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**THE FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH**  
Richard Hooker and the Problem of Christian Liberty

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Submitted in Satisfaction of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Ph.D in the University of Edinburgh  
11 November 2013

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis takes as its starting point recent variations on the old narrative that seeks to make the Reformation, and Calvinism in particular, the catalyst for generating modern liberal politics. Using David VanDrunen's *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* as an example, I show how these narratives often involve attempting to accomplish a "transfer" from the realm of spiritual liberty to that of civil liberty, a transfer against which John Calvin warns in his famous discussion of Christian liberty. In making such a transfer, such narratives are often insufficiently attentive to the theological complexities of the Reformation doctrine of Christian liberty, and the tensions that could lie concealed in various appeals to the doctrine.

Accordingly, adopting as a lens John Perry's concept of the "clash of loyalties," (the conflict of religious and civil commitments which helped give rise to liberalism), I attempt to trace how different understandings of Christian liberty, and its accompanying concept of "things indifferent," served both to mitigate and to exacerbate the clash of loyalties in the sixteenth century. This narrative culminates in the attempt of English puritans in the reign of Elizabeth to resolve the conflict by subjecting all ecclesiastical, political, and moral matters to the bar of Scriptural law, thus undermining earlier understandings of what Christian liberty entailed.

Against this backdrop, I survey the work of Richard Hooker as an attempt to recover and clarify the doctrine of Christian liberty. This involves a careful distinction of individual and institutional liberty, and different senses of the concept "things indifferent," a rehabilitation of the role of reason in moral determinations, and a harmonization of the believer's loyalties by clarifying the relation of divine and human law. The result is a vision of a Christian commonwealth free to render corporate obedience to Christ while at the same time enabling the freedom of its citizens.

## SIGNED DECLARATION

I hereby affirm that I have composed this thesis and the work is my own. I have not submitted the work for any other degree or professional qualification.

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W. Bradford Littlejohn

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Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### *OMNI CUI MULTUM DATUM EST...*

Like perhaps many other things in life, a Ph.D thesis is a disconcerting combination of, on the one hand, meticulous planning and disciplined execution, and, on the other hand, the completely unforeseen and fortuitous: the chance meeting and conversation at a conference or (more often perhaps nowadays) online, the curious footnote pursued into a treasure-trove of exciting discoveries, an offhand suggestion by your supervisor that blossoms into an important new line of inquiry, the epiphany that comes during the morning walk to your desk or over your third coffee as you muse on Rachmaninov's Third. Unfortunately, it is only the first of these categories, by far the less consequential contribution, that the lowly writer can take any credit for. For the rest, he can only say, *non nobis, Domine, sed Nomini Tuo da gloriam!* However, it smacks suspiciously of false modesty to wax eloquent thanking God on an Acknowledgements page, a way of not-so-subtly insinuating to one's examiners that everything before them has God's personal stamp of approval, being His own handiwork. Thankfully, however, God works mostly through strange and fallible secondary causes, especially those that walk on two legs, and to these it is appropriate to indulge in effusions of gratitude.

Many of these (some long dead) have made their contribution primarily through the written word, sealed up between two covers of a book; these are honored in the appropriate (though depressingly formal) way in the footnotes and bibliography that accompany this thesis, so there is little point listing them here. I will make an exception of three only. David VanDrunen, given the rather merciless beating (although with all due academic decorum) he receives in a few of the pages that follow, deserves a word of thanks here. His book *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* fortuitously came my way three years ago, and set me on a quest of refutation that led me unexpectedly to this thesis (in the process of which the nature of the refutation changed dramatically, and I learned a great deal from him). He was polite enough to meet me for a beer and a somewhat confusing argument about Calvin even after I had intemperately savaged him in print—and I have no doubt he will have the graciousness to do so again next time our paths should cross. In a very different way, my debt to Torrance Kirby in various ways is evident all over the pages that follow, although he will no doubt find much to quibble with. The rich insights I have mined from his books and articles have been complemented by his patient correspondence and feedback over the past few years, during the early part

of which he displayed great perseverance in trying to drill the Reformational two-kingdoms concept into my thick head. Third, of course, I must thank Richard Hooker, “of blessed memory” (as Paul Stanwood likes to always add), who has been far more to me these past two and a half years than the subject of a thesis. I hope it will not sound like sacrilege to say that his words have been a lamp for my feet, and a light unto my path in more ways than I can count, many of them well beyond the scope of this research.

For introducing me to Hooker (or re-introducing, as I had made a passing though passionate acquaintance with him during a summer study at Oxford some years ago), I must thank of course my supervisor Oliver O’Donovan, who has throughout this process guided me with a gentle but judicious hand. His suggestions have been few but carefully-chosen, and have usually yielded abundant fruit—none more so than his absurd insistence that I spend my Christmas break two and a half years ago toiling through the eight books of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, which had, I thought, little bearing on my anticipated thesis topic. His wife Joan has proved an extraordinary (though again, an unforeseen) secondary supervisor, meticulously flagging the least grammatical transgression or conceptual ambiguity throughout the process. Perhaps just as important as this formal supervision has been the quirky but unfailing advice of my friend and mentor, Peter Escalante. I have had the uncanny experience, ever since stumbling upon the topic and argument of this thesis, that I was simply unfolding an idea that he had mysteriously “incepted” into my mind sometime in autumn 2010. Of this thesis it might truly be said “Peter planted, Hooker watered, and God gave the growth.” I appreciate also Peter’s willingness to read over each chapter draft as it appeared, reassuring me that yes, it was coherent enough to pass on to my supervisors for their scrutiny.

Many other friends (some of them friends formed along the way) helped by their suggestions, conversations, feedback on drafts, and penetrating questions. Steven Wedgworth and Jordan Ballor, in particular, gave me many helpful ideas and put a number of key resources in my path; the opportunity to work with Jordan on a project on 16<sup>th</sup>-century Calvinist church discipline was especially fruitful. Andrew Fulford read over several bits of the thesis at the crucial revising stage, helping me ensure that they were polished and comprehensible enough. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my old and brilliant friend Davey Henreckson, who will no doubt be the secure occupant of a professorial chair at Yale Divinity while I’m still trying to jerry-rig my own personal theological-paedagogical revolution from my parents’ basement a few years hence. Throughout the process, he has asked many

annoying but penetrating questions, and made a number of suggestions, many of which turned out to be very useful indeed—putting me onto John Perry’s *Pretenses of Loyalty*, for instance. And of course my faithful friend Brad Belschner has always been there to chat things through when we have the chance to catch up every few months.

Even the rare reader inquisitive enough to read through an Acknowledgements section is likely to skip ahead when he encounters the section thanking family, as it is sure to be sentimental, and almost entirely unrelated to the matter of the thesis. And yet for the writer of the Acknowledgments, no section could be more important. In particular, the bit where the author thanks his wife for her extraordinary patience and longsuffering over years of penniless and seemingly pointless toil (often in a foreign land, no less), can seem quite perfunctory, and yet it is anything but. To my wife, Rachel, I am indescribably and eternally grateful for her unflinching support at every stage of the way. It may sound trivial, clichéd, or maybe even sexist to single out for gratitude the extraordinarily fine dinners that I could look forward to at the end of a day of study and writing, but few things contributed so much to the relative ease and efficiency of my work. “An army can’t move except on its stomach,” said Napoleon, and the same is true of an academic. My four-year-old son Soren has been a source of frustration as well as delight along the way, but even the former has been invaluable in keeping me grounded—such as his resort to the blunt expedient of slamming my laptop shut and saying “Don’t work!” when it was high time to call it a day. My eight-month-old angel Pippa has provided constant joy and inspiration on the crucial last leg of the thesis (and to think I was afraid she would slow it down with sleepless nights!). To thank one’s mother may seem acceptable at a high school graduation speech, but frankly embarrassing in a Ph.D thesis Acknowledgements page. And yet I must thank her once more for teaching me to write—to write essays clearly, quickly, and effectively, from a young age. Too many scholars must labor simultaneously with forming their ideas and forming their words; I have been fortunate enough to be able to focus on the former and let the latter take care of themselves, thanks in large part to that training many years ago. My dad too has provided an ever-ready ear, to chat about things thesis-related, or not-so-related, throughout my Ph.D work, keeping my morale up with his humor and his uncanny willingness to agree with me.

Finally, I will thank God directly—not for the content of the thesis, but for the joy it has brought me. For too many Ph.D students, it seems, a thesis has become stale and lukewarm by the date of submission, and they are only too happy to do to it what God wanted to do to the Laodiceans. I am happy to say it is not so for me,



and it is with a fond farewell that I send this thesis forth upon its voyage of examination.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES ON CITATIONS

### Primary Sources

- Answere*\*\* Whitgift, John. *An Answere to a certen libell intituled, An Admonition to Parliament*. London: Henrie Bynneman, 1573. Reprinted in *Whitgift's Works*. Edited by John Ayre. 3 vols. Cambridge: Parker Society, 1849–51.
- CR *Corpus Reformatorum*. Edited by C.B. Bretschneider and H.E. Bindseil. Halle and Brunswick: C.A. Schwetschke, 1834–.
- FLE 1\* Hill, W. Speed, and Georges Edelen, eds. *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker, vol. 1: The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Pref., Books I to IV*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977.
- FLE 2\* Hill, W. Speed, ed. *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker, vol. 2: The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book V*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977.
- FLE 3\* Hill, W. Speed, and P.G. Stanwood, eds. *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker, vol. 3: The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Books VI, VII, VIII*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981.
- FLE 4\* Hill, W. Speed, and John E. Booty, eds. *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker, vol. 4: Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie: Attack and Response*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982.
- FLE 5 Hill, W. Speed, and Laetitia Yeandle, ed. *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker, vol. 5: Tractates and Sermons*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990.
- FLE 6 Hill, W. Speed, ed. *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker, vol. 6: Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie, Books I-VIII: Introductions and Commentary*. Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1993.
- Institutes* Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 2 volumes. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960.
- LEP Hooker, Richard. *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie. Eyght Bookes*. London: John Windet, 1593, 1597; Richard Bishop, 1648; J. Best, 1662.
- LW Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works: American Edition*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, and Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955–.
- Replie*\*\* Cartwright, Thomas. *A Replye to an Answere Made of M. Doctor Whitgift ... Agaynste the Admonition*. s.l., 1574. Reprinted in *Whitgift's Works*. Edited by John Ayre. 3 vols. Cambridge: Parker Society, 1849–51.

- RSR Cartwright, Thomas. *The Reste of the Second Replie: Agaynst Master Doctor Whitgifts Second Answer Touching the Church Discipline*. Basel: 1577.
- SR Cartwright, Thomas. *The Second Replie of Thomas Cartwright: Agaynst Master Doctor Whitgifts Second Answer Touching the Church Discipline*. Heidelberg: 1575.
- ST Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*. Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. At New Advent, [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org).
- WW\*\* Whitgift, John. *Whitgift's Works*. Edited by John Ayre. 3 vols. Cambridge: Parker Society, 1849–51.

## Secondary Sources

- AP Lake, Peter. *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought From Whitgift to Hooker*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1988.
- BCRH Kirby, W. J. Torrance, ed. *A Companion to Richard Hooker*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- LGTK VanDrunen, David. *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.
- NLTK VanDrunen, David. *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought*. Emory University Studies in Law and Religion. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- RHAMR Joyce, A. J. *Richard Hooker and Anglican Moral Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- RHCCC McGrade, Arthur Stephen, ed. *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*. Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997.
- RHDRS Kirby, W. J. Torrance. *Richard Hooker's Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy*. Leiden: Brill, 1990.
- RHER Kirby, W. J. Torrance, ed. *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003.
- RHRP Kirby, W. J. Torrance. *Richard Hooker, Reformer and Platonist*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.
- RHRT Voak, Nigel. *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- TLAER O'Donovan, Joan Lockwood. *Theology of Law and Authority in the English Reformation*. Emory University Studies in Law and Religion 1. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991.

\*All quotations or citations of Richard Hooker are assumed to be from the *Lawes* unless otherwise specified. They will generally be given by parenthetical references in the main body text (unlike all other citations, which will be footnoted), which will give first the book (in roman numeral), chapter, and paragraph from the *Lawes*, and then the volume (in arabic numeral), page, and line number from the *Folger Library Edition*. So, for instance, the citation "(II.4.3; 1:153.30–154.5)" denotes that the quotation is taken from Book II, ch. 4, par. 3 of the *Lawes*, which can be found in vol. 1, beginning on p. 153, line 30, and ending on p. 154, line 5 of the *Folger Library Edition*. The same format of *FLE* citations will be used for Hooker's other works.

\*\* Since both Whitgift's *Answer* and Cartwright's *Replie* were reprinted as part of the text of Whitgift's 1574 *Defense of an Answer*, which comprises the Parker Society edition of *Whitgift's Works*, I have simply used that edition for citations of all three sources. So, where the *Answer* or *Replie* is cited, I provide the original page #, followed by the *Whitgift's Works* page #: so, for instance, "Whitgift, *Answer*, 61 (WW II:44)," or "Cartwright, *Replie*, 14 (WW 1:190)"; however, when the citation is from the *Defense*, you will see only, e.g., WW I:235.

### **A note on spelling and punctuation**

When quoting from original 16<sup>th</sup>-century English sources, I have preserved original spelling and punctuation with the following exceptions:

- 1) I have changed consonantal "i"s to "j"s and "u"s to "v"s, for easier readability, and likewise have changed "vv"s to "w"s where appropriate.
- 2) Where the / is used in earlier sources to signify a comma, I have replaced it with a comma; likewise, in some cases where a colon is used for functions we would not denote with a semicolon or period, I have amended accordingly.
- 3) Where quotations within quoted text were denoted in the original by italicizing the text, I have replaced with inverted commas.

# CHAPTER ONE

## DIFFERENT KINGS AND DIFFERENT LAWS: CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND THE CONFLICT OF LOYALTIES IN THE REFORMATION

### I. Conflicting Loyalties

In a justly famous passage of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin warns his readers against a confusion of Christian liberty and civil liberty:

Now, these two, as we have divided them, are always to be viewed apart from each other. When the one is considered, we should call off our minds, and not allow them to think of the other. For there exists in man a kind of two worlds, over which different kings and different laws can preside. By attending to this distinction, we will not erroneously transfer the doctrine of the gospel concerning spiritual liberty to civil order, as if in regard to external government Christians were less subject to human laws, because their consciences are unbound before God, as if they were exempted from all carnal service, because in regard to the Spirit they are free.<sup>1</sup>

And yet, despite this peremptory warning, repeated verbatim in each successive edition of the *Institutes* from 1536 onwards,<sup>2</sup> neither Calvin's heirs nor later historians of early modern political thought have been prevented from seeking to make just this transfer. Indeed, the past century has seen a veritable cottage industry of theologians and political theorists claiming that Protestantism and especially Calvinism constituted a revolutionary ideology, a theology that struck at the heart of established power structures and helped generate the modern liberal and secular state.<sup>3</sup> From a purely empirical perspective, such an argument certainly seems eminently plausible.<sup>4</sup> Although Calvin and his fellow reformers repeatedly

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<sup>1</sup> *Institutes* III.19.15 (1:847).

<sup>2</sup> William R. Stevenson, *Sovereign Grace: The Place and Significance of Christian Freedom in John Calvin's Political Thought* (New York: OUP, 1999), 4.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance (although their particular arguments differ radically), Ralph C. Hancock, *Calvin and the Foundations of Modern Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Douglas F. Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World: The Influence of Calvin on Five Governments From the 16th Through 18th Centuries* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992); Quentin Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought, vol. 2: The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1978); William R. Stevenson, *Sovereign Grace: The Place and Significance of Christian Freedom in John Calvin's Political Thought* (Oxford: OUP, 1999); Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); John Witte, Jr., *The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion, and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> However, it should be noted that contemporary scholars are increasingly turning to the late medieval period to find the early roots of secular modernity and its legal institutions. Among those seeking a positive *ressourcement*, Brian Tierney's *The Idea of Natural Rights*:

insisted that the reformation in religion entailed no alteration of civil authority, no revolution against the powers that be, no reconfiguration of the Christian's loyalties, it hardly seems mere coincidence that the spread of Protestantism has accompanied the rise of the liberal state and the development of radical politics.

Indeed, from a theoretical standpoint, how could it be otherwise? The high papalist political doctrine of the late middle ages ensured that, at least in principle, there could be no conflict of loyalties between God and humanity. The Pope wielded a plenitude of authority—spiritual, temporal, epistemological—so that the faithful could be assured that when they obeyed him, and the elaborate canon laws which defined their duties in every sphere of life, they obeyed God. All loyalties could in principle be harmonized underneath this one visible authority. But Protestantism, as part of its doctrine of Christian liberty, shattered this synthesis (which had never worked very well in practice anyway). By depriving the Pope—indeed, any human authority—of the power to infallibly declare the voice of God, the reformers liberated the Christian conscience from any absolute human epistemological authority, the authority to determine truth. Henceforth, Scripture alone could infallibly declare to believers the will of God, and although other authorities might make claims upon the outward conduct of believers, only God could bind the heart.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever Calvin's protestations to the contrary, this dialectic was hardly a stable one, and introduced the possibility of a conflict of loyalties, which John Perry has argued to be the central early modern dilemma that spurred the rise of liberalism.<sup>6</sup> How could a believer be sure that her loyalty to God, the supreme and final good, might not come into conflict with her loyalty to the magistrate, the fallible guardian of the temporal common good? No human authority could finally dictate what God demanded, and what God demanded, human authority could not demand: "we must obey God rather than men," all the reformers eagerly affirmed.

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*Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law, and Church Law, 1150–1625* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) represents one of the most significant achievements. On the opposite side, many within the movement known as Radical Orthodoxy have identified late-medieval political and philosophical developments as seminal to the development of the modern secular state, a development they lament. Some of the most thoughtful contributions to this discussion are the essays of Joan O'Donovan on the significance of late medieval political thought in Oliver and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 73–120, 137–66.

<sup>5</sup> For a particularly full statement, see Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession. For a discussion of the knots into which this claim of individual hermeneutical authority tied the reformers, see Susan Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise? The Quest for Certainty in the Early Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), ch. 3.

<sup>6</sup> John Perry, *Pretenses of Loyalty: Locke, Liberal Theory, and American Political Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2011). See especially pp. 66–68.

Once such a wedge had been introduced, spiritual liberty demanded some recognition in civil order, some limit on how much obedience civil authorities could require. A “transfer” of some kind seemed inevitable.

By some accounts, the very wall that Calvin here describes between the spiritual and the civil, his so-called “two-kingdoms doctrine,”<sup>7</sup> is the means by which this transfer takes place. By establishing an autonomous spiritual kingdom with its own particular laws and duties, Calvin sought to render this space exempt from civil jurisdiction. This exemption, it is argued, becomes the basis for modern religious liberty, and indeed for the development of a neutral secular state. The separation between these kingdoms, moreover, ensured the desacralization of the latter; freed from a preoccupation with ultimate concerns, the state found its task and its justification on strictly secular grounds. Although Calvin himself did not do so, his heirs, applying these principles, progressively banished religious considerations from affairs of state. By this means, the Protestant doctrine of spiritual liberty of conscience becomes the midwife of modern civil liberties, in which the just bounds between religion and politics—between private ultimate concerns and public temporal concerns—have been fixed.

In the introductory chapter that follows, we will survey a prominent recent example of this argument, that offered in David VanDrunen’s 2010 *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, which attempts to use the two-kingdoms doctrine to set “just bounds”<sup>8</sup> between spiritual and civil, ensuring no conflict of loyalties. VanDrunen’s argument highlights the importance of the doctrine of Christian liberty and particularly its associated doctrine of adiaphora, or “things indifferent,” but his appropriation of these themes reveals deep underlying tensions in these doctrines,

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<sup>7</sup> Calvin uses the language of the “two kingdoms,” following Luther’s usage, in *Institutes* III.19 and IV.20, as a way of structuring his entire discussion of Book IV. However, despite the importance of the two-kingdoms doctrine in Lutheran studies, its role in the theology of Calvin has only recently begun to engage the systematic attention of scholars. John Witte, Jr., gave it some attention in his “Moderate Religious Liberty in the Theology of John Calvin,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 31 (1996): 359–403. David VanDrunen’s analysis in *NLTK* is perhaps the first systematic investigation of the matter (see Cornelis Venema, “The Restoration of All Things to Proper Order: An Assessment of the Two Kingdoms/Natural Law Interpretation of John Calvin’s Public Theology” in Ryan McIlhenny, ed., *Kingdoms Apart* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012]: 3–32 for a critical response). Torrance Kirby, however, also drew attention to the theme in *RHDS*, 43–45, 64–66 and has recently explored it in more depth in “A Reformed Culture of Persuasion: John Calvin’s Two Kingdoms and the Theological Origins of the Public Square,” in Richard R. Topping and John A. Vissers, eds., *Calvin @500: Theology, History, and Practice*, ed. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011): 52–66.

<sup>8</sup> The language is that of John Locke, from *A Letter concerning Toleration*, ed. Mario Montuori (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), 15, and is a prominent theme of Perry’s *Pretenses of Loyalty*.

rendering his own historical narrative and constructive project problematic. We then turn briefly to John Perry's argument in his recent *Pretenses of Loyalty* to show how the themes VanDrunen identifies are in fact central to John Locke's enormously influential attempt to resolve the conflict of loyalties, but that Locke makes a very different use of them than VanDrunen does. We will then suggest that valuable light could be shed on these tensions by turning to Richard Hooker, one of Locke's chief influences and the arch-critic of one of VanDrunen's chief influences, the Elizabethan puritan Thomas Cartwright.<sup>9</sup> The latter part of this chapter will seek to clarify the issues at stake in 16th-century debates over Christian liberty and political authority, justify the relevance of Hooker to the discussion, and sketch the shape of the argument in the following chapters.

## II. Christian Liberty and the Two Kingdoms

David VanDrunen's *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* offers perhaps the boldest and most comprehensive argument for the value of "Reformed two-kingdoms doctrine" for modern liberalism, and Christians living in liberal polities. His argument is both *descriptive*, identifying the role of the "two kingdoms" in the development of liberal political theory and institutions, and *prescriptive*, hailing it as the best compass for Christians in a pluralist world. The argument of this thesis will suggest that VanDrunen is right to single out the doctrine of the two kingdoms, a common theme in Luther scholarship but generally ignored among the Reformed, as the fulcrum of Reformation political thought; however, both his descriptive account of this theme and his prescriptive appropriation of it run into a number of difficult tensions.

Descriptively, VanDrunen sets up his narrative as an attempt to answer a common question: if the reformers maintained a strong doctrine of natural law, as recent scholarship has increasingly highlighted,<sup>10</sup> how does this cohere with their

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<sup>9</sup> Given his essentially secularizing agenda, VanDrunen has been very shy about mentioning his debt to Cartwright, who does not appear once in *NLTK*, although Cartwright's influence is readily visible. He does draw explicitly on George Gillespie and Samuel Rutherford (pp. 173–206 *passim*), 17th-century Scots Covenanters who fleshed out the two-kingdoms political theology developed by Andrew Melville and Thomas Cartwright in the 1570s. Cartwright is also one of those particularly responsible for developing the doctrine of the regulative principle and of the two mediatorships of Christ in the form in which VanDrunen employs these concepts, as we shall see. However, in a recent article, "Remembering the Two Kingdoms," *Christian Renewal* 30:8 (Feb. 8, 2012), VanDrunen's research assistant, Matthew Tuininga, explicitly identified Cartwright as the most significant exponent of their form of the doctrine.

<sup>10</sup> See especially Stephen J. Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), and Robert C. Baker and Roland Cap Ehlke, eds., *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011).



fierce insistence on *sola Scriptura*? Influenced by Barth and others, many modern Reformed have deemed these two irreconcilable, and have jettisoned natural law in favor of a comprehensive biblicism.<sup>11</sup> Prescriptively, then, VanDrunen considers this severely misguided, resulting as it often does in a triumphalistic, even theocratic approach to politics, in which politics must be reshaped according to distinctively Christian and Scriptural norms.<sup>12</sup>

VanDrunen finds the answer for this contemporary problem, as well as the historical problem of explaining the reformers' embrace of natural law, in the two kingdoms doctrine, which distinguished between the spiritual and heavenly domain, the church, ruled by Christ the redeemer, and the civil and earthly domain, the state, ruled by God the Creator through human vicegerents.<sup>13</sup> Far from being a merely Lutheran concept, as often supposed,<sup>14</sup> VanDrunen shows that this doctrine was fully articulated by Calvin (as seen in the opening quotation), and in many of his Reformed successors through at least the 19th century. The reformers, he argues,

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<sup>11</sup> Grabill summarizes 20th-century Reformed opposition to natural law in *Rediscovering the Natural Law* 3–11, 21–53.

<sup>12</sup> See chs. 9 and 10 of *NLTK*, and for further critique, plus a fuller development of the alternative model VanDrunen wishes to advance, *LGTK*, ch. 7. VanDrunen's associate D.G. Hart offers similar critiques and prescriptions, although aimed at American evangelicalism more broadly, rather than the Reformed in particular, in *A Secular Faith: Why Christianity Favors the Separation of Church and State* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006) and *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin: Evangelicals and the Betrayal of American Conservatism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). Good examples of the biblicistic politics VanDrunen and Hart are critiquing can be found, in its evangelical form, in Wayne Grudem's recent *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), and, in a distinctively Reformed form, in Greg Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 1977). For a survey, see my "Sola Scriptura and the Public Square: Richard Hooker and a Protestant Paradigm for Political Engagement," in Angus Paddison and Neil Messer, eds. *The Bible: Culture, Community and Society* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 209–22.

<sup>13</sup> For this distinction between Christ the redeemer and God the creator as the respective heads of the two kingdoms, see particularly *NLTK* 176–81. For a theological critique of this distinction, see ch. 6 of this thesis below. In his more recent *LGTK*, VanDrunen has quietly retracted this claim (p. 118). In this, he has followed the precedent of the Scots Covenanters, who, as David McKay has shown, abandoned this same use of the two mediatorships doctrine sometime between the 17th and the 19th centuries, though without ever acknowledging the fact ("From Popery to Principle: Covenanters and the Kingdom of Christ," in Anthony T. Selvaggio, ed., *The Faith Once Delivered: Essays in Honor of Dr. Wayne R. Spear* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007], 135–69).

<sup>14</sup> See for instance Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 35–36; D.A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 188, 210–12. Whereas scholarship on two-kingdoms theology among the sixteenth-century Reformed was almost nonexistent prior to VanDrunen's work, Luther's two-kingdom theory has been the subject of voluminous literature for many decades. Two particularly authoritative treatments, which extensively summarize previous scholarship, can be found in W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, "The 'Two Kingdoms' and the 'Two Regiments': Some Problems of Luther's *Zwei-Reiche-Lehre*," *Theological Studies* XX:1 (1969): 164–85, and William Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

while defending the principle of *sola Scriptura* when it came to redemption and the life of the spiritual kingdom, were careful to confine it there; the civil kingdom, they affirmed, was ruled by natural law, not Scripture.<sup>15</sup> Thus they could warmly endorse the use of reason and secular authority in the civil kingdom, while denying these any efficacy when it came to the Gospel and the church.<sup>16</sup>

VanDrunen unfolds this paradigm historically, seeing the somewhat unsystematic foundations in Luther, stressing its appropriation and development in Calvin, drawing attention to the prevalence of natural law in the Reformed resistance theorists, and finding systematic codification of this relationship in the period of seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy. The end result of this paradigm, he argues, is a modern separation of church and state, in which the State, ruling by natural law, does not interfere in the spiritual business of the church, and the church, armed only with Scripture, does not sally forth into the arena of civil affairs.<sup>17</sup>

At the heart of this argument, VanDrunen tells us, is the doctrine of Christian liberty, and Calvin's famous articulation of it in the *Institutes*. No mere adjunct to Protestant teaching, this doctrine was integrally linked to the fundamental principles of Protestantism: justification by faith alone and the authority of Scripture alone. Christian liberty was the liberty of the conscience from bondage to external works, and from the dictates of human authorities beyond Scripture. There were in fact three dimensions to the doctrine, which Calvin summarized as (1) "that the consciences of believers, in seeking assurance of their justification before God, should rise above and advance beyond the law, forgetting all law righteousness;" (2) "that consciences observe the law, not as if constrained by the necessity of the law, but that freed from the law's yoke they willingly obey

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<sup>15</sup> Of course, VanDrunen acknowledges that they "did not mean to say that Scripture is irrelevant for the civil kingdom" (*NLTK* 208–9; see also p. 113), and in his own constructive articulation of the doctrine in *LGTK*, he seems to allow for a general application of scriptural principles to the civil kingdom (see especially ch. 7). At some points, however, he seems resistant to any intrusion of distinctively Christian reasoning into the social-political realm (e.g., *NLTK* 265). This resistance is even more pronounced among some contemporary advocates of the "Reformed two-kingdoms doctrine," such as D.G. Hart. See especially his *A Secular Faith*, 153–257, and *From Billy Graham* (implicitly throughout, but esp. pp. 220–24).

<sup>16</sup> See *NLTK* 112–14, 208–10 for good summary statements of these claims.

<sup>17</sup> For the fullest statement of this paradigm, see *NLTK* 267, 428–29. Although, as a historical study of Reformed theology, *NLTK* offers no explicit treatment or endorsement of American constitutional arrangements on the relationship of church and state, VanDrunen considers salutary the influence of Presbyterian two-kingdoms theology on religious disestablishment in the 1780s (*NLTK* 234–47), and tentatively endorses Stuart Robinson's claim that Reformed two-kingdoms theology undergirded the US Constitution's separation of church and state (212–13, 274–75).

God's will"; (3) "regarding outward things that are of themselves 'indifferent,' [often designated by the Greek word, *adiaphora*] we are not bound before God by any religious obligation preventing us from sometimes using them and other times not using them, indifferently."<sup>18</sup> (Throughout this thesis, I will designate these the principles of *justification*, *willingness*, and *indifference*, respectively.) It quickly becomes apparent that VanDrunen, having expounded these three dimensions, is chiefly interested in the third, and in expounding it, he appears to make some moves that are counterintuitive.

The tensions are evident already in the way he paraphrases it: "being freed from obligation to do or not to do external things that are in themselves morally indifferent." The omission of Calvin's "before God" and his specification of "religious obligation" seems to render this liberty much more sweeping than Calvin's description. Accordingly, VanDrunen has to read Calvin as saying that this liberty applies only in the spiritual realm of the church, where no human authority can bind our consciences, and "Scripture is the only authority."<sup>19</sup> It does not apply in the civil realm, where human authorities can issue laws and bind us to obedience outside of Scripture, but according to the standard of natural law. Calvin's exposition, on the other hand, as we shall see in Chapter Two, makes clear that conscience by definition cannot be bound by *any* human laws, whether civil or ecclesiastical. The problem, as we shall have occasion to see at more length later on, is that for Calvin here, "spiritual" and "civil" designate primarily two different *modes* of Christian existence, *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus*, rather than two different external spheres of it. By positing the Christian's "spiritual liberty" as an external liberty within the visible church, VanDrunen draws the corollary that "the officers of the church have authority to do and command only those things prescribed in Scripture, and Christians in the spiritual kingdom are thus free in conscience from anything *beyond* this."<sup>20</sup> This is in fact a restatement of the so-called "regulative principle of worship"<sup>21</sup> that was developed by certain English Calvinists, which Walter Lowrie summarizes as, "that nothing is lawful in the church which is not expressly or implicitly sanctioned in the word of God."<sup>22</sup> Although formulated and often defended as an amplification of the Christian liberty

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<sup>18</sup> *Institutes* III.19.2 (1:834). See VanDrunen's exposition of these three at *NLTK* 73.

<sup>19</sup> *NLTK* 73.

<sup>20</sup> *NLTK* 73.

<sup>21</sup> VanDrunen is well aware of this. See *NLTK* 191–92.

<sup>22</sup> *The Church and Its Organization in Primitive and Catholic Times: An Interpretation of Rudolph Sohm's Kirchenrecht, Volume 1* (New York: Longmans, 1904), 64.

doctrine, it is in fact, as Lowrie argues, “its express logical contrary,” as can be seen by comparison with a classic creedal formulation of the third principle of Christian liberty, Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles: “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” Lowrie continues: “in so far as it [the regulative principle] extended the operation of this principle from what is to be believed to what is to be done, it transformed a guarantee of freedom into a bond of scruple.”<sup>23</sup>

This blurring of the domains of *belief* and *action*, evident in VanDrunen’s assumption that human laws are conscience-binding, thus leads to an ironic inversion of the concept of liberty. The preservation of Christian liberty in the church means that the church is in fact bound—it has no liberty to speak or command anything on its own accord, and should it attempt to do so, believers *must* disobey it. Meanwhile, in the civic arena, VanDrunen gives to magistrates full liberty to make laws as they see fit. In the church, the institution is bound, in order to enable the individual to be free, while in the state, the individual is bound, that the institution might be free. But of course, inasmuch as our freedom is realized socially, in and through our participation in institutions, it would appear that on Van Drunen’s construal Christians are in fact less free in the church than in the state. This apparent inversion becomes quite explicit in his later exposition, where he uses the nineteenth-century debate between Presbyterians Charles Hodge and James Henley Thornwell to elucidate what he takes to be at stake in the Reformed doctrine of Christian liberty and the two kingdoms.

The question at stake (a typically Presbyterian one) was whether the denomination was permitted to create a mission board.<sup>24</sup> Charles Hodge argued a resounding “Yes,” appealing to the doctrine of Christian liberty, and complaining that Thornwell’s doctrine “‘ties down’ the government and action of the Church,” and is as good as a new popery, substituting “the mummified forms of mediaeval

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<sup>23</sup> Lowrie, *Church and Its Organization*, 66. Whereas Christian liberty meant that nothing beyond Scripture “may be exacted as an article of faith,” says Lowrie, “the Dissenters asserted that nothing but this may be permitted in the Church—either to be believed or to be done” (67).

<sup>24</sup> Hodge’s chief contribution to the discussion may be found in “Presbyterianism,” in *Discussions in Church Polity* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1878), 118–33, Thornwell’s in B.M. Palmer, ed., *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, vol. 4 (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1873), 145–296. For a recent analysis, see A. Craig Troxel, “Charles Hodge on Church Boards: A Case Study in Ecclesiology,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 58 (1996): 183–207.

Christianity” for “this free, exultant Church of ours.”<sup>25</sup> This charge of neo-popery is a remarkable one (and one we shall encounter again many times in this thesis), suggesting as it does that the doctrine of Christian liberty, Protestantism’s fundamental protest against papal tyranny, has been abandoned.

Thornwell, however, argued that Hodge had it backward: his “principle that the church is permitted to do all that Scripture does not forbid it to do was not the Reformed principle of Christian liberty over against Rome but the principle of Rome which the Reformed doctrine of Christian liberty sought to overthrow.”<sup>26</sup>

VanDrunen sides with Thornwell’s account, saying,

The Reformed doctrine of Christian liberty was never about the church being freed to do things (such as create boards to which it could delegate the work of missions) about which Scripture was silent. Instead, with direct reference to the two kingdoms doctrine, Reformed theologians and confessions spoke of Christian liberty in regard to the justified individual, who was freed in the civil kingdom from any obligation to do things *contrary* to the teaching of Scripture and in the spiritual kingdom from any obligation to do things *beside* the teaching of Scripture. . . . Thus, when Hodge taught, as the Presbyterian’s doctrine of Christian liberty, that the church is permitted to do what is not forbidden in Scripture, he was in fact transferring the traditional Reformed standard for the civil kingdom to the spiritual kingdom and thus giving the church precisely the power (speaking and acting beyond the teaching of Scripture) that the Reformed tradition had tried to take from it. . . . Thornwell sought to limit the government and action of the church to the prescriptions of the Bible *only*, and did so with reference to historic Reformed convictions about the church’s ministerial authority and about Christian liberty.<sup>27</sup>

For VanDrunen, as for Thornwell, the Protestant doctrine of Christian liberty means that the individual believer is freed from having to do anything not directly commanded in Scripture, and therefore the church is bound not to command anything that is not directly commanded in Scripture. But this concept clearly goes further than the original Protestant concept that the church must not command anything beyond Scripture as an article of faith or as necessary for salvation. So strict is this “liberty” that the church cannot even authorize, speak, or do anything outside of Scripture, whether or not it is being done with the purpose of binding consciences, as creating a church mission board surely is not. Given that the church is the community of believers, this means that, when it comes to ecclesiastical matters, matters of “the spiritual kingdom,” believers’ liberty of action is

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<sup>25</sup> *NLTK* 258; quoting from Hodge, “Presbyterianism,” 118–19, 133.

<sup>26</sup> *NLTK* 259.

<sup>27</sup> *NLTK* 258–60.

dramatically curtailed, and indeed, there seems to be no room at all for adiaphora within this kingdom.

This shift is significant because it leaves liberty of action to believers only in the civil kingdom; indeed, this is its express purpose, as another controversy between Hodge and Thornwell illustrates. When the Presbyterian Church debated measures endorsing the work of the American Temperance Union and the African Colonization Society, Thornwell vehemently opposed them on the basis of the doctrine of the “spirituality of the church.” According to Thornwell, the church was bound to confine itself to specifically spiritual matters, and must not transgress on affairs that belong properly to the civil kingdom—political and social matters like slavery. The church must have “nothing to do with the voluntary associations of men for various civil and social purposes”<sup>28</sup> because the church was bound to Scripture alone, which did not address such matters. Again, the issue at stake, said Thornwell, was Christian liberty, “the freedom of Christians from the tyranny of the church speaking where Scripture is silent”<sup>29</sup>; individual Christians were free to participate in such organizations and advance particular political agendas as they wished, but the church as such must neither support or oppose them. In making this argument, says VanDrunen, Thornwell

explicitly hearkened back to the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine in identifying the church as ‘the kingdom of God’ and as ‘a kingdom not of this world. The church’s only ‘legitimate business,’ therefore, were the things that ‘belong to His kingdom,’ for it had ‘no mission to care for the things that ‘belong to His kingdom,’ and to become entangled with the kingdoms and the policy, of this world.’<sup>30</sup>

This argument of Thornwell’s, then, turns out to be central to VanDrunen’s adaptation of the Reformed two-kingdoms doctrine to address contemporary political theology. Attempts to assert the Lordship of Jesus Christ over politics, common in many corners of the Reformed and evangelical world, blur the two kingdoms, and thus result in a violation of Christian liberty, particularly when they seek to argue for specific policies on biblical, rather than natural law grounds. VanDrunen is concerned that church ministers will “command . . . [Christians] what political strategies to follow, what child-rearing methods to utilize, or how to make their businesses run more efficiently.”<sup>31</sup> This fear might seem unnecessary so long as

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<sup>28</sup> Thornwell, “Societies for Moral Reform,” in *Collected Writings* 4:469; quoted in *NLTK* 261.

<sup>29</sup> *NLTK* 262.

<sup>30</sup> *NLTK* 262. Quotations are from Thornwell, “Societies for Moral Reform,” 477, and “Speech on African Colonization,” in *Collected Writings* 4:472–73.

<sup>31</sup> *LGTK* 155.

ministers are humble about the provisionality of applying biblical truths to changing circumstances; however, VanDrunen's two-kingdoms model rests upon a concept of ministerial authority prominent in certain strands of the Reformed tradition that sees ministers as surrogates of Christ whose teaching of the Word has conscience-binding force.<sup>32</sup> Hence, they must simply avoid all teaching on civil matters, and leave such matters entirely to the discretion of citizens using natural law.<sup>33</sup> Thus the purpose of the two-kingdoms distinction is to constrain Christians within tightly-defined scriptural bounds within the spiritual kingdom of the church, and to liberate them to apply a loosely-defined natural law in the civil kingdom of society and politics. A crucial corollary of this teaching, by which VanDrunen links the two kingdoms to the origins of liberalism, is that civil authorities must refrain from making any religious claims on their subjects, or enacting policies on religious grounds.<sup>34</sup>

In expounding what he takes to be the Reformed two-kingdoms doctrine, then, VanDrunen would appear to have accomplished the very transfer that Calvin warns against. Liberty is established in the civil kingdom, but at the cost of a legalistic biblicism in the church, from which *adiaphora*, so central to the original doctrine of Christian liberty, have been banished. Indeed, on this interpretation of the two-kingdoms doctrine, it is precisely in the midst of telling us that spiritual liberty makes us "no less subject to human laws" that Calvin and the reformers introduce the great limitation of human laws that will lead in the end to a substantial narrowing of the scope within which we are subject to them. Moreover, the secularization of the public square that VanDrunen describes as a consequence of the Reformed two-kingdoms theory bears little resemblance to Calvin's own theory and practice in Geneva. As a descriptive account, then, VanDrunen's

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<sup>32</sup> Thornwell offers a pithy statement: "In this kingdom of God the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners, and no church judiciary ought to pretend to make laws that bind the conscience, or to issue regulations that regulate manners, without the warrant, explicit or implied, of the revealed will of God" ("Societies for Moral Reform," 469–70). See also *LGTK* 151–59. The principle is nearly always stated negatively, emphasizing where ministers may *not* bind; however, it highlights the conviction that within proper limits, they may. In fact, it becomes clear that this conscience-binding authority is taken to reside in the office, rather than in the Word as such, when we see that both Thornwell and VanDrunen consider public pronouncements of ministers beyond Scripture to be *ipso facto* violations of Christian liberty, even if not intended to have conscience-binding force.

<sup>33</sup> *LGTK* 152.

<sup>34</sup> See for instance *NLTK* 254–55.

paradigm scarcely seems adequate to the original theory of Calvin and other reformers.<sup>35</sup>

As we have already mentioned briefly, however, this apparent inversion is not at all original to VanDrunen. Although not hardly Jeffersonian advocates of a separation of church and state, English puritans used the regulative principle, with its strict limitation of the visible church to Scripture alone, to protest against both civil meddling in ecclesiastical affairs and (although with some key ambiguities that we shall have cause to explore later), against ecclesiastical meddling in civil affairs. They, like Thornwell, invoked the language of Christian liberty, but were accused by their conformist opponents of subjecting the church to a new popish bondage, by arguing for a regulative principle that seemed to exclude adiaphora altogether from the Church. But whence arose this regulative principle? I will argue in this thesis that this inversion of Christian liberty was in fact a natural development from the struggle to resolve the conflict of loyalties bequeathed by the Reformation. If we must obey God rather than men when their demands conflict, then there arises an urgent need to determine the just bounds of their claims to reduce the possibility of conflict. One of the most attractive solutions, favored by liberals, is what John Perry

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<sup>35</sup> John Witte tells a more sophisticated but not altogether dissimilar narrative in *The Reformation of Rights*. As the title suggests, Witte's focus is more on the political concept of "rights" than the theological concept of the "two kingdoms," but the starting point (Calvin's doctrine of Christian liberty) and the endpoint (contemporary liberal separation of church and state) are the same. For Witte, religious rights were the first ones insisted upon, and became the "midwife" of other rights as early modernity unfolded (2), and at the core of the assertion of religious rights was the assertion of freedom of conscience, that is to say, Christian liberty. Calvin's ideas on this point, and his distinction of church and state as spheres of "aspirational spiritual norms" and "mandatory civil norms" (4), respectively, Witte argues, were "protean and provocative" (1) in the development of rights thinking among his followers.

Although Witte appears more aware than VanDrunen of the complex dimensions of the two-kingdoms doctrine, describing it as "not simply a political theory of institutions, but a theological framework designed to distinguish the realms not only of church and state, but also of soul and body, spirit and flesh, inner life and outer life, conscience and reason, redemption and creation" (44), he, like VanDrunen, reads Calvin's strict distinction of "spiritual liberty" from "civil liberty" as an invitation to carve out a sphere of exemption from human laws. Accordingly, he too finds it difficult to come to terms with Calvin's increasing readiness to give the state "a moral role in the governance of the heavenly kingdom" (58), and sees him failing to follow through on the original genius of his two-kingdoms theology. Witte, like VanDrunen (though much more self-consciously) plays off individual and institutional liberty against each other, and identifies the former as the true locus of Christian liberty (55–56), so the doctrine serves to constrain institutional freedom. Of course, the problem, as we have already seen, is not in identifying the locus of Christian liberty as the individual *conscience*, but in facilely equating this with a liberty of individual *action*, which is thus rendered highly unstable. The inner kinship between legalism and antinomianism in the resulting puritan tradition is revealed in the fact that where VanDrunen takes the legalistic apogee of the tradition, Thornwell, as the hero of his narrative, Witte takes the antinomian apogee, John Milton, as the hero of his (ch. 4).



calls the “jurisdictional approach”<sup>36</sup> which seeks to “distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other,” in the words of John Locke.<sup>37</sup> VanDrunen’s rendition of the two-kingdoms theory, it can readily be seen, is a version of such a jurisdictional approach (although with a far higher ecclesiology than Locke’s). If the “spiritual kingdom” can be understood as essentially synonymous with the institutional church, then the boundary-lines of a Christian’s loyalty are readily visible: within the institutional church, Scripture (interpreted through ministers) rules exclusively; while outside its bounds, our loyalty is to civil authorities, unless they are to command us in clear contradiction to Scripture (which will be rare, since it rarely addresses civil matters directly). Conversely, these authorities are by this boundary-drawing shown that they may claim loyalty only within certain limits—secular matters, adjudicated by natural law. But just how “secular” are these matters?

As it moves from being a descriptive account of the origin of liberalism, to a prescriptive theological model for political liberalism, VanDrunen’s narrative thus faces a larger ironic tension, a tension faced indeed by any narratives that find in Protestant doctrine the key to modern liberal politics. According to such narratives, it is on the basis of a specifically Christian—indeed, specifically Protestant— theological argument that a non-theological, religiously neutral, concept of government and society is to be erected. All such accounts thus beg the question: what is the continuing role of these foundational theological concepts in sustaining a religiously plural polity? Are they mere scaffolding that had to be erected in order to achieve a new theoretical edifice that now rests on its own foundations, and can now be safely discarded? Or is Protestant theology a necessary part of the foundation on which rests the ideal of the *saeculum*, of a political space dedicated to penultimate, this-worldly concerns and hence tolerant of a rich diversity of religions? If the former, these doctrines would seem to be of merely historical interest (as indeed they are for many scholars of early modern political thought, such as Quentin Skinner) and there is little reason to continue to trot them out and argue for them. If the latter, then how long can the *saeculum* be sustained in a society that no longer shares this theological underpinning? Indeed, can the conflict of loyalties truly be resolved, given the possibility that some citizens will simply not

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<sup>36</sup> Perry, *Pretenses of Loyalty*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 15. Quoted in Perry, *Pretenses of Loyalty*, 6.

share the same theopolitical assumptions that undergird the careful separation of jurisdictions? Will a stable secularism have to be a Christian, or indeed a Protestant, secularism?<sup>38</sup>

The tension permeates *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, which seeks to show that it was the Reformed doctrine of the two kingdoms which both helped make possible, historically speaking, and which properly undergirds, theoretically speaking, an autonomous political realm, governed not by Scripture but by natural law. The status of natural law however, remains ambiguous in this schema—is it a concept which all men and women of goodwill share? Or is it a distinctively Christian concept with distinctively Christian content, undergirded by revelation? VanDrunen is decidedly equivocal on this question. If natural law is empty of theological content, then it is unclear why he seeks to offer such a forthrightly theological defense of it, and situates it within biblical teaching.<sup>39</sup> Should not Christians assert that civil laws must follow the foundation of natural law established by God, and assert that the “civil kingdom” is in fact the kingdom of Christ, not merely of human authority, especially when society seems eager to jettison these claims? And yet in doing so they will be imposing religious claims on a secular public square, thus, to VanDrunen’s mind, confusing the two kingdoms and violating Christian liberty, just as Thornwell accused the church of doing with regard to slavery. Perhaps VanDrunen would seek to resolve this ambiguity by distinguishing between the level of general principles—government is under God; it is bound to a moral law which he has established; it must respect human life and punish those who take human life—at which Christians should invoke their faith commitments, and particular policies, at which they should not.<sup>40</sup> However, he does not provide clear conceptual criteria for determining whether and to what extent the polity must rest on a specifically Christian foundation.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The ambiguity is highlighted in the conclusion to Witte’s *Reformation of Rights*, in which, having extensively demonstrated the distinctive contribution of Calvinist theology to the development of liberal rights, and in the midst of an apologia for the continuing importance of religion in nurturing, sustaining, and grounding human rights norms, he cannot bring himself to say that anything more than “religion in all its forms” is important (335). Religious narratives and communities of whatever sort—Calvinist, Catholic, Jewish, Islamic—all have just as much to offer to a doctrine of human rights.

<sup>39</sup> Indeed, preparatory to writing *NLTK*, he even wrote *A Biblical Case for Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2006).

<sup>40</sup> He attempts such a distinction in *LGTK* 199–203, but casts doubt on it in *NLTK* 265–66.

<sup>41</sup> His tension is well-illustrated by the ambiguous place of the Decalogue in his schema. He essentially endorses the reformers’ identification of natural law with the Decalogue, but although he insists that natural law is the standard for governing the civil kingdom, he cannot bring himself to share the reformers’ conclusion that, therefore, the magistrate was

### III. Things Indifferent and the Conflict of Loyalties in John Locke

VanDrunen is far from alone in perpetrating this sort of ideological parricide, in which specific Christian doctrines are appealed to in order to establish the possibility of a non-theological politics and then promptly hidden under the rug, perhaps to be furtively drawn upon later on when needed to oppose other theologies that might seek to intrude themselves upon the public sphere. In his remarkable recent book, *The Pretenses of Loyalty*, John Perry draws attention to the ubiquity of this amnesia in the liberal tradition. Moderns have imagined that liberal theory rests on a strictly political-philosophical foundation; indeed, it must do so if it is to provide the kind of religious neutrality desired. A torrent of criticism in recent decades has exposed that these foundations are in fact thoroughly rotten if not illusory.<sup>42</sup> Perry has argued that John Locke, in setting for future generations the “just bounds” of religion and politics, knew better, even if he sought to present himself as arguing from timeless self-evident principles. His was a forthrightly theological argument, and once the theological premises that undergird it are discarded, it can no longer bear the weight.

As John Perry describes it, Locke’s argument sought to address the fundamental Protestant dilemma introduced above: the clash between loyalties to God and to the common good. We all owe loyalty both to God as our highest good, and to civil authority as guardian of the temporal common good.<sup>43</sup> With no infallible interpreter of what loyalty to God entails, how are we to set the just bounds between the demands of these two? The ambiguity of this situation leaves us wide open to the danger of “pretence”: fanatics will, pretending the demands of God, refuse to obey the legitimate commands of the magistrate, while rulers, pretending the demands of the common good, will trespass on matters that are between individuals and their God.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, such a conflict between king and conscience,

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guardian of the First Table of the Decalogue, and must defend the identity and right worship of the Christian God in law (see *NLTK* 88, 104, 165, 201).

<sup>42</sup> Perry offers a thorough analysis and summary of recent criticisms of “Johannine” (from John Locke to John Rawls) liberalism in chapters 1 and 2 of *Pretenses of Loyalty*, ranging from the mild intra-liberal critiques of William Kymlicka and William Galston to the sharper communitarian critiques of Michael Sandel and Kwame Appiah, to the wholesale opposition of Stanley Fish, Leo Strauss, and Stanley Hauerwas. Although immensely varied in their particular lines of criticism, they all serve to draw attention to the ways in which a liberal policy of religious neutrality may not in fact be compellingly justifiable to religious believers on religiously-neutral grounds, and may make claims on believers that violate their most fundamental loyalties.

<sup>43</sup> Perry explores this clash of loyalties throughout, but see particularly pp. 1–6, 18–21, 44–46.

<sup>44</sup> Again, see throughout, but especially pp. 7, 17–19, 51–54.

dogged by pretenses of loyalty on either side, had characterized the history of the English church from the Reformation to Locke's time. Locke recognized the need to provide a harmonization of loyalties, a way of showing believers that these two need not be conceived as rivals, but were perfectly complementary. Only once he had achieved such a harmonization on theological grounds could he attempt to adjudicate with philosophical precision the "just bounds" between religion and politics.

So successful was Locke's project, says Perry, that we have been able to forget the original context of clashing loyalties and the particular contribution of theological debate to resolving these loyalties, and we have occupied ourselves purely with the boundary-drawing question. Liberal theorists have therefore dedicated themselves assiduously to parsing out with ever more precision the jurisdictional boundaries between church and state, and have been puzzled that their efforts have met with so little success, as conflicts between religion and politics continue to proliferate. VanDrunen's approach, I would suggest, betrays the influence of this jurisdictional preoccupation. On his account, the clashing loyalties to God and country are in need of no careful harmonization, because they belong in different spheres with different standards: church and state. If Christians would only respect these institutional boundaries, conflicts would rarely arise. However, far from being self-evident, the nature of VanDrunen's boundaries in fact depends on a very particular set of theological assumptions. It will be instructive, therefore, to see Locke's work against the backdrop of nonconformist arguments about Christian liberty that resemble VanDrunen's account. Although very little Locke scholarship has taken much note of this background, instead focusing almost entirely on his later work, Perry invites us to first attend to his early *First Tract on Government* (1660), written in response to nonconformist Edward Bagshaw's *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent*.

The Anglican attempt to crack down on nonconformity after the Restoration rested, as it had for more than a century, on the concept of adiaphora which encountered above. For conformists, the Christian's liberty in matters indifferent was exercised by their representative, the magistrate, who was free to make policies regarding such rites and orders, and to demand uniformity in them. This uniformity was no violation of Christian liberty, since it was imposed as a matter of *civil* necessity, not *spiritual* necessity. Thus conformists would argue that although in themselves indifferent, the rites in question ceased to be so contingently once the magistrate established a particular usage. Although not among those puritans who so insisted on the regulative principle that there were no adiaphora left, Bagshaw

opposed this conformism with his own concept of contingent indifference. Many of the disputed rites were indifferent *per se*, he acknowledged, but ceased to be so contingently once they became a stumbling block, a source of superstition; then, it was necessary for Christians to avoid them.<sup>45</sup> Conformists responded that this source of offense could be removed by proper instruction regarding purpose of the rites, whereas the offence of disobeying the magistrate could not.

However, Bagshaw argued that there was another way in which adiaphora could cease to be indifferent—if they were commanded by the civil authority:

So long as a thing is left Indifferent, though there be some suspicion of superstition in it, we may lawfully practice it, as Paul did circumcision. But when any shall take upon them to make it Necessary then the thing so imposed presently loses not its Liberty only, but likewise its Lawfulness; and we may not without breach of the Apostles' Precept submit to it.<sup>46</sup>

Bagshaw does not here oppose merely making such rites necessary *to salvation*, or articles of faith, as did Article VI of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, but necessary in any sense. In Bagshaw's view, if such matters are made necessary by law, Christian freedom in adiaphora is violated, and civil authority has demanded a loyalty that only God can claim. Far from being original with Bagshaw (as Perry suggests), this line of argument appears repeatedly in English puritan polemics and can be found in other Protestant controversies over adiaphora, such as the Lutheran Matthias Flacius's 1548 *Liber de veris et falsis adiaphoris*.<sup>47</sup> The basic reasoning, though superficially different from the regulative principle, shares the concern to preserve individual, rather than institutional, freedom of action in adiaphora, thus restricting institutions from establishing standards regarding the use of such rites for the sake of order and the common good.

In his *First Tract on Government*, however, John Locke saw the Protestant doctrine of adiaphora as the means by which to rightly distinguish and harmonize the loyalties of believers. He argued that all matters left adiaphorous by God's Word are by that very fact made subject to the oversight of the civil magistrate, who has care, not over the souls, beliefs, and salvation of his subjects, but over their external actions, so far as he is not limited by the Word of God (as he is not, by definition, in

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<sup>45</sup> Examples of such superstitious rites were "bowing at the name of Jesus, the [sign of] the cross in baptism, pictures in churches, surplices in preaching, kneeling at the sacrament" (Perry, *Pretenses of Loyalty*, 89, quoting from Edward Bagshaw, *The Great Question concerning Things Indifferent* [Oxford: 1660], 2).

<sup>46</sup> Bagshaw, *Great Question*, 9–10, quoted in Perry, *Pretenses of Loyalty*, 90.

<sup>47</sup> See full discussion in ch. 2 below.

adiaphora).<sup>48</sup> He thus does not bother to quibble with Bagshaw about whether certain rites are or are not superstitious, but simply affirms that they are fundamentally civil and not religious matters, and that maintaining Christian liberty in such matters thereby transgresses on the liberty of the magistrate.<sup>49</sup> Again, although Perry sees this “thoroughly political” rather than religious argument for uniformity as a new departure,<sup>50</sup> Locke too is in fact treading well-worn ground. The equation of religious and civil adiaphora, and the consequent argument for religious uniformity on the basis of civil peace, can be found in English conformist writers from the very decade of Henry VIII’s separation from Rome. For the early Locke, as for many of his conformist predecessors, this subjection of adiaphora to civil oversight is in fact the best way to ensure they remain adiaphora. “Without uniformity in adiaphora, summarizes Perry, “the only liberty we would achieve is ‘liberty for contention, censure and persecution [turning loose] the tyranny of religious rage; were every indifferent thing left unlimited nothing would be lawful.’”<sup>51</sup> This was no idle fear, since as we have seen, the puritan regulative principle did move from denying that adiaphora could be *enforced on* the church to denying that they could be *practiced in* the church, leading to bitter strife and even schism. Uniformity seemed the only way the magistrate could keep in check the intolerance of his subjects for one another’s practices.

Accordingly, the early Locke contends that although the magistrate must make no attempt to command his subjects’ hearts, he may command their actions—those actions acknowledged by Protestant theology to be inessential. Although the permissibility of such uniformity is established on theological grounds, its advisability is established on grounds of political prudence,<sup>52</sup> in line with earlier conformist writers such as Richard Hooker. When Locke later concluded that imposed uniformity was incapable of bringing civil peace, and toleration the more prudent course,<sup>53</sup> he had to find a way of showing tolerated sects why they should

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<sup>48</sup> See Locke, “First Tract on Government,” in *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 15.

<sup>49</sup> Perry, *Pretenses of Loyalty*, 90–91.

<sup>50</sup> Perry, *Pretenses of Loyalty*, 90. See also Jacqueline Rose, “John Locke, ‘Matters Indifferent’, and the Restoration of the Church of England,” *Historical Journal* 48:3 (2005), 611.

<sup>51</sup> Perry, *Pretenses of Loyalty*, 91, quoting from Locke, *First Tract*, 65.

<sup>52</sup> Perry, *Pretenses of Loyalty*, 93, 98–99.

<sup>53</sup> Of course, his transition was not that seamless, for his other early argument against toleration was principled, not merely prudential. It seemed clear to him that the magistrate rightfully has authority over all indifferent matters, that the liberty that naturally belongs to individuals is ceded to the public authority upon the formation of a political society. So far as he could see, then, there was no logical way to draw a line around which indifferent

tolerate one another. He sought to achieve this harmonization of loyalties by drawing on his earlier distinction between things indifferent and things essential to salvation; it is because the differences between Protestant groups concern the former, rather than the latter, and that the latter, in any case, cannot be coerced, that Christians should not worry that loyalty to God requires them to persecute or quarrel with those who differ.<sup>54</sup> Locke's liberalism, then, is one that in fact rests on a specific Protestant set of theological assumptions, and that will not function well in the absence of them.

Perry's narrative confirms VanDrunen's thesis that the doctrine of Christian liberty and adiaphora played a crucial role in the development of liberal theory, but complicates that thesis dramatically by showing how differently such doctrines could be understood and deployed. Whereas for VanDrunen, civil regulation of church affairs is *ipso facto* a transgression on the kingdom of Christ, daring to tamper with what God has already prescribed, for Locke the external order of the church was a matter indifferent to God, and thus its regulation or lack thereof is determined by considerations of prudence and charity.<sup>55</sup> For VanDrunen, the two kingdoms means that the ordering of the church has not been left free to human decision; for Locke, it meant it has. Ironically, then, it turns out that VanDrunen's call for an autonomous church looks more illiberal than the early Locke's aggressive calls for imposed uniformity. After all, if Christians are to be free from state interference only in order to pursue the one biblically-prescribed form of religion, what is to stop them from insisting that this freedom belong only to those who follow these prescriptions? Logically, such a scheme suggests that church leaders may dictate to magistrates the limits of their authority, and their duty to punish violators of the true religion. This clearly inverts VanDrunen's own preference for an apolitical ministry, yet this preference proceeds only from his persuasion that Scripture turns out to say little about politics, a persuasion that few of the early Reformed shared. It is easy to see how 16th and 17th century puritans, using a similar paradigm of the two kingdoms and Christian liberty, were tempted toward

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matters the magistrate may regulate, and which he cannot. It was to provide such a criterion that Locke later developed his concept of rights, offering a new account that strictly limits the legitimate powers of civil government, and excludes matters of religious conviction, as Locke defines it, from those powers (see Perry, *Pretenses of Loyalty*, 99–101).

<sup>54</sup> See Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 23–27.

<sup>55</sup> See for instance *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 57–59, where Locke insists that the "public good" must govern the magistrate's authority over things indifferent, and the stubborn and various conscientious scruples of his subjects in such matters will mean that attempts to impose legislation on them will hurt the public good.

such a clerocracy. By accomplishing the “transfer” of spiritual liberty to civil that Calvin warns against, VanDrunen’s scheme would appear to undermine both liberties in the end. Moreover, although Perry teaches us to be suspicious of any attempt to draw the “just bounds” of church and state in a way that does not rest on specific theological convictions, VanDrunen’s paradigm, resting as it does on a highly specific and exclusive ecclesiology, seems particularly ill-suited to ground a modern liberal political order.

Locke’s final solution, though perhaps more widely shared, certainly in our own day, hardly yields liberal toleration as a timeless and necessary principle either; it remains a conclusion contingent on certain theological premises, much as Locke tries to hide the fact (or even perhaps manages to forget it).<sup>56</sup> Moreover, we might well doubt Locke’s claim to carry on the heritage of Reformation Protestantism in his own development of Christian liberty, given his willingness to simply bracket out of consideration any concerns about the external ordering of the church, and depict Scripture as narrowly concerned with the life to come. This appears more like Enlightenment rationalism than Reformational commitment to *sola Scriptura*. On the other hand, his conviction that matters of church order were by definition “things indifferent” and part of the “civil kingdom” was one that we can trace back to the earliest days of the English Reformation.

#### **IV. The Thesis**

The divergent developments and political applications of the two kingdoms and Christian liberty doctrines, I will suggest, stem from a fundamental ambiguity in the Reformation around the meaning of *sola Scriptura* and its relation to the doctrine of Christian liberty. In addition to the three dimensions of the doctrine described above—justification, willingness, and indifference—an unspoken premise underlay all the reformers’ teaching on Christian liberty: Christians were free from the word of man but in bondage to the Word of God; the bounds of Christian liberty were governed by the bounds of Scripture. This doctrine of *sola Scriptura* could create, however, a certain tension with the other fundamental Protestant doctrine, that of justification *sola fide*, as Luther himself found in attempting to make sense of the Epistle of James. Since Scripture was full of moral and legal prescriptions, in what sense was the justified believer free from these? When it came to the principle

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<sup>56</sup> To this extent, Perry is fairly critical of Locke particularly in the Conclusion of *Pretenses of Loyalty* for having supposed that he had permanently settled the problem of defining the “just bounds” of religion and politics; the liberal amnesia about the need to harmonize loyalties, he charges, was partially created by Locke’s own hubris.



of indifference, were adiaphora to be described *epistemologically*, those things “not commanded or forbidden in Scripture,” as puritans tended to reason, or *soteriologically*, those things “not necessary to salvation,” as conformists tended to reason?

Problems clearly arose when the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* became not a background condition for Christian liberty, but replaced *sola fide* as its starting point and determining context. We see this in VanDrunen’s exposition, which places little or no emphasis on a fear of works-righteousness; indeed, we find his allies such as Thornwell accused of reinstating a papal tyranny, only one that consists in the *proscription* rather than the *prescription* of particular works. Christian liberty, on this view, is fundamentally about the conscience being bound to Scripture alone, and free outside of it. This view requires the doctrine of the two kingdoms as a way of distinguishing the sphere over which scriptural authority operates to the exclusion of human laws (on VanDrunen’s view, the institutional church) from that in which liberty to make and obligation to obey human laws still pertains. As we have seen, this has the paradoxical effect that the believer *is not* at liberty within the “spiritual kingdom” of the church, but *is* within the “civil kingdom,” apparently contrary to Calvin’s exposition.

If, we take justification *sola fide* as the fundamental orientation for these doctrines, however, as Luther clearly did and as Calvin’s exposition also suggests, and derive the principles of willingness and indifference from the principle of justification, they take on a rather different shape. From this perspective, it is the freedom of the conscience from all bondage to external works, the inwardness of the Christian’s relation to Christ by faith, that ensures, not that Christians *ought not* to be conscientiously bound in adiaphora (as VanDrunen reads it), but that Christians simply *cannot* be conscientiously bound in adiaphora.<sup>57</sup> Since the Christian lives by faith *coram Deo*, his conscience is not determined by works *coram hominibus*. On this understanding, the doctrine of the two kingdoms is thus not an attempt to control the implications of the doctrine of Christian liberty with an institutional separation of church and state, as VanDrunen would have it, but is part and parcel of the

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<sup>57</sup> This is made quite clear in Calvin’s exposition in *Institutes* III.19.14–16: “we conclude that they [consciences] are released from the power of all men.... They have surely fallen away from it if they can, at men’s good pleasure, be ensnared by the bonds of laws and constitutions” (III.19.14; 1:846–47). He goes on to contend that if consciences could be bound by civil laws [which chiefly concern adiaphora], “all that we said a little while ago and are now going to say about spiritual government would fall” (III.19.15; 1:848). He concludes that “however necessary it may be with respect to his brother for him to abstain from it,” speaking concerning eating meat, a matter in which the believer has adiaphorous liberty, “he still does not cease to keep freedom of conscience. We see how this law, while binding outward actions, leaves the conscience free” (III.19.16; 1:849).

doctrine. The “spiritual kingdom” properly speaking describes the inner realm *coram Deo* in which the believer is subject immediately to Christ alone, while the “civil kingdom” refers not merely to civil government or what we might call “secular” matters, but to the life of the Christian *coram hominibus*, mediately governed by human authorities.<sup>58</sup> The church exists in both realms, and most matters of liturgy and polity were in the latter realm; to say otherwise was to make the juridical and liturgical form of the church constitutive of the kingdom of Christ, which was the Pope’s error. On this latter understanding, the puritan attempt to make the avoidance of particular ceremonies *obligatory* was indeed, as Hodge accused Thornwell, a return to “the mummified forms of mediaeval Christianity”; the conscience-binding *proscription* of works was as bad as its *prescription*. The regulation of such ceremonies as a civil matter which English conformists advocated was then, far from a violation of the distinction of the two kingdoms, a way of protecting it, preventing an unhealthy fixation on externals. From this standpoint, however, the question remained: assuming that Scripture had something to say about matters of liturgy and polity, how did it inform or limit such civil regulation?

This question became particularly urgent, I shall argue, given the intrinsic instability of the Lutheran dialectic between belief and action, between the binding of the conscience before God and the binding of actions before men. We will recall that both VanDrunen and Bagshaw, unable to sustain this distinction, rejected civil laws that imposed on the church because they saw these as intrinsically conscience-binding, making necessary what God has left free. Even if the distinction works in principle, however, contingent circumstances may render it difficult to sustain. After all, if a believer is convinced that particular ceremonies will lead to superstition or will cause his brother to stumble, they are not indifferent for him, and his loyalty to God is brought into conflict with his loyalty to the magistrate. The possibility of such crises of conscience, in an age that, as Susan Schreiner has

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<sup>58</sup> As a matter of fact, the development of Luther’s two-kingdoms doctrine does quite clearly proceed in this latter way—out of his doctrine of justification by faith alone, not his doctrine of Scripture. See F. Edward Cranz, *An Essay on the The Development of Luther’s Thought on Law, Justice, and Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959). For a fuller exposition of Luther’s doctrine of the “two kingdoms” and “two regiments,” along the lines described in this paragraph, see W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, “The ‘Two Kingdoms,’” and John Witte, Jr., *Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 89–115.

Note that there is considerable complexity and variation in the terminology, with Luther’s *Zwei Reiche*, distinguishing domains, being translated as either “two kingdoms” or “two realms,” and his *Zwei Regimente*, distinguishing modes of rule, being rendered as either “two regiments” or “two governments.” Throughout the thesis, I will freely use all four terms, depending on the demands of context and the usage of the authors under discussion.

recently documented, was particularly consumed with the quest for certainty,<sup>59</sup> demanded the provision of a certain standard for adjudicating such dilemmas. I will argue that it was primarily in answer to this demand that Scripture came to take on such a central role, particularly in the English Reformation, for defining the scope and nature of Christian liberty. However, in the absence of a consensus about how Scripture was to be used in ecclesiology and politics, and how it was to be interpreted, the biblicist turn served simply to heighten the conflict of loyalties, impinging upon the institutional liberty of church and state even as it altered the character of individual conscientious liberty.

The question, then, that was urgently posed by the Reformation's proclamation of the freedom of a Christian man was this: How can the liberty of human authorities to seek the common good be reconciled with the liberty of individual consciences to serve God? How can the freedom of a Christian man co-exist with the freedom of a Christian commonwealth?

Clearly a full engagement with this question would require extensive consideration of multiple leading reformers, and the emergence of tensions between churches and civil authorities in Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, Scotland, and England in the decades following the Reformation. Thankfully, however, the tumultuous debates of the Elizabethan period serve as a convenient and reliable proxy for such a study; although idiosyncratic in many regards, I shall argue in chapter 2 that the English Reformation was thoroughly engaged with developments in the continental Reformation when it came to issues of Christian liberty and the two kingdoms. In particular, I shall turn to the magisterial political-theological synthesis of Richard Hooker as one of the most convincing 16th-century attempts to answer this question and to harmonize the loyalties to God and prince within the terms of orthodox Protestant theology. His synthesis, I shall argue, seeks to establish the Christian subject's duty to submit to the determinations of the prince, while at the same protecting all three dimensions of Christian liberty, and clarifying the relation of scriptural authority to the doctrine. The answer he provides, I shall argue, can enable us to offer a more coherent *descriptive* account of how the fundamental tenets of Protestant theology did and did not impact their

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<sup>59</sup> *Are You Alone Wise?*. Schreiner gives particular attention to the late medieval struggles to achieve philosophical certainty, the existential struggles to achieve certainty of salvation that helped launch the Reformation, and the hermeneutical struggles to achieve certainty in the interpretation of Scripture that the Reformation unleashed. A significant missing theme in her book is the struggles for certainty over matters of ethics (i.e., debates over the *adiaphora*), a *lacuna* that this study perhaps makes some contribution to filling.

understanding of civil government, laying the groundwork for modern civil liberties in important ways, but not necessarily the ways we would expect. Moreover, it also provides resources for a better *prescriptive* account of how a Protestant political theology for our day might attempt to reconcile these clashing loyalties, one that offers a more integrated account of the function of divine law, natural law, and human law, than VanDrunen's paradigm, and thus a stronger foundation for Christian political engagement in our own day.

The choice of Hooker for such an inquiry is a natural one. Hooker's *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie* has of course long been renowned for its systematic coherence and thoroughness, far surpassing the other English polemical literature of this period, and for its creative synthesis of Reformed Protestantism with the categories of medieval scholasticism, especially Thomism. Hooker's rejection of puritan legal voluntarism and his defense of consensual government have often earned him respect as a defender of liberty, despite his role as unyielding apologist for the *status quo*. Hooker also exerted an enormous influence on the political and religious thinkers of 17th-century England, especially John Locke (although scholars have largely ignored this influence until recently).<sup>60</sup> More importantly, however, for our purposes, Hooker's work was composed in direct response to puritans such as Thomas Cartwright, whose two-kingdoms doctrine bears perhaps closer resemblance to VanDrunen's than any other 16th-century figure. Although Cartwright certainly has little interest in the kind of secular public square that VanDrunen seeks to defend, he shares a similar underlying account of the nature of the church and its relation to the state, of divine law and its relation to positive law, and the nature of Christian liberty. Accordingly, we will find Hooker thoroughly engaged in addressing the tensions and problems we have identified in VanDrunen's account, including his *jure divino* doctrine of church order, his sharp dichotomy between the Christian life in church and in commonwealth, and his bifurcation of the government of Christ into a realm of creation and a realm of redemption. Although rejecting Cartwright's two-kingdoms doctrine, Hooker relied heavily on his own two-kingdoms doctrine, closer to that of Luther and in many respects Calvin, to defend the Elizabethan settlement and the royal supremacy.

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<sup>60</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch provides a good survey of the 17th-century reception of Hooker, demonstrating how widely his influence was disseminated, in "Richard Hooker's Reputation," in *BCRH*, 563–99. The fullest survey is Michael A. Brydon, *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker: An Examination of Responses 1600–1714* (Oxford: OUP, 2006). Alexander Rosenthal traces his influence on a wide range of 17th-century English political theorists in ch. 4 of *Crown Under Law: Richard Hooker, John Locke, and the Ascent of Modern Constitutionalism* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2008), before analyzing Locke's use of him extensively in ch. 5.

## V. Scope and Context of the Thesis

However, while to this extent the Elizabethan context may appear an appropriate one to test VanDrunen's claims, this angle still requires considerable justification on a number of fronts. Indeed, attentive readers may have already noted, within this introductory section, several interpretative decisions that require a good deal of justification. For one, I have throughout this section spoken in fairly sweeping terms of a "Protestant doctrine" of Christian liberty, and have even presumed to jump from Calvin, where I began, to Luther, implying that the Wittenberg reformer's understanding of the two kingdoms may provide a hermeneutical grid for Calvin's later statements. So stubborn has the retrospective dualism between Lutheran and Reformed proved within Reformation scholarship that this move on my part may still seem to some inexcusably transgressive. Thankfully, however, modern scholarship has increasingly demonstrated the anachronism of erecting such hard-and-fast borders in this early period, and has drawn attention to the unimpeded cross-pollination of ideas between different reformers during the first several decades of the Reformation.<sup>61</sup>

To speak of a "Protestant doctrine" also exposes me also to challenge from those who would so emphasize the irreducible diversity of individual reformers that they would prefer to speak of "reformations" and "protestantisms" rather than indulging in a reified proper noun.<sup>62</sup> Such deconstruction, however, while it can help illuminate different nuances among otherwise allied thinkers and the early emergence of rival trajectories, can easily get carried away. In fact, few things are perhaps so surprising about the Protestant Reformation as the extent of its basic doctrinal uniformity, given the range of different concerns that gave rise to it and

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<sup>61</sup> See Patrick Collinson, "The Fog in the Channel Clears: The Rediscovery of the Continental Dimension to the British Reformations," in Polly Ha and Patrick Collinson, eds., *The Reception of the Continental Reformation in Britain*, Proceedings of the British Academy 164 (Oxford: OUP, 2010), xxxii. Philip Benedict's *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), and Diarmaid MacCulloch's *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490–1700* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), are two recent overviews that give an excellent sense of the fluidity of the early decades of the Reformation. Although Benedict remains methodologically wedded to the Lutheran/Reformed dichotomy by the nature of the task he has set, several points in his narrative reveal its anachronism (see particularly pp. 55, 225–26, 289–90). Francois Wendel, in his sketch of Calvin's theology, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), draws repeated attention to the basic kinship between his theology and Luther's (see especially 133, 220–25).

<sup>62</sup> See for instance MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 171. The impetus for rejecting the singular noun "Reformation" has been particularly strongest in scholarship on the English Reformation (see Peter Marshall, "(Re)defining the English Reformation," *The Journal of British Studies* 48:3 [2009]: 564–86).

different contexts in which it flourished, and how infrequently its first- and second-generation leaders saw their differences as significant enough to merit open disagreement.<sup>63</sup> On core issues such as soteriology and Scripture, all the magisterial reformers appear to have shared a basic theological consensus, and they united as well around common understandings of ecclesiology and political theology, in opposition to the Catholics on one side and the Radical Reformation on the other.<sup>64</sup> Among these shared bedrock doctrines we must surely number the doctrines of Christian liberty, adiaphora, and the two kingdoms, which despite a great deal of flexibility in terminology, hold a prominent place in the theology of reformers as diverse as Luther, Melancthon, Bullinger, Vermigli, Calvin, and Cranmer.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, although his understanding of the doctrines ultimately differs considerably from that offered here, VanDrunen too argues for a similar unity among the leading reformers on these points.<sup>66</sup> This is certainly not to deny the existence of key differences and ambiguities; indeed, otherwise, it would be difficult to account for the clear emergence of rival two-kingdoms doctrines in the Elizabethan context. However, as I hope to show briefly in the following chapter, we can still discern a wide range of shared assumptions regarding these concepts in early Protestant teaching.

Yawning perhaps even wider than the chasm between Lutheran and Reformed in traditional historiography is the chasm between the English and

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<sup>63</sup> The eucharistic controversies, although they loom so large in the secondary literature, are in fact the exception that proves the rule; few of those who refer the Marburg Colloquy (1529) as the beginning of the rift within Protestantism remember that its delegates reached full agreement on fourteen out of fifteen proposed articles (Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, 35). And from Zwingli's death in 1531 until the polemics of Joachim Westphal in 1552, even the eucharistic issue failed to provoke much open disagreement. As late as 1553, Cranmer could invite Melancthon as a replacement for Bucer at Cambridge, and entertain the prospect of a pan-Protestant council, thwarted only by the death of Edward VI (P.D.L. Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), 25).

<sup>64</sup> P.D.L. Avis does an excellent job of tracing the basic unity-in-diversity of the 16th-century magisterial reformers on ecclesiology in his *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981). On the similarity of Protestant political theology in the early decades, see Skinner, *Age of Reformation*, ch. 3. Indeed, a comparison of James Estes' recent *Peace, Order, and the Glory of God: Secular Authority and the Church in the Thought of Luther and Melancthon, 1518-1559* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) with Torrance Kirby's *Zurich Connection* reveals a common stock of concepts and arguments involving the two kingdoms, church, state, and the magistrate's *cura religionis* that was shared by Lutherans, Zwinglians, and English reformers.

<sup>65</sup> Torrance Kirby has documented this consensus more than any other scholar. See for instance, on Bullinger and Vermigli, *ZC*; on Luther and Calvin, *RHDS*, 41–45, 60–66; "A Reformed Culture of Persuasion"; *RHRP*, 23–28, 79–95. On the doctrine of Christian liberty and the concept of adiaphora in particular, see Bernard Verkamp, "The Limits Upon Adiaphoristic Freedom: Luther and Melancthon," *Theological Studies* 36:1 (1975): 52–76, "The Zwinglians and Adiaphorism," *Church History* 42:4 (1973): 486–504. and *IM*.

<sup>66</sup> *NLTK* 65–72, 115–18.

continental reformations. Indeed, so successful was the Oxford Movement's transformation of Anglican self-understanding that until quite recently, many historians have continued to treat the English reformation as a *tertium quid*, a unique phenomenon that simply cannot be subsumed within a general Reformation narrative or description of Protestant theology.<sup>67</sup> Of course, a glimpse at the primary sources of the period reveals no such sense among the leading actors of the time, on either side of the Channel (and indeed, many of them spent plenty of time on both sides). Thankfully, modern scholarship has progressively broken down this barrier to understanding.<sup>68</sup> Although in the Henrician period, the reformation in England undoubtedly held a middle course between full-blown Protestantism and the old church, historians have found it impossible to ignore the immense traffic, both in people and ideas, between the continent and England during the Edwardian reformation,<sup>69</sup> and the tremendous influence of continental Reformed ideas on the puritan wing within the Elizabethan Church. Harder to shake, however, has been the prejudice that the architects of the Elizabethan Church—the Queen and her bishops—had only a tenuous loyalty to Protestant theology, and sought to chart their own *via media* course.<sup>70</sup> It is only within the past three decades that this thesis has been decisively refuted, with Torrance Kirby's recent monograph *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* demonstrating this continuity even on the controversial issue of the relation of church and state.<sup>71</sup> Needless to say, however,

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<sup>67</sup> Patrick Collinson provides an excellent overview of the historiography, and how long it has taken to dispel the old prejudice, in "The Fog in the Channel Clears," xxvii–xxxvii.

<sup>68</sup> The collection of essays in Ha and Collinson, *Reception*, provides a good sampling. For a survey of Reformation ecclesiology that sets the writers of the Church of England in conversation with their Continental counterparts, see Avis, *Church in the Theology of the Reformers*. More broadly, the narrative of Diarmaid MacCulloch in *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), and in *Reformation, 198–204, 255–59, 382–93*, emphasizes what a permeable barrier the Channel was during the Reformation era.

<sup>69</sup> See for instance Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), and for more specific studies: James C. Spalding, "The Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum of 1552 and the Furthering of Discipline in England" *Church History* 39:2 (1970): 162–71; Constantin Hopf, *Martin Bucer and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1946); Carrie Euler, *Carriers of the Gospel: England and Zurich, 1531–1558* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2006); Michael S. Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church: John á Lasco and the Forma ac ratio* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>70</sup> Sir John Neale offered one of the most influential statements of this thesis in his *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments*, 2 vols. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), and its presence can be felt, although in a qualified form, in the work of his student, Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

<sup>71</sup> W.J. Torrance Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007). For a broad sketch of the "Calvinist consensus" in Elizabethan and Jacobean England see Patrick Collinson's *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). For good summaries of the development and current state

this debate is still far from fully resolved, and the present thesis necessarily constitutes a contribution to it. While I shall certainly draw attention to unique features of the English situation, and the English tradition of political thought, I will largely concur with the arguments of Kirby and others for understanding 16th-century English Protestants, whether puritan or conformist, within similar categories as their continental Reformed counterparts.

Finally, my choice of Richard Hooker as a key resource (indeed, for purposes of this thesis, *the* key resource) for resolving the questions posed by a Protestant doctrine of liberty and authority may raise eyebrows on several fronts. On the one hand, it might be asked whether Hooker has anything *new* to contribute to this discussion, given that scores of books and articles have discussed Hooker's theology of law, his understanding of the relation of church and state, and his attempt to adjudicate the relative authority of Scripture and reason (natural law).<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, it might be asked whether Hooker has anything *relevant* to contribute to this discussion, given that, despite the emerging consensus that the Elizabethan period as a whole may be best understood with reference to the emerging continental Reformed tradition, Hooker continues to elude such easy classification and is often seen as the departure point for a non-Reformed "Anglicanism."

The first objection may be readily answered. Although Cargill Thompson's lament forty years ago that Hooker "has tended to fall into the category of thinkers who are more written about than *studied*"<sup>73</sup> has been answered by an outpouring of Hooker scholarship in recent decades, the breakdown of the barrier between the continental and English Reformations has yet to be felt in Hooker studies. Few Hooker scholars have made a serious effort to examine Hooker's thought against the backdrop of the magisterial Reformation, which means that many discussions of his work tend to travel in well-worn grooves, rehearsing and debating his Thomistic theology of law or the nature of his polemical posture vis-a-vis the puritans. The doctrine of Christian liberty, which structures this study, has received, to my knowledge, no explicit treatment in the literature on Hooker. Of course, a great many studies have examined related closely related questions, such as his rejection

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of the historiography of this period see Peter Lake, "The Historiography of Puritanism," in the John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 346–72, and Peter Marshall, "(Re)defining the English Reformation."

<sup>72</sup> See for instance, respectively, O'Donovan, *TLAER*; W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, "The Philosopher of the 'Politic Society,'" in C.W. Dugmore, ed., *Studies in the Reformation* (London: Athlone Press, 1980) 131–91; and W.J. Torrance Kirby, "Reason and Law," in *BCRH*.

<sup>73</sup> "Philosopher of the Politic Society," 132.



of the voluntarism of puritans and the absolutism of earlier conformists<sup>74</sup> and the importance of the category of adiaphora has been frequently recognized.<sup>75</sup> But the doctrine of Christian liberty itself as such, though so central to the thought of earlier reformers, has not provided the orienting compass for such studies, with the result, I suggest, that the significance of key features of Hooker's argument has remained largely unclear.

The second objection has deeper roots. In the now-dated *via media* narrative of the Church of England, Hooker held pride of place as the architect of a distinctive Anglican tradition.<sup>76</sup> Even among scholars who recognize the *via media* concept to be anachronistic when applied to most Elizabethan figures, Hooker is frequently singled out as the exception, as the one who, in the words of Peter Lake, can be said to have "invented Anglicanism."<sup>77</sup> No sooner had he published the first five books of his *Lawes* than his Reformed credentials were questioned—indeed, harshly impugned—in *A Christian Letter of Certain English Protestants* (1599). The basic

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<sup>74</sup> See Rosenthal, *Crown Under Law*, 52–54; Lake, *AP*, 197–213.

<sup>75</sup> Cargill Thompson stated ("Philosopher of the Politic Society," 147) that Hooker wrote in order to provide "a philosophical basis for the traditional Anglican concept of 'things indifferent,'" and many scholars have echoed this general conclusion. In *Defending the Royal Supremacy in Tudor England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), Daniel Eppley places the question of adiaphora and how they were to be recognized at the heart of Tudor defenses of the royal supremacy, including Hooker's. In "Richard Hooker and the Problem of Authority in the Elizabethan Church," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 49:1 (1998): 29–60, Mark Perrott notes the importance of Hooker's attempt in the *Lawes* to reconcile liberty of conscience with submission in adiaphora, and Robert Eccleshall, "Richard Hooker's Synthesis and the Problem of Allegiance," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37:1 (1976): 111–124, draws attention to the conflict between institutional and individual liberty as the context for Hooker's argument, but neither gives explicit attention to the doctrine of Christian liberty as such, and its earlier role in debates about conformity.

<sup>76</sup> The thesis dates in some form or other back to the 17th century, though it was given particular impetus by the mid-19th century Oxford Movement. A classic statement of the thesis appears in Francis Paget's *An Introduction to the Fifth Book of Hooker's Treatise of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899). Recent examples of scholarship attempting to cling to this older paradigm include Philip Secor's recent biography *Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1999), and Lee Gibbs in two 2002 articles, "Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Scripture and Tradition," *Harvard Theological Review* 95:2 (2002): 227–235, and "Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism or English Magisterial Reformer?" *Anglican Theological Review* 84 (2002): 943–60; and, to a more qualified extent, A.J. Joyce, *RHAMT*.

<sup>77</sup> *AP* 227. See pp. 145–250 for Lake's full development of this argument, which he re-asserts, with some qualifications, in "Business as Usual? The Immediate Reception of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52:3 (2001): 456–86. However, in "The 'Anglican Moment'? Richard Hooker and the ideological watershed of the 1590s," in Stephen Platten, ed., *Anglicanism and the Western Christian Tradition: Continuity, Change and the Search for Communion* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2003): 90–121, though restating many of the elements of his argument in *AP*, he confesses that this claim was "an unwonted and no doubt unwise experiment in sound bite history" (90). See Patrick Collinson, "Hooker and the Elizabethan Establishment," in *RHCCC*, 176–78, for a balanced assessment of Lake's provocative claims.

arguments of this polemic, that Hooker departed from the Reformed tradition on predestination, justification, on the relationship of nature and grace, reason and revelation, and the status of the Church of Rome, continue to be repeated, with substantial embellishment and expansion, in the secondary literature. Nigel Voak's *Richard Hooker and the Reformed Tradition: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace* offers a considerably nuanced and much more sophisticated version of this line of interpretation, insisting that Hooker must be assessed in relation to the Reformed tradition, but ultimately concluding that he departs from it at fundamental points.<sup>78</sup> In short, on this reading, Hooker is better understood by classing him among what came after (the Jacobean Arminians and the Caroline Laudians) than among what came before him (the Calvinist and Bullingerian Reformed).

Against this interpretation, however, a recent cohort of scholars, foremost among them Torrance Kirby, has argued that Hooker can only be properly interpreted as a fundamentally Reformed theologian, in conscious continuity with the basic doctrinal commitments of the magisterial Reformation.<sup>79</sup> For this reading, they have certainly mounted an impressive case, and in their favor they have Hooker's own repeated assurances to the puritans of peaceable intent, declaring as he does at the outset of the *Laws*, "Thinke not that ye reade the words of one, who bendeth him selfe as an adversarie against the truth which ye have alreadie embraced; but the words of one, who desireth even to embrace together with you the selfe same truth, if it be the truth" (Pref.1.3).<sup>80</sup> Hooker's training in the Reformed tradition, his support by thoroughly Reformed theologians such as Archbishop Whitgift, and his own repeated insistence that he occupies the same fundamental theological ground as his opponents, all constitute strong *prima facie* considerations in favor of Kirby's argument. Detailed readings of key passages on topics such as predestination and the justification, coupled with increasing recognition of the latitude in 16th-century Reformed teaching on such subjects, have also called into

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<sup>78</sup> See also Nigel Voak, "Richard Hooker and the Principle of Sola Scriptura," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 59:1 (2008): 96-139, and Voak, "English Molinism in the Late 1590s: Richard Hooker on Free Will, Predestination, and Divine Foreknowledge," *Theological Studies* 60:1 (2009): 130-177.

<sup>79</sup> See Kirby, *RHDS* and *RHRP*, along with a host of articles and book chapters over the past two decades. Other contributions include David Neelands's essays, "Richard Hooker and the Debates about Predestination, 1580-1600" and "Richard Hooker on the Identity of the Visible and Invisible Church" in *RHER*; also Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason: Reformed Theologian of the Church of England?* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997).

<sup>80</sup> Many have opposed Kirby's interpretation of Hooker's overall "irenical" intent; the latest and perhaps most thorough example is A.J. Joyce, who in *RHAMT* dedicates the whole of chapter 3 to attacking the idea of Hooker as irenically motivated, and by extension, as meaningfully Reformed. These arguments will be addressed in section 2 of Chapter Five.

question many of his supposed departures from Reformed orthodoxy.<sup>81</sup> Finally, Kirby's renewed attention to his doctrine of the two kingdoms, and its close relation to earlier Protestant treatments of this theme, constitutes perhaps the most significant argument for reading Hooker along with his sixteenth-century predecessors, rather than his seventeenth-century successors.<sup>82</sup>

While seeking to steer clear of the thorny details of this fierce ongoing debate, many of which do not directly concern the issues considered here, this thesis is necessarily a contribution to this discussion. By situating Hooker within the preceding decades of argument on the doctrines of the two kingdoms, Christian liberty, and adiaphora, I am both presupposing to some extent the general soundness of Kirby's argument, and also, I hope, offering considerable additional evidence in support of it. This is not, of course, to deny considerable originality to Hooker on the way he answers these questions, and the resources he chooses to draw upon, but I would suggest that scholars like Lake and Voak, in their eagerness to emphasize the elements of novelty in Hooker's synthesis, miss the extent to which he achieves this using resources found within his Protestant tradition.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> See particularly Neelands's discussions in "Predestination," *BCRH*, 185–220, and "Christology and Sacraments," *BCRH*, 369–402, and Ranall Ingalls, "Sin and Grace," *BCRH*, 151–84.

<sup>82</sup> Lake acknowledges as much, and thus implies that to some extent, the two camps may be talking past one another, concerned as they are with different sets of issues ("Business as Usual," 484).

<sup>83</sup> For instance, Voak and others are surely right to note that Hooker is considerably more at home in medieval scholasticism than most of his Elizabethan contemporaries, and this colors the tone of much of his teaching, particularly in the way he describes the natural law and his relative optimism about the ability of fallen man to make use of it. However, we should not forget that a similar scholastic turn was taking place among many continental Reformed theologians around this period, such as Girolamo Zanchi of Heidelberg. See Zanchi, "Of the Law in General," trans. Jeffrey J. Veenstra in *Journal of Markets and Morality* 6:1 (Spring 2003): 305–98, and John Patrick Donnelly, S.J. "Calvinist Thomism," *Viator* 7 (1976): 441–55. The work of Richard Muller has been enormously important in bringing to our attention the deep 16th-century roots of the scholastic turn in Reformed theology (see especially *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003]); this is one of the points, however, at which English Reformation scholarship continues to lag considerably behind developments in Reformation scholarship generally. Muller's work has also highlighted the extent to which theologians such as Heinrich Bullinger, Peter Martyr Vermigli, and Zanchi loomed almost as large on the Reformed stage in the late 16th century as did Calvin (see also Benedict, *Christ's Churches*). Indeed, it is telling that his book purporting to study Richard Hooker and "Reformed Theology," Voak compares Hooker almost exclusively with Calvin, mentioning Bullinger just twice, Vermigli once, and Zanchi not at all. The same problem afflicts Joyce in chs. 4–6 of *RHAMT*, where she repeatedly suggests that the mere fact of Hooker's Thomism and Aristotelianism tells against Kirby's interpretation of him as substantially Reformed (see for instance pp. 72–74, 153). Had Voak or Joyce attended to the work of Vermigli, they might not have been so quick to drive a wedge between Hooker and the Reformed tradition. For a treatment of Vermigli's scholastic inclinations, see John Patrick Donnelly, S.J., *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), and for an example of his optimistic assessment of the value of pagan philosophy in matters ethical and political,

## VI. Structure of the Thesis

The argument that follows will consist of six chapters, two of which will set the stage for Hooker's contribution, and three of which will examine in detail his treatments of the relevant issues in the *Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*; the final chapter will seek to briefly draw together what we have learned from the study and how it might enrich both our understanding of the sixteenth century and the political-theological questions of our own day.

Chapter Two will be the most wide-ranging chapter, as I seek to provide an overview of how the doctrines of the two kingdoms, Christian liberty, and adiaphora were understood and debated during the first fifty years of the Reformation, both on the continent and in England. I shall begin with Luther's classic statement of the doctrine in *The Freedom of a Christian* and seek to sketch its implications, ambiguities, and tensions. We shall then travel to 1530s England to see how a similar bundle of concepts could be applied with a rather different emphasis to undergird an ecclesiological arrangement that might seem quite distant from Luther's ideal. However, by examining in tandem two nearly contemporary conflicts over adiaphora—the 1548 Adiaphora Controversy in Germany and the 1550 Vestiarian Controversy in England, we will find that in fact very similar dynamics were at work among Luther's followers on both sides of the channel, bringing to the surface similar tensions in the understanding of Christian liberty. Finally, we will see how these conflicts intensified in the Second Vestiarian Controversy, with demands for conformity in adiaphora proving such a strain on the consciences of some English Protestants that they were driven into open opposition to the church hierarchy.

Chapter Three will attempt to discern the logic by which this protest for liberty in adiaphora became, in the disciplinarian movement, a functional rejection of adiaphora, as precise, detailed scriptural regulation was applied to all matters of

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in many ways anticipating Hooker's, see Pietro Martire Vermigli, *A Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Emidio Campi and Joseph C. McClelland, The Peter Martyr Library 9 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2006). See also my forthcoming article "More than a Swineherd: Hooker, Vermigli, and the Aristotelian Defense of the Royal Supremacy," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* (2013). Indeed, there is reason to believe that Hooker may have been directly influenced by Vermigli, whose disciples occupied many important positions in the Elizabethan Church (see Jenkins, "Peter Martyr and the Church of England after 1558," in Frank A. James III, ed., *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations* (Leiden: Brill, 2004): 47–69, especially p. 63). For a good example of an article that shows Hooker as working out a distinctive new synthesis, yet in continuity with his Reformed heritage, see Deborah Shuger, "Faith and Assurance" in *BCRH*, 221–50.

ecclesiastical polity (and in some cases, civil polity as well). I will suggest that this shift reflected a general puritan impulse to reduce the gap between the inward and the outward, the invisible and the visible, with a consequent need to achieve the same level of certainty in the realm of action as Protestantism had sought to establish in the realm of faith. By discerning the logic of this shift, we can arrive at a more nuanced understanding of puritan biblicism than the stereotypes found in most of the secondary literature (and therefore prepare the ground for a more nuanced understanding of Hooker's response). Along with this shift came a divergent understanding of the two kingdoms; no longer were they distinguished as inward and outward, but rather as two outward bodies, church and state, ruled by distinct laws and governors. We will trace these themes, and the alternative logic of conformism, by following the Admonition Controversy, the literary exchange of Thomas Cartwright and John Whitgift. In particular, we shall see how the theme of edification came to dominate such debates—whereas puritans contended that adiaphora must be used for the spiritual edification of believers, conformists contended that the imposition of uniformity for the sake of civil order was a form of edification, and indeed trumped other considerations. I shall argue that, although avoiding some of the doctrinal problems created by the emerging disciplinarians, the Elizabethan conformists by and large failed to adequately preserve the full dimensions of the doctrine of Christian liberty, putting severe strains on the consciences of puritan dissenters.

In the course of tracing the emergence of these conflicts of conscience, and rival versions of the two kingdoms, we shall encounter at least three sets of questions that are central to ecclesiology and political theology. First, we find Protestants wrestling with such questions as, to what extent does the Word of God leave us at liberty in the management of ecclesial and civil affairs? is this liberty reserved to individuals, so that liberty of conscience is protected? or does it belong to institutions, so that anarchy may be avoided, order preserved, and the common good pursued? Second, having drawn attention to this tension between individual and institutional liberty, we may then ask whether these two need be opposed to one another, and whether it suffices to make a rigid distinction between inner freedom, which is inalienable from the individual, and outward freedom, which may be constrained by institutional laws. Or can we achieve a deeper reconciliation through a conception of corporate moral agency? Third, within the realm of freedom, how is our judgment guided to a right use of that freedom? VanDrunen, along with many others, has argued for a retrieval of a doctrine of natural law as the basis for morality outside of Scripture, but can and should natural law be emptied

of theological content? Should civil and religious affairs be radically distinguished in order to preserve freedom of conscience, or may they remain married together? In chapters four through six, I will accordingly consider in turn how Hooker seeks to address each of these clusters of questions, and in ways that safeguard the three dimensions of Christian liberty

In Chapter Four, I seek to establish the relevance of Richard Hooker's contribution to these debates. I will show that Hooker clearly situates his apology for the Elizabethan church within the tradition of debates on liberty, adiaphora, and edification. He clearly recognizes the tension that has arisen between individual liberty and institutional liberty, and clearly, along with other conformists, considers the latter to be most important. However, strikingly, he recognizes that the preservation of the latter, through a right doctrine of Christian liberty, is actually necessary to ensure the preservation of the former. It is puritan doctrine, he contends, that undermines true liberty of conscience, endangering the centrality of justification by faith and overthrowing the principle of indifference through its demand for scriptural justification for moral and political actions. He also recognizes the need to provide a thorough conceptual grounding for the concept of adiaphora, and to clarify the relation between its *soteriological* and *epistemological* senses, both of which must be distinguished from its *moral* sense, as the Puritans had failed to do. His definition of adiaphora, I shall argue, depends heavily on a two-kingdoms schema which decisively locates those matters of ecclesiastical polity which are indifferent within the "civil kingdom." It is on this basis that he can argue for the church's regulation of such matters through the instruments of civil authority.

Chapter Five attempts to show how the preceding argument, which is in many ways simply an elaboration and clarification of those offered by previous conformists, avoids trampling on puritan consciences. Indeed, Hooker explicitly sets up his argument as one intended to "resolve the consciences" of his opponents, recognizing that a summons to obedience can only be authentically Protestant if it honors the principle of willingness and seeks to elicit a free, conscientious obedience. Hooker's strategy for ensuring such a free obedience is three-pronged. First, unlike many earlier conformists, Hooker recognizes that even adiaphorous ceremonies must still be ordered toward the positive edification of believers. His attempt to explain how such ceremonies, which he has clearly classified as *civil*, may yet be *spiritually* edifying, involves a remarkable nuancing of his doctrine of the two kingdoms, demonstrating how the radical distinction between the two realms, far from pitting them against one another, allows them to work in closest harmony.

Second, Hooker, unlike many of his predecessors, seeks to respond to the puritan demand for certainty by rehabilitating the probable authority of reason in discerning the goodness of established laws and ceremonies; by encouraging his puritan opponents to apply the test of reasonability, rather than narrow biblical fidelity, to debated ordinances, he hopes to persuade them to a free embrace of such laws. Finally, however, he argues that even in the absence of individual conviction that a prescribed ceremony is reasonable or edifying, free consent to such a ceremony may still be understood to have been given through established representatives. Hooker accordingly uses a sophisticated concept of corporate rationality and corporate moral agency in order to characterize the legal imposition of church orders as a free act of self-limitation on the part of the English people.

In Chapter Six, I shall turn to consider how the rehabilitation of reason that is so central to Hooker's project does not make him either a rationalist or a proto-secularist. Rather, Hooker offers a nuanced account natural law and divine law as intimately related and mutually interpretive. His constant fidelity to the principle that "grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it" leads him to argue that the best political community is a self-consciously Christian political community, in which the reign of Christ over the commonwealth is explicitly acknowledged, though it does not require that all positive law be derived from Scripture. In this he offers an explicit rebuttal to Cartwright's separation of the commonwealth from the kingdom of Christ, and the de-Christianization of the political order that this implies. By this means, Hooker's argument offers a direct rejoinder to David VanDrunen's two-kingdoms paradigm, which similarly seeks to separate the state from the rule of Christ and empty the civic order of any public Christian identity.

The final chapter will seek to briefly draw out and analyze the problems in the conceptualization of liberty that have been traced in this narrative. In conversation with contemporary political theologians Oliver O'Donovan and Richard Bauckham, I shall seek to specify more clearly what it was about puritan (and VanDrunenian) understandings of Christian liberty that rendered the doctrine unstable, and sure to generate a clash of loyalties. I shall also show why it is that Richard Hooker's response comprised a more conceptually sound notion of liberty, and one that holds greater promise for resolving the clash of loyalties. Indeed, I shall suggest in closing that his approach to Christian liberty offers exactly what scholars like VanDrunen and Witte had sought to find, though by a rather more indirect route than they pursued: a promising precursor of modern liberal freedoms that remains distinctively Christian and theologically grounded.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FREEDOM FOR THE NEIGHBOR: CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND THE DEMAND FOR EDIFICATION

In February of 1589, Richard Bancroft, chaplain to the Lord Chancellor and the future Archbishop of Canterbury, preached one of the most audacious sermons that the celebrated pulpit of Paul's Cross had witnessed: "Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God." The sermon launched a direct attack on puritan dissenters as seditious libertines, a threat to both church and state. At the heart of their threat to good Protestant orthodoxy and social stability, Bancroft would charge, was their exhortation to their followers to "Search, examine, trie, and seeke: bringing them thereby into a great uncertainty."<sup>1</sup> To be sure, he does not wish to commit the popish error of "forbid[ding] the children of God to proove any thing"<sup>2</sup> and he grants that believers ought to "reade the Scriptures, *but with sobrietie*."<sup>3</sup> "Sobrietie" meant submission, recognizing that "God hath bound himselfe by his promise unto his church of purpose, that men by hir good direction might in this point be relieved. To whose godlie determination in matters of question, hir dutifull children ought to submit themselves without any curious or willfull contradiction."<sup>4</sup>

The puritan radical John Penry cried foul to this remarkable constriction of Christian liberty, but his own solution to the problem of uncertain interpretation was scarcely better. Rather, he vests all authority in the Presbyterian ministers, from whom no layperson, not even the queen herself, has any right of dissent: "her majesty and the Parliament are bound to establish and erect amongst their subjects, al such lawes and ceremonies, as the true ministers of the word, shall proove by the Scriptures of God, to be meet and necessary."<sup>5</sup> Both sides had been brought to this impasse by the seemingly insoluble problem of adiaphora: just what sorts of things

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<sup>1</sup> *A Sermon preached at Paules Crosse the 8. of Februarie, being the first Sunday in the Parleament, Anno. 1588. by Richard Bancroft D. of Divinitie, and Chaplaine to the right Honorable Sir Christopher Hatton Knight L. Chancelor of England* (London: E. B. [Edward Bollifant] for Gregorie Seton, 1588, i.e. 1589), 39. For a discussion of the audacity of the sermon, see Mary Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul's Cross Sermons, 1558–1642* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 208–14.

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft, *A Sermon*, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Bancroft, *A Sermon*, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Bancroft, *A Sermon*, 42.

<sup>5</sup> Penry, *A Briefe Discovery of the Untruthes, and Slanders Against Reformation, and the favourers thereof, contained in D. Bancroft's Sermon [...]* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1589/90), 41.



were indifferent, and as for those that were, who was to decide what we were to do with them? Leaving the Christian conscience free before God seemed a recipe for disaster, since his Word was proving so pliable in the hands of various disputants. Better to seek some definitive sentence from human authority, whether it be magistrate or minister.

## **I. The Freedom of a Christian: Adiaphora in the Lutheran Reformation**

Things had certainly come a long way from Luther's 1520 proclamation of the "freedom of a Christian," intended to liberate the Christian conscience from any such tyranny by human authority. Luther's attempt to demote the whole heavy burden of ecclesiastical ceremonies that had accumulated in the medieval church to the level of adiaphora was in itself nothing new; many would-be reformers had said as much, most notably Erasmus. In themselves, Erasmus contended, these ceremonies were neither pleasing nor displeasing to God, but were valuable only as taken up by a means of true devotion by a God-fearing conscience.<sup>6</sup> Luther, however, by coupling the notion of adiaphora with his central doctrines of *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura*, achieved an explosive new theological synthesis, the doctrine of Christian liberty, which struck at the heart of late medieval authority structures.

Luther sets forth the doctrine in *The Freedom of a Christian* in terms of his familiar binary division between the inward and the outward man, evident in the famous paradox, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."<sup>7</sup> Luther goes on to explain that in his inward character, before God, the Christian is entirely free because justified by faith; outwardly, before men, he is enslaved by love to serve all. Only by virtue of such a radical distinction between the inward and the outward, Luther believes, can the freedom of a Christian conscience before God be guaranteed, for if the Christian is led to believe that his justification before God depends on any outward works, rather than the free gift of faith, he is in bondage.<sup>8</sup> By this means Luther attacks the whole array of Catholic ceremonies, saying,

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<sup>6</sup> Verkamp, *IM*, 24–5, 36–40. Verkamp offers a helpful introduction to the history of the concept adiaphora, which derived originally from the Cynics and Stoics, in ancient and medieval thought. The earlier usage, he argues, differs from the Reformational usage in that the term was used in a philosophical sense, designating actions that had no intrinsic moral value in themselves, but became good or evil depending on intention (21–26).

<sup>7</sup> LW 31:344.

<sup>8</sup> "First, let us consider the inner man to see how a righteous, free, and pious Christian, that is, a spiritual, new, and inner man, becomes what he is. It is evident that no external thing

It does not help the soul if the body is adorned with the sacred robes of priests or dwells in sacred places or is occupied with sacred duties or prays, fasts, abstains from certain kinds of food, or does any work that can be done by the body and in the body. The righteousness and the freedom of the soul require something far different.

That something, he says, is the “the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

It is crucial to understand that the purpose of this radical distinction is not to attack outward works *per se*, but merely to establish the priority of the inward, which is faith: the outward must never determine the inward, grace must never be conditioned upon works, but the inward life of grace will determine the outward, issuing forth in good works. Thus it is that the principle of justification issues into the principle of willingness: moral laws, and precepts of Scripture are obeyed, but out of an overflow of love, not a spirit of bondage. Likewise, it grounds the principle of indifference: outward things are indifferent to the life of faith inasmuch as they do not determine it, and their practice has no necessary relation to the conscience. Yet because the Christian lives outwardly before others as well as inwardly before God, their indifference for one’s own conscience does not mean they are indifferent to one’s neighbor. Freed by faith from having such works reign over the conscience, the believer remains bound by love to let the needs of the neighbor reign over his outward conduct:

A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather he lives only for others and not for himself. To this end he brings his body into subjection that he may the more sincerely and freely serve others.... Man, however, needs none of these things for his righteousness and salvation. Therefore he should be guided in all his works by this thought and contemplate this one thing alone, that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, considering nothing except the need and advantage of his neighbor.... This is a truly Christian life. Here faith is truly active through love, that is, it finds expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward; and for himself he is satisfied with the fullness and wealth of his faith.<sup>10</sup>

The freedom of a Christian is thus not so much a freedom *for* oneself, but a freedom *from* oneself, a liberation from the preoccupation with one’s own salvation and merit, from fear that one is not toeing the line and meeting the standards; instead, he can actually focus on serving his neighbor. “No longer does he need to

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has any influence in producing Christian righteousness or freedom, or in producing unrighteousness or servitude” (LW 31:344–45).

<sup>9</sup> LW 31:345.

<sup>10</sup> *Freedom of a Christian*, in LW 31:364–65.

use his neighbor as party to some moralistic scheme of proving himself worthy,” explains Bernard Verkamp. “Now instead, his love of neighbor can be genuinely altruistic.”<sup>11</sup>

This focus on freedom for the neighbor protects Luther’s teaching against the radical individualism for which he might seem to have opened the way. Indeed, precisely because the Christian man justified by faith understands the indifference of outward works, he should often feel no need to assert his inward freedom outwardly. If existing laws or circumstances constrain his outward behavior, he happily complies, knowing that he remains free before God. Since Christian freedom is an inner freedom that expresses itself in outward servitude, it is not nullified by external bondage, as Luther is careful to explain. “For a Christian, as a free man, will say, ‘I will fast, pray, do this and that as men command, not because it is necessary to my righteousness or salvation; but that I may show due respect to the pope, the bishop, the community, a magistrate, or my neighbour, and give them an example.’”<sup>12</sup> Calvin later puts it even more sharply, asserting that if someone is obliged to abstain from meat for their entire life out of regard for their neighbor’s weakness, they are not on that account any less free.<sup>13</sup>

In principle, then, the designation of a matter as adiaphorous did not mean that it must remain entirely unregulated by authorities in church or state, as we shall see in a moment, but merely that regulations must be based on the demands of order, decency, or love for the neighbor, not duty toward God or salvation of the soul. This was still a radical claim, however, directly undermining the medieval church’s claims to make liturgical ceremonies necessary *media* of grace, and to withhold salvation on the basis of sins committed or penance omitted. Human rulers could still require certain conduct for temporal ends, but they could no longer insist that it was necessarily what God required. Any obligations with respect to adiaphora were contingent, not necessary.

This shows that although the leading reformers did undoubtedly protest against the quantitative multiplication of superfluous ecclesiastical ceremonies, their chief concern was with the qualitative claims about the status of such ceremonies. The call for freedom in things indifferent was thus not a call for freedom *from* things indifferent. This was not always clearly understood by their followers, however. Luther’s colleague Andreas von Karlstadt quickly took the clarion call of Christian

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<sup>11</sup> Verkamp, “Limits,” 57.

<sup>12</sup> *Freedom of a Christian*, in LW 31:370.

<sup>13</sup> *Institutes* III.19.10 (1:842).

liberty much further than Luther intended, insisting that all impositions beyond Scripture must be rejected outright, a view we have already met with above in the strong regulative principle of worship advocated by Thornwell and VanDrunen. And just as Charles Hodge would complain that this kind of “liberty” was actually a new legalism, so Luther charged that Karlstadt destroyed freedom just as clearly as the papists did, only by forbidding instead of commanding in things indifferent.<sup>14</sup> The very indifference of the adiaphora, then, meant that to insist on one’s external liberty in them would be to attribute to them more significance than they actually possessed, to make one’s faith dependent again on externals. Of course, the Henrician conservative bishop Stephen Gardiner would complain that the magisterial reformers themselves erred just as surely as Karlstadt in this respect when they insisted on evangelical freedom for priests to marry:

Tell me I pray you how these things agree in constancy and continuity of doctrine: we are by only faith justified and made acceptable to God, according to your doctrine, and yet a large part of our controversy bears upon food and wives. If those things do not pertain to justification, why do you who are reclaimed from the elements of the world contend about them, as if without them no happiness could find place in a Christian man?<sup>15</sup>

Karlstadt’s example and Gardiner’s complaint show just how difficult it was, from the very beginning, to hold the dynamic tension of Luther’s doctrine in balance. For it was not the case that Luther was willing to deny that Christian liberty had any external expression—far from it. In *The Freedom of a Christian* he argued that toward “wolves” who urge ceremonies upon us as necessary, we “must resist, do the very opposite, and offend them boldly lest by their impious views they drag many with them into error. In the presence of such men it is good to eat meat, break the fasts, and for the sake of liberty of faith do other things which they regard as the greatest of sins.”<sup>16</sup> He himself was soon to provide a particularly shocking example of this behaviour in his marriage to Katerina von Bora. But then, in this same passage, Luther went on to advise just the opposite course of action before the weak in faith who needed to be initiated slowly into Gospel liberty, just as Calvin spoke of the need to observe traditional fasts for the sake of the weaker brother.

This was precisely the difficulty with the doctrine—there were no fixed rules! The whole point, after all, was to be ready to respond as love demanded in

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<sup>14</sup> Verkamp, “Limits,” 70.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Gardiner, *Contemptum humanae legis* (1541), in Pierre Janelle, ed. and trans., *Obedience in Church and State: Three Political Tracts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1930), 195.

<sup>16</sup> LW 31:373. See also Philipp Melancthon, *Loci Communes* (1521 edition) in CR XXI:226; Calvin, *Institutes* III.19.11–12 (1:843–45).

concrete circumstances. Luther cites the example of St. Paul circumcising Timothy, so as not to offend the weak, while later refusing to circumcise Titus, so as not to give in to Judaizers.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, although he might issue some general guidelines, Luther could not establish *a priori* which response in the adiaphora would be right or wrong.

To this extent, it seems difficult to deny that Luther's teaching could have a tendency to favor individual liberty at the cost of institutional liberty; while the individual Christian's freedom may not be a freedom for himself, but one to be used on behalf of others, he alone remains the arbiter of how best to use it on behalf of others. Although Luther thought he had averted a clash of loyalties toward God and toward man by clearly distinguishing the inward relation to God from the outward relation to man, a new clash had now arisen within the outward realm: when to defer to authoritative determination about what is best for the community or institution, and when to insist on liberty to judge the concrete needs of one's neighbor. The magisterial reformers would frequently attack Karlstadt and other radical reformers as unprincipled, self-serving libertines, who perverted the doctrine of Christian liberty for their own pleasure, failing to understand that it was not a freedom *for oneself*. No doubt this was sometimes true, and many Protestants quickly twisted liberty into license. But this need not be the explanation for every form of radicalism. As we shall see with the Puritans, many who sought to assert their liberty externally did so with Luther's concern about "wolves" in mind, or else with the fear that weak Christians would be led into superstition; they were, as Luther taught, subordinating adiaphora to their desire to love and edify the neighbor. However, what about those weak who would be offended by such hasty rejection? How could one do justice to both? Far from removing the problem of uncertainty that dogged the late medieval conscience, Luther had merely displaced it from the realm of justification to that of sanctification. Faced with such uncertainty, the urge was to find a set of fixed rules to guide Christian conduct, even if such rules might tend to hinder the believer's ability to freely respond as circumstances seemed to dictate.

There were two places to look for such rules: to God or to man. The former possibility has appeared already in an ambiguous line from *The Freedom of a Christian* quoted above, where Luther said that Christian liberty was grounded in submission to "the most holy word of God, the Gospel of Christ." While for Luther,

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<sup>17</sup> *Freedom of a Christian*, in LW 3:368–69.

the Gospel is the substance of Scripture, so that even its moral laws serve chiefly to drive the believer to faith in Christ and free submission to him alone, other reformers were to increasingly emphasize the didactic function of Scripture as a moral guide for the believer's whole life.<sup>18</sup> This shifting emphasis would tend to move the focus from Luther's soteriological construal of adiaphora, in which anything not essential for justification could be considered indifferent, to an epistemological construal, in which it was only those things left undetermined by Scripture that were indifferent.<sup>19</sup> Although this epistemological language could be used fairly innocuously, it could also take on a potentially radical dimension. After all, if Scripture tells us all that is necessary, and it is necessary for the believer to know what is edifying in the church and what is not, Scripture must provide guidance on all disputed matters, so that very little, if anything, can be said to be strictly "indifferent" in this sense.

The latter possibility, of seeking for rules in the decrees of human legislation, might seem to contradict the spirit of Luther's reform altogether. However, even if

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<sup>18</sup> The radicalism of the early Lutheran understanding of freedom in relation to the law is well displayed in Melanchthon's 1521 *Loci Communes* (CR XXI:194–206), where he speaks of the Decalogue itself having been abrogated (although the Spirit leads the believer to freely embrace the same things the Decalogue commands). Such an emphasis was absent from the Zwinglian reformation from the beginning, which always accented the need for moral reform based on rigorous obedience to Scripture (see Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, 23–28; Verkamp, "Zwinglians and Adiaphorism," 489–90), and a heavy accent on the *tertius usus legis*—the positive role of scriptural in the moral life of the believer—was to be an enduring distinctive of the Reformed branch of Protestantism. However, the emphasis could be found in Melanchthon as well from the 1530s on (John E. Witte, Jr., and Thomas C. Arthur, "The Three Uses of the Law: A Protestant Source of the Purposes of Capital Punishment?" *Journal of Law and Religion* 10 [1993–1994], 434–36; Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 128–29).

<sup>19</sup> Verkamp argues that to attribute to Luther this strong, solfidian doctrine of adiaphora, as did Clyde Manschreck, "The Role of Melanchthon in the Adiaphora Controversy," *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 49 [1957], 165, and T.W. Street, "John Calvin on Adiaphora: An Exposition," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Union Theological Seminary, NYC), 1954, 255–56, is not strictly accurate, because Luther and Melanchthon did in fact insist on the necessity of good works for sanctification, good works that responded to what was commanded and forbidden in Scripture ("Limits," 53–58). Accordingly, Verkamp wants to restrict the definition of adiaphora, even for the early Luther, to those things "neither commanded nor forbidden" in Scripture, i.e., my "epistemological construal" ("Limits," 59–60). However, this is perhaps to be overly precise and miss the salient point about the Lutheran understanding of Christian liberty (even though Verkamp elsewhere shows a good understanding of the logic of the doctrine): justification meant that all works besides faith were to flow out of a free response of love, so that one was not bound by scriptural commands or prohibitions *as law*, but only as specifications of the law of love, to be applied as circumstances demanded. That is to say, both externals commanded by Scripture and those left free by Scripture were treated not as good in themselves, but good in respect of their end; the relationship of the conscience to them is the same. See for instance Luther, *Treatise on Good Works*, in LW 44:26.

However, it is certainly the case that Zwingli's concept of adiaphora functioned more within the epistemological key from the beginning (Verkamp, "The Zwinglians and Adiaphorism"), and this becomes the dominant articulation in the English Reformation (Verkamp, *IM*, 28–29).

in his earliest reforming enthusiasm Luther had hoped for a purely voluntary community of true Christians, he very soon conceded the necessity of coercive authority in external church administration, and most of the other reformers never doubted it. Although this has often been treated as a betrayal of the original genius of his two-kingdoms theology,<sup>20</sup> it was in fact a thoroughly consistent development of it, particularly given his strong emphasis on the believer as *simul justus et peccator*. For Luther, there would never be in the world a community of true Christians who were only true Christians—they would also be gross sinners, and as such, subject to the government of God’s “left hand,” exercised by force.<sup>21</sup> In all matters of the earthly regiment, within which of course adiaphora necessarily fell, the Christian might find himself subject to the constraint of law, even while remaining spiritually free before God. As the government of the visible church was taken to be part of the worldly regiment, it would seem to have need of laws as well.<sup>22</sup> Such laws could indeed flow quite logically out of the demand to use adiaphora for edification, for as the reformers were quick to realize, peace and order were blessings not to be undervalued, and far more edifying than discord. So, although John Milton, like his fellow 17th-century dissenter Edward Bagshaw, was to ask “by what right the Conformists had changed the nature of adiaphora by submitting them to legislation,”<sup>23</sup> their conformist opponents were on firm ground in deeming adiaphora fit subjects of legislation. Luther’s colleague, Melancthon, had clearly argued as much,<sup>24</sup> and the nearly universal early Protestant practice of promulgating official liturgies and church ordinances, often backed by secular authority, confirms this conviction.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Indeed, one of the chief burdens of Johannes Heckel’s *Lex Charitatis: A Juristic Disquisition on Law in the Theology of Martin Luther*, ed. Martin Heckel, trans. Gottfried G. Krodel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) is to dispute the notion that the development of Lutheran state churches was an appropriate development of Luther’s two-kingdoms doctrine. Cargill Thompson, *Political Thought of Martin Luther*, ch. 8, offers a more qualified assessment, but with some of the same concerns. However, Estes unequivocally puts this old claim to rest in his *Peace, Order, and the Glory of God* (see especially pp. 40–41, 66–68, 105–109, 202–204).

<sup>21</sup> Cargill Thompson makes this point quite effectively against Heckel (“The ‘Two Kingdoms’,” 177–82).

<sup>22</sup> See Cranz, *Development*, 144–55; Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 7, 110; Estes, *Peace, Order, and the Glory of God*, 41, 66–67, 107–108. More generally, see Avis, *Church in the Theology of the Reformers*, chs. 9–10.

<sup>23</sup> Verkamp, *IM*, 132.

<sup>24</sup> See Estes, *Peace, Order, and the Glory of God*, 65–68; Verkamp, “Limits,” 172–74 (especially footnote 134, where he critiques Manschreck for attempting to drive a wedge between Melancthon and the English reformers on this point), and Melancthon, *Loci Communes* (1555 edition), ch. 34.

<sup>25</sup> Verkamp has an excellent endnote (*IM*, 152n8) in which he offers citations from every major reformer, as well as a number of confessions, in defense of the idea of legislation of

The more difficult questions, which were to create substantial tensions as the Reformation wore on, were *by whom* and *with what authority* such ordinances were to be established. Many reformers were caught in a tension between their initial anti-clericalism, which saw as one of Rome's chief errors its granting of political and coercive authority to ecclesiastics, and their desire for an authentically evangelical church, directed by the ministry of the word rather than political machinations. The preference of many continental reformers, then, was for most "human precepts in the church" to be promulgated by ecclesiastical authorities with no strictly coercive force, but only as rules of good order, which it was rarely godly to flaunt, but which did not directly bind the conscience.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, they did not deny that some ecclesiastical precepts would require coercive imposition, and such force could only come from the magistrate. Melancthon, indeed, would speak of the Christian magistrate as the *summus episcopus* in the church,<sup>27</sup> and by the 1530s and 1540s, this position of honor had been codified in many Lutheran cities, where civil authorities oversaw a wide array of ecclesiastical legislation.<sup>28</sup> Other continental reformers such as Bucer, Zwingli, Bullinger, and Vermigli showed much less reluctance at this point,<sup>29</sup> and even Calvin's position is rather more "Erastian" than is usually acknowledged.<sup>30</sup> To this extent, the difference between the continental and English

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ecclesiastical adiaphora. For an overview of the promulgation of *Kirchenordnungen* (church ordinances) by political authorities, during this period, see Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church*, 23–39.

<sup>26</sup> See Melancthon's *Loci Communes* (1555 edition), in Clyde L. Manschreck, trans. and ed., *Melancthon on Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), ch. 34, and *Whether it be a mortall sinne to transgresse civil lawes which be the commaundements of civill magistrates. The judgement of Philip Melancthon in his Epitome of morall Philosophie. The resolution of D. Henry Bullinger and D. Rod[olph] Gaulter, of D. Martin Bucer, and D. Peter Martyr, concerning thapparel of Ministers, and other indifferent things* (London: Richard Jugge, Printer to the Queenes Maiestie, 1566), 3–16 (taken from his *Moralis Philosophiae Epitome* [1541], in CR XVI:109–16). Verkamp traces the tension on this point in the Lutheran and English reformations in ch. 7 of *IM*.

<sup>27</sup> Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 137.

<sup>28</sup> Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 182–96.

<sup>29</sup> For Zwingli, see Robert Walton, *Zwingli's Theocracy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), or Bucer, Bk. II of his *De Regno Christi*; for Vermigli and Bullinger, see Kirby, *ZC*.

<sup>30</sup> Carrie Euler observes that the lack of conflict between Bullinger and Calvin on church government owes not merely to diplomacy, but to the fact that "he [Bullinger] and Calvin actually had much in common in their attitudes toward church polity and discipline. In fact, the structures of discipline in Zurich and Geneva were not that different. . . . [B]oth the Zurich and Genevan consistories reflected an overlapping of the secular and spiritual spheres. . . ." (*Couriers of the Gospel*, 48–49). See also Jordan J. Ballor and W. Bradford Littlejohn, "European Calvinism: Church Discipline," in Irene Dingel and Johannes Paulmann, eds., *European History Online* (EGO) (Mainz: Institute of European History [IEG], 2013).



reformers on the magistrate's authority over adiaphora, as we shall see, is more one of emphasis than of fundamental principle.

If ecclesiastical laws could be backed by civil authority, however, this endangered a key tenet of Luther's doctrine of Christian liberty, which had been to deny to ceremonies not only a "necessity of means" (an intrinsic necessity to salvation) but a "necessity of precept" (in which positive law could render them necessary to salvation).<sup>31</sup> For the reformers were unanimous in preaching a very high doctrine of civil authority and the Christian's duty before God to obey the magistrate. Romans 13:5, many argued, meant that the believer was conscience-bound to obey any laws commanded by the civil magistrate that were not contrary to Scripture, even to the point that disobedience was mortal sin.<sup>32</sup> More careful Protestant thinkers could thread the needle by emphasizing that it was only the end of the law, the divine rule of charity, that bound the conscience *per se*; the particular law, as a specification of charity in particular circumstances, bound only *per accidens*.<sup>33</sup> But the potential for tension at this point was undeniable, particularly when the demands of charity seemed to run counter to the demands of law, and the more forceful apologists for magistratical authority whom we shall soon encounter did little to ease troubled consciences with their peremptory declarations.

The concept of adiaphora, then, held great promise and great peril. On the one hand, it seemed a promising foundation on which to maintain a large space for corporate and institutional freedom, buffering the body politic against the fissiparous logic of the individual liberty of each Christian in the spiritual kingdom, and maintaining loyalty to the common good alongside loyalty to God. The Christian was free inwardly, but bound outwardly. However, although not automatically nullified by external constraint, this internal liberty clearly required some space for external expression, a freedom to act as love seemed to demand in the situation. By making Christian liberty a liberty to be exercised in charity, *for the common good*, Luther's reform left room for a renewed clash of loyalties. For who was to determine the common good? Prudence alone seemed a weak reed on which to rest contentious judgments on questions that soon engulfed the young Reformation churches. If Scripture was to be the guide, was it left to be interpreted

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<sup>31</sup> See the careful discussion by Verkamp, *IM*, 38–54.

<sup>32</sup> See for instance Melancthon, *Loci Communes* (1555), in Manschreck, *On Christian Doctrine*, 334; *Whether it be a mortall sinne* 4–5, 9–10 (*CR XVI*:110, 112–14). For more examples see Verkamp, *IM*, 58n71.

<sup>33</sup> Such appears to be Calvin's reasoning in *Institutes* III.19.15 and IV.10.5 (see Sect. IV below). Verkamp suggests that Calvin may have been unique, however, in recognizing the need for this sort of qualification (*IM*, 49–50).

by each individual believer, thus pitting individual liberty against institutional? Or was it to be interpreted by the proper authorities, the ministers, raising the specter of new papal tyranny? In either case, there was the risk that Scripture be reconceived as an exhaustive law-book, rather than a proclamation of the good news of forgiveness, shackling the conscience again to a new legalism. Some might instead insist that civil authority was to be the guide, even if it seemed sometimes to thwart the quest for godliness. To a certain point, it would be easy to argue that Christian love equalled submission to civil authority, since in a chaotic age, few things were more loving than the maintenance of peace and order. But in the end, must not human laws serve only as rules of thumb about what love might require in particular circumstances? No human ruler, according to Protestant teaching, wielded final epistemological authority over the conscience, so must not Christian liberty allow some room for the believer to disagree with and even disobey his ruler?

These tensions, I will argue in what follows, repeatedly reached a boiling point in the course of the English reformations. Although the conflict was starker here, due to the particularly forceful doctrine of royal supremacy and the duty of obedience that many English reformers articulated, similar tensions and conflicts were liable to emerge throughout Protestant Europe.

## **II. The Freedom of a Christian Prince: Adiaphora in the Early English Reformation**

From its outset, the Henrician Reformation, the product of calculating royal policy rather than a monk's troubled conscience, was not overly interested in the freedom of an individual Christian, a doctrine that hardly seemed conducive to the safety of the state. It was a telling indicator of the future tenor of reform in England that Tyndale entitled his 1526 outline of Protestant theology *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, and Henry VIII's protest against papal domination was lodged on behalf of the freedom of a Christian prince, not so much his subjects. However, these obvious differences have led many scholars to underestimate the continuities between Lutheran and English treatments of liberty and authority, church and state; and as the conservatism of Henry's reign gives way to the more forthrightly Reformed churches of Edward and Elizabeth, we find striking parallels between debates on Christian liberty in England and those on the continent. In what follows we shall survey first the fairly authoritarian concepts of adiaphora voiced by Henrician theorists Thomas Starkey and Stephen Gardiner, and then turn to see

how the tensions thus generated spawned conflict in the successive Vestiarian controversies of Edward and Elizabeth's reigns. In particular, we shall discern an increasing strain between the believer's liberty in adiaphora and the magistrate's liberty to compel obedience in adiaphora. We will also find a tension between different understandings of what Christian charity demands in the use of adiaphora, with some equating charity with civil peace and order, and others conceiving it in more dynamic and ecclesiological terms. Meanwhile, the ambiguity between a soteriological conception of adiaphora, concerned chiefly with what is indifferent *to salvation*, and the more narrow epistemological conception which focused on the limits of scriptural commands, was to help heighten the tensions.

The concept of adiaphora clearly played a central role in the theological defense of the Henrician reform, but scholars dispute just how much the concept owes to Lutheran sources. Whereas W. Gordon Zeeveld, followed by Quentin Skinner,<sup>34</sup> argued for political-theological continuity between the Lutheran and the Henrician Reformations, others have argued for sharp contrast. T.F. Mayer, followed by Glenn Burgess, has insisted that Henrician theorist Thomas Starkey's concept of adiaphora differed radically from the Lutherans.<sup>35</sup> When Starkey describes adiaphora as "all such thynges whiche by goddis worde are nother prohibyted nor commaunded, but lefte to worldly polycie, wherof they take their ful authoritie,"<sup>36</sup> Burgess contrasts this with the Lutherans, who used the concept "to indicate a sphere of liberty for Christians," not "an area where the civil authority was free to regulate matters as it chose. Indeed, Starkey goes so far as to say that, once adiaphora are determined by civil authority, then the people 'are to them bounde, ye by the vertue of goddis own worde.'"<sup>37</sup> As we have already seen, however, this is not so contrary to Luther and Melancthon as Mayer and Burgess suppose, given that they too recognized that the magistrate may have to take order in many adiaphora, and Christians are bound to obey the magistrate. However, the tension we noted above—that Christian consciences had been freed from

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<sup>34</sup> W. Gordon Zeeveld, *Foundations of Tudor Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 128–49; Skinner, *The Age of Reformation*, 88–108.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas F. Mayer, "Starkey and Melancthon on Adiaphora: A Critique of W. Gordon Zeeveld," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 11:1 (Spring 1980): 39–50.

<sup>36</sup> Starkey, *Exhortation to Unitie and Obedience* (London, 1540; facsimile reprint, Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1972), 6v.

<sup>37</sup> Glenn Burgess, *British Political Thought: 1500–1660: The Politics of the Post-reformation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 50–51, quoting Starkey, *Exhortation*, 6v. But see Verkamp, *IM*, 132–33.

clerical authorities in the adiaphora only to be bound again by civil authorities—is considerably sharpened in Starkey’s exposition.

In fact, prominent conservatives such as Starkey and Gardiner were explicit in affirming that while adiaphora did not have a necessity of means, they did have a necessity of precept, to the extent that they were not even soteriologically indifferent once the king enacted them into law.<sup>38</sup> Starkey would go so far as to say, “For to the obedience of princes and of all other comen orders and politike we are bounde, after they be ones receyved, by goddis owne worde and commaundement. And suche thinges as by their owne nature be indifferent, are made therby to our salvation necessary.”<sup>39</sup> Gardiner, while not quite so forthright, argues the same against Martin Bucer in his *Contemptum humanae legis*: “But he who contemns [human law], what else does he do but rise up against the divine power, and fight with God?”<sup>40</sup> Bucer was protesting Henry VIII’s reactionary *Six Articles* of 1539,<sup>41</sup> in which he decreed in no uncertain terms the continuance of traditional Catholic practice on key issues such as clerical celibacy, and went so far as to assert, as robustly as any Catholic might, that these things were binding by divine law. After this, Gardiner would not hesitate to tell Bucer that “by me mariage of prestes was no sin before God til the Kingis Majesti made it sin before God.”<sup>42</sup> Such a declaration would appear to collapse Luther’s distinction between the two kingdoms, allowing temporal laws to have eternal consequences, giving to man the power to change a believer’s standing before God, a key part of what the doctrine of Christian liberty denied.

To be sure, Starkey and Gardiner could both employ very Lutheran language in their treatises, speaking of justification by faith alone, of Scripture’s sole authority over things necessary to salvation, of the indifference of all external ceremonies and the hypocrisy and superstition that characterized so many of them.

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<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Daniel Eppley has argued that Christopher St. German ended up going even further, giving to the King-in-Parliament not merely the power to issue binding commands within the realm of things by nature indifferent, but to determine what was by nature indifferent in the first place (*Defending Royal Supremacy*, 61–141).

<sup>39</sup> *Exhortation*, 8v.

<sup>40</sup> *Contemptum* in Janelle, *Obedience*, 187.

<sup>41</sup> For discussion of Gardiner’s controversy with Bucer see Janelle’s introduction to *Obedience*, xli–l.

<sup>42</sup> *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, ed. James A. Muller (Cambridge, 1933), 491, quoted in Verkamp, IM, 50. Note that Eppley argues that Gardiner does not give to the ruler any power over the conscience (*Defending Royal Supremacy*, 32–41), but this appears to result from his failure to attend to the *Contemptum humanae legis* and his insistence on reading Gardiner’s later conscientious protest against the policies of Edward VI back into his Henrician arguments.

Not only that, but perhaps more surprisingly, we find in both Starkey and Gardiner's works a heavy accent laid upon the principle of charity as the rule of all Christian conduct, the surest guide for the right exercise of liberty. But unlike Luther, these Henrician theorists see charity exercised primarily in passivity, rather than activity. To be sure, we must always use our liberty to edification, but for Starkey and Gardiner, nothing is so conducive to edification as peace, order, and decorum, and this means firmly subordinating individual judgment to authoritative determination.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, in the *Exhortation*, having declared that the prince has divine authority to determine what ought to be done in adiaphora, Starkey admonishes believers to content themselves with clinging to the essential truths of the Christian religion laid down in the Creeds, and, apart from this, not to trouble themselves with trying to understand the justifications for various doctrines or practices, but instead to meekly follow the laws in such matters.<sup>44</sup> Like Luther, we have here a conscience freed of fear and worry about indifferent things, and called to subject itself in externals for the sake of charity. But while Luther would say that "O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith"<sup>45</sup> Starkey will tell us that faith consists in meek, passive humility. Luther's conscience never rests secure in its freedom, but uses it indefatigably to seek out how the neighbor can be served in every circumstance, thinking creatively about the right way to show charity as each situation demands, even if this risks impinging on loyalty to the prince. Starkey's conscience, however, passively contents itself with the decree of the prince, heedless of any offense caused to its neighbors, who have only themselves to blame for their lack of submission.

This is clearly a more stable basis for governing a commonwealth than Luther's version of Christian liberty, and promises the believer greater certainty for how to act than Luther's paradoxical prescriptions. However, it is worryingly reminiscent of the Catholic doctrine of "implicit faith," in which believers did not need to understand biblical teaching themselves, but merely to trust in church authorities, who exercised intelligent faith on their behalf. We will recall that Bancroft, in professing fifty years later to steer a golden mean between this doctrine

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<sup>43</sup> See for instance Starkey, *Exhortation*, 40v, 82r–82v; Gardiner, *De Vera Obedientia: The Oration of True Obedience* (1535), in Janelle, ed., *Obedience in Church and State*, 161.

<sup>44</sup> Starkey, *Exhortation*, 7r–8v. This passage highlights the minimalist direction in which a soteriologically-oriented conception of adiaphora could go, encouraging believers to concern themselves with little else once they had believed those things necessary for salvation. Incidentally, it also highlights the equivocation between such a soteriological conception and an epistemological one (which Starkey has just given two pages before, defining adiaphora as "all such thynges whiche by goddis worde are nother prohibyted nor commaunded").

<sup>45</sup> Luther, *Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (1546) in LW 35:370.

and libertinism, had failed to clearly differentiate his position from the former. Inasmuch as the principle of willingness seemed to demand that to be genuinely free, Christian liberty must be intelligent and rational, grasping the goodness of a course of action and embracing it of its own accord, Starkey's recommended posture of default submission seems an inadequate exercise of liberty, even if motivated by charity.

As willing, then, as Luther and the other reformers were to admit the need for authority, law, and obedience in the midst of Christian liberty, these had remained secondary, necessary to help govern a liberty that had its seat in the individual. We may discern in Lutheran doctrine a dynamic tension between the liberty of the individual and the institution, a tension that could perhaps collapse into outright contradiction. The Henrician theorists, by using the doctrine of adiaphora to put institutional liberty front and center, achieved greater stability and consistency, perhaps, but at the risk of eviscerating evangelical doctrine. The liberty of the individual believer in adiaphora, although asserted at times, is never a central concern. Rather, we find a sense that the English church must be well-ordered, that reform has to proceed from the top down by statute, and the leaders will decide what is edifying and what is not. This core difference in spirit, we shall discover, persists as we move through the English reformations, even though Gardiner and Starkey proved to be outliers, opposed by more Protestant-minded reformers in England, and soon superseded. Cranmer, Cromwell, and others articulated a more evangelical concept of Christian liberty, and denied the power of the king's laws in adiaphora over conscience (although precisely how this related to their understanding of Romans 13:5 remained unclear).<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, even though the more evangelical strain gains strength and becomes increasingly explicit, the English taste for good order, civil concord, and lawful authority, and the conviction that these are edifying above all else, remains.

The ambiguity thus introduced, although it will come to dominate Elizabethan debates on adiaphora, could arise for any Protestant. For if one allows, as the Lutheran reformers did, that laws can be made regarding ecclesiastical ceremonies, and if the laws cannot be made on the basis that they are necessary to salvation or especially honoring to God, as the reformers were keen to deny, then they must be made on the basis that they conduce to public good, civil order, etc.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Verkamp, *IM*, 50–53.

<sup>47</sup> Gardiner mocked this distinction in his debate with Bucer, insisting that it was unworkable: "as if . . . subjects might ask from their prince, and inquire, why he decides this or that" (*Contemptum in Obedience*, 195).

But this ran the risk of instrumentalizing the church, completely subjecting it to political ends, as had often been the case in Henry VIII's reign and as Starkey and Gardiner seemed prepared to justify. However, if more positive and specific content is to be given to the concept of edification—e.g., that vestments encourage more reverent worship—this merely invites dispute over whether they are in fact edifying, and invites disobedience from those who beg to differ. In addition, if a rite is prescribed because it is particularly edifying, this might be taken as saying it has a particular spiritual efficacy, which in the minds of many, was too close for comfort to the Roman doctrine of ceremonies that had just been rejected. The two horns of this dilemma, coupled with the tensions we already observed above in the doctrine of adiaphora, were to lead to an anti-adiaphorist reaction, which although hinted at in Henrician writings such as those of Turner and Bale,<sup>48</sup> first boiled to the surface in the Edwardian period.

### **III. The Christian Man vs. the Christian Prince: Controversies over Adiaphora**

#### *The Edwardian Vestiarian Controversy*

Under the boy-king Edward VI, who unsurprisingly proved much less self-willed than his obstreperous father, the pace of reform accelerated. With firmly Protestant leaders like Cranmer and Ridley at the helm, no longer could things like prayers to the saints be considered “things indifferent,” things potentially edifying for the churches, as they were for Starkey and Gardiner. Although the initial struggles of the new regime were against conservatives who considered the pace of reform too fast, this was soon to change, as an influx of Protestant exiles from the continent and Scotland (Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr Vermigli, John á Lasco, John Knox, and others) brought a more advanced version of the Reformation with them. Many of these were men who of necessity bore more allegiance to the cause of Reformation than to any homeland or nation, who did not entirely share the English Reformation's overriding concern for civility, order, and structure.

However, the conflicts over liturgy, polity, and magisterial authority in the church that were to play out in the reigns of Edward and Elizabeth were not, as is often implied, a uniquely English problem, the result of its hybrid liturgy and its Erastian polity. Rather, they reflected theological tensions and concerns shared by continental reformers, whose input was frequently solicited and frequently offered in debates over adiaphora, Christian liberty, and the *cura religionis*. Nowhere were

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<sup>48</sup> Verkamp, *IM*, 68–71.

the issues at stake more sharply outlined than in the successive Vestiarian Controversies, first in 1550 under Edward and then in 1565–66 under Elizabeth. In each case, it was in fact overenthusiastic Englishmen who raised the trouble, and the foreign reformers, rather than leading the radical charge, by and large sided with the authorities. In each case, the seemingly trivial question of what liturgical vestments should be worn became the occasion for profound tensions on the relation of conscience to authority, of the church to the civil magistrate, and of Scripture to both, to rise to the surface. In each case, the authorities readily enough won their case on the narrow question at stake, but by failing to entirely resolve the theoretical tensions, they enabled the seeds of further and more radical dissent to take root.

The first major “puritan” test for the reforming government appeared in 1550 in the person of John Hooper. Hooper had spent several years in exile, having been dangerously in advance of the pace of reform during Henry’s reign, and in the course of his peregrinations to centers of continental Reform, had imbibed a more thoroughgoing opposition to anything that looked like “popery” and a conviction that purity took priority over peace and order. When in 1550 he was offered the bishopric of Gloucester and refused to wear the prescribed episcopal vestments, the ensuing First Vestiarian Controversy brought the question of the nature and use of adiaphora to the fore. The government relied on foreign reformers such as Bucer and Vermigli, who shared Hooper’s distaste for vestments, to convince him that they were nonetheless adiaphora, and should be patiently borne as such.<sup>49</sup> Of course, this did not entirely resolve the problem, for adiaphora, all agreed, ought to be used in accord with Christian charity, with the goal of edifying other believers; if a minister was convinced that they were not on the whole edifying, did he not have a duty to abstain from them? And if they were adiaphora, ought not the conscience to be free in these matters from the compulsion of law? The uncertainty that surrounded adiaphora allowed a seemingly trivial matter to become the stage on which the clash of loyalties, to God and to prince, would play out. The Henrician theorists had emphasized the decree of the prince as the surest resolution to such uncertainty. But Hooper, with his more advanced Protestant sentiments, thought it better to fall back on the supreme authority of the Word of God, to which the reformers had taught that the church ought to conform itself, as much as possible, in

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<sup>49</sup> See Verkamp 66–78, 149–51 for a brief narrative of the controversy and a thorough discussion of the issues at stake, and John Primus, *The Vestments Controversy: An Historical Study of the Earliest Tensions within the Church of England in the The Reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1960), 3–67, for a fuller analysis. Torrance Kirby analyzes Vermigli’s role in both Vestiarian controversies in *ZC*, 204–207.



its worship and discipline. But if directed by the Word of God, were these things really indifferent?

In explaining his position, Hooper highlighted the tensions. While acknowledging the existence of adiaphora in principle, John Primus observes that “he sets up demands which seem to nearly exclude the whole sphere of indifferent things.”<sup>50</sup> To qualify as adiaphora, something must meet four criteria: 1) they must have their “origin and foundation in God’s word”; 2) they must have the implicit sanction of Scripture; 3) they must have “manifest and open utility,” and be “edifying”; 4) they “must be instituted with levity and without tyranny, and those that are not, are no more indifferent.”<sup>51</sup>

In each case, we may note, as Verkamp does, that Hooper has transformed what were considered principles for the right *use* of adiaphora into principles for their *definition*. Accordingly, while Hooper denies that things indifferent have the “express sanction” of Scripture,<sup>52</sup> he insists in the first two conditions that we must be able to positively derive their indifference from Scripture, rather than treating scriptural silence on the issue as sufficient proof of indifference. (We will meet this argument again in Cartwright.) Likewise in the third condition, Hooper argues not merely that adiaphora must be *used* to edification, but that if unedifying, they do not qualify as indifferent in the first place.<sup>53</sup> This point invites the question of what was to count as “utility” and “edification”—certainly for Hooper’s opponent Nicholas Ridley, speaking for the magistrates and many of the bishops, the good order, stability, and continuity provided by maintaining the old vestments was of great utility and edifying to the people.<sup>54</sup> Yet such merely civil edification was not what Hooper had in mind; ceremonies in the church must be spiritually upbuilding. In the fourth point, Hooper appears to insist that adiaphora must be free from legal compulsion; internal freedom must find external expression, and adiaphora be left

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<sup>50</sup> *The Vestments Controversy*, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Verkamp, *IM*, 72–73.

<sup>52</sup> “*Expressum Dei verbum habeat quo se tueatur.*” Constantin Hopf, ed., “Bishop Hooper’s ‘Notes’ to the King’s Council,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 175–176 (1943), 196.

<sup>53</sup> As Verkamp points out, this condition involves Hooper in a contradiction, since he began by defining adiaphora as “a thing whose use is not profitable and whose non-use is not harmful” (*IM* 72–73). Although John Primus tries to rescue Hooper from contradiction by suggesting that Hooper must in fact mean that edification is a condition for right *use* (*Vestments Controversy*, 26–27), Verkamp insists this misses the point that for Hooper, along with his ally John á Lasco, and Flacius in Germany, the usefulness of adiaphora became integral to their definition, and thus *prima facie*, rather than *ultima facie*, permissibility (*IM*, 73–76).

<sup>54</sup> Primus, *Vestments Controversy* 27–28.

to the decision of the individual conscience.<sup>55</sup> If so, then we find here the dynamic tension between inward and outward in Luther's statement of Christian liberty beginning to collapse.

Hooper's ideas, however, were certainly not new or unique. On the contrary, they had been voiced already in the midst of Lutheran Germany, by hardline reformer Matthias Flacius Illyricus, in opposition to Philipp Melanchthon. The context of the Lutheran debate was the imposition of the 1548 Leipzig Interim on Saxony in the aftermath of Charles V's triumph the previous year over the Lutheran princes at the Battle of Mühlberg. Although it appeared at first that Lutheran doctrine would be wholly proscribed, the Interim represented a victory of sorts for Melanchthon and other Wittenberg leaders, preserving inviolate the basic tenets of Lutheran doctrine, while consenting to the imposition of a wide array of traditional liturgical practices. Although Melanchthon disapproved of these and considered them a "harsh servitude," he accepted the ceremonies as in themselves indifferent, and hence subject to the prudential calculus of edification, which in this case required accepting the practices for the time being that the church might be preserved and the gospel still preached.<sup>56</sup>

It was not long before Melanchthon and the other conformists were denounced as traitors to the cause of the Reformation by Lutherans in other parts of Germany, some of whom had forsaken their home churches in refusal to submit to the "popish tyranny." Many insisted that the Interim "meant an end to Christian liberty,"<sup>57</sup> suggesting that Christian liberty *could* be nullified by mere externals, which Luther and Melanchthon had always denied. Flacius led the opposition to Melanchthon, and developed this claim about Christian liberty in the *Liber de veris et falsis adiaphoris* (1549).<sup>58</sup> In it he argued (anticipating Hooper's fourth condition) "that all rites and ceremonies, regardless of how non-essential they are by nature, cease to be adiaphora when they become compulsory. Compulsion undercuts Christian liberty and destroys the church of God."<sup>59</sup> He also argued that "In the

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<sup>55</sup> See Primus, *Vestments Controversy*, 23–24, 29–30.

<sup>56</sup> Manschreck summarizes the background of the controversy in "The Role of Melanchthon," 166–71. See also Verkamp, *IM*, 87–88; Verkamp, "Limits," 66. The fullest account of the controversy, though one that suffers from a rather partisan reading in favor of Flacius, can be found in Oliver K. Olson, *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002), 68–167.

<sup>57</sup> Manschreck, "The Role of Melanchthon," 171.

<sup>58</sup> Flacius's arguments are analyzed in Manschreck, "The Role of Melanchthon," 173–75, Verkamp, *IM*, 71, and Verkamp, "Limits," 66–68.

<sup>59</sup> Manschreck, "The Role of Melanchthon," 173.

present situation it is necessary to reject ceremonies and rites otherwise non-essential, for adiaphora in certain circumstances cease to be indifferent, *in casu confessionis et scandali*.”<sup>60</sup> This was plausible as an application of Luther’s teaching that before “Pharisees,” those who cause Christians to stumble by making adiaphorous ceremonies necessary to salvation, it will often be necessary to openly disobey in order to demonstrate our liberty to those who would deny it; however, Melancthon insisted that the authorities had not Pharisaically proclaimed these ceremonies necessary for salvation, but for civil order.<sup>61</sup> In any case, Flacius went beyond Luther in saying that with such Pharisaical imposition, these ceremonies had ceased to be adiaphora, so that defiance was *necessary*. We see here the impulse to simplify into universal rules what Luther had been content to leave as guidelines for conscience to apply as particular circumstances seemed to demand. Flacius was to take this further, arguing that we must distinguish between true and false adiaphora, the former being intrinsically edifying, and the latter unedifying.<sup>62</sup> Here we see the elevation of edification from a condition for the right *use* of the adiaphora into a condition for the *definition* of adiaphora.<sup>63</sup> This meant that the concept of “edification” no longer functioned within a prudential calculus on a case-by-case basis, on which individual Christians might differ, and in which concerns of civil order might be prominent. The effect of this was to attempt to remove the uncertainty surrounding the right use of adiaphora, an uncertainty that called forth a free and creative exercise of prudence, and to replace it with a rule-governed certainty that would circumscribe our options in advance. For Flacius, things are either edifying in themselves or they are not; God’s Word provides us direction as to which are which; and only if they meet this condition are they permissible in principle. Of course, if they are edifying and are suggested in God’s Word, are they really adiaphora, or are they in fact required? To be sure, while retaining the term, Flacius does render it largely obsolete, and it is perhaps no coincidence that much of Flacius’s support came from Lutherans such as John Epinus, who denied the notion in the first place.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Manschreck, “The Role of Melancthon,” 173.

<sup>61</sup> The difficulty of discerning whether the prince imposed a particular rite for “civil” or “religious” purposes, highlighted by Gardiner in his letter to Bucer, was to prove intractable here.

<sup>62</sup> Verkamp, *IM*, 71.

<sup>63</sup> See Verkamp, *IM*, 71–76 for a full discussion.

<sup>64</sup> Verkamp, “Limits,” 69.

Flacius thus offered a threefold distinction—things prohibited *in se*, things prohibited by virtue of being unedifying (“false adiaphora”), and things that are edifying and therefore true adiaphora. A group of Hamburg pastors, influenced by Flacius’s polemics, wrote a concerned letter to Melanchthon during the controversy, outlining the same understanding of three categories and asking him which category certain practices fell into.<sup>65</sup> Melanchthon’s reply is brief and circumspect, but in listing what are and are not adiaphora, sticks with two categories only, leaving out the so-called “false adiaphora.”<sup>66</sup> The ceremonies in question might be unedifying, he says, but that does not in itself compel their rejection, for it would be even more unedifying for pastors to desert their churches. In the use of adiaphora, prudence calls us to weigh all such factors in the balance before determining the course that love of neighbor and loyalty to God demand, even if that means living with uncertainty and disagreement.<sup>67</sup>

The controversy loomed large in the backdrop of Hooper’s showdown with the Edwardian authorities. Verkamp has argued that Hooper (as well as John á Lasco, his ally in the First Vestiarian Controversy) had probably encountered Flacius during their time in Germany in 1547-9, while the controversy was raging.<sup>68</sup> Flacius’s *Liber* would likely have been known by Hooper, and in fact would exert a significant influence on Elizabethan nonconformists, by whom it was reprinted fifteen years later at the height of the Second Vestiarian Controversy.<sup>69</sup> Hooper’s establishment opponents also seem to have been aware of the relevance of the controversy, as the letter from the Hamburg pastors and Melanchthon’s reply appeared in English translation in 1549.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *De Rebus Adiaphoris: Epistola Concionatorum Hambergensium ad D. Philippum Melanthonem, et Responsio Eiusdem* (1549), in Anthony Sparrow, ed., *A Collection of Articles, Injunctions, Canons, Orders, Ordinances, and Canons Ecclesiastical: With Other Publick Records of the Church of England, Chiefly in the Times of K. Edward VI., Q. Elizabeth, K. James, and K. Charles I* (London: Printed for Robert Cutler and Joseph Clarke, 1671), 9–19.

<sup>66</sup> *De Rebus Adiaphoris*, 23–25.

<sup>67</sup> *De Rebus Adiaphoris*, 27.

<sup>68</sup> Verkamp, *IM*, 71.

<sup>69</sup> Verkamp, *IM*, 71–72. Verkamp offers evidence that following its republication, the book was widely read and cited by Elizabethan nonconformists. See also Primus, *Vestments Controversy*, 138–39.

<sup>70</sup> This is the *De Rebus Adiaphoris* cited above. The circumstances surrounding the translation and publication of this text are obscure, but the title page dates it in 1549, and Anthony Sparrow, editor of the *Collection of Articles*, has placed it between Cranmer’s 1548 Articles of Visitation, and Ridley’s 1550 Articles, suggesting that it was published with official backing, for purposes of addressing similar debates in the Edwardian church.

In any case, Hooper's protest revealed the presence of serious divergences in how the Protestant doctrine of Christian liberty and the adiaphora was to be understood. Was Christian liberty to mean primarily the liberty of each believer to determine what was edifying in the church (i.e., what was according to Scripture), without any external requirement, and to act accordingly, as Hooper believed? Or did it mean the liberty of the church (-state) to determine what the body on the whole required, which was most urgently unity and peace? Peter Martyr Vermigli, a continental reformer of impeccable Protestant credentials, defended the latter against Hooper, in terms reminiscent of Charles Hodge's argument against Thornwell: "Truely, we must take good heede that we bryng not the Church of Christ into such bondage, that it may not use any thyng that the Pope used...howe shall we debarre the Church of this libertie, that it can not signifie some good thyng, in setting forth theyr rites and ceremonies?"<sup>71</sup> Hooper's conception of liberty thus opposes the Henrician doctrine of passive submission, which preserved corporate freedom at the cost of an authentically free individual agent. However, aware that an anarchy of individual convictions would seem to make common action in the church impossible, Hooper seeks to establish a certain rule for action in the Word of God. The danger here is that by invoking Scripture as a self-interpreting law code that will determine in advance our exercise of freedom, those of Hooper's persuasion substitute heteronomy for authentic liberty as surely as Starkey does. The full development of this biblicism, however, would have to wait until another round of controversy which would bring the tensions in the doctrine of Christian liberty into sharper relief.

#### *The Elizabethan Vestiarian Controversy*

Although Hooper himself relented after a few months, other such conflicts would surely have emerged in the Edwardian church if the nascent Reformation had not been suddenly cut short by Edward's death and Mary's accession. And indeed, exile did not put an end to conflicts over adiaphora, but intensified them; many scholars have argued that the "troubles at Frankfurt," in which the exile church split over differences regarding the Prayer Book, can be regarded as the crucible of what was to become Elizabethan puritanism.<sup>72</sup> On Elizabeth's accession,

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<sup>71</sup> Vermigli, letter to Hooper in Matthew Parker (?), ed., *A Briefe examination for the tyme, of a certaine declaration, lately put in print in the name and defence of certaine Ministers in London, refusyng to weare the apparell prescribed by the lawes and orders of the Realme* (London: Richard Jugge, 1566), 32v, 33v.

<sup>72</sup> See for instance M.M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), ch. 6.

however, differences were temporarily put aside as exiles hurried home from Frankfurt, Zurich, Geneva, Emden, and other continental refuges, all hoping that Elizabeth's settlement would legally establish their concept of a "church purely reformed." Elizabeth, however, while probably of genuinely Protestant convictions, took rather more seriously than these zealous exiles the need to placate Catholic subjects at home and Catholic enemies abroad; this concern, coupled with her own taste for more ceremonial worship, meant that the resulting settlement disappointed the aspirations of nearly all her churchmen. Those with close ties to Zurich, however (who received most of the high-level ecclesiastical appointments), were on the whole more willing to adapt to these remaining imperfections than those who had resided in Geneva (who were largely excluded from preferment<sup>73</sup>), conceding indifference of the unsatisfactory orders and ceremonies and the broad prerogatives of the magistrate in such matters.

However, it was former Zurich exiles Lawrence Humphrey and Thomas Sampson who were to take the lead among those opposing the imposition of the "relics of the Amorites," the popish vestments that Elizabeth and her archbishop Matthew Parker had prescribed in 1564. Hundreds of lower churchmen, unable to accept this apparel as indifferent, and certainly not as edifying, balked at the prescription. Elizabeth, wary of incurring the personal hostility of so many of her subjects, left it to her bishops to propound, enforce, and defend the vestments regulations. They undertook this task with some reluctance, but ultimately held their line. Although excoriated at the time and by many since as pragmatic and ambitious time-servers, willing to compromise their beliefs to maintain their position, a closer look at the writings of the period tells a different story.

In fact we find among the bishops of the 1560s an earnest attempt to grapple with the tensions of the principle of adiaphora, which required them to subordinate their own personal preferences, largely against the vestments, to their acceptance of the magistrate's right to command in things indifferent, as Vermigli had done in the First Vestiarian Controversy. In this, they sought to privilege Reformed doctrine, maintaining the indifference of such outward ceremonies, over prevailing Reformed practice, which largely eschewed them. The disjunction between continental Reformed doctrine and practice meant that both sides in the Elizabethan controversy were able to portray leading reformers as being on their side, and both

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<sup>73</sup> This was largely due to the politically disastrous timing of John Knox and Christopher Goodman's precipitous calls to revolution published in Geneva in 1558, just before Mary's death; Calvin's earnest protests that he had never endorsed such publications or ideas proved vain.

sides quickly took to the printing presses to publicize these testimonies. As none of the Edwardian foreigners had returned after Elizabeth's accession—a Lasco and Bucer now dead, Vermigli and Ochino happily ensconced at Zurich—these opinions had to be mined from earlier writings or sought by correspondence.<sup>74</sup> We have already mentioned how Flacius's *Liber* was reprinted at this time; so was all the literature from the earlier Vestiarian dispute, including Hooper's, Ridley's, Vermigli's and Bucer's contributions, and counsel was sought from Reformed leaders at Zurich, Geneva, and elsewhere.

The most decisive continental intervention was Heinrich Bullinger's answer to the letters of Humphrey and Sampson, who had expected them to endorse their cause. "Bullinger's reply," says Torrance Kirby, "landed like a bomb-shell"; "he sided unequivocally with [Archbishop] Parker and the Queen."<sup>75</sup> Bullinger sent a copy of the letter to his friends who were conformist leaders as well, and they promptly published it to score a propaganda victory against the non-conformists. This elicited another letter from a rather miffed Rudolph Gualter, Bullinger's assistant, who was keen to emphasize that neither he nor Bullinger were at all in favor of the vestments, nor of the harsh treatment that nonconformists had received; they would certainly prefer that such vestments be done away with, and that in any case, those pastors who objected should be allowed to follow their own consciences.<sup>76</sup> However, this preference did not change their stance on the key questions: were the vestments in question adiaphora, and could they be legitimately required? Yes and yes.

In his letter, Bullinger staunchly resisted the Flacian logic that made its appearance in Sampson and Humphrey's questions.<sup>77</sup> When they worried that any legal compulsion in the adiaphora meant an abridgement of Christian liberty, Bullinger replied by distinguishing the inward liberty of conscience regarding the necessity of a practice, and the outward constraint regarding its use:

I answer. That indiffering things may sometymes be prescribed, yea, and also constrayned to, as I may terme it, as touching the use, but not as of necessitie, that is, that any indifferent thyng of his owne

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<sup>74</sup> The most thorough discussion, which analyzes all the major publications of the controversy, is to be found in Primus, *Vestments Controversy*, 71–147. See also D.J. McGinn, *The Admonition Controversy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1949), 14–23, and for a more recent discussion, Kirby, *ZC*, 203–20.

<sup>75</sup> Kirby, *ZC*, 209–10.

<sup>76</sup> This letter is reprinted in Frere and Douglas, eds., *Puritan Manifestoes*, 41–43. See discussion in Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 80.

<sup>77</sup> I have used here Kirby's reprint of Bullinger's letter in *ZC* 221–33. It first appeared in English translation as part of the pamphlet, most likely assembled by Archbishop Matthew Parker, *Whether it be a mortall sinne*, 27–46.

nature should be forced to a mans conscience, and thereby a kynde of religion charged to his conscience. The times and places of holy assemblies, are rightly accounted to be indifferent: and yet if there be no order prescribed therein, I pray you what confusion and mis-order would ryse hereby?<sup>78</sup>

Bullinger granted that ceremonies must be used unto edification, but like Melancthon, he worried that failure to submit to legitimate, even if misguided and oppressive, laws would prove more harmful than any use of the offending vestments could: “way [i.e, weigh] with your selves, if ye refuse to weare a thinge meere politike and indifferent . . . do you set your churches at libertie, when you minister occasion to oppresse them with more and with greater burthens?”<sup>79</sup> In a situation where refusal to wear the vestments meant deprivation from their pulpits, surely they should recognize that edifying their flocks should mean accepting the vestments.<sup>80</sup>

When they wondered, again following the Flacian logic, whether something unedifying like vestments could even be indifferent in the first place, Bullinger seemed almost puzzled by the question: “Surely it seemeth to be an indifferent thing, in so much as it is a mere civil thing, appointed for decency, seemelines, and for order, wherin is put no religion.”<sup>81</sup> And when they asked, betraying the increasing biblicism in the non-conformist attitude toward ceremonies: “Whether any new ceremonies may be increased, besides the expresse worde of God?”<sup>82</sup> Bullinger replied, despite his own Swiss preference for a biblical minimalism in ceremonies, “I woulde have no ceremonies brought into the Church, but such as are necessarie: yet in the meane season I confesse, that the lawes touchyng these ceremonies, which perchance are not necessarie, and sometyme unprofitable, may not by and by be condemned of wickednesse.”<sup>83</sup>

The final question they raise, however, highlights growing tensions within Reformed theology over the relationship of magistracy and ministry that the next few years of controversy in England would bring to a boiling point. Sampson had asked, “Whether the prince may prescribe any thyng touchyng ceremonies, without

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<sup>78</sup> Heinrich Bullinger, *Concerning thapparel of Ministers*, in ZC 229–30. See also his response to their first question, p. 225.

<sup>79</sup> ZC 228.

<sup>80</sup> ZC 231, 232.

<sup>81</sup> ZC 228.

<sup>82</sup> ZC 230.

<sup>83</sup> ZC 230.



the wyll and free consent of the Cleargie.”<sup>84</sup> Bullinger, who had always been one of the foremost apologists for the Christian magistrate’s *cura religionis*, his duty to oversee and reform the Church, notes that if the prince had always waited for the consent of the clergy, then reformation might never have happened, and he cites Old Testament examples for the right of princes to reform religion. He would prefer that bishops be consulted, of course, but only in an advisory role; they must not claim for themselves any legislative authority: “Neyther would I agayne have them challenge unto themselves that power, which they usurped agaynst princes and magistrates in tyme of poperie.”<sup>85</sup> Bullinger’s worry here presages the recurrent polemic of English conformists in the 1570s and 1580s that the Puritan assertion of clerical prerogative to prescribe ecclesiastical laws would result in a new popery.

It also reflects the growing tensions between Bullinger’s Zurich and Geneva, where Theodore Beza was asserting with increasing aggressiveness the autonomy of the presbyterian ministry. Unsurprisingly, the anti-Vestiarrians found a more sympathetic ear when they wrote to Beza asking for support.<sup>86</sup> His response, sent directly to Bishop Edmund Grindal in London, granted, like Bullinger, the *prima facie* indifference of the ceremonies under dispute, but he argued rather more strenuously that in the present case, they could only be unedifying,<sup>87</sup> and he exhorted the bishops not to oppress their brothers’ consciences. Most significantly, however, he ended by saying, “by what right . . . may either the civill Magistrate by himself . . . or the Bishoppes wythoute the judgmente and consent of theyr Eldershship, of duetie ordaine anything, I have not yet learned.”<sup>88</sup>

#### IV. Unresolved Tensions

These growing ambiguities regarding the relative role of civil and ecclesiastical authorities can be discerned beneath the surface of conformist publications in the 1560s, even as these display a remarkable degree of pan-Protestant consensus regarding the basic principles of Christian liberty. In 1566, Archbishop Matthew Parker had responded to a prominent anti-Vestiarrian pamphlet by Robert Crowley with *A Briefe Examination for the tyme*.<sup>89</sup> That same year, he edited and published a collection of writings by continental Reformers

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<sup>84</sup> ZC 232.

<sup>85</sup> ZC 232.

<sup>86</sup> See Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 81.

<sup>87</sup> Frere and Douglas, eds., *Puritan Manifestoes*, 47–52.

<sup>88</sup> Frere and Douglas, eds., *Puritan Manifestoes*, 54.

<sup>89</sup> The attribution to Parker, it should be noted, is likely but not certain.

relevant to the adiaphora dispute, which was headlined by a *scholium* from Melancthon's 1541 *Moralis Philosophiae Epitome*, entitled "Whether it be a mortall sinne to transgresse civill lawes."<sup>90</sup> Around the same time also appeared a remarkable document, a set of "Propositions or articles framed for the use of the Dutch Church in London" on the subject of Christian liberty and related doctrines. These articles had been occasioned by a dispute over the use of godparents in baptism in the Dutch Strangers' Church in London,<sup>91</sup> which raised fundamental questions about Christian liberty, adiaphora, and ecclesiastical authority, and led ultimately to a schism. The Dutch ministers therefore drew up a set of articles, attempting to express the magisterial Reformed understanding of these doctrines, and submitted it to the review of the leaders of Reformed churches in Heidelberg, Bern, Lausanne, Zurich, and Geneva. The document received general approval, although a number of clarificatory revisions were proposed by Beza. The final draft, incorporating some of these suggestions, was submitted to Grindal, who, as Bishop of London had jurisdiction over the Strangers' Churches. Pleased at its contents, seeing its relevance to the ongoing Vestiarian disputes, and recognizing its value as a pan-Reformed consensus statement on these issues, he had it published.<sup>92</sup> Although both Thomas Cartwright and John Whitgift later refer to it in the

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<sup>90</sup> This text occupies pp. 3–16 of the pamphlet *Whether it be a mortall sinne*, and the original appears in CR XVI:109–16.

<sup>91</sup> This was a church consisting of refugees from the persecution and fighting in the Netherlands. They were affiliated with a congregation of French refugees as well, under the leadership of Nicholas des Gallars, and maintained close ties to Beza in Geneva. During the reign of Edward VI, the Stranger Churches had been collectively overseen by John á Lasco, and the *Forma ac ratio* he created for their government proved enormously influential in the development of Reformed church polity. See Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church*. See Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 113–15.

<sup>92</sup> At least, so claims John Strype, in his *Life and Acts of Archbishop Edmund Grindal* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1821 [1710]). He explains that Grindal encouraged the Dutch congregation to make these propositions public, recognizing that they "might serve to satisfy those of the English Church in these days, that scrupled submission in the ecclesiastical appointments about the ceremonies. They were printed by Jugg, printer to the Queen's Majesty, in Latin and English" (190). However, the only publication of these articles that I have been able to locate appeared in 1647: *XXXII Propositions or Articles, Subscribed By severall Reformed Churches, and Concurred in by divers godly Ministers of the City of London* (London: Robert Ibbisson, 1647). Strype reprints the articles in Appendix XVIII to his *Life and Acts* (pp. 519–27), and I have copied his version in full in Appendix I of this thesis. Noting that this version represents the articles after the incorporation of proposed amendments from Theodore Beza, R.W. Dixon offers the originals in Latin, with Beza's comments interspersed in translation (taken from Epistle 24 of Beza's *Letters*), in *History of the Church of England from the Abolition of the Roman Jurisdiction*, vol. 6, *Elizabeth, A.D. 1564–1570* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1902), 186–89.

Admonition Controversy of the following decade,<sup>93</sup> it has strangely escaped historical notice since.<sup>94</sup>

On a great many points, it coheres closely with Parker's doctrine of Christian liberty in *A Briefe Examination*, and with Bullinger's response to Sampson and Humphrey. First, it clearly emphasizes the essentially inward character of Christian liberty, the freedom of a conscience justified before God by faith alone, rather than a license to do whatever we want in the sphere of outward action.<sup>95</sup> In this outward sphere, the designation of a matter as indifferent does not mean it is morally inconsequential, only that its rightness or wrongness is circumstantially dependent.<sup>96</sup> Accordingly, our outward liberty must be used for the love of neighbor, and is limited accordingly. Parker argues similarly in *A Briefe Examination*, noting,

As touchyng Christian libertie, the faythfull man must knowe, that it is altogether spirituall, and parteyneth only to the conscience, whiche must be pacified concernyng the lawe of God, and nexte well stayed in thynges indifferent. This libertie consisteth herein, not to be holden and tyed with any religion in externall things: but that it may be lawfull before God to use them or omit them, as occasion shall serve. This perswasion a godly man must alwayes retaine and kepe safe in his mynde: but when he commeth to the use and action of them, then must he moderate and qualifie his libertie, accordyng to charitie toward his neyghbour, and obedience to his Prince. So though by this knowledge his mynde and conscience is alwayes free; yet his doying is as it were tyed or limited by lawe or love.<sup>97</sup>

This little conjunction, *or*, however, becomes the source of considerable tension and ambiguity. Are "law" and "love" two different considerations that may each constrain our actions for different reasons? The Dutch articles initially seem to

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<sup>93</sup> WW 1:209; SR, 65.

<sup>94</sup> The latest reference to this document, and the controversy behind it, that I have been able to find is Dixon's discussion in *History of the Church of England*, vol. 6, 184–92.

<sup>95</sup> Article I declares: "Christian liberty is not a wandering and unruly licence, by which we may do or leave undone whatsoever we list at our pleasure; but it is a free gift bestowed upon us by Christ our Lord; by the which, the children of God (that is, all the faithful), being delivered from the curse of the law, or eternal death, and from the heavy yoke of the ceremonial law, and being endowed with the Holy Ghost, begin willingly of their own accord to serve God in holiness and righteousness" (Strype, *Life and Acts*, 519).

<sup>96</sup> Article V: "Indifferent things are called those, which by themselves, being simply considered in their own nature, are neither good nor bad, as meat and drink, and such like; in the which therefore, it is said, that the kingdom of God consisteth not; and that therefore a man may use them well or evil: wherefore it followeth, that they are marvellously deceived, which suppose they are called indifferent, as though without any exception we may omit them, or use them as often as we list, without any sin" (Strype, *Life and Acts*, 520).

<sup>97</sup> *A Briefe Examination* 15v. He follows this passage with quotations from John Calvin and Peter Martyr Vermigli to demonstrate his continuity with the continental reformers on this point.

suggest so,<sup>98</sup> and provide a separate discussion of each constraint. Article VIII begins, “Generally, the use of these indifferent things is restrained by the law of charity, which is universal,” and makes this duty paramount, “nothing, otherwise indifferent and lawful, be done, whereby thy neighbour is destroyed; or that any thing be omitted, whereby he may be edified.” Of course, as we have already seen, this raised the question of how the believer was to judge, in uncertain circumstances, how the neighbor was to be edified. The Dutch articles, unsurprisingly, point us to Scripture: “judgment [must] be taken out of the word of God, what may or ought to be done, or not done.”<sup>99</sup> This, however, raises the spectre of private judgment, whereby individual liberty to judge what Scripture requires will clash with institutional liberty when the demands of love seem to come into conflict with those of law. This was certainly Parker’s concern in response to Crowley: “Upon this universall sentence: ‘That Christes Ministers must builde up and not pull downe,’ you determine that Vicars, Curates, and paryshe priestes ought to admit no orders which may not manifestly appeare unto them that they do edifie; giving every man in his paryshe an absolute authority.”<sup>100</sup>

Parker’s solution was to argue, sounding a characteristically Lutheran note (and one we have seen also in Starkey and Gardiner) that the laws of the magistrate in *adiaphora*, are in fact derived from the law of charity; law is a specification of love, and on this basis, carries divine authority:

Whatsoever man shall decree, whiche by any meanes may make to the use of his neighbours, for that the same is derived from the rule of charitie, as be lawes civill, domesticall statutes, ceremonies and rytes whiche Christian men use, thereby to teache or heare Goddes worde more commodiouslye, or to prayer, and about the Lordes Supper and Baptisme, yea, and whatsoever shalbe a furtheraunce to passe our life here more profitablye and decently: that thing ought not to be esteemed as a tradition or precept of man, though by men it be commanded, but as the tradition or precept of God.<sup>101</sup>

Article IX of the Dutch articles proceeds in a similar vein, declaring that, “Specially, the use of these things is forbidden by ecclesiastical or civil decree.” Clearly mindful

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<sup>98</sup> Article II: “Therefore, sith that he which is the Son of God is ruled by the Spirit of God, and that the same Spirit commandeth us, we should obey all ordinances of man (that is, all politic order, whereof the magistrate is the guardian), and all superiors, which watch for the health of our souls; yea, and that according to our vocation we should diligently procure the safeguard of our neighbour; it followeth, that that man abuseth the benefit of Christian liberty, or rather, is yet sold under sin, who doth not willingly obey either his magistrate or superior in the Lord, or doth not endeavour to edify the conscience of his brother” (Strype, *Life and Acts*, 519).

<sup>99</sup> Strype, *Life and Acts*, 521.

<sup>100</sup> *A Briefe Examination*, 7r.

<sup>101</sup> *A Briefe Examination*, 10r.

of the need to explain how such human decrees can bind the conscience without abridging Christian liberty, the article goes on to say that although “only God doth properly bind the conscience of man,” the magistrate or church may impose orders for the sake of edification which “do so far forth bind the conscience, that no man wittingly and willingly, with a stubborn mind, may, without sin, either do those things which are forbidden, or omit those things which are commanded.”<sup>102</sup>

Of course, the implication of this line of reasoning, in which the law of love serves as the basis for the authority of civil laws, is that such laws cease to bind when, by virtue of circumstances, they no longer serve the cause of edification, and the believer may disobey them without sin. The Dutch article X draws this implication,<sup>103</sup> and article XI emphasizes strongly that human authorities must *only* make laws in adiaphora for the purposes of “edifying,” “policy,” or “ecclesiastical order.”<sup>104</sup> Naturally, Parker is not so keen to endorse the logic of article X, worrying, “here is perylous auctoritie graunted to every subiect, to determine upon the Princes lawes, proclamations, and ordinances, that when they shall see them (many tymes otherwayes then they are in deede) unprofitable, then shall they, nay they must not do and accomplyshe the same.”<sup>105</sup> Accordingly, the subject must consider that once a law has been made, the offense that will come from disobeying it outweighs any other concerns of offense:

In indifferent thynges, if lawe, for common tranquillitie have prescribed no order what ought to be done, a Christian man ought to have a great regarde of his neighbour’s conscience, according to S.Paul’s doctrine. But yf lawe foreseeyng harmes and providing quietnes, have taken lawefull order therin, offence is taken, and not given, when the subiect doth his duetie in obedience.<sup>106</sup>

Melanchthon, as a matter of fact, had argued similarly in his “Whether it be a mortall sinne,” the text Parker had recently reprinted, contending that breaking civil laws “doth hurt, and troubleth common quietnesse; therefore in civill laws, respect of charitie and offence is alwayes of force.”<sup>107</sup> But could the same be said of

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<sup>102</sup> Strype, *Life and Acts*, 521.

<sup>103</sup> “And sith these things are not ordained simply for themselves, but in respect of certain circumstances, not as though the things themselves were of their own nature unlawful things (for it belongeth only to God to determine this) in case those circumstances do cease, and so be that offence be avoided as near as we can, and that there be no stubborn will of resisting; no man is to be reprovved of sin, which shall do otherwise than those ordinances” (Strype, *Life and Acts*, 521).

<sup>104</sup> Strype, *Life and Acts*, 522.

<sup>105</sup> *A Briefe Examination* 14r.

<sup>106</sup> *A Briefe Examination*, 10v.

<sup>107</sup> *Whether it be a mortall sinne* 12 (CR XVI:114).

ecclesiastical laws? Given that the original function of the doctrine of Christian liberty was to restrain clerical tyranny and ease the burden of conscience in ecclesiastical ceremonies, some Protestants were clearly reticent to say so. Melanchthon had in fact expressly insisted that “the bynding is unlike”<sup>108</sup>: whereas ecclesiastical laws bound *only inasmuch* as circumstances dictated, and could be disobeyed without sin if there was no offense or stubbornness (precisely the standard given in the tenth Dutch article), civil laws, it seemed, always bound the conscience. But why? Although he later suggests that in the case of civil laws, disobedience would always, as a matter of fact, cause offence, he initially states: “Touching obedience due to the civil laws, Paul sayth, we must obey, not only for feare of vengeaunce, but also for conscience sake. This commaundement byndeth us even without matter of offence; for we must obey the authoritie of God, though no offence be geven.”<sup>109</sup> The voice of the magistrate is the voice of God, full stop. Melanchthon certainly does not wish to say the same of the minister, and therefore takes a more moderate line on ecclesiastical laws; however, he does not explain in this text how the believer is to understand laws proceeding from *civil* authority, imposed for *civil* reasons, but regulating *ecclesiastical* matters. This was the dilemma he was to face seven years later in the Adiaphora Controversy, and of course the dilemma that Elizabethan churchmen were facing.

As Parker reprinted Melanchthon’s *scholium* without commentary, we can only guess at how he intended to apply it. Unlike Melanchthon, Parker does not seem to have viewed ecclesiastical ceremonies and laws of civil order as fundamentally different in nature; both can bind the believer for the sake of good order.<sup>110</sup> Although he reasons more along the lines that Melanchthon uses for ecclesiastical law (emphasizing that these laws indirectly bind the conscience by virtue of the demands of charity, rather than appealing directly to Romans 13:5), he does not seem to contemplate the possibility of occasional disobedience, as Melanchthon and the Dutch articles do.

The ambiguity here was fatal, given the conviction we have already seen from Sampson, Humphrey, and Beza of a certain clerical autonomy in the matter of

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<sup>108</sup> *Whether it be a mortall sinne*, 11 (CR XVI:113).

<sup>109</sup> *Whether it be a mortall sinne*, 9–10 (CR XVI:112).

<sup>110</sup> He draws an express analogy between the way they function in *A Briefe Examination* 12r–12v. Primus draws attention to the ambiguity in Parker’s use of Melanchthon in *Vestments Controversy*, 140.

ecclesiastical ceremonies.<sup>111</sup> For, although we have discussed the problem thus far in terms of individual vs. institutional liberty, and this is clearly how figures like Parker saw it, we have now seen the emergence of rhetoric that suggests a clash of institutions. The concern for “*eutaxia*, that is, seemly order,”<sup>112</sup> after all, was one that could be found just as much in John Calvin as in Tudor bishops. None of the reformers wanted individual freedom for every believer to do as he or she liked in matters of worship or discipline; this was self-evidently unedifying. In his *Institutes*, accordingly, Calvin makes very clear that in its external form as part of the civil kingdom, the church, like any human society, requires a “form of organization . . . to foster the common peace and maintain concord.”<sup>113</sup> In explaining the authority of such rules, he argues very similarly to the Dutch articles, explaining that in framing such laws, ministers do not lay down new laws binding on the conscience before God, but rather “the divine and eternal command of God not to violate love,”<sup>114</sup> specified for particular circumstances, beyond which it does not bind. Unlike Melancthon, Calvin extends the same kind of reasoning to civil laws, recognizing the need to carefully navigate the relationship between Romans 13:5 and the principle of Christian liberty: “Moreover, the difficulty [of defining conscience] is increased by the fact that Paul enjoins obedience toward the magistrate, not only for fear of punishment, but for conscience’ sake. From this it follows that consciences are bound by civil laws. But if this were so, all that we said a little while ago and are now going to say about spiritual government would fall.”<sup>115</sup> Therefore, the same restrictions must reply to both: “human laws, whether made by magistrate or by church, even though they have to be observed (I speak of good and just laws), still do not of themselves bind the conscience. For all obligation to observe laws looks to the general purpose, but does not consist in the things enjoined.”<sup>116</sup> But when he spells out this “general purpose” by reference to “God’s general command, which commends to us the authority of magistrate,”<sup>117</sup> we have to ask whether God

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<sup>111</sup> Indeed, Primus notes that in their response to Bullinger’s letter, Humphrey and Sampson “objected strenuously to Bullinger’s regarding the vestments issue as a mere *civil* matter when it so obviously relates to *ecclesiastical* polity” (*Vestments Controversy*, 131n60).

<sup>112</sup> Parker, *A Briefe Examination*, 12v.

<sup>113</sup> *Institutes* IV.10.27 (2:1205). It should be noted that this line of argument contradicts VanDrunen’s reading of Calvin, in which the visible church, *qua* institution, is identified with the spiritual kingdom, such that all its laws, must derive directly from Scripture.

<sup>114</sup> *Institutes* IV.10.22 (2:1200–1201).

<sup>115</sup> *Institutes* III.19.15 (1:848).

<sup>116</sup> *Institutes* IV.10.5 (2:1183).

<sup>117</sup> *Institutes* IV.10.5 (2:1183–4).

similarly ratifies the authority of the minister. The Dutch articles on Christian liberty had, quite strikingly, put God's command to obey "all superiors which watch for the health of our souls" on the same par as His command to obey "all politic order, whereof the magistrate is the guardian,"<sup>118</sup> and it was, after all, a protest against the *ministers* of the Strangers' Church that had prompted these articles. Indeed, in Article XX, we find the parallelism made explicit, "In the Church of Christ, that is to say, in the house or city of the living God, the Consistory, or fellowship of governors, consisting of the Ministers of the word, and of Seniors lawfully called, sustaineth the person of the universal Church in ecclesiastical government, even as every magistrate in his commonwealth."<sup>119</sup>

With such tensions evident within the very documents that were employed by conformist leaders to quell the anti-Vestiarian dissenters, it is not surprising that the controversy was not long resolved. Although most of the dissenting ministers conformed, the murmurings of discontent were soon to lead in a more radical direction, one presaged by the more clericalist strand of the Reformed which we have here encountered. In pitting the institutional liberty of the ministers against that of the prince, however, these dissenters would increasingly de-emphasize it as an adiaphoristic liberty. After all, the Protestant polemic against arbitrary clerical authority to make new laws for the church was not soon forgotten. The authority of ministers was to be an interpretive authority, bound to the word of God, which was the only sure guide as to what should or should not be done in the adiaphora. Yet increasingly, this authority was to acquire judicial, rather than merely epistemic weight. The need for certainty, confronted with the contradictory demands upon the believer to use the adiaphora to edification, rather than to destruction, had prompted the call for a new authority who would adjudicate the conflict of loyalties by recourse to Scripture, which could, after all, be relied upon to tell us all that was necessary. Of course, it also followed then that if such a judging authority was itself necessary, Scripture must have told us about it. It was thus possible to argue that church polity was not a matter of indifference after all, that divine law in fact required an autonomous, scripturally-regulated clerical jurisdiction with responsibility for all ecclesiastical affairs. Needless to say, such a resolution, far from resolving the conflict of loyalties, simply transposed the locus of the conflict and heightened the stakes.

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<sup>118</sup> Article II (Strype, *Life and Acts*, 519).

<sup>119</sup> Strype, *Life and Acts*, 524.



## CHAPTER THREE

### “EXACT PRECISE SEVERITIE”: THE PURITAN CHALLENGE TO PRINCE AND CONSCIENCE

#### I. The Beginnings of a New Movement

Between 1567 and 1572, the Elizabethan Church entered upon a decisive new stage, engendering a movement which was to leave a wide and lasting legacy on the Reformed world over succeeding centuries, particularly in Britain and America, a movement traditionally known as “puritanism.” Although a number of scholars have quite helpfully traced lines of development for the puritan movement back to the Marian exile, or the Edwardian reform, or even the Henrician period (lines we have to some extent followed in the previous chapter),<sup>1</sup> there is wisdom in the preference among contemporary scholars to confine the term to the Elizabethan era and beyond. Indeed, even the Elizabethan Vestiarian controversy, despite its central importance to the development of the new movement, represents more of a prologue to “puritanism” than its first chapter. A great deal seems to have changed between the conclusion of this controversy in 1567 and the outbreak of the Admonition Controversy in 1572, when young radicals John Field and Thomas Wilcox, frustrated by the lack of official response to reforming overtures and complaints, published and disseminated a scandalously rancorous *Admonition to Parliament*.

The document, clearly intended (despite its name) as a piece of public propaganda,<sup>2</sup> ignited a firestorm of controversy: Field and Wilcox were imprisoned, an official *Answer* by John Whitgift was commissioned, and battle lines were drawn as pamphlets and counter-pamphlets, treatises and counter-treatises, began to multiply. The immediate literary controversy, in which Whitgift emerged as the spokesman for the establishment, and Thomas Cartwright as the spokesman for the puritans, lasted until 1577, but the movement that the *Admonition* called into being lasted in organized form until the early 1590s, when it had grown so militant that

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<sup>1</sup> Among older scholarship, Knappen’s *Tudor Puritanism* sees fit to begin the story with William Tyndale back in 1524, thus losing for the term in clarity what it gains in context. More careful, and quite helpful, is Verkamp’s *IM*, which traces the roots of the puritan attitude toward adiaphora back into the reigns of Edward and Henry. The connection between Elizabethan puritanism and some of the radicalism engendered during the Marian exile is undeniable, and is particularly helpfully treated by Joan O’Donovan, *TLAER*, 91–108.

<sup>2</sup> See the discussion in Frere and Douglas, *Puritan Manifestoes*, xii–xvii; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 118–120.

the bishops and Privy Council took dramatic steps to quash it. The cast of this new act in the drama, however, were quite different from those who had fought it out with the bishops over vestments in 1565–67, most of whom had grudgingly submitted when it was clear the policy was inflexible. Of the twenty scrupulous Protestants who presented a supplication to the bishops over vestments in 1565, only three, says Patrick Collinson, “remained staunch to the radical cause until their deaths,” and most “at once dissociated themselves from the new extremism.” So much so, in fact, that from 1572 on, “we are evidently witnessing the beginnings of a new movement rather than the conversion of the old.”<sup>3</sup>

And indeed, the issues at stake in the Admonition Controversy are far different, and broader, than those in the Vestiarian. No longer is the question one of the legitimate scope for resisting imposition of certain ceremonies that troubled scrupulous consciences, a dispute on the margins of the Elizabethan settlement, but it concerns the basic validity of that settlement in its essential features. “We in England are so far off from having a church rightly reformed, according to the prescript of God's word, that as yet we are not come to the outward face of the same,” the *Admonition* fulminates, throwing down a gauntlet to the bishops and the government.<sup>4</sup> At stake now is not whether the bishops should enforce strict conformity, but whether the bishops have power to govern the church at all; not whether civil law should presume to bind ministers to wear the cap and surplice, but whether civil authority has any role in determining ceremonies. A fundamental platform of the *Admonition* is the presbyterian doctrine of church government, which, aside from a general sense that lower clergy ought to have more authority in determining church affairs, had been nowhere on the radar in the earlier controversy. This system of polity is not presented as a suggestion, as that best suited to the edification and good government of the churches, but as a biblical requirement. This emphasis reflects a shift in attitudes toward adiaphora across the board, with the new Admonitionists suggesting not so much that indifferent ceremonies were being used unedifyingly, but that they were not indifferent in the first place.<sup>5</sup> Earlier protests against tyranny in adiaphora, and suggestions that only

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<sup>3</sup> Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 75, 120.

<sup>4</sup> John Field and Thomas Wilcox, *An Admonition to Parliament*, in W.H. Frere and C.E. Douglas, eds., *Puritan Manifestoes: A Study of the Origin of the Puritan Revolt* (London: SPCK, 1907), 9. This sentence was quickly amended in the second edition of the *Admonition* to the somewhat more moderate, “as yet we are scarce come to the outward face of the same”; but the damage was done—conformists would hereafter charge the Presbyterians with denying that the church of England was a true church.

<sup>5</sup> Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 105.

Scripture could guide us to their right use, hardly seem to provide a basis for these aggressive new claims. So how do we account for this shift?

We have seen in the last chapter how dissenters in the 1560s, faced with insoluble crises of conscience, began to gravitate toward the idea of an independent ministry with final interpretive authority. Beza's presbyterian Geneva was a natural place to draw support for such a conception. All the more so given that the bishops, as unwilling but seemingly tyrannical enforcers of Elizabeth's policy, had completely lost their credibility during the Second Vestiarian Controversy. Passionately loyal to their sovereign and seeking a scapegoat, the dissenters grew increasingly hostile to the very idea of episcopacy, and began to look to presbyterianism as an attractive alternative.<sup>6</sup> The intense need for certainty, for authoritative guidance that would dictate the shape of the church, meant that the justification for this presbyterianism must be sought directly in Scripture. Accordingly, Beza's doctrine, a hardened and doctrinaire version of that which Calvin had pioneered,<sup>7</sup> was taken up by some of those dissatisfied with the ineffectual protests of the 1560s. Its chief exponent was Thomas Cartwright, who made a name for himself by expounding the presbyterian system in a series of lectures on Acts at Cambridge in 1570. However, it is not enough to explain Cartwright's presbyterianism simply as the application of Genevan ideas to England, as has been customary among many historians.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, with Cartwright and his associate Walter Travers, we find a systematic development of presbyterianism, along with a distinctive version of the two-kingdoms doctrine, that went beyond anything Beza had yet articulated and indeed likely exerted an influence on his own crystallization of Presbyterian doctrine.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, as we shall see at points, Cartwright's views on adiaphora, law in Scripture, and the two

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<sup>6</sup> On the bishops' reluctance to enforce the Queen's policies, see MacCulloch, *Later Reformation in England*, 30–31. On the resulting scapegoating of the bishops, see Frere and Douglas, *Manifestoes*, x; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 115.

<sup>7</sup> That Beza, rather than Calvin, is responsible for the emergence of a *jure divino* concept of presbyterianism, has been increasingly recognized by scholars; the fullest exposition can be found in Tadataka Maruyama, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza: The Reform of the True Church* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> So we find Knappen in *Tudor Puritanism* setting the stage with a chapter entitled "The Genevan Model and Its Propagandists" (134–48). See also Stephen Brachlow *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology, 1570–1625* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), 36–37, and more nuanced statements in Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 109–113 and Lake, *AP*, 3–4.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Milton, "Puritanism and the Continental Reformed Churches," in Coffey and Lim, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, 116.

kingdoms go well beyond those of his hero Calvin, with whom he has too often been simply equated.

To be sure, such men as Cartwright and Travers represented a fairly radical point (although certainly not the most radical) along a spectrum of advanced Protestant dissent in Elizabethan England, and we must avoid casting all of Elizabethan puritanism in their mold.<sup>10</sup> However, conformist apologists such as Whitgift and Hooker were hardly being arbitrary in singling out their works for critique, recognizing in these writings a logic dangerous to the liberty of the English church. So we find that in Cartwright's exchange with Whitgift we can discern the theological anxieties at the root of the puritan protest in this period. These anxieties manifest themselves in part in the biblicism so often seen as a hallmark of puritanism, and also in the puritan erosion of magisterial authority in favor of an independent presbyterian jurisdiction, commonly noted by historians of political thought. But these are merely symptoms. Nearer to the heart of the problem was the puritan concern for "visible saints," a zeal to move beyond an understanding of justification by faith alone that seemed to license apathy and complacency and in its place to cultivate a more dynamic spirituality.<sup>11</sup>

I will suggest in section II, therefore, that this concern served to intensify the crisis of conscience posed by adiaphora by again vesting temporal matters with eternal significance. Underlying all of this, however, are the tensions regarding the doctrines of Christian liberty and the adiaphora, the clash of loyalties and the quest for certainty, that we have discerned in the previous two chapters. Understanding this will enable us to see the conformist critique of puritanism as motivated, in part at least, by a desire to protect their own understanding of the magisterial Protestant doctrine of Christian liberty.

From this standpoint, I will argue in section III, we can gain a new clarity about the exact motivation and nature of puritan biblicism, which is best understood not as a distinctive concept of *how authoritative Scripture was*, but of *how Scripture exercised its authority*—namely, in such a way as to minimize the need for human prudence. The new understanding was to be summed up by Thomas Cartwright at the conclusion of his *Second Replie*: "It is the vertue off a good lawe to leave as litle as may be in the discretion off the judge."<sup>12</sup> Dwight Bozeman has

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<sup>10</sup> For a full discussion of contemporary scholarship on puritanism, and an attempt to situate my own approach in relation to it, see Appendix II.

<sup>11</sup> See Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, ch. 3; Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963), ch. 1.

<sup>12</sup> SR, Appendix p. i.21–22.

captured this emphasis in his book *The Precisianist Strain*, where he identifies the theme of “preciseness,” a “zest for regulation,” as lying at the heart of both Puritan theology and piety:

A primary attribute of the deity they served, ‘exact precise severitie’ was equally a habit and credential of his people. ‘Walke precisely, or exactly, or strictly in all things,’ enjoined John Preston in a sermon, ‘Exact Walking’.... To ‘walk exactly,’ this eminent preacher and college head explained, is to ‘goe to the extremity.’ It is ‘so to keepe the commandments...that a man goes to the utmost of them, ... lookeing to every particle of them.’<sup>13</sup>

To highlight this emphasis, which is central to my interpretation of puritanism in the period, I shall dispense with the slippery word “puritanism” in the rest of this chapter and adopt the term “precisianism,” which was in fact initially the more common designation in Elizabethan polemics.<sup>14</sup>

Such preciseness, naturally, required an authoritative interpreter, lest the believer go astray. From this, therefore, I will suggest in section IV that we can gain a clearer understanding of the nature of the puritan challenge to civil authority, which consisted not chiefly in a boundary-dispute over jurisdictions, but in an arrogation of supreme epistemological authority to the presbyterian ministers. Such an assertion of clerical authority to make conscience-binding determinations of God’s will invited the challenge from conformists that the precisianists were reversing the Reformation and resurrecting popish tyranny. Even aside from this, however, it is easy to see how the precisianist outlook was bound to create deep theological rifts in a church formed by the Protestant spirit of adiaphorism, which contended both that a great deal of the Christian life was left underdetermined by God’s commandments, and that, by virtue of the doctrine of justification by faith, failures to walk exactly were readily pardonable. The doctrine of Christian liberty,

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<sup>13</sup> Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion & Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 5, quoting Preston, *Sermons Preached before His Maiestie ....* (London, 1630), 108–109. Bozeman does not mean by this to resurrect the stereotype of Puritan as mere nitpicker, preoccupied by a merely negative agenda of removing offenses that trouble his trivial scruples. John Coolidge, echoed by Peter Lake, has rightly attacked this image, emphasizing the very positive vision of reform that drove precisians of all stripes (Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England: Puritanism and the Bible* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1970], especially ch. 2; Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* [Cambridge: CUP, 1982], 2–3.) But contrary to Coolidge’s sometimes rosy-spectacled revisionism, this positive reform was to be conducted at every point according to strictly predefined rules, under the watchful eye of a rule-loving God.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Collinson, “Antipuritanism,” in Coffey and Lim, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, 21.

with which the puritan protest began, was at risk of being lost in a thicket of legalism.

## II. "A Shifting View of Redemption Itself": The Precisianist Rejection of Invisible Grace

### *Adiaphora in Three Dimensions*

We began in chapter 1 with John Perry's concept of the "clash of loyalties," and the recurrent sense in the Reformation that there was an urgent need to determine the "just bounds" of a Christian's political and religious duties. In depriving the Christian conscience of any authoritative human arbiter of these duties, Luther had opened the door for various human authorities to jostle for position, potentially leaving the believer suspended in perpetual doubt, torn by different loyalties. Yet so sweeping was Luther's two-kingdoms doctrine that it sought to render this loss of certainty unproblematic, by insisting it could never touch the conscience. Because justified by faith in Christ alone, not by any outward works, the Christian's conscience belonged to God alone, and could confidently face any uncertainties that confronted him in the external forum, sure that his standing before God was not in jeopardy should he err. The radical freedom thus unleashed, freedom to "make new Decalogues" even,<sup>15</sup> proved too much for most reformers, and was increasingly fenced in by strict adherence to the Word of God.

As we have mentioned above, there was an ambiguity in the concept of adiaphora. While Luther and others could sometimes speak from a soteriological standpoint, as if everything but faith was indifferent, there was an increasing preference to define adiaphora as those things neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. Scripture, after all, had a great deal to say not merely about justification but about sanctification, about how the justified Christian must live out his freedom in obedience to God and for the blessing of his neighbor. In this context, then, the concept of adiaphora functioned primarily as an epistemological rather than a soteriological distinction—it distinguished those duties of which we have certain knowledge by special revelation (whether essential to salvation or not) from those duties of which we have uncertain knowledge, deriving from natural revelation or human authority. This difference between these two eroded, however, with an increasing stress on the "third use of the law," Scripture's guidance for the process

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<sup>15</sup> Martin Luther, *Theses Concerning Faith and Law*, in LW 34:112.

of sanctification, which was an integral part of salvation, even if not its basis.<sup>16</sup> “Things necessary to salvation,” then, could encompass all things required in Scripture, which are part of the life of sanctification, leaving a much smaller sphere of adiaphora. But the emphasis on sanctification, on the conformity of the visible realm of outward behavior to the invisible realm of grace,<sup>17</sup> also rendered increasingly problematic the realm of uncertainty regarding moral questions that lay outside special revelation. For, from the *soteriological* and the *epistemological*, we might also distinguish a *moral* sense of adiaphora, which is indeed probably the first that comes to our own minds if we hear of “things indifferent.” When something was designated “indifferent,” did that mean it was morally neutral or irrelevant? While the early Luther at times spoke as if all things but faith were morally inconsequential,<sup>18</sup> he and later adiaphorists were generally clear to distinguish that this was not what the term *adiaphoron* meant.<sup>19</sup> There were plenty of deeds indifferent to salvation that still had moral weight, requiring deliberation according to Scripture and natural law. Or were there?

If the barrier between justification and sanctification, the hidden and the visible, were eroded, if failure to conform to the will of God could exclude one from salvation, or at least from the community of the church, then anything not morally indifferent was potentially of eternal significance. To leave large swaths of the realm of moral conduct shrouded in uncertainty, then, no longer seemed a viable option. The clash of loyalties precipitated by disputes over adiaphora had made it clear that Calvin’s dictum, “Let love be our guide, and all will be safe,”<sup>20</sup> simply would not be sufficient. “To walk exactly” was necessary for the believer who wanted to please

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<sup>16</sup> While noting that the concept of the “third use” could be found in Lutheranism as well, Witte summarizes, “Among sixteenth century Protestant reformers, Lutherans tended to emphasize the theological use of the moral law consistent with their emphasis on the doctrine of justification. Calvinists tended to emphasize the educational use of the moral law, consistent with their emphasis on sanctification” (Witte and Arthur, “Three Uses of the Law,” 436n8; see full discussion on pp. 434–43).

<sup>17</sup> This shift of emphasis can be seen in the increasing drive for ecclesiastical discipline that came to dominate particularly Reformed (but many Lutheran as well) churches from the mid 1530s on, to the extent that some added “a third mark”—the right practice of ecclesiastical discipline—to the Lutheran definition of a true church as one that maintains the pure preaching of the gospel and the sacraments. By this means, the outward moral purity of professing Christians was made into an essential component of what it meant to be a Christian, and of what it meant for a fellowship of Christians to be a genuine church. See Ballor and Littlejohn, “European Calvinism: Church Discipline.”

<sup>18</sup> For instance, *Treatise on Good Works*, in LW 44:26.

<sup>19</sup> See Manschreck, “The Role of Melancthon,” 165; Verkamp, “Limits,” 52–59. Indeed, we have seen this clearly stated above in Art. II of the Dutch propositions on Christian liberty as well.

<sup>20</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* IV.10.30 (2:1208)

God, and to walk exactly, one needed exact and certain guidance, which could be afforded by Scripture alone. Accordingly, the conviction arose that “the word of God containeth the direction of all things pertaining to the church, *yea, of whatsoever things can fall into any part of man’s life,*” as Cartwright so succinctly put it.<sup>21</sup> By this means, the distinct conceptions of adiaphora—soteriological, epistemological, and moral—were collapsed into one another, with devastating consequences for the doctrine of Christian liberty.

The problem was not the idea that Scripture should rule our lives; this in itself was not inimical to freedom. As Cartwright would say, in words offensive perhaps to modern sensibilities but impeccably Protestant, “the greatest libertie and freedom off Christians is to serve the Lord according to his revealed will, and in all thinges to hang upon his mouth.”<sup>22</sup> The problem, as we shall see, was the way in which Scripture was taken to rule, “to leave as litle as may be in the discretion off the judge.”<sup>23</sup> Prudence was to be eliminated, eroding the extent to which the believer could be seen as a rational and active participant in God’s work, as the principle of willingness would seem to call for.

Before proceeding to examine how this comprehensive concept of biblical authority functioned for precisianists, let us first examine the evidence for this elision of justification and sanctification, hidden and visible, in precisianist thought.

#### *Eliding Sanctification and Justification*

In *The Communion of Saints*, Stephen Brachlow describes how radical puritans increasingly looked for “*visible* evidence of true, saving faith by means of what they called an ‘open’ or ‘outward’ profession of faith that issued in a visibly active and obedient membership.”<sup>24</sup> While constantly fighting shy of the temptation to make such good works *constitutive* of salvation, they lay enormous stress on them as necessary for assurance of salvation. Good works may not get the believer into heaven, but they were the best guarantee for knowing that one had a ticket there.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Replie*, 14 (WW 1:190); italics mine.

<sup>22</sup> SR 442.30–32.

<sup>23</sup> SR, Appendix p. i.21–22.

<sup>24</sup> Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, 120.

<sup>25</sup> Dwight Bozeman describes how in the emerging puritan divinity, in sharp contrast to Luther, “Ethical activity was to flow toward, not away from, religious security. . . . [T]he quest for assurance—despite regular appeals to free pardon and the Spirit’s inward witness—led squarely into the realm of behavior.” To some extent, English Protestant thought had never adopted Luther’s thoroughgoing solfidianism, but had tempered it with a vision of moral reformation informed by humanist and perhaps Lollard emphases (Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 13–23). Nonetheless, Elizabethan and Jacobean puritanism



In his study *The Precisianist Strain*, Bozeman chronicles how this obsession increasingly worked to subvert precisianist commitment to justification by faith alone, eventually generating an antinomian backlash. “They spoke of Christian freedom,” he says, “but usually had in mind freedom to obey.”<sup>26</sup> “One can imagine,” he goes on

the irascible Luther’s reaction to Cartwright’s flat statements that the “Gospell” aims to “perswade [men] to submit themselves to the kingdome of Christ, and to obey his laws.” . . . [W]hen we find a figure like John Udall (1560–1592). . . suggesting that “Amend your lives” is “a sentence . . . containing the very substance of all religion, and the whole sum of Christianity,” we may infer that advocacy of formal church discipline was but one expression of a shifting view of redemption itself.<sup>27</sup>

Whitgift is well-attuned to this shifting view, and when Cartwright goes so far as to say that “all the commandments of God, and of the apostles, are needful for our salvation,”<sup>28</sup> he cries foul. “What is to lay an intolerable yoke and burden upon the necks of men, if this be not? or wherby could you more directly bring us into the bondage of the law, from the which ‘we are made free,’ than by this assertion?”<sup>29</sup> Whitgift is convinced that the confusion of the soteriological and epistemological dimensions here, and the consequent blurring of justification and sanctification, hidden and visible, results in the destruction of evangelical ecclesiology, playing into the hands of the two great enemies of the evangelical Reformation, the papists and the Anabaptists.<sup>30</sup> The latter in particular had sought, like the puritans, to make the pure community of the godly visible in separated churches. They had insisted

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undoubtedly displayed an intensification in this theme, as both Bozeman and Brachlow chronicle at length. This may be attributed to the volatile synthesis of this native English moralism with several strains in Reformed continental divinity at this time: the general Bucerian/Calvinist disciplinary drive which had distinguished the Reformed since the 1540s but was finally coming to full expression by 1560 (Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 17–18; Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, 114–17); the emergence of covenant theology, in particular the concept of a bilateral covenant in which blessings were contingent on obedience (Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 32–39; Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, 31–35, 50–55); and the hardened predestinarianism of Beza and Zanchi, which, as R.T. Kendall has argued, led to the development of a distinctively English “experimental predestinarianism” concerned with “making one’s calling and election sure” (*Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* [Oxford: OUP, 1979]; Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, 30–39, 118–19).

<sup>26</sup> Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 31–32.

<sup>28</sup> Cartwright, *Replie*, 18 (WW I:231).

<sup>29</sup> WW I:235.

<sup>30</sup> WW I:181–87.

that without discipline and “the ban,” by which ungodly members were cut off from the fellowship of the saved, there could be no church.<sup>31</sup>

Although perhaps influenced by this Anabaptist emphasis on discipline, considering it to be crucial for the health of the church, Calvin had repudiated the idea that it was essential to the being of a church, and consistently maintained that the visible church remained a “mixed multitude,” in which tares remained inseparable from the wheat—there was a limit to how much even the best-reformed visible church would approximate the invisible.<sup>32</sup> The precisianists, however, had no qualms in adopting discipline as a third mark of the church, and laying considerable stress upon it: “The outward marks wherby a true christian church is knowne, are preaching of the worde purely, ministring of the sacraments sincerely, and ecclesiastical discipline which consisteth in admonition and correction of faults severelie.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, they went further, insisting not merely that some practice of discipline was essential, but that “*the discipline*”—by which they referred to the Presbyterian model of polity and discipline—was essential, indeed, part of the gospel. In his *Replie to an Answer*, Cartwright specifically repudiated the idea that matters of discipline “were not matters necessary to salvation, and of faith”; on the contrary, “Excommunication, and other censures of the church, which are forerunners unto excommunication, are matters of discipline, and the same are also

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<sup>31</sup> For an excellent discussion of this Anabaptist theme, and its relation to early Reformed ecclesiology, see Kenneth R. Davis, “No Discipline, No Church: An Anabaptist Contribution to the Reformed Tradition,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 13:4 (1982): 43–58. Of course, modern scholarship has increasingly recognized the difficulty of making generalizations about the myriad of different Anabaptist groups, even if the emphasis on separated visible purity was, in one form or another, a fairly common element. For a full overview, see John D. Roth and James M. Stayer, eds., *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> See John Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and the Libertines*, ed. Benjamin Wirt Farley (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 57–66, and Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 230. Despite a recurrent emphasis on the importance of discipline for the health of the church, Calvin self-consciously resists making it part of the essence of the church, retaining just the two Lutheran marks of the word and sacraments (see Avis, “‘The True Church’ in Reformation Theology,” *SJT* 30:4 (1977), 327–32).

<sup>33</sup> Field and Wilcox, *Admonition, in Puritan Manifestoes*, 9. The subject of the “marks of the church” or *notae ecclesiae* has often been a focal point of Reformation scholarship seeking to identify a distinction between Lutheran and Reformed (e.g., Robert Kingdon, “Peter Martyr Vermigli on Church Discipline” in Emidio Campi, ed., *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism, Republicanism, Reformation* [Geneva: Droz, 2002], 67–76), or magisterial and radical Protestant ecclesiologies (Kirby, *RHDRS*, 81–86; Avis, “True Church”). However, given that one can find two-mark and three-mark formulations comfortably existing side-by-side in nearly every branch of the Reformation from the 1530s on, the language itself matters less than what is meant by “discipline” (see Glenn Sunshine, “Discipline as the Third Mark of the Church: Three Views,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 33 (1998): 469–480) and whether the *notae* are being used descriptively or constitutively. See Ballor and Littlejohn, “European Calvinism: Church Discipline,” for a full discussion.

of faith and salvation.”<sup>34</sup> For Whitgift, this was clear evidence of both popery and Anabaptistry. The pope, too, he reminds Cartwright, had insisted that his outward government was necessary to salvation, and like Cartwright, he had done so without scriptural justification.<sup>35</sup> Whitgift rejects Cartwright’s assertion on three grounds. The first is that “I find no one certain and perfect kind of government prescribed or commanded in the scriptures to the church of Christ; which no doubt should have been done, if it had been a matter necessary unto the salvation of the church.”<sup>36</sup> The second is his commitment to Luther and Calvin’s two-mark ecclesiology. Whitgift quotes Calvin’s writings against the Anabaptists on this point, and concludes that although government “may be a part of the church, touching the outward form and perfection of it,” it is not so essential that a church ceases to be the body of Christ if it lacks the proper form of government; in other words “the ‘kind of government’ of the church is not ‘necessary to salvation.’”<sup>37</sup>

To these first two points, Cartwright’s response in the *Second Replie* helps clarify his motivations. He rebukes Whitgift for a reductionism interested only in the bare minimum that is necessary to qualify as a church: “As thowghe the question were what thinges the church (of those whiche be prescribed by the worde off God) may want and yet be the church of God, and not what thinges yt owght to have by the prescripte of the worde off God.”<sup>38</sup> Perhaps the church could exist without discipline, so that from a soteriological standpoint discipline could conceivably be classed among the *adiaphora*, but that is hardly the point. For the precisian, the emphasis has shifted toward conforming as fully as possible to all the words of God, which are all *necessary* for the believer to obey; if God has made His will clear regarding a matter, it is certainly not indifferent from the epistemological perspective. This raises the stakes immensely for the believer’s conscience; at every point of the Christian life, it is necessary to grasp rightly the will of God, and only certainty that one has done so can yield a conscience at peace with God. Of course, Whitgift will dispute, as a matter of empirical fact, that God has spoken to the

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<sup>34</sup> *Replie* 14; in *WW* I:181. See also *SR* 5. Naturally, this was one of those points where precisianists were prone to rhetorical overreach in the midst of polemics, and Cartwright would later qualify such remarks, admitting that discipline was not quite so essential as word and sacrament—was, perhaps, part of the *bene esse* as well. Nonetheless, it is part of the contention of this study that differences of rhetoric and emphasis mattered a great deal, even where the formal principles espoused, as articulated in the most sober moments, were quite close to those of the conformists.

<sup>35</sup> *WW* I:182.

<sup>36</sup> *WW* I:184.

<sup>37</sup> *WW* I:185.

<sup>38</sup> *SR* 52.21–24.

matter of ecclesiastical discipline, so at this point, he contends, soteriological and epistemological indifference quite overlap. For Cartwright, however, the conclusion that God *has* in fact spoken is less an empirical observation about Scripture than an *a priori* conviction about how revelation functions, as we shall see below.

Whitgift's third objection is also a staple anti-Anabaptist argument. If excommunication is necessary to salvation, as Cartwright contends, "then any man may separate himself from every church wherein is no excommunication."<sup>39</sup> Against this, Whitgift has no difficulty summoning up a barrage of writings from Reformed heavyweights (Calvin, Bullinger, and Gualter) opposing the Anabaptists on just this point. To this, Cartwright will insist in the *Second Replie* that he is not speaking to the duty of individual Christians, as if they ought to take matters into their own hands when discipline is not practiced rightly, but to the duty of ministers to excommunicate.<sup>40</sup> This, however, misses part of the point of Whitgift's objection, and those he has quoted from other Reformed authorities: that, if the *Admonition* and its defenders are going to speak of discipline as of such fundamental necessity, it will be difficult to resist the Anabaptist conclusion that churches that lack it are not true churches, and true Christians should separate from them and erect their own. Of course, this was no idle concern, given that a number of precisianists would do just this, particularly in the 1580s and the 1590s, forming the Separatist movement. Tellingly, the Separatists berated Cartwright, Travers, and other non-separating precisians for inconsistency, insisting that they were simply acting on the principles articulated by these writers in the 1570s. Apologists for conformity naturally seized upon such statements,<sup>41</sup> and modern scholars have generally admitted that they certainly seem to have had a point.<sup>42</sup> Brachlow in particular, as mentioned above, has argued compellingly that between separatists and "radical puritans" such as Cartwright, there was little difference of principle: "the breach between separatists and non-separating radical puritans is not to be explained as a difference of ecclesiology but as a difference of strategy, timing, and the extent to

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<sup>39</sup> WW I:185.

<sup>40</sup> SR 247.7–18.

<sup>41</sup> Hooker: "Thus the foolish Barrowist deriveth his schism by way of conclusion, as to him it seemeth, directly and plainly out of your principles" (*LEP* Pref.8.1; *FLE* 1:39). For more on the separatist Henry Barrow's importance as background for Hooker's work, see Scott N. Kindred Barnes, *Richard Hooker's Use of History in His Defense of Public Worship: His Anglican Critique of Calvin, Barrow, and the Puritans* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2011), esp. pp. 60–65.

<sup>42</sup> See especially Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 16–28.

which each was willing (or unwilling) to disavow their allegiance to the church as constituted by English law."<sup>43</sup>

Accordingly Hooker is justified later on in reproaching Cartwright for the separatist logic of his position, even if he never followed through on it. If the conscience could only be assured by following Scripture at every point, then English Christians would have to depart from a church that was not so thoroughly aligned with Scripture.

#### *Eliding the Visible and Invisible*

In any case, Cartwright clearly shares the later separatist and precisionist stress on "visible saints"—a desire to make the purity of the invisible church clear already in the godliness of those making up the visible. By means of right discipline, the kingship of Christ might be made apparent here on earth, so that "our saviour Christ sitteth wholly and fully not only in his chair to teach but also in his throne to rule, not alone in the hearts of everyone by his spirit, but also generally and in the visible government of his church, by those laws of discipline he hath prescribed."<sup>44</sup> Peter Lake notes that in such passages, we discern a shift in the use of standard Protestant terminology, such that "language normally applied to the internal process of individual salvation was being applied to the collective cause of national reformation," thus describing the visible church in terms usually reserved for the invisible.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, at one point in the *Second Replie* Cartwright seizes on one of Whitgift's many uses of the visible/invisible church distinction in order to call any such division into question: "Againe, why doo yow saie, 'he that is a membre off the invisible, maye be a minister in the visible'? . . . as thowghe the true members of the visible church did not make one misticall bodie off Christ with the invisible."<sup>46</sup> The only real purpose of the concept of the invisible church, he says, is to designate those elect from all eternity that have not yet been outwardly called.<sup>47</sup> And when Whitgift questions popular election of ministers on the basis that the church

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<sup>43</sup> Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, 6.

<sup>44</sup> Cartwright, *Replie*, 155 (WW III:315). See also Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, 119: "While always admitting that the visible church could never approach the perfection of the invisible church in this life, radical puritans . . . did not always clearly regard the visible and invisible churches as two entirely distinct societies. The purity of the church triumphant should, they believed, be reflected in the church militant."

<sup>45</sup> Lake, *AP*, 31.

<sup>46</sup> *SR* 171.25–29.

<sup>47</sup> *SR* 171.4–16.

contains many ignorant, ungodly, and papists, unfit to make such elections, Cartwright is indignant: “the A[nswerer] imagineth off the churche as off dogges . . . and not as sheepe which heare the voice off their pastor.”<sup>48</sup> The ignorant, ungodly, and papists are not to be thought of as in any sense members of the church, and it was the purpose of discipline to cut such off. Although of course he granted that there were still hypocrites who might remain hidden among the assembly of saints, nevertheless, “for Cartwright there was a practical assumption that the elect and the godly were roughly coterminous.”<sup>49</sup>

To all of this, Whitgift reacted forcefully. Neither must the visible government of the church be conflated with Christ’s invisible spiritual government, nor must the visible congregation be conflated with the elect:

There are two kinds of government in the church, the one invisible, the other visible; the one spiritual, the other external. The invisible and spiritual government of the church is, when God by his Spirit, gifts, and ministry of his word, doth govern it, by ruling in the hearts and consciences of men, and directing them in all things necessary to everlasting life: this kind of government indeed is necessary to salvation, and it is in the church of the elect only. The visible and external government is that which is executed by man, and consisteth of external discipline, and visible ceremonies practised in that church, and over that church, that containeth in it both good and evil, which is usually called the visible church of Christ, and compared by Christ to ‘a field’ wherein both ‘good seeds’ and ‘tares were sown,’ and to ‘a net that gathered of all kind of fishes.’<sup>50</sup>

Cartwright’s conflation of the outward government of the church by ministers with Christ’s own, Whitgift consistently decried as papist;<sup>51</sup> his perfectionist account of the visible congregation, he denounced as Anabaptist. This disjunction between visible and invisible appears throughout Whitgift’s theology, and is indeed for him an essential bulwark of evangelical doctrine. We find this, for instance, in his treatment of vestments. The precisianists, of course, had argued that while it was all very well that the vestments and ceremonies were not actually being prescribed for papist reasons, why give the appearance of evil? To the common people, they looked papist, so should they not be done away with? Should the visible form of the church not be made, as much as possible, to conform to pure doctrine, which needed nothing of such outward trappings? Whitgift responds, on the contrary, that

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<sup>48</sup> *SR* 230.14–17.

<sup>49</sup> Lake, *AP*, 41.

<sup>50</sup> *WW* I:183–84.

<sup>51</sup> See section IV below for a more extensive discussion of Whitgift and Cartwright’s rival doctrines of the two kingdoms/two governments.

things indifferent must not be abrogated as soon as they are abused, for this will imply that they are not indifferent in fact, depriving ministers of the valuable teaching opportunity to instruct their congregations in this “necessary” doctrine. It is not lamentable that outward and inward do not correspond perfectly, for if they did so, this would in fact fail to root out superstition, which consists in attaching a higher spiritual value to outward things than rightly belongs to them.<sup>52</sup>

The clash between Cartwright and Whitgift here reflects one of the most deeply-seated tensions in Protestant theology, and indeed perhaps in all Christian theology, often typified as the tension between Paul and James. On the one hand, faith alone freed the believer before God; on the other hand, faith must never remain alone, but must make itself visible in outward service to God. The tension between inward and outward in the doctrine of Christian liberty reflected this dialectic. Whitgift sought to do justice to Luther’s emphasis on liberty of the mind *in* external things by minimizing the importance of outward ceremonies. For him, as John Coolidge summarized, “both Christian liberty and edification are matters of inward understanding. Together they describe an integrity of conscience maintained by a conscious disjunction between social gesture and inner meaning, between metaphor and sober sense.”<sup>53</sup> And yet this suspicion toward precisianist attempts to make inward salvation outwardly visible resulted in a conformist retreat from the Reformation ideal of a reformed culture and worship, a church and community that visibly expressed its willing subjection to God’s Word. Indeed, Peter Lake suggests that by the time we reach Richard Bancroft, Whitgift’s successor as chief anti-puritan polemicist in the 1580s and 1590s, “there was no room left . . . for any sort of active (and conventionally protestant) lay piety.”<sup>54</sup>

### **III. The Logic of Precisianist Biblicism**

#### *Private Judgment vs. Public Authority*

Whitgift’s disjunction between inward and outward, while certainly carrying good Lutheran credentials, tended merely to hold apart the clashing spheres of conscience and authority, rather than genuinely reconciling them. While Luther and Calvin both prescribed the law of charity as the guide for each individual Christian in navigating laws and duties in the civil kingdom, a law which could offer very different prescriptions for different individuals in different

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<sup>52</sup> WW II:43, 72.

<sup>53</sup> Coolidge, *Pauline Renaissance*, 46.

<sup>54</sup> Lake, *AP*, 128.

circumstances, many Protestants craved principles that could prescribe actions in advance with more certainty and regularity. As we have seen, many puritans emphasized that even where Scripture did not provide detailed guidance, it offered general rules which should be followed in determining right and wrong conduct in the civil kingdom. In particular, four “rules” out of St. Paul were often singled out as regulative and always binding: (1) that none be offended (1 Cor. 10:32); (2) that all be done “in order and comeliness” (1 Cor. 14:40); (3) that all be done to edification; (4) that all be done to the glory of God.<sup>55</sup> Conformists, on the other hand, tended to make another rule out of St. Paul normative above all else: Romans 13:1. Ultimately, then, it could be said that both sides in fact agreed that the general rules of Scripture must guide the use of adiaphora, but they differed as to which general rules should take precedence.<sup>56</sup>

From Whitgift’s standpoint, it was unthinkable that Paul could have intended these four rules to serve as principles that each individual could apply at his own discretion, since this would contradict Paul’s injunctions to obey the prince in all indifferent matters (Romans 13).<sup>57</sup> The difference between Whitgift and Cartwright at this point is thus more nuanced than many commentators have realized. Cartwright acknowledges that many, at least, of the matters under dispute are adiaphora, but insists that things indifferent in their own nature must be concretely used “as the circumstances of the times and persons, and profit or hurt of our brethren,” require.<sup>58</sup> Whitgift agrees, but “with this proviso, that it is not every man’s part in the church to judge and determine what the circumstance of the times and persons maketh profitable or hurtful (for then should we never be quiet), but theirs only to whom the government of the church is committed.”<sup>59</sup> Like Parker before him, then, Whitgift has to insist that the criterion of edification can only be used as a yardstick for weighing potential courses of action *before* laws have been imposed. We ought to seek to avoid offending our brother, unless law directs us otherwise:

but, being by lawful authority commanded to wear it, if I should refuse so to do, I should offend against the magistrate, and against

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<sup>55</sup> Cartwright, *Replie*, 15 (WW I:195).

<sup>56</sup> Eppley, *Defending Royal Supremacy*, 152: “Whitgift and Cartwright do not differ on the issue of *whether* scripture provides general guidelines to order adiaphora; they differ regarding *what* general guidelines scripture provides. The controversy is thus about the interpretation of the Bible, not the authority of the Bible.”

<sup>57</sup> Eppley, *Defending Royal Supremacy*, 154.

<sup>58</sup> Cartwright, *Replie*, 52 (WW II:1).

<sup>59</sup> WW II:3.



God, who by his apostle hath given this commandment: *Omnis anima potestatibus, etc.*: 'Let every soul be subject to the higher power, etc.:' which is to be understood in all things that are not against God. And therefore, if any man be offended with me in so doing, the offence is taken, it is not given.<sup>60</sup>

Confronted with such remarks, we might well conclude, with Patrick Collinson, that "to intimidate their presbyterian opponents, apologists for the ecclesiastical *status quo* erected a blank and uninviting wall bearing the single word Obedience."<sup>61</sup> Of course, as we have seen above in chapter two, it was possible to make this argument in such a way as to emphasize the priority of the law of charity, contending that violation of civil laws was always wrong because it would always be, as a matter of fact, a source of offence to other Christians. Whitgift considers nonconformity more certain to cause a brother to stumble than obedient use of corrupt ceremonies. But if there is an implicit appeal to such an empirical argument, then it would seem that Whitgift should allow for the possibility that in particular circumstances, nonconformity would be an appropriate action. Indeed, the Dutch articles, to which Whitgift expressly appealed in defense of his assertion that "things otherwise indifferent of themselves after a sort change their nature, when by some lawful commandment they are either commanded or forbidden,"<sup>62</sup> had stipulated that laws must not be so tyrannically imposed that they did not admit of exceptions when such would not cause offense.<sup>63</sup> Whitgift indeed concedes as much in his *Answer*, summarizing from Bullinger and Gualter five conditions for the lawful requirement of ecclesiastical ceremonies, of which the fifth is, "that men be not so tied unto them but that by occasion they may be omitted, so that it be without offence and contempt."<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, Whitgift showed little disposition to expand on this concession either in his *Answer* or in his later tenure as Archbishop of Canterbury, deeming no doubt that only the supreme magistrate could judge when omission was and was not "without offence."

#### *Edification Per Accidens*

To be sure, Whitgift did not intend to absolutely reject Cartwright's four Pauline rules as important guides, especially the second and third, so long as they were interpreted according to the magistrate's judgment, rather than "every private

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<sup>60</sup> WW II:5.

<sup>61</sup> *Religion of Protestants*, 12.

<sup>62</sup> WW I:208, II:5

<sup>63</sup> See article X in Appendix I.

<sup>64</sup> Whitgift, *Answer*, 61 (WW II:44).

man's"<sup>65</sup>: "if you object that they be not comely and decent, then I say unto you that it is your part, and the part of all those that be obedient, to submit yourselves to the judgment of those that be in authority."<sup>66</sup> For Whitgift, as for earlier conformists, "order and comeliness" meant considerations of civil order above all, which must outweigh Cartwright's more concrete liturgical concerns. This attentiveness to the needs of the peaceful administration of Elizabeth's state allowed Whitgift to brush aside almost any objection Cartwright could raise, from the papistical and superstitious nature of various ceremonies, to the lack of competent preachers, to the manifest corruptions in procedures of ecclesiastical administration. Moreover, while Whitgift was more than willing to grant the importance of "edification," the term was evacuated of almost any positive meaning beyond that of "order and comeliness," conceived again in terms of uniformity, civil order, and procedural efficiency. "Such lawes and orders as keep godly peace and unity in the church do edify; but the laws for apparel keep godly peace and unity in the church; ergo, they edify."<sup>67</sup> Indeed, he will go so far as to make the *petitio principii* argument that, seeing as the ministry of the word and sacraments edifies, and by the Queen's command, the wearing of vestments was necessary to minister the word and sacrament, the vestments now edified *per accidens*.<sup>68</sup>

However "mealy-mouthed"<sup>69</sup> this may sound, Whitgift actually felt theologically constrained to say no more than this, for nothing external should be said to edify of itself—"only the Holy Ghost on this sort doth edify by the ministry of the word."<sup>70</sup> This was good two-kingdoms doctrine; or would be, at any rate, if justification and edification were identical. When, on a couple of occasions in his argument, Whitgift attempts to go further than this, he runs up against the Protestant hesitancy to attach any definite spiritual value to liturgical ceremonies, and Cartwright is only too willing to alert Whitgift to his difficulty. When the latter suggests, quoting Vermigli in fact, that white vestments may signify that ministers are like angels, God's messengers, Cartwright seizes upon this, saying that if this were true, then he can no longer claim them as adiaphora: "by this means [they] not only make it an ecclesiastical ceremony, but also a matter of conscience. For, if so be that the white apparel of the minister have any force either to move the people or

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<sup>65</sup> Whitgift, *Answer*, 237 (WW II:50).

<sup>66</sup> WW II:55.

<sup>67</sup> WW II:61.

<sup>68</sup> WW I:71, II:59

<sup>69</sup> Lake, *AP*, 164.

<sup>70</sup> *Answer*, 238 (WW II:56).

the minister unto greater pureness, or to any other godliness whatsoever, then it is that which ought to be commanded, and to be obeyed of necessity.”<sup>71</sup> Cartwright goes on, maintaining that if the church has power to attach such religious significations, then this is power to “institute new sacraments,” a charge he repeats later in the argument when Whitgift hesitantly suggests an edifying signification for the use of a wedding ring.<sup>72</sup>

Thus fenced in by his own principles, it is little wonder that Whitgift proves so quick to fall back on bare magisterial authority to defend the established polity and ceremonies of the English church, or, despite his rejection of Cartwright’s biblicism, to fall to protracted exegetical wrangling with Cartwright about the biblical precedent for some ceremony or other. Unable to clearly distinguish between different senses of “adiaphora,” he does not know quite how to say how something soteriologically indifferent (that is, indifferent to *justification*) might still be useful for *sanctification*, or how to justify it as such when Scripture offers no clear guidance (making it epistemologically indifferent). When Cartwright suggests that Whitgift is proposing *reason* as a standard for determining the value of disputed ceremonies, Whitgift refuses to take the bait, anxious of both common Protestant attacks on the authority of reason, and on the potentially democratic consequences of an appeal to reason.<sup>73</sup>

Against such an apparent resolution of conscience and authority in favor of the latter, Cartwright was insistent that religious duties, above all the duty to guard the conscience of a weaker brother, must outweigh all other considerations. In one of the few passages of his *Second Replie* where his chronic indignation rises to the pitch of eloquence, Cartwright characterizes Whitgift’s position as, “that if all should be offended, that is to say perish and make shipwracke of conscience . . . yet we owght to doo that which is commaunded; the Magistrate being therby lifted above the Lord.” On the contrary, Cartwright asserts, it is “a flat commaundement of the holy gost that we absteine from thinges in their owne nature indifferent if the weake brother should be offended,” so that “no authoritie ether off church or comenwealth can make yt voide.” In a crystal-clear articulation of the threefold clash of loyalties we have observed (to God, to magistrate as putative guardian of the common good, and to neighbor as concrete demand of the common good), Cartwright declares,

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<sup>71</sup> *Replie* 59 (WW II:64); see also *RSR* 228–30.

<sup>72</sup> WW III:354.

<sup>73</sup> Perrott, “Problem of Authority,” 43–45.

And where the magistrates commaunding and owr obedience owght to be squared owt first by the love off God then off men, our brethren especially; this new carpenter, as one that frameth his squire according to his tymber, and not his timber according to the squire, will make our obedience to the cyvill Magistrate the rule off the love off God, and our brethren.<sup>74</sup>

It is at points such as this that Cartwright's argument is at its strongest, leading some to the conclusion that it is in fact the puritan who is most concerned with the variable, circumstantial nature of adiaphora. John Coolidge will praise the puritans' "dynamic" understanding of Christian liberty, in contrast to the flat and sterile doctrine of the conformist, arguing that the former is motivated by a positive vision of edification that drives him to seek the upbuilding of the neighbor and the church in all his actions.<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately, Cartwright does not rest content with asserting the supremacy of our duty to God's glory and our brethren's salvation over civil concerns. Indeed, how could he, after long battles in the Vestiarian controversies had ended indecisively, with conformists earnestly insisting that God's glory and the salvation of the brethren was not in fact at stake? A "dynamic" understanding of Christian liberty, in which the believer exercised his freedom by cultivating prudence in response to changing circumstances, seemed inadequate to the task. A more certain rule for resolving the doubtful conscience and adjudicating clashing loyalties was needed—Scripture.

*"A Word of God for all things we have to do"*

"No man's authoritie . . . can bring any assurance unto the conscience,"<sup>76</sup> Cartwright concluded. Perhaps in "humane sciences" the word of man carried "some smale force" but "in divine matters [it] hath no force at all."<sup>77</sup> Of course, whether the matters in question were "divine matters" or "human sciences" was part of what was in question. Whitgift would concede that in divine matters, Scripture alone was our guide, but if the disputed orders and ceremonies were merely civil ordinances, Scripture did not necessarily have much to tell us. When pressed, then, Cartwright would go so far as to insist that in *all* actions of moral weight, Scripture was our guide: unless we "have the word off God goo before us in all our actions . . . we cannot otherwise be assured that they please God."<sup>78</sup> The

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<sup>74</sup> SR 403.31–404.7.

<sup>75</sup> See Coolidge, *Pauline Renaissance*, ch. 2; also Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 2–3.

<sup>76</sup> SR 19.33–36.

<sup>77</sup> SR 19.18–21.

<sup>78</sup> SR 61.9–12.

reasoning behind this claim was as follows: “But no man can glorify God in anything but by obedience; and there is no obedience but in respect of the commandment and word of God: therefore it followeth that the word of God directeth a man in all his actions.”<sup>79</sup> Whitgift, breathless at such a declaration, answers that this would make not merely the matters in question, but all civil matters as well dependent on the Word, indeed, any action whatsoever, even “to take up a straw.”<sup>80</sup> Cartwright happily swallows the *reductio*, acknowledging that the guidance of Scripture is needed for the taking up of a straw. Why? Because although a class of action may be indifferent in itself, any particular action takes on the moral quality of goodness or badness based on the *motive*, and the motive, says Cartwright, must always be a desire to please God; since, as he has already argued, no man may be confident he pleases God except when acting in adherence to the Word, Scripture must in some sense go before us even in the most trivial of actions.<sup>81</sup> Cartwright has thus, under pressure to find some certain rule for guiding the Christian amidst doubtful and disputed moral decisions, rendered the concept of moral indifference obsolete, and with it, the epistemological concept as well. Since no action is morally neutral, and since the Christian must have guidance in all moral matters, and since Scripture is the Christian’s surest guide, Scripture must be taken to pronounce positively or negatively on all matters.<sup>82</sup> Even the relative indifference of the adiaphora, it would seem, would have to come from the positive permission of the Word. Thus certainty is gained, but at the cost of both the peace of conscience and the exercise of prudence necessary to a true possession of Christian liberty.

And indeed, when Whitgift expresses concern on this score, Cartwright confirms that this is precisely his meaning: “For even those things that are

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<sup>79</sup> Cartwright, *Replie*, 14 (WW I:190).

<sup>80</sup> WW I:193. It is likely that Whitgift alludes here to Luther’s statement in *A Treatise on Good Works*: “Now every one can notice and feel for himself when he does what is good and what is not good. If he finds his heart confident that it pleases God, then the work is good, even if it were so small a thing as picking up a straw” (LW 44:25). Indeed, given the similarity of Luther’s statement to Cartwright’s statement, “we cannot otherwise be assured that they please God,” and the fact that both Cartwright and Luther go on to refer to Romans 14:24, “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin,” Cartwright likely had this passage in mind as well. If so, it provides a striking example of the soteriological-to-epistemological shift we have described. For Luther, the confidence that one pleases God proceeds from justifying faith; for Cartwright, from zealous attention to scriptural commands.

<sup>81</sup> SR 59–60.

<sup>82</sup> An example of Cartwright’s confusion on this question comes when he attacks Whitgift’s notion of adiaphora as things “not commanded or expressed in the Scriptures” by pointing out that this would leave it indifferent whether we came to receive communion clothed or naked. Clearly this is not a matter indifferent, reasons Cartwright, so we clearly need a wider understanding of scriptural authority. See WW I:64, SR 24.

indifferent, and maye be donne, have their fredom grounded off the word off God; so that onless the word off the Lord, either in generall or especiall words, had determined off the free use of them: there could have ben no lawfull use of them at all.<sup>83</sup> This is a remarkable transformation of the doctrine of adiaphora; no longer is scriptural silence regarding a matter *demonstrative* of its moral lawfulness, but it is *constitutive* of it, so that this silence is to be construed as a positive act of permission, without which the matter would have remained morally illicit.

The fundamental difference between the conformist and the precisianist, then,<sup>84</sup> is not merely that the precisianist considers that fewer matters have been left indifferent than the conformist does, although that is certainly the case; nor is it merely that the precisianist considers scriptural guidance on matters that are indifferent to be more detailed and constraining than the conformist does, although that is certainly the case; rather, it is that the precisianist considers all moral law whatsoever to be divine positive law. We may see what this difference of approach entails by considering the role of the Mosaic judicial laws in Cartwright's system. Whitgift, worrying that the precisianist principle of scriptural direction for every action would lead not merely to the abridgement of the magistrate's freedom over ecclesiastical matters, but over strictly civil matters as well, was met with a curious waffling on the part of his adversary. On the one hand, Cartwright and other precisianists would insist that as ministers of the Gospel, they disclaimed all interest in merely civil and political matters, leaving those to the lawyers; moreover, they denied that the principles they advanced regarding ecclesiastical polity necessitated a similar reconfiguration of civil polity.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, however, they could also assert that the laws of England ought to take the laws of Moses as their guide, and were to be condemned as unjust whenever they failed to do so.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> SR 59.8–13.

<sup>84</sup> To be sure, we must use caution in essentializing "the precisianist," given the difficulty we noted at the beginning of this chapter in identifying a stable essence to the puritan protest. However, neither Whitgift nor Hooker were being arbitrary in identifying Cartwright as the leading representative of the stream of aggressive puritan and presbyterian opinion which most concerned them. To this extent, we may generalize from the logic of his biblicism, though with the additional caveat that of course he sometimes shies away from the apparent implications of that logic.

<sup>85</sup> See for instance SR xv.1–17, 228.11–22 (also A.F. Scott Pearson, *Church and State: Political Aspects of Sixteenth Century Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 2–5; Burgess, *British Political Thought*, 117–21). Indeed, they complained that it was their opponents who were guilty of ecclesiastical meddling in civil affairs (Walter Travers, *A Full and Plaine Declaration of Ecclesiasticall Discipline Owt Off the Word Off God / and Off the Declininge Off the Churche Off England From the Same* [Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1574], 78–84; Cartwright, *RSR*, 151–70).

<sup>86</sup> Cartwright, *Replie*, 22 (WW I:270); SR 95–118.

Paul Avis has drawn particular attention to this emphasis on the abiding validity of the Mosaic judicial laws for its idiosyncrasy among the Protestant reformers (with the exception of the Scots Presbyterians, who were in this of a similar mind as their English brethren), showing that even where they used similar language, there was a compelling difference between a Calvin and a Cartwright on this issue.<sup>87</sup> The former, although much more emphatic about the positive uses of the law than Luther was, took a fundamentally similar tack on the judicial laws. Luther believed that while the Ten Commandments summed up the natural law, the latter temporally and logically preceded this formal expression, and the same principle applied to the rest of the Mosaic laws. They were expressions and applications of natural law in a particular polity, and so, although their accuracy as a good application was, by virtue of its divine revelation, more assured than that of the law of Solon, it was not intrinsically more binding on us. Only inasmuch as our own circumstances were the same as those of the Hebrews should we expect our own judicial laws to be similar to theirs.<sup>88</sup> Calvin's argument is similar, viewing the natural principle of equity, perfected in the gospel principle of charity, to be instantiated in the Mosaic judicial laws, but to exist independently of them, so that it might and often should be instantiated quite differently in a contemporary Christian polity.<sup>89</sup> Cartwright, however, while he will use Calvin's term of the "general equity" of the law, understands this as something *posterior*, rather than *prior*, to the particular positive law, *extracted from it*, rather than *instantiated in it*. Accordingly there is some room for flexibility in application, but not a great deal:

And as for the judicial law, forasmuch as there are some of them made in regard of the region they were given, and of the people to whom they were given, the prince and the magistrate, keeping the substance and equity of them (as it were the marrow), may change the circumstances of them, as the times and places and manners of the people shall require. But to say that any magistrate can save the life of blasphemers, contemptuous and stubborn idolaters, incestuous persons, and such like, which God by his judicial law hath commanded to be put to death, I do utterly deny.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Avis, "Moses and the Magistrate: A Study in the Rise of Protestant Legalism," *Ecclesiastical History* 149 (1975): 148–72. Though idiosyncratic, however, it proved remarkably influential on later puritans, particularly in North America. See VanDrunen, *NLTK*, 230–33, for a discussion of a 17th-century theologian, John Cotton, and Wedgeworth, "The Two Sons of Oil and the Limits of American Religious Dissent," *Journal of Law & Religion* 27:1 (2011/2012): 141–61, for a 19th-century example, Samuel Wiley. Indeed, the legacy continues to have modern advocates, such as Greg Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*.

<sup>88</sup> Avis, "Moses and the Magistrate," 153–55.

<sup>89</sup> Avis, "Moses and the Magistrate," 163–64.

<sup>90</sup> Cartwright, *Replie*, 22 (*WW I*:270). See Pearson, *Church and State*, 108–9; O'Donovan, *TLAER*, 122–23 for a brief discussion.

This is because, for Cartwright, according to Joan O'Donovan, "the particular command . . . is the perfect form of law because it 'leave[s] as little undetermined and without the compass of the law as can be.'"<sup>91</sup> Accordingly, we ought never to rest content with a mere general moral intuition if a clear scriptural directive could be found; indeed, the latter was the only basis upon which the former could be valid. This conviction leads Cartwright to a preposterous dependence on scriptural prooftexts at many points in his debate with Whitgift where mere common-sense would have more than sufficed. For instance, when complaining that in the Prayer Book service, the minister cannot be clearly heard by the congregation when he stands at the far end of the chancel, Cartwright feels the need to allege a scriptural positive law for the principle, and resorts to Acts 1:15: "Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples." When Whitgift raises his eyebrows, Cartwright holds his ground: "The place of St. Luke is an unchangeable rule to teach that all that which is done in the church ought to be done where it may be best heard, for which cause I alleged it."<sup>92</sup> At another point, discussing the requirements for elders, he says "The holie goste by Jethro prescribenge what officers are to be chosen dothe not only require that they should fear God . . . be wise and valiant, but also requireth that they be trustie."<sup>93</sup> Jethro's counsel to his son-in-law can no longer be read merely as prudent counsel, the prudence of which ought to be obvious in similar situations, such as they choosing of church officers, but must appear as a specific prescription of the Holy Spirit, intended for use as a positive law for the church.

This style of reasoning permeates the writings of Cartwright, Travers, and other precisianists, and is undergirded by two syllogisms that we find frequently repeated. The first finds perhaps its most amusing expression when Whitgift queries the *Admonition's* statement that in the Apostles' time, there was always a careful examination of communicants before they were permitted to receive the Supper—how, he asks, do they prove this in Scripture? "After this sort," replies Cartwright: "all things necessary were used in the churches of God in the apostles' times; but examination of those whose knowledge of the mystery of the gospel was not known or doubted of was a necessary thing; therefore it was used in the churches of God which were in the apostles' time."<sup>94</sup> Thus putative apostolic

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<sup>91</sup> TLAER 122, quoting Cartwright, SR, 94.6–7.

<sup>92</sup> RSR 187.

<sup>93</sup> Cartwright, SR, 172.29–32.

<sup>94</sup> *Replie* 130 (WW 3:79).



practice, even when not explicitly stated in Scripture, becomes canonical. It should not surprise us to find this sort of reasoning given the obsession with certainty that we discussed above; for the Christian convinced that he must please God in all actions, it was clear that the church *needed* detailed guidance in all its practices, and since God must love and favor His church, it stood to reason that he must have provided such guidance in Scripture. Moreover, since the most specific form of law was the most perfect, the more God loved his church, the more detailed legislation we should expect. Accordingly, we frequently find the following form of *a fortiori* syllogism:

To prove that there is a word off God for all thinges we have to doo: I alleged that otherwise our estate should be worse, then the estate of the Jewes, which the *Ans[werer]* confeseth to have had 'direction owte of lawe, in the leste thing they had to doo.' And when yt is the vertue of a good lawe, to leave as litle undetermined and withowte the compasse off the law as can be: the *A[nswerer]* in imagining that we have no word for divers thinges wherein the Jewes had particular direction: presupposeth greater perfection in the lawe, gyven unto the Jewes, then in that which is left unto us. And that this is a principal vertue of the lawe may be seen . . . by that I have shewed, that a conscience well instructed and towched with the feare of God seeketh for the light off the word off God in the smallest actions.<sup>95</sup>

In a remarkable early passage of his *Full and Plaine Declaration*, outlining the scriptural plan of presbyterian polity, Walter Travers manages to combine both syllogisms side-by-side. God's care for his people, he says, is apparent in the precise and detailed legislation for the building of the tabernacle in the Old Testament; even though Scripture describes David and Solomon's changes to the worship and building of the temple without narrating God's prescription of them, we may safely conclude, given the obvious approval of their actions, that they would have only made such changes by express divine command. "And," concludes Travers, "how absurd and unreasonable a thing is it, than especially to think the love and care of God to be diminished towards his Church" that he would omit such express commands in the New Covenant?<sup>96</sup>

In their quest to safeguard Christian liberty, then, the precisianists have so hedged it in with unchangeable divine law that they have obscured it even more surely than Whitgift's cold call to submission. In either case, the believer is left with no room to deliberate about a course of action, and much to fear if he strays from the right path, but the cause for fear is rather greater in the precisianist paradigm, where failure to "walk exactly" could have eternal consequences. Yet this legalism

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<sup>95</sup> SR 94.2–15.

<sup>96</sup> *Full and Plaine Declaration*, 8.

threatens the same disastrous consequences for civil polity as libertinism, charges Whitgift, for while they claim to be obedience to the civil magistrate as far as conscience allows, since they “in all things pretend the word of God and ‘conscience’” they “straiten the authority of the magistrate to [their] own purpose.”<sup>97</sup> Moreover, by emphasizing that Christ’s kingship takes visible form here on earth in the institutions of his church, and that Christ rules over these institutions as lawgiver and judge, the precisianist, far from resolving the clash of loyalties between these two kingdoms, ensured that it would come to an open conflict, a struggle between rulers temporal and spiritual.

#### **IV. Hippocrates’ Twins: The Precisianist Rivalry of Church and State**

##### *Two Governments vs. Two Kingdoms*

We turn in our final section to examine the implications of this precisianist variant of the two-kingdoms doctrine, a model similar to VanDrunen’s, in which the two kingdoms are clearly identified with the church on the one hand and the commonwealth on the other. Twenty years after the Admonition Controversy, Richard Bancroft neatly summed up Presbyterian two-kingdoms doctrine and the dangers it posed:

Cartwright and some others with him do affirme...that all Kinges (as well heathen as Christian) receiving but one commission and equall authoritie immediatly from God, have no more to doe with the Church the one sorte than the other, as being in no respect deputed for Church officers under Christ otherwise than if they bee good Kinges, to maintaine and defende it. And secondlye, that as God hath appoynted all Kinges and Civile Magistrates his immediate Lieutenants for the government of the worlde in temporall causes, so Christ, as hee is mediator, and governour of his Church, hath his immediate officers to rule in the Church under him, and those they saie are no other, then Pastors, Doctors, and Elders, to whom they ascribe as large authoritie in causes Ecclesiasticall.<sup>98</sup>

This pithy synopsis highlights the two great dangers of this doctrine as conformists saw it: secularism (for lack of a better word) and clericalism. The former danger Cartwright might have been quick to dismiss as one of Bancroft’s slanders, although there was in fact some just cause for the criticism, as we shall see later on. The latter, however, he would have had no difficulty recognizing as his position, which conceived of “ecclesiastical governors” as occupying an equivalent place under God in the society of the church as civil governors did in the

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<sup>97</sup> WWI:82–83.

<sup>98</sup> Bancroft, *A Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline*, 256–57.

commonwealth.<sup>99</sup> Over the church as a visible institution, Christ exercised his “spiritual government” through his subordinate pastors.<sup>100</sup> For Whitgift, however, in this again hewing closer to Luther and other magisterial reformers such as Vermigli and even Calvin, this was a seriously confused use of the language of spiritual government. As we saw above, Whitgift defined the two kingdoms much more in terms of “two kinds of government . . . one invisible, the other visible; the one spiritual, the other external.” The first was by the Spirit and the Word “ruling in the hearts and consciences of men, and directing them in all things necessary to everlasting life”; only this was necessary to salvation, and it was found “in the church of the elect only.” The latter, however, “is that which is executed by man, and consisteth of external discipline, and visible ceremonies” in the visible church of Christ, the one “that containeth in it both good and evil.”<sup>101</sup> By this definition, there were no subordinates in Christ’s spiritual government; ministers of the Gospel there were, to be sure, who outwardly assisted this spiritual ministry, but these ultimately held their office as part of Christ’s external government, since Christ alone had the power to inwardly nourish the hearts of believers.

In the spiritual government Christ is only the Prince, the King, the Judge, and in respect of him all other be subjects . . . Christ is ‘the only Head of the church,’ if by the head you understand that which giveth the body life, sense, and motion; for Christ only by his Spirit doth give life and nutriment to his body: he only doth pour spiritual blessings into it, and doth inwardly direct and govern it.<sup>102</sup>

In the spiritual kingdom, clergy and laymen are all the same—passive recipients of the justifying grace of Christ. Rule and authority and hierarchy there must be in the church, to be sure, but all this must be understood as part of the external government. Given that the ministry served for the outward government of the visible society of professing believers, which is what a Christian commonwealth

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<sup>99</sup> “And to note the distinction of these regiments civil and spiritual, the place unto the Thessa. is well alleged; for by the words, ‘such as rule over you in the Lord,’ the apostle doth put a difference between the civil and ecclesiastical regiment. For, albeit that godly civil magistrates do rule over us in the Lord, yet St. Paul . . . ascribeth that unto the ecclesiastical governors, because that, whereas the civil magistrate, beside his care for the salvation of the souls of his people, is occupied in procuring also the wealth and quietness of this life, the ecclesiastical governors have all their whole care set only upon that which pertaineth to the life to come” (Cartwright, *Replie*, 166 [WW III:417]).

<sup>100</sup> SR 410.

<sup>101</sup> WW I:183–84.

<sup>102</sup> WW II:84–85.

was, it seemed clear to Whitgift that the magistrate had every right to be part of, indeed, head of, this external government of the church.<sup>103</sup>

Cartwright professes astonishment at this set of distinctions so “full of disorder” and “nothing sound.”<sup>104</sup> On the one hand, it divides what must be united—the inward and the outward aspects of the church’s means of grace, both components of the “spiritual government” without qualification; on the other hand, it unites what must be divided—Christ’s rule over the church and over the commonwealth. Whereas Whitgift will go so far as to say, “I make no difference betwixt a christian commonwealth and the church of Christ; wonder you as much at it as you will”<sup>105</sup> Cartwright understands them as, in Scott Pearson’s words, “two self-sufficient complete and distinct, but related, societies”;<sup>106</sup> or, to use his own preferred metaphor, “like unto Hippocrates’ twins, which were sick together and well together.”<sup>107</sup> As distinct societies, they have different ends, different constitutions (for the church, a complete law-code given in Scripture, but not so for the state, Cartwright will insist, despite his occasional statements regarding the Mosaic judicials), different rulers, different political structures, different forms of coercion (excommunication vs. civil punishments),<sup>108</sup> and ultimately different heads as well. This last remark may puzzle, since Cartwright describes both as governments under Christ, but in fact, when pressed, he will insist that Christ occupies two totally distinct personas in his headships over these two kingdoms: the civil as he is “the sonne off God onely before all worldes coequall with his father,” as “creator and preserver of mankinde,” the other “as mediatour betwene God and us,” as “redeemer, and upholder of his church.”<sup>109</sup> This remarkable distinction, it turns out, is also fundamental to VanDrunen’s articulation of the two-kingdoms doctrine, with a like rigorous separation between the realm of creation and redemption; we shall have occasion to revisit it in detail in Chapter Six below.

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<sup>103</sup> “I do not perceive why the magistrate may not as well be called the head of the church, that is, the chief governor of it in the external policy, as he is called the head of the people, and of the commonwealth” (WW II:85); “Because it hath also an outward and visible form, therefore it requireth an outward and visible government, which Christ doth execute as well by the civil magistrate, as he doth by the ecclesiastical minister” (WW III:419).

<sup>104</sup> SR 409.32

<sup>105</sup> WW 3:313.

<sup>106</sup> Pearson, *Church and State*, 10.

<sup>107</sup> *Replie*, Preface (WW I:123).

<sup>108</sup> Pearson, *Church and State*, 111: “While the Puritans looked to the State to administer corporal punishment they held that the Church had a coercive jurisdiction of its own, according to which ecclesiastical penalties are imposed upon defaulters. The chief of these is excommunication.”

<sup>109</sup> SR 411.10–11, 416.36–417.1, 418.2, 417.2.

Indeed, it is notable that Whitgift and other conformists saw, as the inevitable consequence of such a personal separation of church and commonwealth, “an inevitable de-Christianizing of the secular political order,” as Torrance Kirby puts it.<sup>110</sup> We witnessed this in the Bancroft passage above, and it turns up repeatedly throughout Whitgift’s critiques of Cartwright. Whitgift accuses Cartwright of separating the church from the Christian commonwealth as thoroughly as he would separate “betwixt the church and a heathenish commonwealth that hath a persecuting and an unbelieving magistrate”; how, in Cartwright’s model, does the church in England stand in any different relation to the commonwealth as “the church of Christ in Turcia”?<sup>111</sup> This too he sees as more evidence of Presbyterian affinity with papal apologists, who argued “that Christian magistrates do govern, not in the respect they be Christians, but in the respect they be men; and that they govern Christians, not in that they be Christians, but in that they be men.” This, Whitgift again fulminates, “is to give no more authority to a Christian magistrate in the church of Christ than to the great Turk.”<sup>112</sup> According to Puritan political doctrine, he charges, political order serves merely for temporal purposes, and has no responsibility over divine matters. This he sees as a violation of the standard Protestant two-kingdoms insistence that “Christ came not to overthrow kinds of government and civil policy; neither doth the gospel dissolve kingdoms.”<sup>113</sup> On the contrary, he quotes Wolfgang Musculus that it is pointless and impious to distinguish between “ecclesiastical and profane laws” in a Christian commonwealth, since “there is nothing in it that is profane, seeing it is a people holy to the Lord God, and the magistrate is holy and not profane. . . .”<sup>114</sup>

In this, Whitgift is somewhat reading between the lines of Cartwright, and extrapolating to conclusions Cartwright would deny. Certainly Cartwright’s emphasis on the magistrate’s duty to enforce Old Testament laws against heresy is proof enough that he did not see the office in thoroughly secular terms. Indeed, in the near term, the precisianists were determined to bring about their ecclesiastical reform by gaining the ear of Parliament and the Queen, who could use their authority to sweep away the hated jurisdiction of the bishops and purify the church in accordance with the Word of God. At this point, however, another threat to the

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<sup>110</sup> Kirby, *RHDS* 106.

<sup>111</sup> *WW* III:296–97.

<sup>112</sup> *WW* III:160.

<sup>113</sup> *WW* III:192.

<sup>114</sup> *WW* III:298. Cf. Lake, *AP* 75–76.

magistrate's authority arose, one that troubled Whitgift even more than the danger of making the Queen into no more than the Great Turk—clericalism.

*Licking the Dust at the Feet of the Church*

Although we have spoken above of the threat of individual conscience to the magistrate's authority, the precisianists were not, in practice, all that interested in the authority of the individual believer to assert his interpretation of Scripture. As Peter Lake describes it, they "placed very severe restrictions on the workings of the individual conscience in confrontation with the word of God."<sup>115</sup> Indeed, their campaign against the mere public reading of the Word of God in place of preaching suggested that the unmediated Word alone was of little use for the believer.<sup>116</sup> Instead, they placed immense emphasis on the importance of a learned preaching ministry which could rightly interpret the Scriptures for the people. "In practice," observes Lake, "this rendered the average layman totally dependent on the minister."<sup>117</sup> In this respect, although certainly worthy of high honor, the prince was no different than the average layman, and was ultimately bound to submit his or her policy determinations to the judgment of church ministers. Cartwright, showing even less than usual discretion in his choice of scriptural imagery to employ, declared,

civil magistrates must govern it [the church] according to the rules of God prescribed in his Word and that as they are nourishes so they be servants unto the church and as they rule in church so they must remember to subject themselves unto the church, to submit their sceptres, to throw down their crowns, before the church, yea, as the prophet speaketh, to lick the dust of the feet of the church.<sup>118</sup>

Unfortunately, the church here is being conceived quite specifically in terms of the Presbyterian ministers, lending weight to the conformist charge of a neo-papistical clerical tyranny.<sup>119</sup> The Queen, to be sure, retains in theory her jurisdiction over all the matters of ecclesiastical polity which she currently governs, but it is a

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<sup>115</sup> Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 90.

<sup>116</sup> It was at this point that Richard Hooker was able to level one of his most blistering critiques of precisianist teaching as sub-Protestant in its denigration of the power of the Word. See *LEP* V.19–22.

<sup>117</sup> Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 90.

<sup>118</sup> *Replie* 144 (*WW* III:189), quoting from Is. 49:23.

<sup>119</sup> To be sure, the presbyterian system laid great stress on the importance of "lay-elders" as co-governors with the ministers, but in practice, rather than functioning as representatives of the laity at large, "the tendency in Calvinist churches was to progress (or regress?) from a lay to a clerical idea of the eldership" (Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 299; see also pp. 108, 286–87).

jurisdiction merely of enforcing laws, not of making laws, or if of making laws, doing so only upon the direction of her learned ministers. It is, as Whitgift and Bancroft insisted, *potestas facti non iuris*, which is the same as the ecclesiastical authority allowed to magistrates in papalist theory.<sup>120</sup> This is one charge that the precisianists simply could not escape, and their attempts to deny it simply damned them further. In his *Reply* to Bancroft, for instance, John Penry acknowledges that “we say that the true governors of the church are meetest to direct her majesty what lawes and ceremonies are most lawful, expedient, and necessary, for the right government of the church.” Put this way, the claim is rather innocuous, and not dissimilar from Hooker’s later argument that it is only prudent for the Queen to govern ecclesiastical matters by the counsel of her bishops. But Penry then asserts flatly, “she [is] to establish nothing in the church, but that which the true ministers and true governors (if they may be had) shall show unto her to be according unto the word of God.” Immediately Penry protests that this does not give ministers “power to enact laws, [for] we leave that authoritie unto her Majesty and the Parliament.” However, they execute this authority only upon the direction of the ministers: “her majesty and the Parliament *are bound* to establish and erect amongst their subjects, all such lawes and ceremnies, as the true ministers of the word, shall prove by the Scriptures of God, to be meet and necessary for the government of the temple, and house of the Lord, within this kingdom.”<sup>121</sup>

Most scholars have in this at least readily acknowledged the justice of the Queen’s alarm at the precisianist threat.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, while they were almost always careful to qualify, as Penry does above, that it was only in ecclesiastical affairs that ministers wielded such interpretive authority, in practice this limitation would not have been so easy to maintain, especially given that the dividing line between what constituted “civil” and “ecclesiastical” affairs was so hotly debated. Ultimately, admits Scott Pearson, “the Cartwrightian scheme makes the Church governors, as the interpreters of God’s will, the depositaries of conscience, and gives them the power to determine when obedience is due and the right to enforce it.”<sup>123</sup> Cartwright cannot resist telling the magistrate that his religious duty extends to the continued enforcement of capital punishment against adultery, among other things—proof enough, perhaps, that Whitgift was not overly alarmist when he said

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<sup>120</sup> WW III:297–313; Bancroft, *A Sermon*, 81–82. For a good overview of Elizabethan Catholic political thought, see Burgess, 102–113.

<sup>121</sup> Penry, *Briefe Discovery*, 40. Italics mine.

<sup>122</sup> See for example O’Donovan, *TLAER*, 126.

<sup>123</sup> *Church and State*, 69.

that if the precisianist scheme won the day, the lawyers would have to abandon their trade and defer to the Presbyterian clergy.<sup>124</sup>

In summary, the precisianist project to safeguard Christian liberty ran aground on a series of irresolvable contradictions. They seek to safeguard freedom with law, dissolving Luther's law/gospel dialectic, and accordingly in attempting to free the church from the bonds of political order so it may do its distinctive work, they make it into a petty imitation of political order. As Joan O'Donovan pithily describes it,

Rather than seeking the principles of the church's discipleship, they seek a political constitution for it, erecting this structure into the vessel of salvation. As much as their papist enemies, they cast the city of God in the form of the earthly city, oblivious to the eschatological opposition of the two cities. Their undialectical concept of the church as a legally constituted polity brings it into inevitable rivalry and alignment with the secular polity.<sup>125</sup>

Worst of all, in seeking to free the conscience from being tyrannically bound by human authority, and providing it an assurance that the prince's will could not, they have merely inverted the conformist model of authority. Where the conformist denies to ministers the right to withhold assent from the interpretive decisions of the magistrate and the bishops, the precisianist denies to the magistrate and bishops the right to withhold assent from the interpretive decisions of the ministers. Both sides, seeking some definitive resolution to the adiaphora problem, have reached the point where the Protestant doctrine of Christian liberty in its full form is no longer usable. Some definitive sentence is necessary; an authoritative interpreter must be established, and all others must submit.

More than a battle over the prerogatives of episcopacy and presbytery, then, or over the Royal Supremacy understood primarily as a jurisdictional quarrel, the Admonition Controversy vividly illustrates the impasse at which conformists and precisianists both found themselves on the vexed question the Reformation had bequeathed—the relationship of conscience and authority, law and liberty. As the rhetoric became more and more strident through the 1580s, establishment leaders would abandon the task of persuading their opponents altogether, resorting to imprisonment, interrogation, and intimidation to break the back of the nascent Presbyterian organization. It would fall to Richard Hooker, however, to attempt to painfully unravel the knots in which both Cartwright and Whitgift had tied

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<sup>124</sup> WW I:273.

<sup>125</sup> TLAER 127.



themselves, to offer the precisianist the assurance he lacked that he could please God and please his prince.

From the standpoint of our larger question about the clash of loyalties, and VanDrunen's attempt to establish "just bounds" between civil and ecclesiastical concerns, the result of precisianist two-kingdoms theory is sobering. Because Christian liberty in the ecclesial sphere is in fact a liberty only to follow precisely-dictated laws, the church must dictate the terms of civil liberty to the state, requiring from the civil authority its subjection to honor such laws. This liberty, despite what might appear to be a proto-liberal "separation of church and state," provides little foundation for liberal pluralism, nor indeed any assurance that religious concerns will be kept out of politics (unless we assume, with VanDrunen, that Scripture happens to say very little on political topics). The stakes—the right ordering of Christ's kingdom on earth—are too high to allow such liberty. By lowering the stakes and taking more seriously the character of adiaphora, Hooker's attempt to harmonize loyalties also offers a more promising prospect for distinguishing them, and thus for a Christian liberty that sustains civil liberty.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RICHARD HOOKER AND THE FREEDOM OF A “POLITIQUE SOCIETIE”

#### I. Introduction

As we have seen in previous chapters, Luther’s iconoclastic announcement of the “freedom of a Christian” in 1520 was powerful but dangerous, generating a conflict of loyalties to God and to human authority even as it tried to radically distinguish the two, and putting institutional and individual liberty on a collision course. Seeking an authority to adjudicate the conflict, precisianists tended to fall back upon the divine law of Scripture as an all-encompassing rule for Christian behavior, thus safeguarding, in principle, the liberty of the individual. Conformists, meanwhile, with a preference for institutional liberty that went right back to the Henrician phase of the English Reformation, minimized the scope of Scripture and offered instead human law as the decisive authority for the Christian life. Each solution, however, undermined in its own way the inward liberty of the justified conscience that was so central for Luther and the early Reformation.

The precisianist approach, as we have already seen, tended to substitute for the confident freedom of a conscience justified by faith the wary submissiveness of a conscience seeking assurance through obedience to all the revealed words of God. The result was a legalistic trap, in which an ever more precise delineation of these commands was needed to provide the required assurance, but the demand of such a high standard of precision simply increased the opportunity for doubt. This apparent subjection of the conscience to a new bondage of works, together with their obvious threat to the institutional freedom of the Christian commonwealth to fashion its own polity, understandably elicited the charge of a neo-papalism from alarmed conformists.

The conformist approach, however, risked assimilating human law to divine, the will of the prince to the will of God, so thoroughly that the conscience had no freedom to dissent. Nor did most conformist apologists really escape the orbit of precisianist biblicism; they merely sought to confine it within a much smaller space, leaving a large vacuum to be filled by the royal authority which was itself commanded directly by Scripture.<sup>1</sup> Where Scripture did in fact command, it

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<sup>1</sup> As Andre Gazal has shown in ch. 8 of his *Scripture and Royal Supremacy in Tudor England: The Use of Old Testament Historical Narrative* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013), the standard conformist defense of royal supremacy during this period was divine right, resting on the same hermeneutic that the precisianists then deployed in favor of a divine-right presbyterianism.

could not be gainsaid; where it did not, the magistrate's command could not be gainsaid. Although Cartwright contended that in justifying orders not contained in Scripture, Whitgift must be instead relying on "some star or light off reason"<sup>2</sup> as his standard for what should and shouldn't be done in the church, Whitgift would not take the bait; as Mark Perrott observes, he "never publicly affirmed or denied Cartwright's suggestion that his argument implied an assertion of rational authority and his attitude towards the role of human reason in the ordering of the Church remains unclear." As we have seen, Whitgift often proved very hesitant to explain why the magistrate found certain policies or ceremonies "edifying" or wise; emphasizing instead "the magistrate's freedom to establish indifferent orders as he saw fit,"<sup>3</sup> By demanding of the believer a blind obedience to orders that lacked clear rational justification, conformists could tend to overthrow the principle of willingness so central to early articulations of Christian liberty, rendering the conscience almost wholly passive before authority.<sup>4</sup>

I shall argue in the following three chapters of the thesis that Richard Hooker constructs his argument in the *Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie* as (among other things), a response to this twofold crisis in the articulation of Christian liberty. With his sophisticated argument regarding the respective roles of natural, divine, and human law, he seeks, I shall suggest, to regain something akin to the original Lutheran dynamic of Christian liberty in its three dimensions (justification, willingness, and indifference), while attempting to stabilize the resulting tensions between individual and institutional liberty, and clarifying the nature and function of adiaphora in the Christian life and church polity.

The present chapter will seek to reconstruct his argument against the precisianist distortion of Christian liberty. He aligns himself with earlier conformists in seeking to defend the pole of institutional liberty in particular; however, he seeks to go further by demonstrating that the precianists undermine individual liberty of conscience as well by functionally removing the category of adiaphora. He thus seeks to get to the root of the conflict by disentangling the different senses of

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<sup>2</sup> SR 56.22.

<sup>3</sup> Perrott, "Problem of Authority," 43–4. See also Lake, *AP*, 39, and pp. 119, 125, where Lake shows the same problem at work in later conformists such as John Bridges.

<sup>4</sup> Of course, it would be unfair to exaggerate this tendency. After all, the conformists did not simply resort to bald coercion. On the contrary, they wrote lengthy tracts and treatises arguing against puritanism and calling for conformity, and the very act of writing is an attempt to rationally persuade an intelligent reader. Nonetheless, as Lake has argued, they drew upon a rather thin arsenal of arguments for the purpose, and were quick to flee to the skirts of the magistrate for protection when they had run out of weapons (Lake, *AP*, 119).

adiaphora and re-situating the concept firmly in a soteriological context, as those things “not necessary to salvation.” Moreover, in defending the institutional liberty of the English church-commonwealth to make laws for its common good, he resists the temptation to anchor the royal supremacy in divine law, using a version of the magisterial reformers’ two-kingdoms doctrine to demonstrate the thoroughly human-law basis of ecclesiastical polity.<sup>5</sup>

Chapter Five will then look more at how Hooker goes beyond a typical conformist argument, attempting to avoid the conformist tendency to trample on liberty of conscience, and seeking to offer a positive harmonization of his opponents’ loyalties. This required that he, unlike Whitgift, assure their consciences and invite voluntary obedience by demonstrating the sound rational basis and the edifying character of the orders and ceremonies of the Church of England. The latter part of the chapter will show how Hooker seeks to achieve this without sacrificing his earlier emphasis on institutional liberty, by expounding his carefully-constructed arguments about the role of corporate decision-making and the element of consent in English laws. By this means he seeks to argue that the freedom of subjects is not incommensurate with their willing subjection to the decisions of their representatives.

Where Chapter Five seeks to show how Hooker renders loyalty to the magistrate both rational and free, Chapter Six will show how it is a form of loyalty to Christ, who rules over both church and commonwealth. Chapter Six will thus bring us finally to a direct response to agendas like VanDrunen’s, which attempt to resolve the conflict of loyalties by a thoroughgoing secularization of temporal affairs. This mis-application of two-kingdoms thought stems from the same source as the seemingly opposite error of Cartwrightean clericalism and theonomy. Hooker’s clear sense of the harmony of nature and grace, and his careful application of an orthodox Christology and doctrine of the ascension enable him to achieve a

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting how both sides in this dispute sought to defend the liberty of “the church”; where puritans saw their opponents as enslaving the church to the state, conformists saw their opponents enslaving both church and state to a legalistic construal of Scripture. We often tend to view the controversy through puritan eyes, as one between church and state, and might thus expect Hooker to set the question of the royal supremacy and the relative powers of civil and ecclesiastical authorities front-and-center in his argument. And yet it is but one, and the last, of the “particular decisions” that Hooker undertakes to discuss, and plays no role in the “general meditations” of Books I–IV. The fundamental problem, for Hooker, is correctly characterizing the relationship between the two realms, *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus*; once he has shown that both civil and ecclesiastical polity belong in the latter, their specific administration is a comparatively secondary matter.

compelling reconciliation of the purely natural and the distinctively Christian dimensions of the commonwealth.

## II. In Defense of Liberty

### *Unbinding the Church*

When he comes to the end of Book III of the *Lawes*, having painstakingly traced the errors in puritan claims about the kind of authority Scripture wields in the church, Hooker offers an admirably clear and succinct expression of what he considers to be the essential point at issue between the conformists and Puritans:

The fault which we finde with them is, that they overmuch abridge the Church of her power in these things [matters of order and ceremonies]. Whereupon they recharge us, as if in these things we gave the Church a libertie which hath no limits or bounds, as if all things which the name of discipline containeth, were at the Churches free choice. . . . So as the question is onely how farre the bounds of the Churches libertie do reach (III.11.13; 1:259.18–22, 260.13–15).

Cartwright and the puritans, Hooker charges throughout, are in danger of so much abridging this liberty in favor of a legalistically-construed biblical authority that they “overthrowe such orders, lawes, and constitutions in the Church, as depending thereupon if they should therefore be taken away, would peradventure leave neither face nor memorie of Church to continue long in the world, the world especially being such as it now is” (II.7.1; 1:175.9–13).

For Hooker, the problem with puritanism is a warped doctrine of Christian liberty which will assuredly destroy the liberty of the church (and along with it, the State and the individual). As we have seen already, the doctrine of Christian liberty declared that Scripture alone had authority over the conscience, and that therefore, no other authority outside Scripture could bind the believer. Given the original thrust of this doctrine as a weapon against papal authority, it is no wonder that it should tend to abridge the liberty of the church, pitting against it the freedom of the individual and the authority of Scripture. For Luther, and as we shall see for Hooker, this exclusive authority of Scripture chiefly concerned matters of faith and salvation, in “the spiritual kingdom” into which, by definition, no man could reach, thus averting, in theory, a clash with human institutions that remained suitably humble. But as the puritans had made church discipline and ceremonies to be matters of faith and salvation, a clash was inevitable.

The problem this posed for the Church of England is revealed in a fascinating passage in Book V, where Hooker attacks Cartwright’s argument that the church cannot ordain holy days because God, in ordaining the Sabbath, left

believers at liberty on all other days. They contend, says Hooker, that it is not “more lawfull for the Church to abridg anie man of that libertie which God hath graunted, then to take awaie the yoke which God hath laid upon them and to countermande what he doth expreslie injoigne” (V.71.3; 2:373.4–6). This, he argues, is anarchistic logic: “Which opinion, albeit applied here no farther then to this present cause, shaketh universallie the fabrick of government, tendeth to anarchie and meere confusion, dissolveth families, dissipateth colleges, corporations, armies, overthroweth kingdomes [and] Churches.” On the contrary, Hooker avers that God’s has precisely defined our duties only in “thinges of the greatest weight,” and has left us to our “owne good discretion” only when we are “free from subjection to others.” Wheres the precisians claimed that “everie man is left to the freedom of his owne minde in such thinges as are not either exacted or prohibited by the law of God,” this is in fact to render void all human positive laws whatsoever (since such laws by definition govern those things which Scripture does not). To this disastrous logic he peremptorily answers:

The plaine contradictorie whereunto is unfallible certaine. Those thinges which the Law of God leaveth arbitrarie and at libertie are all subject unto positive lawes of men, which lawes for the common benefit abridg particular mens libertie in such thinges as farre as the rules of equitie will suffer. This wee must either maineteine or els overturne the world and make everie man his own commaunder (V.71.4; 2:374.7–11–16, 21–22, 374.33–375.3).

Of course, the puritans would have vigorously disputed this interpretation of their principle, insisting that they thus limited the power of human authority only with regard to “spiritual matters,” and the public order of the church. In properly “civil” matters, they insisted that the magistrate remained free to bind by positive law on matters which Scripture left at liberty. However, Hooker is convinced that the underlying logic of their view cannot in the end maintain this distinction (hence their willingness to argue that the magistrate remains bound in civil matters to the Mosaic judicial laws), especially as he is convinced that laws of ecclesiastical polity are of the same nature as those of civil polity.

This seeming libertinism, leaving the believer free in all things not prescribed by Scripture, disappeared into a stark legalism when combined with Cartwright’s dictum that “It is the vertue off a good lawe to leave as litle as may be in the discretion off the judge,”<sup>6</sup> On this basis he had concluded that Christ’s love for the church ensured that He had given her the most detailed and comprehensive

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<sup>6</sup> SR, Appendix p. i.21-22.

law.<sup>7</sup> Hooker objects that there is no point in saying that God *must have* blessed the church with detailed laws, when we face the simple empirical fact that he *has not*: “it is manifest that our Lord and Saviour hath not by positive laws descended so farre into particularities with us as Moses with them . . . [therefore] to us there should be freedome and libertie graunted to make lawes” (III.11.10; 1:256.2–4, 7–9). Here then it is Hooker arguing that we are “left at liberty” when Scripture is silent; only the liberty is that of an institution to make laws, not of an individual to be free from law.

This curious dynamic between legalism and libertinism was a recurrent feature of the Reformation’s search for a certain resolution to the clash of loyalties. This could only be found, it seemed, by resort to the certainty of the Word of God, thus expanding the sphere of loyalty to God and diminishing the sphere of loyalty to the magistrate. By asserting the rigid positivity and massive scope of biblical law, regulating in detail the conduct of a believer, the precisianist platform left the believer, it would seem, very little liberty before God. On the other hand, functioning as it does to obviate the need for human discretion or prudence, this divine law muscles out of the way all other forms of authority; since it leaves no matter in need of legislation untouched, we are to assume that no further legislation is permissible where it does not speak. The believer is thus left a great deal of liberty before man. By failing to distinguish the different planes on which the two loyalties operated, so that freedom of conscience before the one can coexist with submission before the latter, the precisianist has imagined the two to be competing for territory on the same plane, necessarily in conflict, and with the latter sure to give way before the superior claims of the former. Thus the assertion of Christian liberty strikes directly at the foundation of institutional liberty.

On the contrary, says Hooker, those things left uncommanded by divine law, being matters of adiaphora, are grants of liberty to political societies to frame positive laws “for the common benefit,” not chains restricting them from any legislation. If we do not say this, then nothing is left to the authority of such institutions, but all to the individual or to Scripture—privately interpreted.<sup>8</sup> The result of this, Hooker is convinced, will be the crippling of any capacity for corporate action, a reasonable concern, as Robert Eccleshall acknowledges: while the

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<sup>7</sup> WW I: 264–67, II:90; Cartwright, *SR*, 440.

<sup>8</sup> In V.10.1 he asks, “[if] the Church did give everie man license to followe what him selfe imagineth that Gods Spirit doth reveale unto him, or what he supposeth that God is likelie to have revealed to some speciall person whose virtues deserve to be highlie esteemed, what other effect could hereupon ensewe, but the utter confusion of his Church under pretense of beinge taught, led, and guided by his spirit[?]” (2:46.22–28).

effect of the puritan doctrine was to permit any individual to challenge the established structure at any point he desired, no community could withstand some of its members undermining the social fabric simply because they disagreed with certain features of public policy.<sup>9</sup>

Hooker thus seeks to turn the burden of proof back against the puritans. While they had insisted since all things in the church must be ordered according to the Word, the burden of proof was on the apologists for conformity to show scriptural justification for existing orders, he denies the premise, and thus establishes a presumption in favor of publicly enacted law against mere private dissent.<sup>10</sup> It is thus up to the puritans to prove that the present order is positively wrong: "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" (Pref. I.1; 1:2.17–21).

### *Unbinding the Conscience*

But, however convenient the doctrine of adiaphora may have been for shifting the burden of proof, Hooker's defense of it appears to have a deeper motivation, recognizing that its denial erodes not merely institutional liberty, but individual liberty as well. One of Hooker's foremost and most clearly stated purposes in the *Lawes* is to offer reassurance to Christian consciences that may have been driven by puritan teachings into a spirit of bondage, rather than freedom—undoing, in Hooker's mind, the gains of the Reformation.<sup>11</sup> We saw in chapter three that precisianist biblicism stemmed from the very concern to assure the conscience, with Cartwright insisting that unless we "have the word off God goo before us in all our actions . . . we cannot otherwise be assured that they please God."<sup>12</sup> In point of fact, however, the appeal to Scripture in all things had not necessarily served as a salve for uncertain consciences; on the contrary, it could have precisely the opposite

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<sup>9</sup> Eccleshall, "Richard Hooker's Synthesis," 114.

<sup>10</sup> Eccleshall, "Richard Hooker's Synthesis," 114. "We therefore crave . . . to have it granted, that where neither the evidence of any law divine, nor the strength of any invincible argument otherwise found out by the light of reason, nor any notable publique inconvenience doth make against that which our own lawes ecclesiastical have although but newlie instituted, for the orderinge of these affaires, the verie authoritie of the Church it selfe, at the least in such cases, maie give so much credit to her own lawes, as to make their sentence touching fittnes and conveniencie waightier then anie bare and naked conceipt to the contrarie" (V.8.5; 2:40.24–33).

<sup>11</sup> Perrott, "Problem of Authority," 38–39, 48–52.

<sup>12</sup> SR 61.10–12.



effect, as Bozeman has shown in his *The Precisianist Strain*.<sup>13</sup> Hooker, accordingly, seeks to turn the tables on the precisians. If Scripture is to be our guide in everything, thus abrogating the law of nature, “what shall the scripture be but a snare and a torment to weake consciences, filling them with infinite perplexities, scrupulosities, doubts insoluble, and extreme despaires?” (II.8.6; 1:190.16–19).

Accordingly, he dedicates Book II to addressing what he takes to be the chief point at issue in the puritan protest: “For whereas God hath left sundry kindes of lawes unto men, and by all those lawes the actions of men are in some sort directed; they hold that one onely lawe, the scripture, must be the rule to direct in all thinges, even so farre as to the ‘taking up of a rush or strawe’.” This declaration, says Hooker, could be accepted on two conditions: 1) that it be restrained “within the compasse of morall actions, actions which have in them vice or vertue” (there being some actions—such as taking up a rush or straw, which are absolutely indifferent); 2) that we be not bound to deduce it directly from Scripture, so long as it is “framed according to the lawe of reason,” which being in harmony with Scripture, and embedded in it, will ensure that our action “may be deduced by some kinde of consequence” from Scripture (II.1.2; 1:145.10–14, 19–20, 24–25, 27–28).

This latter point highlights the key problem with precisianist biblicism that we identified in the last chapter: that it was not a matter of *how much* Scripture governed, but of *how* it governed, namely, in such a way as to abrogate the law of nature and the exercise of prudence. While interpreters have very often implied that the issue at stake between Hooker and the puritans is one of the *scope* of scriptural authority<sup>14</sup> (and Hooker does occasionally use this sort of language<sup>15</sup>), this is clearly not quite accurate. Hooker freely grants here that Scripture does govern *all* moral actions, but insists that it is not our sole guide, but operates together with the law of reason, with which it is in harmony. Whereas for Cartwright it is essential that the believer not only act in conformity with Scripture, but be consciously guided by it

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<sup>13</sup> See chs. 7 and 8 in particular. It should be noted that Hooker’s preoccupation with the subject of assurance extended beyond merely the moral dimension that we are focusing on here. In his surviving sermons from the 1580s, the issue of attaining assurance of saving faith is a prominent theme (see especially *A Learned and Comfortable Sermon of the Certaintie and Perpetuitie of Faith in the Elect*, FLE 5:69–82), and has engaged the attention of several scholars (see for instance Egil Grislis, “The Assurance of Faith According to Hooker,” in *RHCCC*, 237–50, and Deborah Shuger, “Faith and Assurance,” in *BCRH*, 221–50).

<sup>14</sup> See for instance the discussions in H.C. Porter, “Hooker, the Tudor Constitution, and the *Via Media*,” in W. Speed Hill, ed., *Studies in Richard Hooker: Essays Preliminary to An Edition of His Works* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), 104–107, O’Donovan, *TLAER*, 142–45, and Burgess, *British Political Thought*, 131.

<sup>15</sup> See for instance *LEP* I.1.2 (1:145.6–10), I.1.4 (1:147.3–6), although in the larger context of both passages, it becomes clear that Hooker is more concerned with describing the *mode* of scriptural authority (operating conjointly with reason) than in limiting its scope.

and in submission to it at every point,<sup>16</sup> for Hooker it is adequate that we act in conformity with reason, this also being a law God has given us. Otherwise, it is hard to see how the doctrine of adiaphora remains intact:

Whereas therefore they still argue that 'wheresoever faith is wanting, there is sinne,' and 'in everie action not commaunded, faith is wanting,' *ergo*, 'in every action not commaunded, there is sinne:' I would demaund of them, first for as much as the nature of things indifferent is neither to be commaunded nor forbidden, but left free and arbitrarie: how there can be any thing indifferent, if for want of faith sinne be committed, when any thing not commaunded is done (II.4.3; 1:153.30–154.5).

In response, Hooker insists, directly *contra* Cartwright's claims,<sup>17</sup> that adiaphora are those things *left* free by Scripture, not *made* free by Scripture; whereas the puritans say that "unlesse the word of the Lord had determined of the free use of them, there could have bene no lawfull use of them at all," in fact "it is not the Scriptures setting downe such things as indifferent, but their *not setting downe* as necessarie that doth make them to be indifferent" (II.4.5; 1:155.16–18). Such matters, while indifferent in themselves, are of course not indifferent in use, being still subject to the moral demands of concrete circumstances. Whereas Cartwright, seeking a certain rule to guide the believer in the edifying use of adiaphora, enlists Scripture, Hooker is concerned that this pious-sounding insistence will actually overturn the whole concept, since "If scripture require me so to do, then is not the thing indifferent, because I must do what scripture requireth" (II.4.5; 1:155.25–27). Since adiaphora are those things in which Scripture has not clearly bound us, we should not persist in seeking to wrest guidance from Scripture by dubious deduction, forcing Scripture to speak when it does not. Rather, we should feel free to rely on reason, prudence, or human authorities to make our decision.

Hooker goes on to explain why he considers this point so important:

A hard case, that hereupon [determining an action by discretion, not Scripture] I should be justly condemned of sin. Nor let any man thinke, that following the judgement of naturall discretion in such cases we can have no assurance that we please God. For to the author and God of our nature, how shall any operation proceeding in naturall sort be in that respect unacceptable? The nature which himselfe hath given to worke by, he cannot but be delighted with, when we exercise the same any way without commaundment of his to the contrarie (II.4.5; 1:155.30–156.2).

The doctrine of Christian liberty that is at stake, therefore, is not simply the liberty of the Christian church or the Christian magistrate; rather, it is, like Luther's, the

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<sup>16</sup> Cartwright, *SR*, 59–60; Coolidge, *Pauline Renaissance*, 11.

<sup>17</sup> *SR* 59.9–13.

freedom of a conscience that does not fear have to fear divine condemnation at every turn. Such liberty is not to be safeguarded by making Scripture the sole and exhaustive authority, but by using it in conformity with the nature God “hath given to work by.”

### III. Defining Adiaphora

#### *Ambiguities*

This discussion, however, highlights the difficulty in defining the concept of adiaphora, and the relationship between “indifference” from a moral standpoint and from a scriptural (or epistemological) standpoint. We have seen also above that Luther and others could employ the term from a soteriological standpoint, treating all things unnecessary to salvation as indifferent. A lack of precision in defining and relating these three contexts had dogged disputes between conformists and puritans throughout the English reformation.

Within the context of moral philosophy, the concept of adiaphora had been a part of discussions regarding what sorts of human actions (leaving aside the complexity of defining an “action”) were intrinsically good or evil, which were good or evil depending on intention, circumstance, and object (for which the word “indifferent” was sometimes used), and which were absolutely indifferent considered in themselves.<sup>18</sup> Related to this discussion was also the distinction of actions so good that we are morally obliged to perform them, and goods that are merely recommended, not required, treating the latter as in some sense adiaphorous.<sup>19</sup>

Distinct from this set of issues was the question of which actions had been prescribed or proscribed in Scripture, which was an epistemological question, distinguishing how we *know* whether an action is good or evil. Where Scripture has spoken, we have direct knowledge of the good and are obliged to act accordingly; where it has not, however, the good has been left undetermined, and it is up to us to discern and apply it as we see fit. Of course, if this was merely an epistemological distinction, it did not mean that matters outside of Scripture were morally neutral (indifferent in our first sense), only that we had to use other means (reason or human law) to determine their morality. Nor, for that matter, did it mean that

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<sup>18</sup> For a general background on this pre-Reformation usage of the concept of adiaphora, see Verkamp, *IM*, 21–26.

<sup>19</sup> See for instance Hooker’s distinction between the law of reason’s “mandatory,” “permissive,” and “admonitory” declarations in *LEP* I.8.8 (1:89.1–31), and Joyce’s discussion of the same in *RHAMR* 177–78.

things commanded in Scripture were not, in themselves and apart from such command, morally indifferent; sometimes they were. In other words, not everything scripturally indifferent need be morally indifferent, and not everything morally indifferent need be scripturally indifferent. However, as we have seen, under pressure of demands to conform to unedifying ceremonies, precisianists such as Cartwright had increasingly lost sight of such a distinction.

Within the soteriological context, the concept of adiaphora had its home in Luther's doctrine of the "two realms" of Christian existence, which distinguished between the salvific "spiritual kingdom" of Christian existence *coram Deo* and the indifferent "temporal kingdom" *coram hominibus*. The former contained those things *necessary to salvation* (on the most minimal definition, passive faith merely, though with suitable qualifications, others could be added to this category); the latter contained those things *accessory to salvation* and thus of no ultimate significance for the Christian soul. Again, important as this way of putting things was for supporting the Protestant edifice of justification by faith, it sat somewhat uncomfortably with the other dimensions of the adiaphora concept. After all, just because lying to your brother does not exclude you from salvation does not mean that it is morally indifferent; nor, just because feeding the hungry cannot win heaven for you does not mean that there is no moral virtue in such a deed. And, as both these examples show, many deeds could be either commanded or forbidden in Scripture even if, on this soteriological definition, they were "not necessary."

We have noted how, faced with the need for certainty, many Protestants displayed an increasing tendency to develop the doctrine of Christian liberty from the starting-point of *sola Scriptura* (as we see VanDrunen doing as well), rather than *sola fide* (as Luther had clearly done), and thus a tendency to privilege the epistemological dimension of adiaphora. For the precisianists, convinced that God would not leave the Christian adrift without detailed moral guidance, this meant identifying the epistemological dimension with the moral, so that Scripture became the only rule to determine the moral goodness of an action, and very little could be considered adiaphora in the epistemological or moral sense. Moreover, by their intensified focus on sanctification, and on the need for the Christian to walk exactly in all the ways of Scripture, they risked collapsing the distinct soteriological sense into the first two, so that now matters formerly considered "accessory," were taken to be "matters of faith and salvation."

The other side of this was that conformist apologists, starting too from the second dimension but unable to see in Scripture the profusion of commands that the puritans read there, could point to Scripture's formal silence on an issue and

conclude thereby that the matter was in every meaningful sense indifferent—left up to essentially arbitrary human judgment, morally and soteriologically insignificant. Or else, still worse, they might exclusively emphasise the third dimension in order to foster a minimalistic quietism. If only a very few things were necessary to salvation, then everything else was essentially free for human authority to devise as it thought best—even if Scripture addressed other subjects, its commands here were not to be taken in any permanently binding sense, since these matters were adiaphorous and changeable. So Starkey could argue that that the English people should concern themselves with little more than the Apostles' Creed; whatever else the authorities might see fit to legislate for the Church of England, they should happily consent to.<sup>20</sup> So Whitgift, in his more fatalistic moments, could imply that as the availability of right doctrine was the only prerequisite for God to call sinners to himself, it little mattered what other spiritual provision the Church of England offered.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Hooker's Response*

In seeking to “open, of what nature and force lawes are, according unto their severall kindes” (I.16.1; 1:134.21–22), Hooker thus seeks to rightly distinguish these three dimensions, and define their relations to one another. This meant overcoming an exclusive reliance on the scriptural criterion, in which all matters of moral significance were addressed in Scripture, and in which “all the commandments of God . . . are needful for our salvation.”<sup>22</sup> The way in which Scripture did and did not bind believers was to be assessed in relation to moral criteria of things that were good, evil, or indifferent in themselves, and soteriological criteria of what things were necessary to salvation, the revelation of which comprised “the principal intent of Scripture” (I.14.1; 1:124.31).

To discern what role the moral dimension plays for Hooker, let us return to the two conditions he insisted on in response to Cartwright's claim that Scripture “must be the rule to direct in all things.” First, this could only be so “within the compass of moral actions, actions which have in them vice or virtue.” By this, Hooker suggests that there are some actions which are quite simply morally indifferent, and of course we should not expect Scripture to direct in such things.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Starkey, *Exhortation to Unitie and Obedience*, 7v.

<sup>21</sup> Lake, *AP*, 41; “The ‘Anglican Moment’,” 98.

<sup>22</sup> Cartwright, *Replie*, 18, (WW I:231).

<sup>23</sup> However, we should note that he later argues in II.8 that, inasmuch as all voluntary actions are directed toward an end, from which they take their moral character, “all actions

But second, he insists that “it sufficeth if such actions be framed according to the lawe of reason; the general axiomes, rules, and principles of which law being so frequent in holy scripture, there is no let but in that regard even out of scripture such duties may be deduced by some kinde of consequence . . . howbeit no man bound in such sort to deduce all his actions out of Scripture” (II.1.2; 1:145.24–30). This serves to render the determination of moral good, evil, or indifference epistemologically independent from Scripture (in principle, at least, though not always in practice, since the postlapsarian corruption of our reason often means that we will need to resort to Scripture). Clearly, it is not metaphysically independent, for he believes the moral substance of Scripture to be identical to that which the law of reason reveals; as he says at one point, “scripture is fraught even with lawes of nature” (I.12.1; 1:119.29), and we shall look more closely at this harmonious relationship in Chapter Six. But “the naturall measure wherby to judge our doings, is the sentence of reason, determining and setting downe what is good to be done. Which sentence is either mandatory, shewing what must be doone; or els permissive, declaring onely what may bee done; or thirdly admonitorie, opening what is the most convenient for us to doe” (I.8.8; 1:89.2–5) .

This sentence may permit some things which are “free in their own nature and indifferent . . . left to our owne discretion” (such as what kind of clothing to wear), until “some higher dutie remove the indifferencie that such things have in themselves.” For instance, “if God himselfe have precisely abridged the same, by restraining us unto, or by barring us from some one or moee things of many, which otherwise were in themselves altogether indifferent. Many fashions of Priestly attire there were, whereof Aaron and his sonnes might have had their free choice without sinne, but that God expreslie tied them unto one” (II.4.4; 1:154.16–19, 23–28). The moral and epistemological criteria remain clearly distinct here, as the mere fact that God has limited our actions by positive command in Scripture does not change the fact that such things are indifferent in themselves. It is because such moral indifference is *antecedent* to the epistemological that we saw Hooker insisting, “it is not the Scripture’s setting downe such things as indifferent, but their *not setting downe as necessarie* that doth make them to be indifferent” (II.4.5; 1:155.16–18)—in other words, Scripture doesn’t have to first positively permit something for it to become indifferent. Thus he attacks the attempt to force Scripture to speak on

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of men endued with the use of reason are generallie eyther good or evill” (II.8.1; 1:186). Joyce notes that the same apparent contradiction can be found in Aquinas, in whom we find likewise the claim that all actions are generally either good or evil, and yet some are morally neutral (*RHAMR* 137).

matters where it simply does not, he insists that we must take as our starting point not what we think Scripture *should* have said (because of its moral importance), but what it *has in fact* said: “When the question is whether God have delivered in scripture (as they affirme he hath) a complet particular immutable forme of Church-politie, why take they that other both presumptuous and superfluous labour to prove he should have done it, there being no way in this case to prove the deede of God saving only by producing that evidence wherein he hath done it?” (III.11.21; 1:269.12–17).

Taken by itself, however, this line of argument would not seem to get Hooker very far in his polemic against the precisianists. He has rebutted the idea that merely because something is morally significant, it must be the subject of scriptural prescription, thus allowing that God may leave many matters to human discretion. However, he has appeared to concede that, to the extent that Scripture has addressed the matter, it is no longer indifferent, and such discretion has been taken away from the church. This would appear to leave him the same difficulty as Whitgift, admitting that if Cartwright’s exegesis was sound, then his claims for presbyterianism would follow, and thus condemning himself to an interminable exegetical tug-of-war about what Scripture had and had not spoken to. Hooker thus seeks to provide a satisfactory argument as to why we should expect Scripture to address some matters, and not to address other things like church polity in any detail—why we should expect it to leave them indifferent. This argument involves bringing in the soteriological criterion.

Accordingly, he insists that in praising the sufficiency of Scripture, we define this in terms of “the sufficiencie of scripture *unto the end for which it was instituted*” (I.14; 1:124.27–28; italics mine). Although Scripture contains many things, “the principal intent of scripture is to deliver the lawes of duties supernaturall” (I.14.1; 1:124.31–32), which he goes on to define as things “necessary to salvation.” Against the precisianist tendency to make Scripture the rule of all our actions, Hooker thus seeks to maintain Luther’s emphasis on the Gospel of justification as the heart of the Scriptures.<sup>24</sup> He returns to this concept at much more length in II.8, where, having spent seven chapters rebutting the precisianist construal of the scope of scriptural authority, he turns to elaborate his own account, synthesizing the moral, epistemological, and soteriological elements.

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<sup>24</sup> See for instance in *Freedom of a Christian*: “You may ask, ‘What then is the Word of God, and how shall it be used, since there are so many words of God?’ I answer: The Apostle explains this in Romans 1. The word is the gospel of God concerning his Son” (LW 31:346).

Having established that “all actions of men indued with the use of reason are generallie eyther good or evill” (II.8.1; 1:186.13), he proceeds to outline three different kinds of morally good action. First, while we might want to say that all actions are in some sense either good or evil, there are some things that are almost absolutely indifferent: “Some things are good, yet in so meane a degree of goodnes, that men are only not disproved or disallowed of God for them,” actions, we might assume, like “taking up a rush or straw”; in these actions “the very light of nature alone may discover that which is so far forth in the sight of God allowable” (II.8.2; 1:187.29–30). Second, on the other extreme, are those things not only allowed but “also required as necessarie unto salvation, by way of direct immediate and proper necessitie finall, so that without performance of them we cannot by ordinarie course be saved.” Here, “our cheifest direction is from scripture, for nature is no sufficient teacher what we shoulde doe that we may attaine unto life everlasting. The insufficiencie of the light of nature is by the light of scripture so fully and so perfectly herein supplied, that further light then this hath added there doth not neede unto that ende” (II.8.3; 1:187.30–188.7). But in between these two is a third category, the sphere with which moral theology is usually concerned, those things we normally recognize as virtues or vices:

Finally some things although not so required of necessitie that to leave them undone excludeth from salvation, are notwithstanding of so great dignitie and acceptation with God, that most ample reward in heaven is laid up for them. Hereof wee have no commandement either in nature or scripture which doth exact them at our handes: yet those motives there are in both which drawe most effectually our mindes unto them (II.8.4; 1:188.7–13).<sup>25</sup>

In the second category, then, Scripture is completely and solely authoritative and sufficient. If anything is necessary for salvation, we may be sure that it is included in Scripture, and we may be sure moreover that we could not have divined it on our own, without the aid of Scripture (though even here this does not mean that reason plays no instrumental role). This being so, we may be sure that in such matters, we have only to carefully attend to and obey the testimony of Scripture; indeed, if we do otherwise, and import doctrines or duties from other authorities, we are sure to err, and in the end to overthrow the gospel. But clearly not all our Christian duties fall under this heading, not even everything of a “spiritual” nature; most fall under Hooker’s first and third headings. There are many things useful for ordering the church and our Christian lives of which Scripture tells us nothing

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<sup>25</sup> These range from the “cup of colde water” bestowed in Christ’s name mentioned in Mt. 10:42 to the selling of possessions described in Acts 4:32–37.



clearly, and on which we may freely make use of reason. Others there are that are taught in Scripture not as supernatural duties unto salvation, but as natural duties, to which we stand bound by virtue of creation. Accordingly, where reason provides adequate guidance, we may make use of it, and even when we seek to be guided by Scripture, we will recognize that the nature of such duties requires us to use prudence in applying Scripture to particular circumstances.

Hooker illustrates the difference with the helpful metaphor of the pathway in which the church is to walk. Without the articles of her creed and the sacraments, “the Church of God should not be able to measure out the length and the breadth of that way wherein for ever she is to walke,” and here she relies wholly on Scripture. Other things there are, however, “that are accessorie hereunto,” and “to alter them is no otherwise to chaunge that way, then a path is chaunged by altering onely the uppermost face thereof, which be it layde with gravell, or set with grasse, or paved with stone, remayneth still the same path.” In these things, “because discretion may teach the Church what is convenient, we holde not the Church further tyed herein unto scripture, then that against scripture nothing be admitted in the Church, least that path which ought alwayes to be kept even, doe thereby come to be overgrown with brambles and thornes” (III.3.3; 1:211.9–23).

#### **IV. The Variability of Divine Law: The Church as “Politique Societie”**

Hooker has thus attempted to establish a neat correlation between the realm of epistemological adiaphora (actions left free by Scripture) and of soteriological adiaphora (actions unnecessary to salvation). Those things necessary to salvation are fully revealed in Scripture; for those things accessory, “wee have no commandment either in nature or in Scripture which doth exact them at our hands” (II.8.4; 1:188.10–12). Yet still the puritan may ask why we cannot simply reverse the equation, and insist that anything for which we do find a commandment in Scripture must then be considered “necessary to salvation”; indeed, this was just the sort of reasoning we encountered in Cartwright.<sup>26</sup> For Hooker, this is an unacceptable move, displacing the gospel proclamation at the heart of Scripture by an unwholesome focus on peripheral matters. Hooker therefore has to show that in point of fact, when it comes to matters of polity, Scripture does not “exact them at our hands” in the way it does matters of faith. Rather than resorting to point-by-point confutation of disciplinarian proof-texts, Hooker thus seeks to categorically

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<sup>26</sup> *Replie* 14 (WW I:181). See also SR 5.

redefine all matters of polity as by nature changeable, beyond the scope of divine law in the strict sense. This is why he is able to say that in such matters, “we holde not the Church further tyed herein unto scripture, then that against scripture nothing be admitted in the Church.” In other words, just because one can find a scriptural command for something, it does not necessarily continue to bind the church, if it can be shown to be by nature outside the soteriological realm of “things necessary to salvation.”

Hooker mounts this argument in Book III, where he defends his conception of the church as a “politique societie,” subject to the same constraints of other human societies, and governed by changeable human laws, rather than unchangeable divine law.<sup>27</sup> As Cargill Thompson has argued, this conception ties together the whole argument of the *Lawes*, and renders Hooker’s case coherent.<sup>28</sup> Yet Thompson’s exposition leaves us unclear as to why Hooker might have expected this argument to be persuasive to his opponents, committed as they were to the idea that the church was a supernatural society ruled by Christ alone according to divine law. To them, Hooker’s argument might seem like philosophical sleight-of-hand, cheating Scripture of authority even in those places where Hooker could not deny its clarity, in order to yield the desired result of a church establishment liberated to legislate as it desired. Accordingly, we must understand the theological foundation which undergirds Hooker’s concept of the church as “politique societie,” which turns out to be an adaptation of Luther’s “two kingdoms” doctrine which we have encountered before.<sup>29</sup>

This becomes clear right at the outset of Book III, which Hooker begins with a systematic examination of “What the Church is, and in what respect lawes of politie are therunto necessariye required” (III.1; 1:194.17-18). Here he draws on the classic Protestant distinction between the church visible and invisible, or in Hooker’s language, “mystical.”<sup>30</sup> The mystical church is apparent only to the eyes

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<sup>27</sup> Hooker first makes this identification in I.15.2, saying that “as it is a societie” the church has “the selfe same originall rounds which other politique societies have” (1:131.11-12).

<sup>28</sup> Thompson, “Philosopher of the Politic Society,” 177-82.

<sup>29</sup> Torrance Kirby has persuasively argued that “The distinction of the two realms constitutes the pivotal link between Hooker’s fundamental theological premises, on the one hand, and his ecclesiology and political theory, on the other. Indeed, this same pattern of thought permeates the argument of the *Lawes* and connects one stage of the discourse to another like a golden thread” (*RHDS* 31).

<sup>30</sup> For whatever reason, many scholars have been resistant to the idea that Hooker means by his distinction quite the same thing as the magisterial reformers did (see for instance William P. Haugaard, “Introduction to ‘Books II, III & IV,’” in *FLE* 6(1): 172-73, William H. Harrison, “The Church,” in *BCRH*, 306), with Peter Lake going so far as to insist that the purpose of Hooker’s theology is to “conflate” the two (*AP* 180-81), notwithstanding his forthright

of faith,<sup>31</sup> and its membership known only to God.<sup>32</sup> The visible church, on the other hand, is a “sensible knowne company” (III.1.3; 1:195.26), identified by the “outward profession of those thinges, which supernaturally appertaine to the very essence of Christianitie, and are necessarily required in every particular christian man” (III.1.4; 1:196.8–11), viz., the creed and baptism. Torrance Kirby has argued that this distinction maps neatly onto the set of distinctions between the internal forum, *coram Deo*, and the external forum, *coram hominibus*, which is central to Luther’s two-kingdoms doctrine:

Just as the true believer was simultaneously ‘in heaven’ (*coram Deo*) with Christ, saved, and totally justified, and ‘in earth’ (*coram hominibus*) a sinner, gradually being sanctified; so also the Church has a twofold character—it too, one might say, is *simul justus et peccator*. In its primary and antecedent form the Church is placed altogether in the realm of total justice; in its secondary and derivative form, the Church has lost its divine character. Thus, for Luther the visible Church in the world is a natural, earthly institution, and therefore subject to human custom, tradition, and positive law.<sup>33</sup>

So it is that we find Hooker describing the mystical church in terms of the passivity of justification, which freely receives and rests on the promises of God by faith, and the visible church with the activity of sanctification,<sup>34</sup> which responds to

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statements in III.1. This claim seems to stem from several misunderstandings. One simply concerns the term “mystical,” which is hardly unique to Hooker in this context, and often functioned as a virtual synonym for “invisible” in the sixteenth century. Another is the contention that for Hooker, the “mystical” church is defined not so much in terms of predestination but in terms of the believer’s invisible union with Christ. The same, however, could be said of Luther and Calvin. Likewise, we encounter the claim that for Hooker, sacraments and ceremonies bind together the visible and mystical, being outward, visible means of grace. This, however, obscures the rich sacramentology shared by reformers such as Luther and Calvin, and ignores the careful distinctions that both they and Hooker drew between the outward means and the inward grace. (Regarding Hooker’s distinction of outward and inward in non-sacramental ceremonies, see below, Chapter Five, sect. 4.) In point of fact, it would probably be more accurate to say that in certain respects, Hooker *radicalizes* the invisible-visible distinction, by renouncing any attempt to define which visible churches are “true churches” which properly embody the invisible church; outward profession of faith alone designates the boundaries of the visible church. See Avis, “True Church,” 341–45.

<sup>31</sup> “That Church of Christ which we properly terme his body mysticall, can be but one, neither can that one bee sensible discerned by any man . . . Onely our mindes by intellectuall concept are able to apprehend, that such a reall body there is . . . a body mysticall, because the mysterie of their conjunction is removed altogether from sense” (III.1.2; 1:194.27–195.3).

<sup>32</sup> “They who are of this societie have such markes and notes of distinction from all others, as are not object unto our sense” (III.1.2; 1:195.9–10).

<sup>33</sup> RHDRS 62. For Luther’s treatment of the visible church as part of the civil kingdom, see Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 7; Cranz, *Development*, 144–45, 173–77, Estes, *Peace, Order, and the Glory of God*, 41, 66–67, 107–10.

<sup>34</sup> Kirby argues that Hooker’s understanding of the relationship of justification and sanctification, as expounded particularly in *A Learned Sermon on Justification*, is essentially

grace, seeking to become more like Christ: “And as those everlasting promises of love, mercy, and blessednes belong to the mysticall Church; even so on the other side when we reade of any dutie which the Church of God is bound unto, the Church whom this doth concerne is a sensible knowne company” (III.1.3; 1:195.22–26). The former is *justus*, pure and righteous in the sight of God (III.1.2), the latter is *peccator*, a mixed company in which are many who are the very “imps and limmes of Satan” (III.1.7; 1:198.22). Accordingly, as Hooker later explains when outlining his theology of worship, the outward visible church should be always striving toward a fuller correspondence with the inward mystical church: “That which inwardlie each man should be, the Church outwardlie ought to testifie” (V.6.2; 2:33.26–27). Moreover, to these two kingdoms correspond, as for Luther, two *regiments*, two different ways in which these two dimensions of the church are ruled: one in which Christ alone works “secretly, inwardly, and invisibly” as “that fountaine, from whence the influence of heavenly grace distilleth,” and the other “externall and visible in the Church, exercised by men” (VIII.4.9; 3:378.11–12, 377.19–20, 378.10).<sup>35</sup> Laws of church polity are those which govern the latter (III.1.14).

The outward, visible church, engaged in the process of sanctification, is Hooker’s primary concern in the *Lawes*,<sup>36</sup> and Hooker is keen to oppose the disciplinarian tendency to spiritualize this visible church, thus attributing the perfection of the mystical church, *justus* in Christ, to the visible, still very much *peccator*. The result, as Kirby notes, “is a ‘humanizing’ of the church as an external, political organization, with the consequence that there is no longer a theological or metaphysical necessity for an ‘essential’ distinction to be drawn between ecclesiastical and civil power; both belong properly to the sphere of the ‘politique societie.’”<sup>37</sup> Hooker accordingly proceeds in the remainder of Book III to explain why church polity, as an external government of the visible church that does not

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that of Luther and Calvin (*RHDRS* 41–59), a judgment that a careful recent study by Ranall Ingalls (“Sin and Grace”) has by and large confirmed.

<sup>35</sup> See Chapter Six, Sect. 5 below for fuller exposition of how this distinction functions in his account of the royal supremacy.

<sup>36</sup> See William H. Harrison, “Powers of Nature and Influences of Grace in Hooker’s *Lawes*” in *RHER*, 15–18.

<sup>37</sup> “From ‘Generall Meditations’ to ‘Particular Decisions’: The Augustinian Coherence of Richard Hooker’s Political Theology,” in Robert S. Sturges, ed., *Law and Sovereignty in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 62. As we shall see in chapter 6, this “humanizing” does not mean a wholesale desacralization, taking place as it does within a Christological logic of what Kirby calls “an *ecclesiological* ‘communication of idioms’ between the mystical and institutional Churches, just as in Christology between the human and divine natures” so that for Hooker, there is “an explicitly divine basis for the human, positive laws and external institutions of the Church” (*RHDRS* 76).

belong to the realm of faith and salvation, is mutable like any other earthly government:

There is no reason in the world wherefore we should esteem it as necessarie alwaies to doe, as alwaies to believe the same things; seing every man knoweth that the matter of faith is constant, the matter contrariwise of action daily changeable, especially the matter of action belonging unto Church politie. . . . Which kind of laws (for as much as they are not in themselves necessary to salvation) may after they are made be also changed as the difference of times or places shall require" (III.10.7; 1:244.21–245.7).

Hooker has thus provided a theological foundation for his claim in I.15.2 that the church, as a "politique societie," functions within the sphere of human law. Therefore, to say that Scripture does not strictly bind us on these matters is in no way to demean or dismiss Scripture, but simply to understand that Scripture necessarily functions differently as the matter differs: immutably on matters that are *coram Deo*, and to some extent mutably on matters *coram hominibus*. This is the point of Hooker's pregnant statement of I.15.1: "Positive lawes are either permanent or else changeable, *according as the matter it selfe is concerning which they were first made*" (1:130.26–28; italics mine). In the three concluding chapters of Book III, Hooker at last elaborates on this statement, delineating carefully how we may know when the church is given institutional liberty to legislate in the adiaphora, and when it is not.

In III.10, he details four subcategories of positive law, and how long they continue in force. Some positive laws will state just how long they continue in force; many, however, will not. In the latter case, the only way for us to determine whether they are still in force is "by considering the nature and qualitie of such lawes," which is to be judged by "by the ende for which it was made, and by the aptnes of thinges therein prescribed to the same end" (III.10.1). This yields four categories: laws with unknown ends; laws with known permanent ends; laws with known temporary ends; and laws with permanent ends but impermanent matter.

First are those laws whose end has simply not been disclosed to us by the lawmaker, and in which we are unable to divine it on our own. As an example, Hooker gives God's original command to Adam, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We know it must have had a good reason, but not knowing what that reason was, we cannot be sure whether the command had permanent force or would have expired when certain conditions changed. When the end of the law is unknown, says Hooker, only the lawmaker has power to change the law; otherwise, we must assume it to be perpetually binding.

But what if we do know the end for which a law was instituted? Well, if that end is known to be permanent, then such laws are “also perpetuall, unlesse they cease to be effectuall unto that purpose for which they were at the first instituted” (III.10.1; 1:240.16–18). The qualification here is a crucial one, distinguishing the second (permanent means to permanent end) and fourth (impermanent means to permanent end) sub-categories of positive law, so it is worth paying attention to Hooker’s elaboration: “we cannot be ignorant, howe sometimes that hath done great good, which afterwarde, when time hath chaunged the auncient course of thinges, doth growe to be either very hurtfull, or not so greatly profitable and necessary” (III.10.1; 1:240.21–24).

Before elaborating on this, Hooker turns to the third subcategory, positive laws with temporary ends: “Whether God bee the author of lawes by authorizing that power of men whereby they are made, or by delivering them made immediatly from him selfe, by word onely, or in writing also, or howsoever; notwithstanding the authoritie of their maker, the mutabilitie of that end for which they are made doth also make them changeable” (III.10.2; 1:240.27–32). Examples here include the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, and even New Testament laws such as the decree of the Council of Jerusalem. These are laws made to serve temporary purposes, which expire when these purposes expire. Hooker is particularly insistent on this category because his puritan opponents are arguing that the divine authority of the lawmaker should be sufficient proof that we have no right to change his laws—to do so would be to assert our authority above his. This argument rests on a fundamental confusion, and an inability to distinguish the different kinds and purposes of laws, says Hooker.

Those who concede this point, however, insist that any law with a permanent end must be unchangeable, considering any change to be “execrable pride and presumption, if so be the end and purpose for which God by that meane provideth be permanent.” Specifically, his opponents argue that “if it be necessary alwaies that the Church of Christ be governed, then doth the end for which God provided remaine still, and therefore in those meanes which he by lawe did establish as being fittest unto that end, for us to alter any thing is to lift up our selves against God and as it were to countermaund him” (III.10.3; 1:242.4–9). This too, however, manifests a crucial misunderstanding:

they marke not that lawes are instruments to rule by, and that instruments are not only to bee framed according unto the generall ende for which they are provided, but even according unto that very particular, which riseth out of the matter wheron they have to work. The end wherefore lawes were made may bee permanent, and those

lawes neverthelesse require some alteration, if there bee anye unfitness in the meanes which they prescribe as tending unto that end and purpose (III.10.3; 1:242.9–16).<sup>38</sup>

This thus leads him to discussion of the fourth category, laws with permanent ends but impermanent matter. The *end* of the law (e.g., “good order in the church”) is completely good, and remains as long as the world lasts, but the *matter* may change, so that a law formerly good ceases to be so, and must be altered so as to realize the original end in new circumstances. There is plenty of evidence for this happening in the Old Testament itself, and it is clear that many of the apostolic injunctions to the New Testament church, while their general aim remains constant, may require alteration when the church finds itself in new settings. To be sure, it will be hard to reach agreement about precisely which injunctions fall under this heading, but everyone will ultimately have to grant that some laws do.

And therefore lawes though both ordeyned of God himselve, and the end for which they were ordeined continuing, may notwithstanding cease, if by alteration of persons or times they be found insufficient to attain unto that end. In which respect why may we not presume that God doth even call for such change or alteration, as the very condition of things them selves doth make necessary? (III.10.4; 1:243.6–12)

Together, these distinctions establish a template for determining the proper scope of the church’s liberty in adiaphora. By highlighting the soteriological function of Scripture as providing a “a way that leadeth us from miserie into blisse,” a “way of supernatural dutie . . . ‘that ye believe in him whome he hath sent’” such that “without beliefe all other things are as nothing,” (I.11.6; 1:118.22–30), Hooker has given the doctrine of Christian liberty and adiaphora a clear compass. Whatever God commands in Scripture beyond the supernatural duties “necessary to salvation” are things soteriologically indifferent, and thus mutable to the extent that their object is mutable. Some are unchanging moral duties, but these coincide with the natural law, so that Scripture illuminates the weakness of fallen reason at this point. Once we move to the concrete realization of these moral duties in human law, we are in the realm of the mutable, where only a careful application of reason can determine to what extent scriptural teaching and precedent continues to bind. Accordingly, the category of epistemological adiaphora is re-configured in terms of the soteriological and moral. If something is soteriologically indifferent—not necessary to salvation—it may still not be morally indifferent, but a perpetual duty of natural law (which will also be contained in Scripture either expressly or by

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I–II q. 104 a. 3 ad. 2.

deduction). If it is not such a perpetual duty, then it is morally indifferent, in the sense that its goodness or badness will depend on changeable circumstances, *whether or not Scripture addresses the matter*; Scripture may specify additional circumstances (e.g., when the high priest served in the Jewish temple, his clothing was not indifferent), but outside of these, it does not bind.

## V. Implications

We thus find Hooker, in his resolute defence of the importance of things indifferent, of the liberty of the authorities to make binding judgments regarding their use, in his distinction of the two kingdoms in terms of two realms, and his clear positioning of the institutional structures and rituals of the visible church in the “civil kingdom,” the realm of adiaphora, following closely in the footsteps of conformists such as Whitgift. But he is not merely repeating their arguments. On the contrary, Hooker has succeeded in providing a much more clear and comprehensive account what it means to be a “thing indifferent,” so as to avoid the apparent fatalism that seemed to exhort dissenters to rest content that the gospel was preached and ask for no more. He has also supplied conformists with a powerful hermeneutical key for determining when and how Scripture dictates matters of church polity, rather than simply engaging in piecemeal exegetical wrangling. Moreover, he has taken the offensive against the puritans, attempting to show how it is their view which, by reintroducing a legalistic understanding of Scripture and the church, has overturned the Protestant commitment to Christian liberty. Hooker has thus accomplished the impressive feat of limiting the role of scriptural authority vis-a-vis ecclesiastical authority, while effectively positioning himself on the side of the reformers and of Christian liberty, and refusing this honor to the puritans. He has done this by focusing unswervingly on the distinction between the “two realms,” which marks out Christian liberty before God, freedom from all earthly authority in bondage to Scripture alone, as something purely spiritual, in contrast with Christian existence in the world, in “politic societies” that wield authority by God’s institution outside of Scripture.

By combining this “two realms” doctrine with a Thomistic division of the different kinds and functions of law, Hooker has arrived at a much more satisfying and consistent understanding of human law, both civil and ecclesiastical, than either his precisianist opponents or conformist predecessors. The church in its external and institutional form is a “politic society” subject to the same limits as any other human society. The ordering of the church, as of other societies, is thus a matter accessory to salvation, and consequently a matter on which we should not expect detailed



scriptural guidance, and should not feel the need to justify every law directly from Scripture. Not only that, but concerning as they do those matters of human social life that are subject to great mutability by time, place, and circumstance, even divine positive law itself does not necessarily bind us to follow it to the letter. Scripture provides instruction and precedents in the government of both church and state, but how these instructions are to be applied and how far these precedents are to be followed, reason must judge, according to the particular circumstances of a politic society. This, then, is the first step of his strategy for “harmonizing loyalties” to prince and to God, seeking to distinguish precisely between the proper scope for each.

This does leave us in considerable uncertainty within the outward realm, required to judge at every turn according to discretion and prudence—precisely what Cartwright considered the mark of a bad law. However, by recovering the soteriological center of Christian liberty Hooker seeks to reassure his readers that such uncertainty is acceptable outside the sphere of those things necessary to salvation. Indeed, it is unavoidable, and to demand certainty will simply be a snare and a torment to weak consciences, filling them with infinite perplexities, scrupulosities, doubts insoluble, and extreme despaires” (II.8.6). Accordingly Hooker is not afraid to overturn the hermeneutic that had for decades helped undergird conformist defenses of royal supremacy—the authoritative examples of Old Testament rules. The royal supremacy itself is defended on grounds of prudence and good order, that which is most suitable for government of civil and ecclesiastical polity in England as it now stands.<sup>39</sup> Hooker clearly believes that something like the royal supremacy will be best for most if not all Christian societies, but it is not in itself a matter of divine law. By tempering the zeal for absolute certainty in earthly matters, he has rehabilitated the usefulness of reason as a way of determining good and evil within the adiaphora. This sets the stage for the second step of Hooker’s strategy for harmonizing loyalties, which we shall turn to now.

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<sup>39</sup> Gazal documents this hermeneutical turn, and the need for it given the failures of existing conformist polemics, in pp. 495–519 of his book. See also Daniel Eppley, ‘Royal Supremacy’, in *BCRH*, 508–509.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**HARMONIZED LOYALTIES: CONSCIENCE, REASON, AND CORPORATE**  
**MORAL AGENCY**

**I. Conformism in Jeopardy: The Problem of Edification**

Having seen in the previous chapter how Hooker sought to protect the doctrine of Christian liberty from the alternately libertine and legalistic logic of precisianism, we shall turn now to consider his attempts to correct a conformism that did not seem overly interested in the doctrine either. Where Luther's liberated conscience was busy and active, using its freedom indefatigably to seek out how the neighbor could be served in every circumstance, Whitgift's was a passive and quietist one, meekly accepting the greater wisdom of authority to determine what love demanded. The puritan protest of the 1560s–1580s could thus claim to be carrying forward the legacy of Luther's insistence that Christian liberty is a freedom *for* the neighbor. This protest might have lacked the ring of authenticity by the highly legalistic form in which it was often lodged, but the puritan challenge to conformists was often a reasonable one: prove that these "indifferent" ceremonies are edifying, and we will submit. Christian liberty, on this construction, could rightly be maintained in the midst of submission to law only if believers could recognize that the laws were good laws, laws that would build up the church, strengthen it and make it grow in righteousness; only thus could law-obedience be sure to be an exercise of charity.

But Whitgift and other conformists proved decidedly shy when it came to answering whether "reason" served to justify the disputed rites, or how exactly they conduced to "edification"; indeed, it cannot be said that the conformist case had advanced very far, if at all, on this point, from Gardiner in 1536 to Bancroft in 1589. The reasons for this failure lie not in poor apologetic ability, but in the internal logic of conformism. Three problems in particular may be discerned. First, the terms in which the concept of adiaphora had often been couched rendered the whole discussion of "edification" in ceremonies extremely awkward. In Whitgift's strictly dualistic version of the two-kingdoms doctrine, a minimalistic account of "things necessary to salvation" faced off against a totally indifferent realm of outward ceremonies to which he hesitated to attribute any spiritual value. Accordingly, he and other conformists repeatedly shied away from attributing any concrete value to

a particular ceremony aside from its contribution to *civil* order and decorum.<sup>1</sup> This public order simply *is* edification: as Whitgift put it, “Such lawes and orders as keep godly peace and unity in the church do edify; but the laws for apparel keep godly peace and unity in the church; ergo, they edify.”<sup>2</sup> Second, insofar as they did seek to establish the edifying value of the debated ceremonies, they were limited by the highly word-centered piety that they share with their opponents, as Peter Lake shows repeatedly in *Anglicans and Puritans*.<sup>3</sup> For Whitgift, the preaching of the word, which is the instrument of conveying saving doctrine into the hearts of the elect, is the only kind of spiritual edification worth considering. Therefore, in chapter three we found him arguing, without any hint of disingenuousness, that the required vestments are edifying, not because of anything in them, but *per accidens*, because, by the Queen’s law, it is necessary to wear the vestments in order to preach, and to preach is to edify.<sup>4</sup>

Both of these points clearly entail a kind of circular reasoning: why require these orders and ceremonies? Because they are edifying. Why are they edifying? Because they are required. Clearly, if anything that establishes uniform civil order is thereby edifying, any ceremony that does so is as good as another, and there is no good reason for the particular ones that have been established, particularly if they were stumbling blocks to the weak. In the standard conformist defense, as Lake observes, “the ceremonies were . . . denied any directly religious function or significance. They were there because they were there and because order and uniformity and obedience were all good things in themselves the ordinary Christian should simply do what he or she was told.”<sup>5</sup>

The conformists felt confident resting on such a weak rational case because, to their minds, the main point was not to make a rationally compelling case for the particular laws established.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, this was the crucial third constraint on how far they could go in demonstrating the edifying qualities of the disputed ceremonies: for most conformists, to go too far in mounting such a defence was already to

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<sup>1</sup> See Lake, *AP*, 45–46, 123).

<sup>2</sup> *WW* II:61.

<sup>3</sup> Lake, *AP*, 39–40, 46–47, 123–25. See also Coolidge, *Pauline Renaissance*, 44–46.

<sup>4</sup> *WW* I.71.

<sup>5</sup> *AP* 164.

<sup>6</sup> Of course, the minimalism of the conformist defence should not be overstated. Most conformists were eager to rebut puritan charges that the disputed ceremonies were in fact *unedifying* or downright offensive to conscientious believers, but beyond this, they were unlikely to go. The ceremonies were not unedifying, they would maintain, but when it came to showing that they were in fact positively edifying, Elizabeth’s apologists became much more hesitant and equivocal. See for instance Parker, *Briefe Examination* 6r–9v.

concede the most subversive puritan assumption—namely, that it should be up to each Christian, or at any rate each Christian minister, to decide for himself whether the established laws were beneficial for the church. We witnessed both Matthew Parker and John Whitgift’s consternation at this idea in previous chapters. To concede this, to suggest that there might be an independent bar at which the case between conformist and puritan could be tried, was to shake the very foundations of Tudor government. Mark Perrott argues that it was for this reason that, when Cartwright challenged Whitgift that the disputed ceremonies, not being found in Scripture, could only be defended by resort to reason, Whitgift refused to take the bait and provide such a defence. An appeal to reason might seem more likely to open a debate than close it, given that the deliverances of reason lacked certainty and specificity, and that reason was the common property of all; a defence based on reason could thus invite objection and disobedience from Englishmen convinced that reason told them otherwise.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the standard conformist line was simply that private Christian citizens simply were not to concern themselves with all such questions regarding indifferent matters, and that they were indeed to assume that most matters were indifferent. By the time we reach Bancroft’s Paul’s Cross sermon, comments Peter Lake, “There was, in short, virtually no need for any active interest in doctrine on the part of the laity, since God had promised his church to enlighten the learned ‘to whose godly determination in matters of question her dutiful children ought to submit themselves without any curious or wilful contradiction.’”<sup>8</sup> Coupled with this rejection of any active inquiry or participation in religious questions on the part of subjects, we should perhaps not be surprised to find a similar passivity in conformist political theory. We find little or no attempt to bridge the gap between the liberty of individual and institution with an account of the subject’s consensual participation in the government.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, the conformist defense of institutional liberty could only be achieved at the expense of the individual subject.

### *Hooker to the Rescue?*

The conformist case thus found itself in a weak and ambiguous position by the time Hooker took up his pen, despite the political defeat of the Puritans. Not

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<sup>7</sup> Perrott, *Problem of Authority*, 44–45.

<sup>8</sup> *AP* 128.

<sup>9</sup> *WW II*:573; Lake, *AP*, 63. Although Lake errs in treating the strong divine-right theories of sovereignty among Elizabethan conformists as some new development, he is right to highlight the powerful role these played in their attempt to quash puritan dissent (*AP* 129–39).

only that, but it found itself having dangerously compromised the Protestant vision of faith as a “living, busy, active, mighty thing,”<sup>10</sup> animating a church full of Christians who exercised their spiritual freedom in eager, open-eyed, conscientious regard for one another; in its place, they threatened to substitute a form of the hated papist doctrine of “implicit faith,” suitably transposed into the key of political religion.<sup>11</sup>

It was one of Hooker’s great accomplishments to attempt to reintroduce, even in the midst of defending conformity, an element of voluntary, rational, conscious acceptance of the established orders on the part of subjects. By this means, he seeks, while carefully distinguishing loyalties to God and to man (as we saw in chapter four) to harmonize these loyalties, so that the conscience may freely submit to, and indeed, positively esteem human laws as distinct from, yet consonant with, divine laws. And yet he must find a way to retrieve such willingness without encouraging open dissent and disobedience on the part of those who, having heard his rational case, continue to differ.<sup>12</sup> He must, in short, articulate a model of corporate rationality and corporate moral agency, of government exercised through consent, that will require his opponents’ submission without destroying their freedom, offering a reconciliation of law and liberty. To this extent, even if he remains a man taking the authoritarian side in an authoritarian age, Hooker’s development of Christian freedom, and in particular his concern for the principle of willingness, bring us noticeably closer to modern ideals of civil liberty, consent, and active citizenship.

The argument in this chapter will comprise five main sections. First, I shall show that Hooker does in fact make it quite clear that he is appealing to the consciences of his opponents, seeking free and rational agreement in the truth, and that this is no mere charade. Second, I will look at the importance of his rehabilitation of probable reason, in place of elusive certainty, as a criterion of the goodness of laws and ceremonies, and how this differs from the legalism typical of both puritan and conformist thought. Third, I shall illustrate his repeated concern for edification, his willingness to argue that many of the disputed ceremonies are of real concrete spiritual benefit to believers, and are not merely “there because they

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<sup>10</sup> Luther, *Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (1546) in *LW* 35:370.

<sup>11</sup> Lake concludes his discussion of conformism: “Thus by 1593 the conformist avant-garde (in the persons of Saravia and Bancroft) found itself teetering on the edge of religious quietism and political absolutism. Both tendencies had been apparent in Whitgift’s reply to Cartwright, but now in the works of his protégé Bancroft they seemed to have established a position of dominance” (*AP* 139).

<sup>12</sup> Perrott, “Problem of Authority,” 45–46, 54–55.

are there.” Fourth, I will suggest how the above considerations relate to the doctrine of Christian liberty as expounded by early magisterial reformers, arguing that Hooker comes closer to doing justice to the multi-dimensional demands of this concept than do many of his predecessors and contemporaries. Finally, I will look at Hooker’s understanding of corporate rationality, and his political theory of consent, to suggest how Hooker sustains this genuine concern for individual liberty within an overarching call to submit to those in authority—for Hooker, we exercise our individual freedom in and through exercising a corporate freedom which structures that individual freedom.

## II. “To Resolve the Conscience”: Hooker’s Apologetic Strategy

When Hooker states in his Preface that “my whole endeavor is to resolve the conscience” (Pref.7.1; 1:34.20–21), this is no mere rhetorical trope, but in fact a declaration of what we have identified as one of his central ambitions in the *Laws*: to recover the doctrine of Christian liberty and reclaim the puritans from the labyrinth of conscience in which they had enmeshed themselves. We argued in chapter three above that the logic of precisianist biblicism, although attempting to provide certainty for the troubled conscience, only burdened it further, and, as Hooker recognized, led it into “infinite perplexities, scrupulosities, doubts insoluble, and extreme despaires” (II.8.6; 1:190.18–19). The puritans had demanded assurance that their loyalty to the magistrate did not clash with their loyalty to God, that in obeying the one, they were also obeying the other, and, Hooker argues, they had sought such assurance in the wrong place. Accordingly he may honestly profess to be seeking not merely the *submission* of his opponents to the law of the realm, but their *liberation*: from a Bible again conceived as a law of condemnation and from a self-defeating quest for precise certainty of what the will of God demands.<sup>13</sup>

The attribution of such irenic motives to Hooker, however, has become increasingly controversial in recent decades. When Cargill Thompson in 1972 challenged the old image of Hooker as dispassionate philosopher, calmly weighing the puritan protest in the scales of eternal wisdom, and noted that “Hooker was continually arguing to a brief,” this re-evaluation prompted subsequent Hooker

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<sup>13</sup> C.S. Lewis puts it well: “Though Hooker is not writing to defend the freedom of the individual, he is certainly writing to defend the freedom of Man from what he believes to be a false conception of supernatural authority.” (*English Literature Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*, The Oxford History of English Literature, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 453).

scholars to give closer attention to his rhetorical devices and polemical agenda.<sup>14</sup> For some this has involved an almost gleeful deconstruction of the “judicious” and irenic Hooker, in order to show that Hooker could fight dirty too. In recent years, this reading has taken on heightened significance as part of an attempt to refute Torrance Kirby’s reinterpretation of Hooker as an apologist for the magisterial Reformation, given Kirby’s emphasis on Hooker’s argument as an “irenic appeal”<sup>15</sup> to his opponents whose basic Reformed doctrine he shares.

We can observe both agendas at work in the fullest recent statement of Hooker the polemicist, chapter 3 of A.J. Joyce’s *Richard Hooker and Anglican Moral Theology*, which she devotes to proving that Hooker was “unambiguously contemptuous” of the puritans, and “was fully capable of the most waspish, acerbic, and irreverent assaults” upon them, so that “it is difficult to see how the kind of account that Kirby and Atkinson have attempted to give . . . can possibly be sustained.”<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, Joyce’s argument depends on a false dichotomy between irenics and polemics, a questionable hermeneutic of suspicion, and a systematic inattention to Hooker’s polemical context. Under the first heading, we may note that Joyce seems to treat the tasks of polemics and irenics as mutually exclusive, when it is quite clearly the case that polemical means, endeavoring to refute an opponent’s errors, may serve an overall irenic cause, one that hopes to bring about reconciliation in the truth.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, part of her error here seems to stem from a misunderstanding of an “irenic” or “judicious” Hooker as one that would conform to modern canons of scholarly objectivity, avoiding any sign of passionate commitment to his cause, or a predetermined conviction as to what truth demanded.<sup>18</sup> Under the second heading, we discover an unwillingness to treat any passage in which Hooker professes respect or peaceable intentions toward his opponents as anything more than “a highly successful and persuasive literary

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<sup>14</sup> Thompson, “Philosopher of the Politic Society,” 140. Among the most significant, though occasionally overreaching, contributions on this score have been Rudolph P. Almsy, “They Are and Are Not Elymas: The 1641 ‘Causes’ Notes As Postscript to Richard Hooker’s *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*,” in *RHCCC*, 183–202; Almsy, “Language and Exclusion in the First Book of Hooker’s *Politie*,” in *RHER*, 227–42; and Brian Vickers, “Public and Private Rhetoric in Hooker’s *Lawes*,” in *RHCCC*, 95–145.

<sup>15</sup> *RHRP* x; see also *RHDSR* 20; *RHRP* 20.

<sup>16</sup> *RHAMR* 47, 51, 63.

<sup>17</sup> Avis captures this balance well in a recent review: “Hooker is a highly effective controversialist who knows how to manipulate his readers to gain his ends. That does not mean that he was not seeking a change of heart and mind, a genuine conversion of his opponents; only that he goes about it in a formidably effective way” (P.D.L. Avis, “Review of *A Companion to Richard Hooker*,” *Ecclesiology* 8 [2012], 416).

<sup>18</sup> See for instance *RHAMR* 60–61, 64.

device." By this means, Joyce insulates her reading against any possible counter-evidence, which must be always read as "laden with irony and sarcasm."<sup>19</sup> Finally, Joyce does not seem overly interested in whether, in Hooker's more polemical passages, the puritans actually said what Hooker accused them of saying, singling out as an example of his "outrageous parody" a passage in which Hooker in fact closely paraphrases Cartwright's own words (and alerts us to the fact with a footnote!).<sup>20</sup>

Pace Joyce, we can only take the full measure of how Hooker's *Lawes* "marks a revolution in the art of controversy," as C.S. Lewis puts it,<sup>21</sup> by comparing it to the full-blown polemics of a contemporary like Bancroft, who was prepared to compass the overthrow of his opponent by fair means or foul. Indeed, it is notable that, unlike Bancroft, Hooker was no officially-commissioned propagandist, but appears to have written primarily "to satisfy himself," with only indirect and limited support from the authorities.<sup>22</sup> Further, what we know of Hooker's life bears out his own statements in the Preface that he writes as one who, having once sympathized with many aspects of the puritan cause, has now, upon further study and reflection, concluded that their complaints lack merit, and has come to genuinely admire and support the established Church.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, where Whitgift had prefaced his *Answer* and *Defence* with warnings addressed to the authorities, Hooker began his by directly addressing his adversaries, beseeching them, "as ye tender the peace and quietnes of this church . . . regard not who it is which speaketh, but waigh only what is spoken" (Pref.1.3; 1:2.34–3.1).

In short, we ought to take seriously Hooker's repeated insistence that "our endeavour is not so much to overthrow them with whome wee contend, as to yeeld them just and reasonable causes of those things which, for want of due consideration heretofore, they misconceyved" (V.1.1; 2:16.18–21). This represents a significant shift from the posture of Whitgift and Bancroft, both of whom liked to

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<sup>19</sup> RHAMR 58.

<sup>20</sup> RHAMR 51. The passage in question is from *LEP* V.22.7, where Hooker critiques Cartwright's teaching on the efficacy of sermons in *SR* 375.1–17.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, *English Literature*, 459.

<sup>22</sup> MacCulloch, "Richard Hooker's Reputation," 572. See also Deborah Shuger, "'Societie Supernaturall': The Imagined Community of Hooker's *Lawes*," in *RHCCC*, 308–9; Collinson, "Richard Hooker and the Elizabethan Establishment," 165–69. Indeed, as Lake has noted, Hooker's argument was scarcely an unqualified endorsement of the *status quo* (AP 146, 225), and Collinson observes in his essay that "no other apologist of the Elizabethan *status quo* chose to be as critical as Hooker of the institution he was supposed to be defending" (171).

<sup>23</sup> *LEP* Pref.1. For a good survey of Hooker's journey from a sort of puritanism to the author of its most powerful rebuttal, see Collinson, "Elizabethan Establishment," 153–64.



accuse the puritans of arrogance and sedition at every opportunity,<sup>24</sup> Hooker was convinced that their errors stem primarily from a failure in reasoning, a failure that patient persistence in good reasoning could repair.<sup>25</sup> Whereas for Whitgift and Bancroft, the key problem was disobedience, for Hooker, the key problem was lack of assurance, and so long as the puritans lacked any assurance that the laws were good, simply insisting on obedience would do little good. Perrott contends, “Hooker did not seek blind obedience to church law simply by emphasising the necessity of blind obedience to magisterial authority but rather by seeking the subject’s apprehension that laws grounded on the authority of reason were sound.”<sup>26</sup> In this, Hooker displays a willingness to go beyond the mere negative argument in favor of conformity—that the disputed rites were *not repugnant* to Scripture—and to show positively that “we are led by great reason to observe them.” A substantial part of this reason is *reason* itself, “sound and sincere judgment” (Pref.7.1; 1:34.17, 22). This may seem natural enough, but Perrott notes that it constitutes “a significant development in conformist thought.”<sup>27</sup> Whereas Whitgift appeared very hesitant to appeal to the judgment seat of reason, Hooker sought to rehabilitate the “probable authority of reason in church affairs” as the “key to resolving the conscientious muddle that underpinned Puritan dissent.”<sup>28</sup> Hooker would thus seek to justify both the goodness of law-obedience in general—the goodness of established authority and of submission to it—but also the goodness of the particular laws and authorities established in the Church of England. And for both, goodness meant rationality.

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<sup>24</sup> See for instance WW I.76–82, II.73; Bancroft, *A Sermon*.

<sup>25</sup> See for instance Pref.9.1–2, I.16.6; also Perrott, “Problem of Authority” 36–37. However, Rudolph Almasy suggests that by the end of his life, as he was finishing the *Lawes*, Hooker may have begun to despair of the possibility of persuasion, concluding that some puritans were simply incorrigible in their opposition (see “Elymas”).

<sup>26</sup> Perrott, “Problem of Authority,” 37.

<sup>27</sup> Perrott, “Problem of Authority,” 37.

<sup>28</sup> Perrott, “Problem of Authority,” 51. To this extent, Kirby’s emphasis upon “the core principles of the reformed doctrinal orthodoxy” (*RHDS* 20) as the means by which Hooker aims to bring agreement, may be somewhat misplaced, given the more central role played by his appeal to the shared capacity to reason (so Joyce argues, *RHAMR* 156). Nonetheless, Kirby is right that such an appeal would have hardly been effective, had not Hooker been able to show that the appeal to reason was circumscribed within Reformed limits. Of course, the 1599 critique of the *Lawes*, *A Christian Letter*, shows that not all were convinced of the compatibility of Hooker’s view of reason with Reformed thought (see especially *FLE* 4, pp. 11–17, 64–71), and the question remains one of hot debate in modern scholarship.

### III. "The Rule of Well-Doing": Rehabilitating Reason

Indeed, when we look at the role of rationality in Hooker's *Lawes*, we will readily perceive that his appeal to the puritan conscience is not merely a political expedient, designed to better secure long-term obedience than would peremptory calls for unquestioning submission. On the contrary, it is deeply rooted in Hooker's whole conception of God, man, and creation.

We see this right at the outset of the famous discussion of Book I. Since in Hooker's sapiential theology God is the principle and pattern of all things, it is in God that we are to discern the basic structure of law and of action,<sup>29</sup> which Hooker describes as follows: "God therefore is a law both to himselfe, and to all other things besides. . . . God worketh nothing without cause. All those things which are done by him, have some ende for which they are done: and the ende for which they are done, is a reason of his will to do them" (I.2.3; 1:60.17–23). Hooker is clearly no voluntarist—God acts not arbitrarily, but always for a determinate end; his action follows law, his action is always rational, and the structure of law therefore, and law-obedience, is fundamentally rational. But this is no denial of God's freedom: "Nor is the freedom of the wil of God any whit abated, let or hindered by meanes of this, because the imposition of this law upon himself is his own free and voluntary act" (I.2.6; 1:62.29–63.1). God's will remains free even as it follows law, for law that is rational, oriented toward its proper desired end, is the form of freedom, not its contradiction, a point that will play a key role in Hooker's account of human law as well. Obviously, we are not God, and only in God, the unconditioned source of being, can will and reason, law and freedom, perfectly inhere in one another. Nonetheless, we bear God's image, and by our intellectual and moral capacities aspire to conformity with Him (I.5.3). Therefore, our wills are not arbitrary either, but rational, moved by the desire of goodness: "To choose is to will one thing before another. And to will is to bend our soules to the having or doing of that which they see to be good. Goodness is seene with the eye of the understanding. And the light of that eye, is reason. So that two principall fountaines there are of humaine action, Knowledge and Will" (I.7.2; 1:78.1–5). Human action, then, is always motivated by desire and our wills incline toward what we perceive to be good, to be "the more avayleable to our blisse" (I.8.1; 1:82.7).

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<sup>29</sup> See Kirby, *RHRP* 29–57; "Creation and Government: Eternal Law As the Fountain of Laws in Richard Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity," in Michael Treschow, Willemien Otten, and Walter Hannam, eds., *Divine Creation in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Thought* (Leiden: 2007), 405–423; "The Neoplatonic Logic of Richard Hooker's Generic Division of Law," *Renaissance and Reformation* 22 (1998): 49–68; "From 'Generall Meditations' to 'Particular Decisions,'" 47–53.

Hooker's basic theology and anthropology, then, demand that if the puritans are to be brought to genuinely choose obedience to the laws of the Church of England, it can only be by demonstrating to them that reason shows these laws to be "more available for their bliss." This, he argues, can be shown not only by recourse to Scripture, but to the law of nature, which is itself part of God's law. "Of all good things God himself is the Author and consequently an approver of them. The rule to discern when the actions of men are good, when they are such as they ought to be, is more ample and large then the law which God hath set particular down in his holy Word, the Scripture is but a part of that rule" (VII.11.10; III.210.14–18). By this means, Hooker can give a broader foundation and a broader application to the conformist (and magisterial Protestant) commonplace that the just commands of the magistrate, derived from the rule of charity, are to be taken as the commands of God.<sup>30</sup> While it is true that all things in the church "ought to be of God," this may mean "of his own institution" or "with his approbation." All things that are well-done (which includes all things in accord with the law of nature) have God's approbation, and are thus "of God," and so "if the rule of well-doing be more ample then the Scripture, what necessity is there, that every thing which is of God, should be set down in holy Scripture?" (VII.11.10; III.210.20–23)

Book I of the *Lawes* offers a beautiful picture of the world as the theatre of God's glory and wisdom, revealing the law of his being in angels, in inanimate creation, in beasts, and in the rational operations of mankind, the creature that bears his image. Because of this, the exercise of reason is glorifying to God, it is a participation in divine wisdom and as such deserves our respect. He cannot hide his impatience with the puritans who "never use reason so willinglie as to disgrace reason . . . as if the waye to be ripe in faith, were to be rawe in wit and judgement; as if reason were an enimie unto religion, childish simplicitie the mother of ghostlie and divine wisdom" (III.8.4; 1:221.28, 222.26–28). He accordingly spends much of Book II, chapter 7, and Book III, chapter 8 in an *apologia* for natural reason, declaring that "to detract from the dignitie thereof were to injurie even God himselfe, who

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<sup>30</sup> Matthew Parker quotes Bucer and Calvin to this effect in his *Briefe Examination*, 10r–10v: "Whatsoever man shall decree, whiche by any meanes may make to the use of his neighbours, for that the same is derived from the rule of charitie, as be lawes civill, domesticall statutes, ceremonies and rytes whiche Christian men use, thereby to teache or heare Goddes worde more commodiouslye, or to prayer, and about hte Lordes Supper and Baptisme, yea, and whatsoever shalbe a furtheraunce to passe our life here more profitablye and decently: that thing ought not to be esteemed as a tradition or precept of man, though by men it be commanded, but as the tradition or precept of God.' Thus farre Doctour Bucer. With whom Maister Calvine very wel agreeth, saying: 'That which is part of decencie commended unto us by the Apostle, though it be prescribed by man, is God's tradition, and not mans, as kneelyng at solemn prayers and suche lyke.'"

being that light which none can approach unto, hath sent out these lights wherof we are capable, even as so many sparkls resembling the bright fountain from which they rise" (III.8.9; 1:226.11–15). Total depravity undermines natural reason in many ways, to be sure, but does not render it incapable of useful knowledge within human and civil affairs. Hooker's two-kingdoms doctrine thus circumscribes his view of depravity (as it did for other reformers such as Calvin and Vermigli),<sup>31</sup> and his careful establishment of matters of church polity as *adiaphora*, within the realm of the civil kingdom, is presupposed in his appeal to the usefulness of reason in such matters.

We would thus be wrong to imagine, as some have, that Hooker's argument is simply about raising the bar as to what reason is capable. It is equally a matter of lowering the bar of what constitutes sufficient assurance in moral and political actions.<sup>32</sup> Whereas the puritans had sought absolute certainty (and thus, direct scriptural warrant) for all such actions, Hooker insisted that this was rarely to be had. While our minds of course always seek the greatest degree of confidence possible, and this is especially important in matters of faith and salvation, where we may not be satisfied with mere probabilities, we can hardly ask this of most affairs of human life (II.7.5). After pointing out all the situations in which human judgment is a dependable authority, he acknowledges that it cannot provide infallible assurance or override divine testimony. "Howbeit in defect of prooffe infallible, because the mind doth rather follow probable perswasions, then approve the thinges that have in them no likelihood of truth at all," we generally accept as a probable authority the testimony of learned men (II.7.5; 1:180.29–32). This probable assurance should suffice in most cases, so that, *contra* Cartwright,<sup>33</sup> our consciences may be assured without direct guidance from Scripture: "in all things then are our consciences best resolved, and in most agreeable sort unto God and nature settled, when they are so farre perswaded as those grounds of perswasion which are to be had will beare." Indeed, to demand otherwise does not give greater assurance, but rather greater "perplexitie":

When bare and unbuilted conclusions are put into their mindes, they finding not themselves to have therof any great certaintie, imagine that this proceedeth only from lacke of faith, and that the spirite of God doth not worke in them, as it doth in true beleevers; by this

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, II.2.13; Vermigli's introduction to *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. See Kirby, "Richard Hooker's Theory of Natural Law in the Context of Reformation Theology," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30:3 (1999), 696–701.

<sup>32</sup> Perrott, "Problem of Authority," 48–52.

<sup>33</sup> As noted in ch. 3, he says that unless we "have the word of God go before us in all our actions . . . we cannot otherwise be assured that they please God." (SR 61)

meanes their hearts are much troubled, they fall into anguish and perplexitie: whereas the truth is, that how bold and confident soever we may be in words, when it commeth to the point of tryall, such as the evidence is which the truth hath eyther in it selfe or through prooffe, such is the hearts assent thereunto, neither can it be stronger, being grounded as it should be (II.7.5; 1:180.5–20).

By this means, the puritans have in fact succeeded in trapping Christian consciences again in fear, uncertain that they have pleased God, which is precisely the labyrinth from which Luther's reform had sought to liberate the conscience. Again, then, we find Hooker claiming to be freeing the consciences of puritans from a bondage of doubt and restoring them to robust Christian liberty.<sup>34</sup> The insistence on scriptural proof, argues Perrott, had shackled the conscience by demanding an impossible level of perfect assurance in matters on which Scripture simply gave no unambiguous testimony.<sup>35</sup> By seeking clear scriptural justification even in matters essentially adiaphorous, they were chasing a mirage, and were bound to be disappointed. In response, Hooker grants that Scripture must be attentively listened to and carefully applied, but insists that the inevitable absence of a clear directive for every particular circumstance, we should readily make use of the other sparks of divine wisdom with which God has showered us.

#### **IV. "Stirred Up Unto Reverence": The Recovery of Edification**

Nowhere was this more important than in his treatment of the concept of edification, which had been so unsatisfactorily expounded by most conformists before Hooker. Whereas Cartwright and the precisianists, by virtue of their demand for "edification," required that even in matters of adiaphora, our ceremonies be framed in accord with Scripture (for how else could one know what is spiritually upbuilding?), Hooker argues that reason may play a role as well. And yet in doing so, Hooker was ready to meet the puritan challenge head-on and demonstrate that the ceremonies contributed to more than mere social stability. This argument meant linking the realm of inward grace with that of outward ceremony, and hence required a very careful parsing of the relationship between the two kingdoms. In the course of Hooker's doctrine of edification, then, we will be able to clearly discern the fundamental contours of his theology of the two kingdoms and the relationship of nature and grace.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. *LEP* II.4.5, II.8.6.

<sup>35</sup> Perrott, "Problem of Authority," 51.

In the previous chapter, we saw how Hooker in Book III drew a sharp distinction between the civil and spiritual realms, and resolutely placed matters of church order and most questions of liturgy within the former. This would appear to condemn him to the same unsatisfying conformist line about edification—ceremonies edify insofar as they conduce to civil order and peace, but that is all. This distinction is indeed a key pillar of Hooker’s argument, though even here, he seeks to provide a broader foundation for this claim, repeatedly expounding the benefits of beauty, dignity, and order in purely civil affairs. But he is also willing to go further. At the outset of Book IV, he offers a careful definition of “edification,” one which will underlie his whole subsequent defence of English liturgical ceremonies:

The end which is aimed at in setting down the outward forme of all religious actions is the edification of the Church. Now men are edified, when either their understanding is taught somewhat whereof in such actions it behoveth all men to consider, or when their harts are moved with any affection suteable therunto, when their minds are in any sorte stirred up unto that reverence, devotion, attention and due regard, which in those cases semeth requisite. Because therefore unto this purpose not only speech but sundry sensible meanes besids have alwaies bene thought necessary, and especially those meanes which being object to the eye, the liveliest and the most apprehensive sense of all other, have in that respect seemed the fittest to make a deepe and a strong impression (IV.1.3; 1:273.30–274.8).

In other words, unlike Whitgift, who reflected the Protestant suspicion of the senses in applying the language of edification only to the Word (so that vestments, for instance, edify only as prerequisites for preaching), Hooker argues that the senses *can* help to fix our minds and hearts on spiritual things. Peter Lake thinks we can scarcely overstate the significance of this claim, a move which marks Hooker out, he thinks, as the founder of Anglicanism:

This was little short of the reclamation of the whole realm of symbolic action and ritual practice from the status of popish superstition to that of a necessary, indeed essential, means of communication and edification; a means, moreover, in many ways more effective than the unvarnished word. The ceremonies, Hooker claimed, must have religious meanings. That was what they were for.<sup>36</sup>

Lake goes on to explain how, for Hooker “the observances of the church, if suitably well chosen and decorous, could, through a series of correspondences, use the external realm of outward performance and ritual practice to affect the internal

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<sup>36</sup> AP 165.

realm of men's minds and characters."<sup>37</sup> But if all this is so, it would seem to represent a repudiation of that very two-kingdoms distinction upon which the conformist case, and Hooker's claim to continuity with magisterial Protestantism, so depended. And indeed, Lake is among those who claims as much, viewing Hooker's maintenance of the visible-invisible church distinction as mere lipservice, when he really means to undermine it.<sup>38</sup> Can both Lake and Kirby be right, then? By carefully attending to Hooker's argument here, we may discover sufficient nuance to make a reconciliation possible, and in so doing, better grasp how Hooker understands these two kingdoms.

Of course, we have already seen that these two are not distinguished in terms of things "sacred" and "secular" in our modern sense. For Hooker especially, God is revealed and encountered in all the arenas of mundane civil existence; and conversely, sacred business cannot take place without using the trappings of external social and political forms. So it is that after having made the above declaration, Hooker appeals to nature and to the common practice of all ages in "publique actions which are of waight whether they be civil and temporall or els spiritual and sacred" (IV.1.3; 1:274.16–18). In other words, the outward means of moving our hearts to awe and devotion in worship are not fundamentally different from the outward means of moving our hearts to awe and devotion in other settings, such as art or politics.<sup>39</sup> Puritans and papists alike will no doubt balk at this, but Hooker is a realist. We are creatures of sense, and for any great occasion or purpose, our senses need to be impressed if our hearts and minds are to be. Nor is this merely incidental; it is part and parcel of Hooker's Dionysian cosmology.<sup>40</sup> Having provided examples of the necessary use of sensible ceremonies in affairs both civil and religious, he quotes Pseudo-Dionysius, "The sensible things which Religion hath hallowed, are resemblances framed according to things spiritually understood, whereunto they serve as a hand to lead and a guide to direct" (IV.1.3; 1:275.21–24). However, when Whitgift had made the slightest moves in this direction, Cartwright had objected that this was "to institute newe sacraments."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> AP 166.

<sup>38</sup> AP 180–81.

<sup>39</sup> On the relationship between worship and the commonwealth in Hooker's thought, see Kirby *RHRP* 101–104, 110–12.

<sup>40</sup> Kirby, *RHRP* 31–32.

<sup>41</sup> *Replie* 159 (*WW* III:354). (As mentioned in Chapter Three, the particular context is Whitgift's appeal to the symbolic value of a wedding ring.)

Hooker thinks that this objection has misunderstood the key function of a sacrament. This is not to serve as a visible sign of invisible things (for such signs are everywhere in human affairs), or even as a visible sign of specifically spiritual things (for Hooker believes that every creature serves as such a sign of God's presence, manifesting the law of his being through its own law-like operations). Instead, "sacraments are those which are signes and tokens of some generall promised grace, which allwaies really descendeth from God unto the soul that duly receiveth them" (IV.1.4; 1:276.14–16). The "generall promise" of grace in the sacraments establishes in their case a *necessary* connection between the outward and inward, bringing the soul into direct relationship with God; not so with the signifying ceremonies he is occupied with in most of Books IV and V.<sup>42</sup>

We find Hooker's Dionysian theology of sign and edification elaborated in the introductory chapters of Book V. Hooker, however, is considerably more careful to maintain the two-kingdoms distinction, rightly understood, than Lake makes him out to be:

There is an inward reasonable, and there is a sollemne outward serviceable worship belonging unto God. Of the former kinde are all manner vertuous duties that each man in reason and conscience to God-ward oweth. Sollemne and serviceable worship we name for distinction's sake, whatsoever belongeth to the Church or publique societie of God by way of externall adoration. It is the later of these two whereupon our present question groweth (V.4.3; 2:31.7–14).

Every bit as much as Calvin, then, Hooker simultaneously maintains the importance of outward worship while distinguishing it clearly from the inward forum of the conscience.<sup>43</sup> Between these two, there should be close correspondence and congruity, but never confusion. Hooker explains this relationship of correspondence with great care two chapters later, in a crucial passage:

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<sup>42</sup> David Neelands offers a good discussion of Hooker's sacramentology in "Christology and Sacraments," confirming him to be in basic accord with Reformed doctrine on these issues.

<sup>43</sup> In *Institutes* IV.10.1–8, 27–32, Calvin offers a thorough discussion of the role of church laws for government and worship and their relation to the conscience, in which he quite clearly avoids the regulative principle logic into which some English Calvinists were to fall. Church laws must not seek to prescribe the "true and necessary worship of God" as the papists have done (IV.10.6; 2:1184), so as "to bind souls inwardly before God" (IV.10.2; 2:1181), however, those done "for the sake of public decency" (IV.10.28; 2:1206), are both necessary and praiseworthy. Calvin's description of the purpose of such rites is substantially similar to that of Hooker, belying Lake's insistence on Hooker's fundamental novelty: "But decorum for us will be something so fitted to the reverence of the sacred mysteries that it may be a suitable exercise for devotion, or at least will serve as an appropriate adornment of the act. And this should not be fruitless but should indicate to believers with how great modesty, piety, and reverence they ought to treat sacred things. Now, ceremonies, to be exercises of piety, ought to lead us straight to Christ" (IV.10.29; 2:1206–1207).



if we affecte him not farre above and before all thinges, our religion hath not that inwarde perfection which it should have, neither doe we indeed worship him as our God. That which inwardlie each man should be, the Church outwardlie ought to testifie. And therefore the duties of our religion which are seene must be such as that affection which is unseen ought to be. Signes must resemble the thinges they signifie. If religion beare the greatest swaie in our hartes, our outward religious duties must show it, as farre as the Church hath outward habilitie. Duties of religion performed by whole societies of men, ought to have in them accordinge to our power a sensible excellencie, correspondent to the majestie of him whom we worship. Yea then are the publique duties of religion best ordered, when the militant Church doth resemble by sensible meanes, as it maie in such cases, the hidden dignitie and glorie wherewith the Church triumphant in heaven is bewtified. . . . Let our first demaunde be therefore, that in the externall forme of religion such thinges as are apparentlie, or can be sufficientlie proved effectuall and generallie fitt to set forwarde godlines, either as betokeninge the greatenes of God, or as beseeminge the dignitie of religion, or as concurringe with coelestiall impressions in the mindes of men, maie be reverentlie thought of (V.6.1–2; 2:33.23–34.20).

It is easy to see here why Torrance Kirby considers Hooker's Christology to serve as the template for his understanding of the church in its two realms of existence, with a "communication of attributes" establishing correspondence between the inward and outward realms,<sup>44</sup> conjoined as they are, but without confusion, in the act of worship. The worship of the visible church is a public religious duty, which is not to be confused with the true religion of the heart, but which must never be separated from it. Through this worship, the inward reality, the "hidden dignitie and glory" of the church in the presence of God, is imperfectly imaged by sensible means. These sensible ceremonies "testify" to the truth, "signify" spiritual realities, "betoken" the greatness of God, and hence serve to "set forward godliness." In short, we might say, they serve toward *sanctification*, enlightening our hearts with better understanding of the truth, strengthening our faith, and forming our affections in the virtues of holiness. For Hooker, it appears, while ceremonies are *testimonies* to justifying grace, they cannot be said to convey it, to improve our standing in the eyes of God or merit his pleasure. Indeed, it is significant that Hooker always speaks of the beneficial effects of the ceremonies *towards us*, and never as rites in themselves pleasing to God. If this distinction is correct, then Hooker would seem, in the midst of this reclamation of ritual, to have maintained the essential Protestant protest against Rome, which revolved around

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<sup>44</sup> Kirby argues extensively in *RHDS* that Hooker's Christology is central to his whole theological paradigm, and in particular, that clear distinction of two natures that are personally united in Christ serves as a blueprint for the relationship between the two kingdoms (pp. 51–125, but see especially 51–58.)

the relationship of justifying and sanctifying grace, and condemned the proliferation of outward rites that were necessary to endear us to God. Thus, Lake leaves out all the important nuances in his assertion,

This reappropriation of symbolic action from the papists was in turn based upon those graded hierarchies of desire, experience and law (outlined in book I) which led man Godwards and held the realms of reason and grace, nature and supernature firmly together. By exploiting and mirroring the correspondences and links between these two realms, symbol and ritual were able to play a central role in that process whereby the church led the believer toward union with God.<sup>45</sup>

The last phrase here represents an elision of justification and sanctification which Hooker would never make.<sup>46</sup> While the Dionysian logic of mediated ascent to God does represent a significant thread in Hooker's theology, it does so only at the level of sanctification; on justification, Hooker's thought remains governed by an Augustinian sense of hypostatic disjunction between the two realms.<sup>47</sup> As such, the liturgy, for all its value and potential, never threatens to rise above the level of changeable adiaphora for Hooker; only its legal imposition, not its intrinsic merits, gives it any character of necessity.

Hooker's concept of liturgy and ceremony, then, despite being charged with spiritual significance, remains fundamentally within the domain of nature, a domain that remained shot through with God's presence, perhaps even "drenched with deity," as C.S. Lewis's fulsome description has it.<sup>48</sup> Hence Hooker's comfort with arguing from natural law, historical consensus, and civil analogues for the value of many of the disputed ceremonies. So, when it comes to vestments, Hooker will both take the traditional line, emphasizing their essentially civil function ("To solemne actions of roialtie and justice theire suteable ornamentes are a bewtie. Are they onlie in religion a staine?"—V.29.1; 2:123.18–19) and yet also point to a spiritual correspondence:

as also for that it suteth so fitlie with that lightsome affection of joye, wherein God delighteth when his Sainctes praise him; and so livelie

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<sup>45</sup> AP 169.

<sup>46</sup> Hooker's doctrine of justification and sanctification has been the matter of some debate, with both Voak (*RHRT* ch. 4) and Joyce (*RHAMT* ch. 6) suggesting that even if Hooker's statements in *A Learned Sermon on Justification* were thoroughly consonant with Reformed theology, his mature views on the subject in the *Laves* are not. Ranall Ingalls, in "Sin and Grace," however, offers a convincing defense of the continuity of Hooker's thought on justification both across his *corpus* and vis-à-vis earlier reformers.

<sup>47</sup> See Torrance Kirby, *RHRP* 29–43, and "From Generall Meditations."

<sup>48</sup> *English Literature*, 459.

resembleth the glorie of the Sainctes in heaven, together with the bewtie wherin Angels have appeared unto men . . . [fitting for] they which are to appear fore men in the presence of God as Angels (V.29.5; 2:127.10–15).<sup>49</sup>

The train of thought which ties together Hooker's understanding of natural utility and spiritual edification appears perhaps most clearly in his treatment of music. He first eulogizes music as "A thinge which delighteth all ages and beseemeth all states; a thinge as seasonable in grieffe as in joy; as decent beinge added unto actions of greatest waight and solemnitie, as beinge used when men most sequester them selves from action" (V.38.1; 2:151.10–14). It is useful for all human affairs, but not merely as ornament; so deeply does music affect us that it can contribute to our moral formation: "In harmonie the verie image and character even of vertue and vice is perceived, the minde delighted with their resemblances and brought by havinge them often iterated into a love of the thinges them selves" (V.38.1; 2:151.21–24). This being the case, what could be more suitable to aid our worship?

The verie harmonie of sounds beinge framed in due sorte and carried from the eare to the spirituall faculties of our soules is by a native puissance and efficacie greatlie availeable to bringe to a perfect temper whatsoever is there troubled. . . . In which considerations the Church of Christ doth likewise at this present daie reteine it as an ornament to Gods service, and an helpe to our own devotion (V.38.1–2; 2:152.5–8, 19–21).

Equally fascinating is Hooker's treatment of festival days. Whereas Whitgift had confined himself to insisting "The magistrate hath power and authority over his subjects in all external matters, and bodily affairs; wherefore he may call them from bodily labour or compel them unto it, as shall be thought to him most convenient,"<sup>50</sup> Hooker justifies them via an elaborate disquisition on the nature of time, and the rhythms of rest and action appropriate to all created beings. All nature, and even heathen peoples, therefore testify "that festivall solemnities are a parte of the publique exercise of religion" (V.70.5; 2:365.29–30), and besides, he adds, working his way through the church year holiday by holiday, they are of great importance to "keepe us in perpetuall remembrance" (V.70.8; 2:367.19–20), of God's redeeming work. Therefore, "the verie law of nature it selfe which all men confess to be Godes law requireth in generall no lesse the sanctification of times then of places persons and thinges unto Godes honor" (V.70.9; 2:368.30–369.2).

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<sup>49</sup> The comparison of the white vestments to angels is one that Vermigli (*A Briefe Examination*, 33v) and Whitgift (*Answer*, 239 [WW 2:63]) have already made.

<sup>50</sup> WW II.70.

For Hooker, then, the ceremonies of the church are simultaneously (though distinctly) civil, natural, and spiritual; there is no need to categorize them as simply one or the other. As civil institutions concerned with outward order, they take their force from the command of the magistrate, who has lawful authority over such matters. As institutions fitting according to the order of nature, they can be determined by reason, which serves to identify their value and to make them useful in their particular times and places. And as institutions tending toward the cultivation of spiritual virtue and reverence, they serve not merely to preserve public order, but for the dynamic upbuilding of the people of God that the puritans had demanded. Hooker, it seems, has unravelled the Gordian knot of edification.

## **V. “Freed from the Law’s Yoke”: Conscience and Christian Liberty**

Let us pause to consider where the foregoing threads of argument bring us, as regards the central question of this thesis: how can the Christian’s liberty to be loyal to God alone reconcile fully with the Christian’s loyalty to the prince and need to obey human laws? At the outset of this chapter, we noted that for Luther, the believer must not become a mere passive subject, but should remain active even in the self-limitation of law-obedience, discerning the need of the neighbor or the community, discerning the goodness of the limitation that this need imposes, and willingly subordinating himself to this limitation. This emphasis proved very difficult to maintain, however, and many conformist thinkers were happy to let it fall by the wayside. Hooker, however, has given us several grounds for the recovery of such an active obedience. Christians are to obey laws out of a genuine conscientious assurance that such laws are well-made, that “we are led by great reason to observe them” (Pref.7.1; 1:34.17). In this, they do not in fact need to set aside concern for edification of the church, since Hooker is prepared to argue that by and large, the laws and ceremonies of the church of England are such as will conduce not only to the civil peace but to the spiritual upbuilding of the people of God. He is the more able to make this argument because he seeks to lower expectations somewhat, reminding his readers that no polity can be perfect, and any set of laws must do the best they can under difficult circumstances, having regard to the greater good of the whole, even though some individuals may feel inconvenienced thereby.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, by lowering the bar for what constitutes

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<sup>51</sup> Hooker makes this point in Bk. IV, addressing the puritan concern that certain disputed ceremonies will cause offence to the weaker brother: “we are not to looke that the Church should change her publique lawes and ordinances, made according to that which is judged ordinarily, and commonly fittest for the whole, although it chance that for some particular

sufficient assurance, he can reclaim ordinary reason as a basis for determining “the rule of well-doing” so that his hearers do not need the absolute certainty that comes from divine law before they can confidently conclude that they do well to observe the laws of England. Hooker’s ideal listener, then, is one who is drawn, through perception of goodness and well-reasoned assurance of the right course of action, to conform his reason and will to the laws of England, yielding his free obedience.

All this suggests that in Hooker’s exposition, we may have at last found a more satisfactory solution to the relationship of law and freedom than that offered by his predecessors, who, as we saw in Chapter Two, wrestled with how the doctrine of Christian liberty related to the obligation to obey civil laws. The second pillar of the doctrine of Christian liberty, the principle of willingness, seemed to require some expression in relation to civil law, even if originally articulated with relation to the moral law of Scripture: “consciences observe the law not as if constrained by the necessity of the law,” said Calvin, summarizing the doctrine, but “freed from the law’s yoke they willingly obey God’s will.”<sup>52</sup> Melancthon put it similarly: “freedom does not consist in this, that we do not observe the law, but that we will and desire spontaneously and from the heart what the law demands.”<sup>53</sup> Such willingness, acting in response to the will’s positive embrace of an action as desirable, requires, negatively, freedom from coercion (in which fear motivates our action), and positively, understanding (through which the intellect grasps the action as desirable, and the will responds). The first pillar of the doctrine of Christian liberty helps provide the former, by driving fear out of the believer’s heart; the latter is supplied by the reformers’ concept of charity as a law which is instinctively grasped and willed by the regenerate heart: the believer discerns the neighbor’s need as a demand of charity, and in recognizing it as such, wills to respond to it, obeying thereby the moral law “spontaneously.”

Luther accordingly often characterizes civil obedience as the Christian’s expression of charity, and Melancthon and Calvin both show a propensity to develop an ethic of civil obedience informed by the principle of Romans 13:8: “Owe no one anything except to love one another.”<sup>54</sup> However, in both, this is

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men the same be found inconvenient; especially when there may be other remedy also against the sores of particular inconveniences” (IV.12.7; 1:325.9–14).

<sup>52</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* III.19.4 (1:836).

<sup>53</sup> Melancthon, *Loci Communes* (1521 edition), in Wilhelm Pauck, ed., *Melancthon and Bucer* (Louisville: WJK Press, 1969), 123 (CR XXI:196).

<sup>54</sup> See Melancthon, *Loci Communes* (1521), in Pauck 148–49 (CR XXI:223–25); Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.10.5, IV.10.21–22.

overshadowed by a heavy reliance on 13:1: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God,” which seems to demand peremptory law-obedience as matter of direct obedience to God. This might seem to relativize the role of the understanding, which need grasp only *who* makes the law, not why he makes it, or why it will further the common good. We have seen already how in some conformist literature, such a marginalization of the understanding was quite intentional. More seriously, however, the appeal to 13:1 might seem to bring fear back into the equation, threatening the conscience with God’s displeasure, particularly depending on how one takes 13:5: “Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid wrath but also for the sake of conscience.”<sup>55</sup>

If conscience is, in Calvin’s words, an “awareness which hales man before God’s judgment”<sup>56</sup> then to obey for the sake of conscience would appear to refer back to 13:1, suggesting in fact little difference between the two motives listed in 13:5. On the other hand, if conscience means something like “a conscientious regard for love of neighbor,” then it invokes the considerations of 13:8, and indeed suggests that these considerations of love should ultimately supersede considerations of fear. Melanchthon suggests as much in the first edition of the *Loci Communes*: “If they command anything that is for the public good, we must obey them in accordance with Rom. 13:5: ‘Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God’s wrath, but also for the sake of conscience.’ For love constrains us to fulfill all civil obligations.”<sup>57</sup> This is gone, however, by the 1555 edition, where the passage is now glossed as reminding us that human laws “can bind us to eternal punishment.”<sup>58</sup> In the 1541 *Moralis Philosophiae Epitome*, this darker tone heavily predominates, with Melanchthon taking the first motive of 13:5 to refer to human wrath and the second motive, “conscience,” to refer to divine wrath: “And if we obey not, he saith that he will revenge it . . . with eternal torments after this life, except we do repent.”<sup>59</sup> However, we saw above in chapter two that, when treating of ecclesiastical laws, Melanchthon still emphasizes that our obedience stems from the law of love, a conscious recognition that laws of order are necessary for the peace and edification of the church. Calvin, moreover, was emphatic that civil laws could not be different

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<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that the opposition here between Rom. 13:1 and 13:8 is intended merely as a heuristic tool, not an exegetical point.

<sup>56</sup> *Institutes* III.19.15 (1:848).

<sup>57</sup> Melanchthon, *Loci Communes* (1521), in Pauck, 148 (CR XXI:223).

<sup>58</sup> Melanchthon, *Loci Communes* (1555), in Manschreck, 334.

<sup>59</sup> Melanchthon, *Whether it be a mortall sinne*, 4–5 (CR XVI:10).

from ecclesiastical laws in this respect and that neither “of themselves bind the conscience” in the way Melanchthon seems to describe.<sup>60</sup> However, Calvin leaves us in no doubt either that for those disposed to resist good laws, fear of God’s wrath provides another motive: “Let no man deceive himself here. For since the magistrate cannot be resisted without God being resisted at the same time, even though it seems that an unarmed magistrate can be despised with impunity, still God is armed to avenge mightily this contempt toward himself.”<sup>61</sup>

Although Hooker is of course equally persuaded that human authorities have been instituted by God, and that to disobey them is a way of disobeying God, he shows remarkably little interest in playing up this theme, or in emphasizing divine wrath as a motive to enforce his opponents’ obedience. Indeed, unlike most early Protestant political theologians and particularly conformist polemicists, he hardly cites Romans 13 at all; the chief exception, a fragment of Book VIII, ch. 6, is so incongruous in tone that Keble took it to properly belong to an independent “Sermon on Civil Obedience,” and to have been mistakenly appended to the *Lawes*.<sup>62</sup> The argument of this fragment does indeed at first follow the Melancthonian line, using 13:1 to establish a direct link between obedience to God and obedience to his ministers, and then invoking 13:5 in a way that makes clear that conscience is consciousness of divine judgment for disobedience. However, the fragment breaks off with an abrupt and tantalizing shift of direction: “Disobedience therefore unto lawes which are made by men is not a thing of so smale account as some would make it. Howbeit too rigorous it were that the breach of every humane law should be held a deadly sinne.<sup>63</sup> A meane there is between these extremities, if so be we can find it out” (VIII.6.9; 3.400.26–401.2).

Although Hooker, alas, never carries on to tell us what this “meane between extremities” is, the overall logic of the *Lawes* gives us a good sense of how Hooker understood the obligation of civil obedience. Indeed, his whole argument could be seen as an attempt to flesh out Matthew Parker’s quotation from Martin Bucer: “Whatsoever man shall decree, whiche by any meanes may make to the use of his neighbours, for that the same is derived from the rule of charitie . . . [and] that thing ought not to be esteemed as a tradition or precept of man, though by men it be

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<sup>60</sup> *Institutes* IV.10.5 (2:1183).

<sup>61</sup> *Institutes* IV.22–23 (2:1509–1511).

<sup>62</sup> See John Keble, ed., *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker: with an Account of His Life and Death by Isaac Walton*, 3 vols. (Oxford: OUP, 1836), III:570.

<sup>63</sup> As it had been, apparently, by Melanchthon. Mark Perrott recognizes this as proof of Hooker’s desire to maintain the Protestant understanding of Christian liberty (“Problem of Authority,” 59n91).

commanded, but as the tradition or precept of God."<sup>64</sup> We are to perceive in civil law the law of God himself, but precisely *through*, rather than instead of, a rational grasp of that law as an instantiation of the law of charity. Conscientious obedience to the laws of England, for Hooker, would be obedience directed by right reason (well-formed probable judgments) and right will (well-formed desires). Hooker thus rejects the heteronomous legal voluntarism of a Whitgift that would seem to say, "Your prince's law is the command of God, therefore obey whether or not it appears rational"; rather, the logic is that the prince's law is the command of God precisely because it is rational, precisely because of its participation, indirectly through the participation of all mankind, in the divine wisdom. Likewise, Hooker rejects the heteronomous theological voluntarism of a Cartwright, in which the moral law gains its force simply from its expression in Scripture, summoning us to an obedience which bypasses our rational faculties. The law of God is presented not as a fearful command over against mankind, of which we are to stand in silent fear, but as the law of our own beings, so that to obey it (as mediated through human institutions) is indeed to obey our own selves, our selves as we should be. To bring the puritans to a truly Christian, truly Protestant obedience, then, Hooker saw that it was necessary to invite them to an obedience based on *understanding*. Hence the patient, architectonic structure of the *Lawes*, from "generall meditations" to "particular decisions" (I.1.2; 1:57.29, 32), in which the justification of any particular law cannot be made except by reference to its place in the whole scheme of God's creation and providence. Hooker accordingly defends the lengthy foundation-laying this method entails at the close of Book I:

Least therefore any man should mervayle whereunto all these things tend, the drift and purpose of all is this, even to shew in what maner as every good and perfect gift, so this very gift of good and perfect lawes is derived from the father of lightes; to teach men a reason why just and reasonable lawes are of so great force, of so great use in the world; and to enforme their mindes with some methode of reducing the lawes wherof there is present controversie unto their first originall causes, that so it may be in every particular ordinance thereby the better discerned, whether the same be reasonable just and righteous or no (I.16.1; 1:135.10–19).

Yet how does this attractive picture relate to the messy real world of Elizabethan England, in which not all laws seemed "reasonable, just, and righteous," and every individual of sound mind and charitable disposition did not find it equally easy to determine the fitness of laws and freely submit to them? Hooker may have given very good reasons to the puritans why they should see the

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<sup>64</sup> Parker, *Briefe Examination*, 10r–10v.



English church's ceremonies as good and edifying, reasons that he hoped would be compelling to the free and rational judgment of any Christian conscience, but he surely knew that many would still fail to see the light; and this indeed not only from obstinacy, but simply from difference of judgment. Indeed, immediately after the above passage, he admits, "Easier a great deal it is for men by law to be taught what they ought to doe, then [than] instructed how to judge as they should do of law" (I.16.2; 1:135.30–32). What was to be done at the point where rational persuasion failed? For Whitgift and Bancroft, the answer was clear: the incorrigible must be coerced. Nor was Hooker any more convinced than most of his contemporaries that a policy of religious toleration was safe for the commonwealth. So Hooker would have to explain a way whereby, even in unconvinced submission to the judgment of another, the Christian subject could remain in an important sense free.

What this task required was an account of corporate moral agency, in which the reason and will of the individual was expressed in and through the action of the whole, as personified in the public authority. Some of the most profound statements of the Protestant doctrine of Christian liberty, Luther's *Freedom of a Christian* and Calvin's *Institutes* III.19, had explored the paradox that freedom need not be opposed to necessity. Our limitation in the sphere of external action, which we ought accept freely as a self-limitation dictated by love of God and love of neighbor, is in fact the form through which we express and realize our freedom. Could this intuition be developed so as to provide a satisfactory synthesis of Christian liberty and civil obedience? Whereas the Calvinist resistance theorists developed the concept of political authority as the expression of the will of the people primarily in order to justify popular disobedience to that authority, for Hooker, the concept functions rather as a ground of obedience, an obedience in which he is convinced the Christian subject remains free and active, rather than disenfranchised and passive.

## **VI. "Even Your Deed Also": Corporate Rationality and Corporate Moral Agency**

Certainly the way forward for such a synthesis was not straightforward. Indeed, there was a period of Hooker scholarship (during the 1950s–1960s) in which it was common to argue that Hooker had stumbled headlong into self-contradiction at this point. The argument went that, having articulated an essentially Thomist theology of law, in which law derived its authority from reason, Hooker found himself forced in Book VIII to retreat to a Marsilian voluntarism, in which law

derived its force simply from the will of the sovereign—what Peter Munz went so far as to call a “Tudor Averroism.”<sup>65</sup> Subsequent scholarship, including McGrade, Thompson, and Kirby<sup>66</sup> have thoroughly rebutted these claims, demonstrating that they represent not only a mischaracterization of Hooker, but of Aquinas and Marsilius as well. Nonetheless, the question remains as to whether Hooker can really exploit all the conscience-salving potential of his emphasis on reason without undermining his fundamental objective as a conformist calling for unity and obedience.

Perrott summarizes the dilemma: “The problem for Hooker was that since he claimed that church laws were grounded on reason, his own argument allowed for the possibility of minority groups putting forward alternative suggestions to existing legislation on the basis of the same rational authority.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, he needed to limit “the subversive potential of such reliance on reason by subordinating subjective, private judgments of what is ‘reasonable’ to public determinations.”<sup>68</sup> It is easy to see in this a certain disingenuity, as if Hooker merely gives with one hand in order to take away with the other. Eppley, indeed, argues that the functional conclusion of Hooker’s argument is to systematically nullify every exercise of reason except that of the Crown-in-Parliament, before which no subject’s reason can be considered valid.<sup>69</sup> Even if Eppley’s argument succeeds, however, it would be cynical indeed to see this as Hooker’s intention, given how much of his own argument in the *Lawes* would thereby be rendered obsolete. Perrott

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<sup>65</sup> This criticism is mounted by H.F. Kearney, in “Richard Hooker: A Reconstruction,” *Cambridge Journal* 5 (1952), 300–11, and by Peter Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought* (London: Routledge, 1952), 49–57.

<sup>66</sup> A.S. McGrade, “The Coherence of Hooker’s Polity: The Books on Power,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24 (1963), 163–82; Thompson “Philosopher of the Politic Society,” 130–91; Kirby, “From Generall Meditations”; Kirby, “‘Law Makes the King’: Richard Hooker on Law and Princely Rule” in Michael Hattaway, ed., *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, 2 vols. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 1:274–88.

<sup>67</sup> Perrott, “Problem of Authority,” 54.

<sup>68</sup> Eppley, *Defending Royal Supremacy*, 169.

<sup>69</sup> Eppley, *Defending Royal Superemacy*, 182–203. Eppley argues that for Hooker, not only do the authorities have the right to establish rules in adiaphora, but indeed, only they are qualified to determine what constitutes an adiaphoron. And, since the disobedience of a subject must be grounded on a demonstrative, not merely probable reason, and a truly demonstrative reason would necessarily be recognized as such by the authorities, there can be no legitimate appeal by private persons against the authority of the Crown-in-Parliament. While Eppley’s argument is ingenious, it relies on uncompromisingly forcing through syllogisms constructed from scattered statements of Hooker, syllogisms that seem to run counter to his own expressed intent. It is possible then that Eppley has discerned certain threads of inconsistency in Hooker, but unlikely that Hooker truly intends, as Eppley’s argument suggests, to give to the English crown authority equivalent to the papal magisterium.

is surely correct to observe that “Hooker acknowledged the importance of conscientious integrity as an issue in church politics even when his argument was at its most staunchly conformist.”<sup>70</sup>

### *Hooker’s Constitutionalism*

As we have seen, however, the same could hardly be said for Elizabethan conformism as a whole. In *Anglicans and Puritans*, Peter Lake identifies the authoritarian tendencies of conformist argument not only in their sterile doctrine of edification, but in their strong divine-right concepts of political authority. Lake errs, however, by treating this as a new development in response to puritan pressure; in fact, Stephen Gardiner in the 1530s was every bit as much the royal absolutist as Whitgift and Bancroft, and for that matter, so was John Wycliffe in the 1380s. In his *Defence* against Cartwright, Whitgift once uses the argument that the laws of England involve the consent of the governed, and so the puritans’ liberty is in no respect being overridden: “I add that every private man’s consent is in the consent of the church, as it is in the consent of the parliament; and therefore no man’s liberty otherwise restrained than he hath consented unto.”<sup>71</sup> But for him, this never implies that the ruled may withhold their consent from the sovereign, and in fact he repeatedly attacks the subversive potential of puritan “popularity,” which he saw in their teaching that ministers and elders must rule their congregations by consent of the multitude).<sup>72</sup> Although more constitutionalist versions of political theory had flourished alongside absolutism throughout the Tudor period, the rejection of puritan popularity pushed most conformist divines decisively toward the latter. By 1593, Dutch emigrant Adrian Saravia, who had emerged as a leading conformist apologist, offered an uncompromising statement of divine right absolutism, which was to become the weapon of choice against pesky puritan consciences a generation later, with disastrous results for church and commonwealth.<sup>73</sup> Lake therefore argues, not implausibly, that Hooker wrote not merely to provide yet another rejoinder to puritanism, but also in an attempt forestall the dangerous tendencies of such argument—to “sort out conformism,” as he puts it.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Perrott, “Problem of Authority,” 54.

<sup>71</sup> WW II:573.

<sup>72</sup> Lake, *AP*, 60–64; see WW II:180–92

<sup>73</sup> See Lake, *AP*, 135–39, engaging with Saravia’s *De imperandi autoritate et christiana obedientia* (London: Barker, 1593).

<sup>74</sup> *AP* 139, 145–46.

Lake thus lays great stress on Hooker's political theory of consent, as have a great many Hooker scholars. Hooker's consent, of course, is not that of Locke, as generations of Whig historians liked to think; his is a thoroughly medieval doctrine, one in which the "consent of the governed" does not necessarily entail an ongoing right of resistance, or the possibility that power might revert to individuals should they simply choose to withhold their consent.<sup>75</sup> A full treatment of Hooker's political theory—the origin of political power, the nature and locus of sovereignty, the relation of Crown and Parliament, and of Convocation, as the representative assembly of ecclesiastical polity, to both—is of course out of the question here, but thankfully it has been treated in depth by many excellent scholars.<sup>76</sup> Briefly, though, we may sketch Hooker's position in light of the above remarks about Romans 13. For many Protestant theologians, an appeal to Romans 13:1 was sufficient to establish the divine authorization of political authority. Without further reflection, however, on precisely how human authority related to divine, thorny problems were likely to arise. Did political power derive by immediate appointment of God, or indirectly, as a human ordinance made according to the light of nature, and hence with God's approval and by virtue of his wisdom? Too often the implication among early Protestant theologians was the former, which raised thorny questions in the 1550s and 1560s as monarchical opposition to reform heated up.<sup>77</sup> Many of the "monarchomachs" set out to reconfigure the logic of Protestant political thought so as to ground political power in the people and hence authorize armed resistance to tyrannical rulers.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> F.J. Shirley, *Richard Hooker and Contemporary Political Ideas* (London: Published for the Church Historical Society by S.P.C.K, 1949), 93–104. For a full discussion of the right of resistance in the late 16th-century, and Hooker's answer to it, see pp. 135–98. Cargill Thompson also treats these themes very adeptly in "Philosopher of the Politic Society," 159–71.

<sup>76</sup> The most notable recent discussion, which has sought to breathe fresh air back into the old and now-deflated argument for Locke's dependence on Hooker, is Alexander Rosenthal's *Crown Under Law*. Although somewhat superficial (due in part to its scope), and not very reliable in its treatment of either Hooker's magisterial Reformed or English conformist predecessors, Rosenthal's core argument is persuasive, and his treatment of the themes mentioned here in ch. 3 of his book is one of the best available. See also Thompson, "Philosopher of the Politic Society," 159–91, Robert K. Faulkner, *Richard Hooker and the Politics of a Christian England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 151–84, Daniel Eppley, "Royal Supremacy" in *BCRH*, 503–34, and Lake, *AP*, 197–213.

<sup>77</sup> Interesting examples of Protestant attempts to rethink the meaning of Romans 13 appear in Christopher Goodman, *How superior powers ought to be obeyd of their subjects [...]* (Geneva: 1558), facsimile reprint (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 110–19 and George Buchanan, *A Dialogue on the Law of Kingship Among the Scots*, ed. and trans. by Roger A. Mason and Martin S. Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 113–23.

<sup>78</sup> The paradigmatic examples are of course Theodore Beza's *Of the Rights of Rulers* and the famous *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*. For a full discussion of these and others, see Skinner, *Age of Reformation*, 189–348.

Naturally, in this context, it is easy to see why English conformists were so liable to shy away from the concept of consent as the origin of political authority. Hooker, however, insists, “unto me it seemeth almost out of doubt and controversie that every independent multitude before any certaine forme of regiment established hath under Gods supreme authoritie full dominion over it self” (VIII.3.1; 3:334.4–7). Therefore a king remains dependent on his people even when they make themselves dependent on him: “Originall influence of power from the bodie into the King is cause of the Kings dependencie in power upon the bodie. By dependencie we meane subordination and subjection” (VIII.3.2; 3:339.7–9).<sup>79</sup> Although this logic is not always embodied in appropriate constitutional forms, Hooker considers that in England it has been:

where the people are in no subjection but such as willingly themselves have condescended unto for their own most behoof and securitie. In Kingdoms therefore of this qualitie the highest Governour hath indeed universall dominion, but with dependence upon that whole entier body over the severall partes whereof he hath dominion so that it standeth for an axiome in this case, The King is *major singulis universis minor* (VIII.3.2; 3:336.23–337.1).

For Hooker, bodies politic are immortal, and therefore the consent embodied in their government does not have to be affirmed anew with the accession of each ruler; rather “the cause of dependencie is in that first originall conveyance” (VIII.3.2; 3:338.28–339.1), so that the consent of our ancestors to be so governed is our own consent. This concept of consent in itself does not necessarily involve any mechanism for the ongoing expression of consent in the present, but fortunately, Hooker believes that in England, Parliament (and Convocation) serve just such a role. Through these gatherings, not only does the government of England as such embody the consent of its people, but the particular laws passed also embody this consent.<sup>80</sup> “A lawe is the deed of the whole bodie politike” (Pref.5.2; 1.27.33–28.1), Hooker will declare.

This much has been treated at length by a great many Hooker scholars. However, it remains to show just how integral this concept of law-making by consent is to Hooker’s broader project of establishing the appropriate balance of conscientious freedom and institutional freedom in the doctrine of Christian liberty. Mark Perrott has attempted this in outline, and I shall build on his argument here.

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<sup>79</sup> Of course, this conclusion would not follow if one had an alienative view of the transmission of political authority, such as we find in Hooker’s contemporaries such as Bodin, and in its starkest form, in Hobbes. There, the initial act of consent serves simply to create the sovereign, who remains thereafter subordinate to God alone.

<sup>80</sup> Thompson, “Philosopher of the Politic Society,” 171–72; *LEP* VIII.2.7, 13.

So how does Hooker's stress on the use of reason in determining the goodness of law support, rather than undermine, his call for submission?

*Government as a Corporate Exercise of Reason*

The first thing to note is that when Hooker speaks of reason, he is of course not working within our modern post-Enlightenment mold. For Hooker, reason is not first and foremost something exercised by the individual (though we are each as individuals capable of exercising reason and called to do so) but something exercised collectively. This follows of course from Hooker's realist and participationist ontology—to reason is to participate in the law of reason that is implanted in human nature, the law by which human nature is directed. It is for this reason that Hooker, despite the Fall, will rest such confidence in the collective wisdom of mankind, when seeking to determine what the law of reason is. Although he grants that demonstrative reasoning from first causes (which can theoretically be done by an individual mind) is the surest way of determining the law of reason, he considers this very rare indeed (I.8.2). Much more often, the law will be determined by consulting the “the generall perswasion of all men” (I.8.3; 1:83.18). Indeed, he will go so far as to say, “The generall and perpetual voyce of men is as the sentence of God him selfe. For that which all men have at all times learned, nature her selfe must needes have taught; and God being the author of nature, her voyce is but his instrument” (I.8.3; 1:83.33–84.4).

It is for this reason that we find him repeatedly throughout the *Lawes* arguing by appeal to tradition. Of course, this was a common enough strategy in any of the debates of that period, even for the puritans, who although eager to disparage the authority of mere men, even the Church Fathers, could not resist trying to line up a list of respected authorities on their side in their debates with conformists (an inconsistency Hooker was only too happy to point out to them).<sup>81</sup> In his interactions with Cartwright, Whitgift frequently cited the magisterial reformers and the testimony of the Church Fathers to bolster the credentials of his arguments, and to present the puritans as arrogant and obstinate for setting their own feeble judgments against those of such lofty authorities. However, for Whitgift as for Cartwright, these appeals had something of an *ad hoc* character; both were happy to dismiss authorities with which they disagreed, and both tended to write off most of the medieval period as an era of apostasy to which no appeal could be made. Hooker, however, as a number of scholars have observed, was eager to resurrect a

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<sup>81</sup> *LEP* II.7.8.

sense of continuity with the past, and was not ashamed to defend a particular ritual on the basis that the English church for many centuries (even centuries of “popery”) had practiced it.<sup>82</sup> He elevated this respect for tradition to the level of principle: “Neither may we in this case lightlie esteeme what hath bene allowed as fitt in the judgment of antiquitie and by the longe continewed practice of the whole church, from which unnecessarelie to swarve experience hath never yet found it safe” (V.7.1; 2:34.24–27). Of course, it was not necessarily to church tradition alone that Hooker appealed, but to the common practice of mankind, whether this be instanced by the patriarchs, Old Testament kings, early Christian emperors, or even heathen peoples. This appears repeatedly in his justification of particular ceremonies in Book V, as we saw above in his discussion of holy days. For this reason, it is important to recognize that for Hooker at least, it is misleading to speak in terms of the Anglican “three-legged stool” of Scripture, reason, and tradition. This terminology fails to realize the extent to which for Hooker, the last of these is simply the second, considered diachronically, and to which the second is almost always to some extent understood corporately.<sup>83</sup>

At this point, however, our modern predispositions may be prone to mislead us again, as all this talk of the appealing to the judgments of all men might seem a rather democratic proposition. But for Hooker, there is no question of putting every man’s judgment on the same level. On the contrary, he repeatedly warns the puritans against the danger of such democratization:

the matter, wherein ye thinke that yee see and imagine that your wayes are sincere, is of farre deeper consideration then any one amongst five hundered of you conceiveth. Let the vulgar sort smongst you know that there is not the least branch of the cause wherin they are so resolute, but to the tryall of it a great deale more appertaineth then their concept doth reache unto. I write this not in disgrace of the simplest that way given, but I would gladly they knewe the nature of that cause wherein they thinke themselves throughly instructed and are not (Pref.3.3; 1:14.13–20).

The complexity of human affairs is such that “men of commone capacity and but ordinary judgment are not able (for how should they?) to discerne what things are fittest for each kind and state of regiment” (I.10.7; 1:102.6–8) For this reason, Hooker’s appeal to the authority of the “generall and perpetual voice of mankind” and the authority of church tradition always privileges the judgment of those who, by reason of learning, age, and station, have a claim to be regarded as the wisest.

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<sup>82</sup> Lake, *AP*, 157.

<sup>83</sup> See David Neelands, “Scripture, Reason, and ‘Tradition’” in *RHCCC*, 89–94, for a good discussion of what Hooker’s concept of tradition is and isn’t.

Hence the weight he will put on the role of Convocation in determining the ecclesiastical laws that the prince will enforce.<sup>84</sup>

On these bases alone, Hooker can rest much of his appeal for individual consciences to submit themselves to the judgments embodied in the English laws. The reason of an individual cannot presume itself above that of so many and so wise minds, so the only rational course is to yield precedence to their judgments, which we may safely take to be the judgments of God. This alone ought to suffice to deflect the argument from Christian liberty, which claims that we must obey only the voice of God: "It is a loose and licentious opinion which the Anabaptists have embraced, holding that a Christian mans libertie is lost, and the soule which Christ hath redeemed unto him selfe injuriously drawne into servitude under the yooke of humane power, if any law be now imposed besides the Gospell of Jesus Christ" (III.9.3; 1:238.8–14), says Hooker in a passage that sums up a great deal of the argument of the *Lawes*. They say we should be led by the light of the spirit, but since "the light of naturall understanding wit and reason is from God" we may trust that "the lawes which the very heathens did gather to direct their actions by, so far forth as they proceeded from the light of nature, God him selfe doth acknowledge to have proceeded even from him selfe, and that he was the writer of them in the tables of their hartes." If this be so for heathens, all the more highly may we value laws "which have been made by his Saints, endued further with the heavenly grace of his spirit, and directed as much as might be with such instructions, as his sacred word doth yeeld." Once we discern human laws to be such, and cultivate "that dutifull regard which their dignitie doth require: it will not greatly need, that we should be exhorted to live in obedience unto them" (III.9.3; 1:238.25–26, 238.31–239.10).

#### *Government as Corporate Agency*

Nonetheless, we might still ask whether Hooker is not overstating his case when he says, "To them which aske why we thus hange our judgmentes on the Churches sleeve, I answer with Salomon, because 'two are better then one.' . . . The bare consent of the whole Church should it selfe in these thinges stop their mouthes who livinge under it dare presume to barke against it" (V.8.3; 2:39.14–16). After all, the "consent of the whole church" was precisely what was lacking, and had been for decades, as puritans in the churches, among the gentry, and even in Parliament continued to oppose the judgments enshrined in law. Indeed, not just

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<sup>84</sup> See especially LEP VIII.6.12–14.



some few, but “thousands, yea and even of those amongst which divers are in publique charge and authoritie,” as Hooker would quote Cartwright in his Preface.<sup>85</sup> To this Hooker responds, in a crucially revealing sentence “As though when publique consent of the whole hath established any thing, every mans judgement being thereunto compared, were not private, howsoever his calling be to some kind of publique charge” (Pref.6.6; 1:34.3–6). The distinction drawn here is one key to Hooker’s political thought, as well as that of many of his contemporaries, between *singulis* and *universis*,<sup>86</sup> citizens considered individually and considered as “the whole.” Neither the number nor the status of dissenting voices counts against the “consent of the whole” inasmuch as this has been enshrined in law.

More, then, than merely an appeal to corporate rationality, to the wisdom found in tradition, underlies Hooker’s argument for submission. Indeed, immediately after his remark in I.10 that laws must be made by wise men, he cautions, “Howbeit laws do not take their constraining force from the qualitie of such as devise them, but *from that power which doth geve them the strength of lawes*” (I.10.8; 1:102.18–21). This power is *sovereignty*, the moral agency exercised by a collective through its authorized representatives, as he discusses at length in Book VIII. To be sure, laws thus made can be overturned, but only by the same exercise of corporate agency that created them, not by the dissent of individual members, no matter how numerous. “Lawes that have bene approved may be (no man doubteth) again repealed, and to that end also disputed against, by the athors therof themselves. But this is when the whole doth deliberate what lawes each part shal observe, and not when a part refuseth the lawes which the whole hath orderly agreed upon” (Pref. 5.2; 1:8.4–8). For Hooker, to speak of our “consent” to these laws is no mere metaphor, but an expression of the fact that we really do act not merely through our private wills, but through others:

As in parliaments, councels, and the like assemblies, although we be not personallie our selves present, notwithstanding our assent is by reason of others agents there in our behalfe. And what we do by others, no reason but that it should stand as our deed, no lesse effectually to binde us then if our selves had done it in person (I.10.8; 1:103.2–7).

As members of a body politic, our agency simply is constituted by our participation in this public action, and it is meaningless to pretend that we can exempt ourselves:

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<sup>85</sup> *LEP* Pref.6.6. The reference is to Cartwright, *RSR*, 181.

<sup>86</sup> See *LEP* VIII.3.2 (3:337.1).

[It is] unmeet that laws which being once solemnly established, are to exact obedience of all men, and to constraine therunto, should so far stoupe as to hold themselves in suspense from taking any effect upon you, till some disputer can perswade you to be obedient. *A lawe is the deed of the whole bodie politike, whereof if ye judge your selves to be any part, then is the law even your deed also* (Pref. 5.2; 1:27.30–28.2; italics mine).

This statement, though it comes at the beginning of the *Lawes*, could be considered the capstone of Hooker's argument. Here we have the logic of God's own action—a law to himself, completely free although bound to observe his eternal law, because this law is the most perfect expression of himself, and of rationality—mirrored in the logic of the human agent: we remain free even in being bound by law, because this law is our own rational action. This is Hooker's final argument; if all else fails, if the puritan conscience refuses to see the edifying value of the laws, refuses to see their basis in the law of reason, refuses to defer to the judgment and wisdom of antiquity, persists in stubborn conviction that these laws are badly-made, his obedience is still, Hooker maintains, congruent with Christian liberty because he is simply obeying himself.

Of course, we will have some concerns about this line of argument. To what extremity could this go? Perhaps the particular laws that Hooker defends really were fairly reasonable, but could the same logic be applied to underwrite meek acquiescence to true tyranny and injustice? Many scholars have noted that Hooker specifically holds back from offering any doctrine of political resistance,<sup>87</sup> although he grants that no man ought to obey an unjust law: "Not that I judge it a thing allowable for men to observe those lawes which in their hearts they are stedfastly perswaded to be against the law of God" (Pref.6.6; 1:33.12–14). But he continues, "your perswasion in this case ye are all bound for the time to suspend, and in otherwise doing, ye offend against God by troubling his Church without any just or necessary cause. Be it that there are some reasons inducing you to think hardly of our lawes. Are those reasons demonstrative, are they necessary, or but probabilities only?" A demonstrative argument, Hooker grants, "dischargeth . . . the conscience, and setteth it at full libertie." But where is this demonstrative argument? "But if the skilfullest amongst you can shewe that all the bookes ye have hitherto written be able to afford any one argument of this nature, let the instance be given" (Pref.6.6; 1:33.14–22, 25–27). There will be times when the Christian must say with Luther, "Here I stand, I can do no other," but in the absence of an utterly compelling reason to disobey the laws, a *certainty* with which we are rarely privileged in civil affairs,

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<sup>87</sup> See for instance Rosenthal, *Crown Under Law*, 123–26.

the puritans must be willing to *suspend* the judgments of their conscience in deference to the superior weight of probability that public consensus holds. Charity itself demands this, for whatever their concerns about the harm to be done by bad laws, they must surely recognize the greater harm that will be done by contentiousness and disobedience: “of peace and quietnes there is not any way possible, unlesse the probable voice of every intier societie or bodie politique overrule all private of like nature in the same bodie” (Pref.6.6; 1:34.6–9).

Throughout this chapter, we have seen how Hooker carefully constructs his defense of the institutional liberty of the Church of England and the commonwealth so as to as to preserve and enhance the doctrine of Christian liberty, particularly the principle of willingness. Having carefully distinguished loyalties to God and to prince, he does not leave them in opposition but attempts to bring them into harmony, by seeking to demonstrate that the prince’s laws are particular obligations of the law of charity, for the upbuilding of the people. He accordingly articulates a much more positive understanding of edification, not merely as means to civil peace (though this is certainly important), but as aids to sanctification and the upbuilding of Christian community. He further invites his opponents to a positive use of reason as a way of discerning the goodness of laws and freely assenting to them. Lest such an appeal to reason, however, invite dissension and strife, he reminds them that reason is always a corporate enterprise, exercised in submission to tradition and to the judgment of the wise. Moreover, once this enterprise of corporate reasoning has concluded in the promulgation of law, he appeals to the consensual foundation of political authority and the Tudor Constitution to persuade his hearers that this law is “even your deed also,” an expression of free action within the constraints imposed by the law of charity and concern for the common good. Even when obedience demands a suspension of private rational judgment, this too is a requirement of neighbor-love, since there will be “no end of contention without submission of both parts unto some definitive sentence” (Pref.6; 1:29.21–22). As a vindication of the *probable* authority of reason, tradition, and human law, Hooker uses this defense to take the offensive against the puritans’ misguided demand for certainty, one which traps the conscience rather than freeing it.

One thing, however, is still lacking in our exposition: a detailed consideration of the authority of the Word of God in its relation to human law. Hooker has made quite clear that Christian liberty is determined first by justification and and only second by submission to the laws of Scripture, that the word of God is not to be a legalistic chain upon a Christian people. Yet any

satisfactory harmonization of loyalties, to show human laws as consonant with the voice of God, will require him to give a fuller account of how this consonance is displayed in the commonwealth: does the Word nonetheless have a public authority in the laws of a Christian commonwealth? It is to this that we turn in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**THE SOUL OF A CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH:**  
**POLITICS IN SUBMISSION TO THE WORD**

**I. Introduction: A Secularizing Agenda?**

In the past two chapters, we have sought to establish Hooker's concern for the freedom of a Christian commonwealth, against an imperialistic puritan biblicism that might seem to shackle both the individual and the commonwealth. We have argued that this can be understood as an effort to harmonize loyalties, to demonstrate how good citizenship can cohere with good Christianity, how rulers may be free to act without inappropriately impinging on their subjects' freedom of conscience. In Chapter Four, we explored how the doctrine of adiaphora and traditional Protestant teaching on Christian liberty grounded Hooker's project, and enabled him to establish a scope for discretionary legislation in the outward ordering of the church. In Chapter Five, we showed how this freedom was not simply a freedom for authorities to do however they pleased, but was bound to rules of right reason, and must be used for edification; by this means, we sought to show, the liberty of individual consciences was not trampled upon by the commonwealth. However, we might be forgiven for wondering whether the foregoing had sufficiently established the freedom of a *Christian* commonwealth, or whether this legislative liberty had not been gained at the expense of biblical authority and subordination to Christ. Does Hooker's polity have liberty *in* the Word, or liberty *from* the Word?

The question is clearly a crucial one for this thesis, given that we began in Chapter One by flagging the danger in David VanDrunen's secularizing project, in which Christian liberty did seem to liberate the "civil kingdom" from accountability to Jesus Christ or Scripture. VanDrunen, we saw, had drawn the line between the two kingdoms in such a way as to render the civil kingdom a strictly secular realm, neither concerning itself with the business of the church nor of any concern for the church as such. Scriptural authority, on his account, was to be confined essentially to the spiritual kingdom of the institutional church, outside of which natural law and human law prevailed. It was against this paradigm that we have sought to enlist Hooker as a more authentic expression of a Protestant theology of natural law and the two kingdoms; and Hooker, we suggested, was a worthwhile interlocutor because many of VanDrunen's moves had been anticipated by Elizabethan puritans such as Thomas Cartwright.

However, thus far in our narrative it may have appeared to be the *puritans* who have been seeking to extend the bounds of scriptural authority, and *Hooker* who has been laboring to confine Scripture within narrower limits, complaining that “whereas God hath left sundry kindes of lawes unto men . . . they hold that one only lawe, the scripture, must be the rule to direct in all thinges” (II.1.2; 1:145.10–13). Moreover, in our discussion of Hooker thus far, we have repeatedly emphasised the role of human law and of reason in the civil kingdom. Indeed, the discussion of the previous chapter, although couched in terms of “Christian liberty” and the “Christian conscience,” might seem to be little more than a debate about the respective roles of private reason and public reason in a polity concerned essentially with maintaining civil order. In Chapter Four, we saw how Hooker used a soteriological definition of the two kingdoms to confine *sola Scriptura* within a range of narrow spiritual concern, leaving all other matters as *adiaphora*, subject to reason and positive law. Far from widening Scripture’s scope so as to bring it to bear on the civil kingdom, Hooker might seem merely to have widened the scope of the civil kingdom over which Scripture did not exercise authority, so that even matters of church polity and liturgy were to be ruled by reason, not Scripture.

If anything, then, it seems that Hooker is the proponent of secularism, not the champion of the role of Scripture in public life. Indeed, in popular stereotypes, which are not always entirely disclaimed in the secondary literature, we are likely to find a presentation of puritans as rabid theologians, eager to take *sola Scriptura* to its logical conclusion, countered by a moderate, *via media* Hooker who wishes to restore reason to a place of honor, and relegate Scripture to narrowly spiritual matters.<sup>1</sup> To many moderns, Hooker’s invocation of natural law might suggest the embrace of a rationally acceptable, religiously neutral standard for moral and political life which can be embraced by all people of goodwill. Although we might chide him for defending the royal supremacy over the church, we might be prone to try to enlist Hooker as a proto-modern, wary of overtly religious claims in the public square. Indeed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it was once fashionable to suggest, as Peter Munz did, that Hooker had offered an argument for a “Tudor Averroism” in which the realm of nature was detached from the realm of grace, and

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<sup>1</sup> McGinn’s discussion in *The Admonition Controversy*, pp. 110–23 is a good example of a rather hostile and simplistic attack on puritan biblicism; see H.C. Porter, “Hooker, the Tudor Constitution, and the *Via Media*,” 103–107 for an example of the argument that Hooker abandoned the Reformed principle of *sola Scriptura* to make way for the authority of reason.

politics functioned as an autonomous secular order accountable to reason only, not revelation.<sup>2</sup>

Curiously, however, this does not seem to be at all how the Elizabethan conformists saw what was at stake. Far from defending the “de-Christianisation of the secular political order,” they lament it as one of the looming disasters that might ensue upon the adoption of the puritan program. Thus we encountered Whitgift fulminating against Cartwright’s sharp distinction between church and commonwealth on the basis that it makes the English commonwealth no more Christian than “the commonwealth of Turcia,” and accusing puritans of perpetuating a papist doctrine “that Christian magistrates do govern, not in the respect they be Christians, but in the respect they be men; and that they govern Christians, not in that they be Christians, but in that they be men.”<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, Whitgift argued that in a Christian commonwealth, “there is nothing in it that is profane, seeing it is a people holy to the Lord God, and the magistrate is holy and not profane. . . .”<sup>4</sup> Nor is Hooker of a different opinion, drawing similar comparisons with Rome and declaring, with one of the more colorful similes in the *Lawes*, “A grosse error it is to think that regall power ought to serve for the good of the bodie and not of the soule, for mens temporall peace and not their eternall safetie; as if God had ordained Kings for no other ende and purpose but only to fatt up men like hogges and to see that they have their mash?” (VIII.3.5; 3:352.20–25).

How can we make sense of this? How is it that puritanism can be blamed both for overreaching biblicism and incipient secularism? Certainly, in both subjecting the civil office to the church’s interpretation of biblical law, and insisting on a “separation perpetuall and personall between the *Church* and the *Commonwealth*” (VIII.1.2; 3:317.24–25),<sup>5</sup> their project was, as Joan O’Donovan has noted, “beset by irresolvable contradictions.”<sup>6</sup> The difficulty, as we saw above in chapter three, was that the puritan spiritual kingdom was too much like the civil kingdom for the two to effectively complement one another. Either they must jostle with one another for position, with, as the conformists saw it, potentially subversive implications, or they must be radically separated from one another to avoid intermeddling. VanDrunen, then, is unmistakably developing one thread of the

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<sup>2</sup> Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought* (London, 1952), 49–57.

<sup>3</sup> WW III:296–297.

<sup>4</sup> WW III:298.

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion in Kirby, *RHDSR*, 106.

<sup>6</sup> *TLAER* 127.

puritan two-kingdoms distinction in eschewing biblicism in the civil kingdom and erecting a high institutional wall of separation between church and state.

Whatever, then, we are to make of Richard Hooker's rehabilitation of reason and attack on puritan biblicism, we would clearly mistake him if we thought he was interested in carving out a "secular" civil order in the modern sense. For Hooker, nothing is more natural than the care for religion, as Cargill Thompson notes in response to Peter Munz:

At no point does Hooker come close to suggesting that the State is a purely secular institution, which is only concerned with the advancement of man's temporal well-being in the world. On the contrary, his political philosophy is founded on precisely the opposite assumption. For Hooker, it is the essence of all 'politic societies' that they are concerned with the promotion of man's spiritual welfare and, therefore, with the advancement of religion.<sup>7</sup>

Hooker, then, is seeking to defend the "freedom of a *Christian* commonwealth," and we have not rightly understood what is at stake between him and the puritans if we have not understood the centrality of this *Christian* identity.

Whence, then, arises the perception that Hooker was pursuing a secularising agenda? C.S. Lewis, in his splendid treatment of Hooker in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, anticipates the charge that, whatever Hooker's purported intent, "the unconscious tendency of his mind was to secularise." Far from it, says Lewis,

there could be no deeper mistake. Few model universes are more filled—one might say, more drenched—with Deity than his. 'All things that are of God' (and only sin is not) 'have God in them and he them in himself likewise' yet 'their substance and his wholly differeth' (V.56.5). God is unspeakably transcendent; but also unspeakably immanent. It is this conviction which enables Hooker, with no anxiety, to resist any inaccurate claim that is made for revelation against reason, Grace against Nature, the spiritual against the secular.<sup>8</sup>

Among recent interpreters, Torrance Kirby has been particularly eager to advance this harmonious picture of Hooker's thought, repeatedly citing Lewis's memorable phrase, "drenched with deity," and elaborating Lewis's essentially neo-Platonic reading of Hooker's model of the universe. In a series of recent writings, Kirby has drawn attention to Hooker's image of the eternal law "in the bosom of God in himself" as the original unity from which the whole order of creation and redemption proceeds and in which it participates, describing natural law and divine

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<sup>7</sup> "Philosopher of the Politic Society," 189.

<sup>8</sup> *English Literature*, 459.



law as “the two most essential moments in the self-mediating operation of the one eternal law.”<sup>9</sup>

This primordial unity and mutual dependence of natural law and divine law ensures a similar mutual dependence of reason and Scripture:

For Hooker the sapiential theologian, claims regarding the respective authorities of Scripture and Reason are not to be construed in binary opposition, in ‘zero-sum’ fashion. Rather he views these two sources as simultaneously both presupposing and participating in a higher, unifying principle which is present in both as a cause in its effects. Whereas “scripture alone” is to be followed in the formulation of the ‘rule of faith’, reason, custom and human authority are necessary in order to avoid ‘infinite perplexities, scrupulosities, doubts insoluble and extreme despaires’ in the external ordering of religion.<sup>10</sup>

On this account, the neo-Platonic concept of participation ensures the unity and theocentrism of Hooker’s universe, and ensures that the heightened role of reason in Hooker’s theology constitutes no threat to the authority of Scripture. However, it is easy to overstate the centrality of this concept in the *Laws*, and indeed, it is perhaps telling that in his many writings on the subject, Kirby has generally appealed to the same quite limited selection of passages to provide evidence for this paradigm in Hooker’s thought.<sup>11</sup>

Although most scholars, therefore, would agree with Kirby that nature and grace, reason and revelation are not in conflict in Hooker’s thought, for many, this is not because of any mutual participation between the two, but because of a clearly defined separation of roles and spheres, in which each has its proper autonomy. Indeed, this concern is nothing new, but was voiced by Hooker’s first critics, the anonymous authors of *A Christian Letter*, who sought to drive a wedge between Hooker and the magisterial reformers on the relation of faith and reason.<sup>12</sup> H.C.

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<sup>9</sup> Kirby, *RHRP* 43.

<sup>10</sup> Kirby, “The ‘sundrie waies of Wisdom’: Richard Hooker’s sapiential theology,” in Kevin Killeen, ed., *Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2013). Of course, it must also be noted that even in formulating the “rule of faith,” reason is not absent. Hooker is clear that reason is the instrument by which we rightly distinguish the meaning of Scripture and distill it into doctrinal formulations: “Exclude the use of naturall reasoning about the sense of holy scripture concerning the articles of our faith, and then that the scripture doth concerne the articles of our faith who can assure us?” (III.8.16; 1:233.15–18).

<sup>11</sup> Kirby’s arguments for a neo-Platonic paradigm in Hooker’s thought can be found particularly in *RHRP* 29–56; “From Generall Meditations”; “The Neo-Platonic Logic of Hooker’s Generic Division of Law,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 22 (1998): 49–68; and “Law Makes the King,” 274–280.

<sup>12</sup> *A Christian Letter of certaine English Protestants* (1599), in *FLE* 4:11–17, 64–71; see also discussion in Kirby, *RHRP* 13–15.

Porter argues that these were correct to see his work as “a celebration of ‘our natural faculty of reason’”<sup>13</sup> that relativised the Reformation teaching of *sola Scriptura*.<sup>14</sup> Peter Lake, likewise, is pleased to observe Hooker’s emphasis on “the independent exercise of human rational faculties.”<sup>15</sup> Joan O’Donovan, on the other hand, laments such an emphasis, but concurs: “In breaking down the puritan opposition of God’s eternally valid decrees to the blind and transient dictates of man’s depraved rationality, Hooker retained a separation of reason and revelation that works to the advantage of reason’s autonomy and jurisdiction.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, suggests O’Donovan, Hooker is less interested in a mutual autonomy, than in an autonomy for reason that will result in its superiority to Scripture:

the authority of Scriptural revelation is everywhere bounded by reason’s own assured authority; reason disposes of divinely revealed truth according to its invariable principles and operations, without itself apparently being at the disposal of faith’s immediate and certain knowledge, without itself being demonstrably directed and empowered in its work by the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

Although always a recurrent theme, debates about the relative authority of reason and revelation in Hooker’s thought have intensified in the past decade, with Nigel Voak in particular insistently arguing for Hooker’s departure from Reformed orthodoxy on this point, and Torrance Kirby just as insistently maintaining the contrary.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Porter, “Tudor Constitution,” 103.

<sup>14</sup> A similar perspective is advanced by Lee Gibbs, in his “Introduction to Book I,” *FLE* 6(1): 118–20.

<sup>15</sup> *AP* 153.

<sup>16</sup> *TLAER* 145.

<sup>17</sup> *TLAER* 145.

<sup>18</sup> Voak, while conceding that the old *via media* portrayal of Hooker is untenable, and he must be read as an essentially Reformed thinker, has assertively argued in his *RHRT* that Hooker nonetheless crucially departs from a Reformed consensus at key points, including many of the same issues listed by *A Christian Letter* (such as the authentication of Scripture, the reliability of reason, and freedom of the will). Kirby’s initial response to Voak suggested that his arguments were unoriginal and similarly tainted by a puritan interpretation of what Reformed theology was all about (Kirby, “Review: *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace*,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 36: 1 (2005): 261–63). In a subsequent article, “Richard Hooker and the Principle of *Sola Scriptura*,” (*Journal of Theological Studies* 59:1 (Apr. 2008): 96–139), Voak has sharpened his attack on Kirby’s reading to the particular issue of the self-authentication of Scripture, while conceding that on other issues related to *sola Scriptura* (such the role of reason in *adiaphora*), Hooker was within Reformed bounds. Hooker, argues Voak, rejected the Reformed consensus that Scripture was *autopistos*, although Kirby disagrees (see “Sundry waies of Wisdom”). Regardless, however, of how this debate is settled, it concerns only the way in which our minds are brought to an initial acknowledgment of Scripture’s authority, not the subsequent relationship between the faithful exercise of reason and faithful attention to the word of Scripture, which is our concern here.

Although certainly distinct from the question of the role of religion in the political order, these issues are clearly related. If natural law, and reason's capacity to apply it in human affairs, are essentially autonomous, then so, might we conclude, is the civil state, in which revealed religion plays a marginal role at best, and Scripture is hardly relevant to the business of governing. On this reading, all of Hooker's apologetics for the royal supremacy cynically dissolve into a mere Hobbesian defence of civil religion, in which Scripture may help buttress the magistrate's authority, but will never really call him to account. On the other hand, if we stress that Scripture and reason "presuppose and participate in a higher, unifying principle" then it is much easier to take seriously Hooker's insistence on the dependence not only of religion on the commonwealth, but of the commonwealth on religion, and indeed, quite specifically, on the Bible.

We might appear then to be confronted with a straightforward question about the relationship of reason and revelation in Hooker's political theology: does Hooker seek to reverse the *sola gratia* of the Reformation and rehabilitate the role of an "autonomous" natural reason, upon which an "autonomous" natural political state is constructed? Or does Hooker seek to emphasise the dependence of all things on God—both reason and Scripture, both spiritual and civil affairs?<sup>19</sup> This, however, is to pose a false dichotomy. In the sixteenth century, it was never a question of whether all things, the secular powers included, depended on God. Whatever one meant by the two kingdoms, one thing at least was clear: these were *God's* two kingdoms. To say that He ruled over one by natural law, rather than by Scripture, did not necessarily mean that it was "secular" in the modern sense. Moreover, everyone in the sixteenth century could speak of natural law as proceeding from God, or promulgated by God; no one wished to make it purely immanent. Likewise, reason was a gift of God, one whose effective functioning depended on him; to speak of reason as "autonomous" could thus only be a relative statement. For this reason, debates about precisely how much "autonomy" or "dependence" could be attributed to the civil kingdom, or to natural law, or to reason, require enormous nuance, and in Hooker's case, involve consideration of almost every aspect of his theology.

While these debates are complex and wide-ranging, and it is beyond my purpose here to provide any definitive resolution, we may gain clarity for the task at hand by recognizing the problem here as one of "exact distinguishing" between

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<sup>19</sup> So, for instance, Glenn Baker sets out to demonstrate the latter in a lengthy but maddeningly vague study, "Richard Hooker and Writing God into Polemic and Piety," unpublished Ph.D dissertation (University of Leicester, 2007).

nature and grace, and “observing what they have in common and what peculiar”; the want of this, declared Hooker in his *A Learned Sermon on the Nature of Pride*, “hath bene the cause of the greatest part of that confusion whereof christianity at this daie laboureth.”<sup>20</sup> The particularly key question for Hooker, and for us here, concerns the teleological orientation between the two, and Hooker’s understanding can be described by the common Thomistic formulation, “grace does not destroy nature, it perfects it.”<sup>21</sup> Of course, at first glance this formulation would seem to be so common as to be nearly meaningless; after all, it would be easy to name any number of theologians, both medieval and modern, who have proudly claimed this motto, and hard to find anyone desiring to explicitly maintain the opposite.<sup>22</sup> Within the context of Hooker’s political-theological polemic, however, it is possible to give the formulation a sharper definition.

The puritans had reified the two kingdoms in such a way that the spiritual kingdom might appear to have all the relevant features of the civil—an independent, self-governing social body, its own rulers and autonomous sphere of jurisdiction, and above all, a detailed, almost exhaustive code of positive law to govern its polity. The church, in short, appeared to be little short of a new political institution alongside the kingdoms of the world, which implied that the kingdom of grace in fact replaces the kingdoms of nature. This was why, for all their protestations of loyalty to the crown, the puritans could be perceived as Anabaptistic or papalist, threatening to overthrow the civil kingdom altogether. If divine positive law had established a divine constitutional polity, why bother with a merely human?

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<sup>20</sup> *A Learned Sermon on the Nature of Pride* in *FLE* 5:313.19–23.

<sup>21</sup> This Thomistic formulation is applied to Hooker by W. David Neelands in “Hooker on Scripture, Reason, and Tradition,” in *RHCCC*, 80: “For Hooker, as for Thomas, grace does not destroy but perfects nature, and Scripture does not obliterate but perfects reason. ‘Supernaturall endowements are an advancement, they are no extinguishment of that nature whereto they are given’ [*LEP* V.55.6]. Grace being the beginning of glory in us, the same pattern is also claimed, by Thomas, for the relation of nature and glory: ‘nature is not done away, but perfected, by glory.’ Hooker frequently adopts the thesis that grace perfects nature. Less frequently, but equally clearly, he extends this to the stronger thesis, that glory is a perfection of nature.” Neelands’s whole discussion of this issue (pp. 76–91) offers a fantastic summary of the relevant material in Books I–III of the *Lawes*. See also Ranall Ingalls, who argues convincingly in “Sin and Grace” that this Thomistic formulation is in no way at odds with an Augustinian and broadly Reformed soteriology.

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, H.C. Porter, whom we have met already at a rather different end of the spectrum from Neelands (who presents a thoroughly Protestant Hooker), uses the same formulation (and the same attribution of a “Thomistic” standpoint) to describe his understanding of Hooker’s theology of nature and grace. Given the contemporary malleability of this dictum since its *ressourcement* by the *nouvelle théologie*, we must discern its meaning by attending to its concrete deployment.

Against the implication that the church was a sort of supernatural political community that could exist alongside or in place of natural political community, Hooker wanted to maintain that Christian political community must be natural political community perfected by grace. That is to say, he insisted that grace enabled political community to achieve its natural potential, to function rightly within its own limitations, and to point beyond itself to the operations of grace that transcended those limitations. The supernatural law of Scripture, then, must not “cleane have abrogated . . . the lawe of nature” (II.8.6; 1:190.11), as it seemed to do in puritanism. Rather, Hooker would insist that regarding matters of the civil kingdom, Scripture would serve to enrich, illuminate, clarify, and apply the law of nature, straightening and sharpening a bent and blunt tool, but not replacing it.

This understanding of nature and grace laid the groundwork for his vision of a Christian commonwealth, and informed his answer to the second key question that will occupy us in this chapter: in what sense is Christ the king over the two kingdoms? This question leads us into the realm of Christology, an area of theology which might seem at first quite alien to the very practical and political questions we have before us, but which has in fact regularly been a touchstone of Christian political thought. This should not strike us as surprising, in fact, given the frequency with which Christ is spoken of in the language of “kingship” throughout Scripture. However, what precisely was the extent of his kingdom? As just mentioned above, most anyone in the sixteenth century could maintain that political rule was delegated by God, and in some sense mediated his rule to mankind. The civil kingdom, in this sense, was not thoroughly secular, because it was bound to creational norms, was accountable to God the creator, and bore witness to him. However, to say that political rule was “creational” was not yet to say it was Christian. It is no coincidence that as early modernity moved increasingly toward a secular, autonomous mode of politics, it shifted its accent from the kingship of Christ the Redeemer to the kingship of God the Creator.<sup>23</sup> The latter seemed quite distant and removed; the former was too close for comfort. A political theology

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<sup>23</sup> The Christological model of kingship is clearly the dominant one at the outset of the great period of High Medieval political theology, as we see in writers like the “Norman Anonymous,” (ca. 1100; see Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 42–86; Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan, eds., *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100-1625* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 250–60), but the shift is already apparent in anti-papalist writers like John of Paris (1250–1306; see *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 398–405) and is complete when we reach chs. 31–32 of Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, where it is the “kingdom of God,” the sovereign lawgiver, that provides the paradigm for earthly kingship.

lacking Christological content, then, it could be safely assumed, was one in which the natural tools of human reason might need little illumination by holy Scripture in order to govern rightly.

So it is no surprise that David VanDrunen, in developing his natural law / two-kingdoms schema, lays great stress on the doctrine of dual mediatorship, whereby, he argues, Christ mediates over the spiritual kingdom—the church—as man, as incarnate redeemer; but over the civil kingdom only as eternal God and creator.<sup>24</sup> From this doctrine, VanDrunen quite explicitly derives the conclusion that the political order has no specifically Christian identity or Christian concerns; it is concerned simply with maintaining the order of creation, not of being renewed in light of redemption.<sup>25</sup> Few of his arguments, it turns out, are more directly relevant to the dispute between Hooker and the puritans, for in his *Second Replie to the Answer*, Cartwright develops precisely this doctrine in order to underwrite the same basic agenda. Of course, Cartwright does not draw the sweeping secularizing implications from it that VanDrunen does, but the immediate target of critique—the magistrate’s care for religion—and the immediate goal—the establishment of an independent visible kingdom of Christ in the church—are the same.

To this argument of Cartwright’s, Hooker directly responds in an electrifying though widely neglected section of Book VIII, arguing that *Jesus Christ the Redeemer* rules over the earthly kingdom, which is thus accountable to witness to the order of redemption. This claim might seem at first quite shocking to those accustomed to see in Hooker the great opponent of theocracy, and champion of natural law. If the civil kingdom exists to witness to the order of redemption, what becomes of Hooker’s steadfast insistence on the natural law as the chief rule for understanding and ruling the civil kingdom? As we shall see, however, this

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<sup>24</sup> “Christ rules the one kingdom as *eternal God*, as the agent of creation and providence, and over all creatures. Christ rules the other kingdom as the *incarnate God-man*, as the agent of redemption, and over the church. The latter kingdom is redemptive, the former is non-redemptive. The latter is exclusive, the former is inclusive” (NLTK 177). For further discussion, see NLTK 75–76, 176–83, 313–14, 341–44.

<sup>25</sup> See especially such passages as “Reformed orthodox theologians also recognized Christ’s continuing distinct identities as creator / sustainer and as redeemer and developed this idea . . . [by] tying it specifically to the two-kingdoms doctrine. As they grounded natural law in the covenant of works, and hence in creation rather than in redemption, so they also grounded the civil kingdom in creation rather than redemption” (NLTK 182); and “to defend the idea of the ‘Christianization’ of the common grace realm because it is the work of ‘Christ,’ is to confuse categories and language. . . . If the Son of God creates in a different capacity from his capacity as redeemer, then he does not create as ‘Christ’ and the terrain of common grace, grounded in the creation order, is not ‘Christian,’ no matter how noble it becomes” (314); see also VanDrunen’s intriguing interaction with Barth on this issue on pp. 341–44, where he fails to see the force of Barth’s objections to such a creation / redemption dichotomy.

objection would presuppose the very disjunction of nature and grace which Hooker refuses.

The argument of this chapter will thus have something of the shape of a pyramid, laying some broad foundations and then building more focused layers of argument, until we reach at the pinnacle a sketch of Hooker's view of the religious responsibilities of the Christian ruler, and the authority of Scripture in a Christian polity. Section II will survey the general principles of Hooker's understanding of nature and grace as it relates to his taxonomy of laws, natural and divine, and section III will survey the relation of nature and grace in his carefully-nuanced Christology. Section IV will show how this Christology informs his understanding of Christ's rule over church and commonwealth, in opposition to Cartwright (and by extension, VanDrunen). Sections V and VI will then bring all of these points together to show how Hooker both ties grace intimately to the natural life of the commonwealth, and yet leaves considerable freedom for the way in which this relationship is concretely realized in particular polities.

## **II. "Natural Desire Cannot Utterly Be Frustrate": Natural and Divine Law in Hooker's Theology**

Let us then turn to consider more carefully the teleological relation of nature and grace in Hooker's theology. We have noted above Torrance Kirby's proposal that Hooker's theology be described in terms of the neo-Platonic pattern of a *processio* and *reditus*: the procession of all things outward from the unity that is God, differentiating according to their creaturely plurality, and the return of all things to God, their differences harmonized in a deeper unity that they have by participation in God.<sup>26</sup> Whether or not we accept the distinctively neo-Platonic features of this scheme, it provides an admirable rubric for discerning the movement of Hooker's thought on nature and grace, natural law and divine law, and eventually, as we shall see, divine law and human law. Indeed, Hooker's characteristic pattern of distinguishing in order to harmonize mirrors John Perry's description of the twofold movement of political theology faced with the clash of loyalties: where Locke first harmonizes loyalties and on this basis seeks to distinguish their just bounds, Hooker painstakingly distinguishes concepts and laws in order to establish a symbiotic harmony between them.

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<sup>26</sup> See especially "Law Makes the King," "From General Meditations," and "The Neoplatonic Logic."

We see the initial outward movement of procession and distinction in Hooker's famous generic division of law in Book I, which reflects Hooker's deep familiarity with Thomas Aquinas and the scholastic tradition, and supplies the systematic foundation for his theology. This has been very carefully described by many scholars, so our summary here can be quite brief.<sup>27</sup>

Hooker begins his *apologia* not with the divine law of Scripture, as a puritan might, or the laws of England, as a conformist might be tempted to, but with the primordial source from which both ultimately derive, "the eternall law," which "is laid up in the bosome of God." Indeed, God himself operates according to this law, for law is intrinsic to being itself:

All things that are have some operation not violent or casual.  
Neither doth any thing ever begin to exercise the same without some foreconceaved ende for which it worketh. And the ende which it worketh for is not obtained, unlesse the worke be also fit to obtaine it by. For unto every ende every operation will not serve. That which doth appoint the forme and measure of working, the same we tearme a *Lawe*. (I.2.1; 1:58.22–29)<sup>28</sup>

In the case of God, we do not say that the eternal law governs his being, but that his being *is* this law (I.2.2), a law that encompasses every kind of law, inasmuch as God's operations encompass all that is; it is "that order which God before all ages hath set down with himselfe, for himselfe to do all things by" (I.2.6; 1:63.2–3).<sup>29</sup> Here Hooker introduces a distinction unique to his exposition, notably departing from Aquinas by describing this order as the "first law eternall"; the "second," on the other hand, is "that which with himselfe he [God] hath set downe as expedient to be

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<sup>27</sup> See especially Cargill Thompson, "Philosopher of the 'Politic Society,'" 150–60; Joan O'Donovan, 137–42; Kirby, "Reason and Law" in *BCRH*, 251–71; and most thoroughly and systematically, though not without some problems, Shirley, *Richard Hooker and Contemporary Political Ideas*, 71–92. Alexander Rosenthal gives particular attention to the Thomistic roots of Hooker's theory of law (*Crown Under Law*, 49–61), although Nigel Voak has played the contrarian, arguing in ch. 1 of *RHRT* that on a number of key points, Hooker is more Scotist than Thomist. In any case, it has been common for some scholars to suggest that Hooker's dependence on Aquinas and the medieval scholastics sets him at odds with Reformed theology (some of the most forceful arguments on this score can be found in Joyce, *RHAMR*, 150–56, and Rosenthal, *Crown Under Law*, 61–72). This betrays, however, an ignorance about the extent to which Thomistic and scholastic ideas were used by leading Reformed theologians such as Vermigli and Zanchi (see Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, and "Calvinist Thomism"; these studies are particularly useful for rebutting Lee Gibbs' spurious claim, of which Rosenthal makes a great deal, that whereas Hooker "stands predominantly within the medieval rationalist and realist tradition," "the magisterial Protestant Reformers . . . stand squarely in the camp of the medieval voluntarists and nominalists" [*FLE* 6:103]; see also Arvin Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985]). Accordingly, in the following section, I will footnote a number of points at which Hooker's understanding of law matches precedents both within Aquinas and within Protestant scholastic predecessors.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Aquinas, *ST* II–I q. 90 a. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Aquinas, *ST* II–I q. 91 a. 1.



kept by all his creatures" (I.3.1; 1:63.8–9). By this distinction, he seeks to avoid the ditch of voluntarism, emphasizing the lawlikeness and rationality of God's eternal decrees, but at the same time to preserve a sharp Creator/creature distinction, by showing that although united in God, from our creaturely standpoint, these decrees remain distinct from his revealed will, and thus inscrutable to us.<sup>30</sup>

Having safeguarded the inscrutability of the first, Hooker turns his exclusive attention in what follows to the second, which although one in itself, unfolds itself in different forms according to its different agents. Hooker summarizes succinctly:

That part of it which ordereth naturall agents, we call usually *nature's* law: that which Angels doe clearly behold, and without any swarving observe is a law *coelestiall* and heavenly: the law of *reason* that which bindeth creatures reasonable in the world, and with which by reason they may most plainly perceive themselves bound; that which bindeth them, and is not knowen but by speciall revelation from God, *Divine* law; *humane* law that which out of the law either of reason or of God, men probablie gathering to be expedient, they make it a law (I.3.1; 1:63.17–26).

Hooker has relatively little to say about the *celestial* law, and although it is quite interesting that Hooker chooses again to depart from Aquinas in distinguishing "nature's law," which governs involuntary actions, from the "law of reason," which governs voluntary actions (i.e., those of human beings specifically), we need not dwell on the distinction here.<sup>31</sup> Both are contained in what the Thomist tradition has called the "natural law," and Hooker's almost exclusive interest in what follows is with the latter part, "the law of reason," governing as it does moral actions. Just as "nature's law" guides irrational creatures to their appointed end and perfection, their unique form of participation in divine goodness, so does the law of reason guide mankind, only that we are uniquely called to reflect on, discern, and actively pursue the goodness proper to our natures. Man thus seeks not only after the perfections proper to all creatures, but to further perfections: "such as are not for any other cause, then for knowledge it selfe desired. . . . [through which] by proceeding in the knowledge of truth and by growing in the exercise of vertue, man

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<sup>30</sup> Torrance Kirby lays great stress on this distinction in his interpretation of Hooker, suggesting that "the crucial consequence of this gathering together of the various species of law within a second eternal law is to diminish the overall significance of the hierarchical *dispositio* as the primary mode of mediation between the divine source of law and the finite, created order of laws. In place of the Thomist logic of a gradual, hierarchical disposition of the species of law, Hooker's positing of the second eternal law sets up an Augustinian 'hypostatic' relation between the Creator/Eternal Law and creature/manifold determinate species of law" ("From General Meditations," 51; see pp. 50–55 for a full discussion).

<sup>31</sup> While also considering the difference from Aquinas here to be of little significance, Rosenthal notes that Hooker may well have derived this distinction from the Henrician jurist Christopher St. Germain's *Doctor and Student (Crown Under Law, 55–56)*.

amongst the creatures of this inferiour world, aspieth to the greatest conformity with God" (I.5.3; 1:73.31–74.3).

By recognizing those goods which constitute the perfection of our nature and gaining experience in pursuing them, we derive maxims and axioms as a guide to right conduct. Of course, these are not always easy to discern, since there are a multitude of possible goods to choose from, and we often choose a less over a greater, or a faulty route to a genuine good. Nevertheless, "There is not that good which concerneth us, but it hath evidence enough for it selfe, if reason were diligent to search it out" (I.7.7; 1:80.29–31). Therefore, although Hooker has no illusions about the power and prevalence of widely engrained error, he does not believe that it can ever become universal. Universal consensus, then, must be taken as a token of truth, indeed, "as the sentence of God him selfe. For that which all men have at all times learned, nature her selfe must needs have taught; and God being the author of nature, her voyce is but his instrument" (I.8.3; 1:84.1–4). Natural reason, Hooker believes, following Romans 1, can perceive the being, power, and fatherhood of God, and can deduce thereby such rules as "That in all things we goe about his ayde, is by prayer to be craved, That he cannot have sufficient honour done unto him, but the utmost of that we can doe to honour him we must" (I.8.7; 1:87.21–23).<sup>32</sup> The latter of these, he says, is the same as the first great commandment that Jesus gives us—that we must love God with all our hearts. Moreover, by discerning the natural equality of all humans, we will necessarily recognize that one cannot expect to receive any greater good from one's fellows than that which one gives unto them, and can expect to suffer from them in proportion to that which one causes them to suffer; this leads to the principle of the second great commandment, that we must love our neighbors as ourselves.<sup>33</sup>

Before treating of "the divine law," as we might expect him to, Hooker follows his discussion of the law of reason with a discussion of human law, reflecting his Aristotelian conviction that the latter is the chief means by which the general principles of the former are rendered concrete. Human law thus exists remedies a deficiency in the law of reason, its lack of precision, since disagreement becomes more and more likely the more we descend from the general to the particular, as well as the fact that the law of reason does not usually serve as a

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<sup>32</sup> Hooker is quoting here from Plato's *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Cf. Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Philosophical Works: On the Relation of Philosophy and Theology*, translated and edited by Joseph C. McClelland, *The Peter Martyr Library*, 4 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1996), 18–22.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Girolamo Zanchi, "On the Law in General," 16–17.

sufficient motivation toward virtue.<sup>34</sup> Human law is more than mere rational deliberation about what the law of reason requires in relation to a concrete problem; deliberation can do no more than provide maxims of prudent action for private individuals. Human law has a necessarily *political* dimension; it is law promulgated and in some sense enforced for a community of men and women bound together by compact, by representatives authorized to act on behalf of the whole. It is thus within the context of his discussion of human law in Book I, chapter 10, that Hooker lays down the general foundations of his political theory, which we have had cause to touch on already in the preceding chapter.

Human laws, says Hooker, may be either *mixedly* or *merely* human. In the former, human law rectifies the sloth of our intellects and the stubbornness of our wills, which prevent us from obeying that which reason already commands of us: “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 only. . . . by vertue of humane law [men] become constrainable, and if they outwardly transgresse, punishable” (I.10.10; 1:106.2–7). The latter, encompassing such things as laws of inheritance, represent an improvisation in matters where the law of reason has not already bound us necessarily to one or another course of action: “the matter of them is any thing which reason doth but probablie teach to be fit and convenient, so that till such time as law hath passed amongst men about it, of it selfe it bindeth no man” (I.10.10; 1:106.8–10).<sup>35</sup> Within this section, Hooker draws attention to a fact that is central to his argument throughout the *Lawes*: the vast diversity, and constant mutability, of human societies and circumstances. This diversity calls for great variety in the proper forms of human law, notwithstanding the original unity of its principles in the law of reason: “the sundry particular endes whereunto the different disposition of that subject or matter, for which lawes are provided, causeth them to have especiall respect in making laws. . . . [O]ne kinde of lawes cannot serve for all kindes of regiment” (I.10.9; 1:103.30–32, 104.15–16). This will be true even of *mixedly* human laws, which are simply applications of necessary principles of the law of reason—although the principle may be the same, the best way to apply the principle and achieve its desired end will differ depending on circumstances.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Aquinas *ST* II–I q. 94 a. 4, q. 95 a. 1; Zanchi, “On the Law in General,” 22.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Aquinas q. 95 a. 2; Zanchi, “On the Law in General,” 23–24.

*Divine Law, the Perfection of Nature*

What, then, of divine law? We might be forgiven at this point for imagining that Hooker has indeed provided us with a robust naturalism, attributing an autonomy and self-sufficiency to the law of reason (and its applications in the form of human law) that would leave little need for revelation within this-worldly affairs. Indeed, by insisting that the law of reason includes the principles of the two great commandments—honoring God and loving our fellow man—we might ask what need we have of divine law at all. Of course, Hooker does take care to maintain, even within his exposition of the law of reason, that our reasons are at all times dependent upon “perpetuall aid and concurrence of that supreme cause of all things” (I.8.11; 1:92.26–27) for their effective operation, aid that can be withdrawn at any point if we give God just cause. However, this proviso, while important, only gets us so far. As mentioned above, even the most avant-garde early modern would affirm that reason is a God-given capacity, not a possession to which man can lay autonomous claim. Much more, then, will need to be said to satisfy our questions about the scope of reason and the need for revelation. Thankfully, Hooker unfolds his answer to these questions in a sophisticated argument that occupies chapters 11 and 12 of Book I.

In this argument, he will establish three things: First, nature and reason cannot be autonomous in the sense of encompassing their own end; nature cannot be considered a self-enclosed compartment, nor can reason be satisfied merely with the task of investigating creation. This much should be clear already from Hooker’s inclusion of the first great commandment as one of the prescriptions of the law of reason, however, he will have much more to say in support of this claim in chapter 11, insisting that man’s final end is one beyond nature: God.<sup>36</sup> Second, nature and reason cannot be autonomous in the sense of being capable, on their own, of reaching their final, supernatural end. On this point, Hooker is particularly nuanced, attributing most of this incapacity to the reality of sin, but acknowledging a dependence on divine grace even in the state of innocence. Third, nature and reason cannot be autonomous in the sense that the gift of revelation serves solely to provide a path to the supernatural end, and leaves reason perfectly adequate on its own for all natural purposes. Let us investigate each of these three points in turn.

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<sup>36</sup> The importance of this claim—a Thomistic one, as Neelands notes (“Scripture, Reason, and Tradition,” 83)—to Hooker’s theology is immense. Robert Faulkner declares, “All important peculiarities of Hooker’s ethics are traceable to this final end external to man as he knows himself” (*Politics of a Christian England*, 77).

Hooker begins chapter 11 by returning to his statements early in chapter 5, where he introduced the law of reason, saying that it was the way in which man sought the unique goodness proper to his nature. Everything created, he says, must have not merely particular goods, but a final good, “our sovereign *good* or *blessednes* that wherin the highest degree of al our perfection consisteth, that which being once attained unto there can rest nothing further to be desired” (I.11.1; 1:111.2–4). Indeed, when we look at created goods, we see how they each serve not as goods in themselves, but as instruments unto some higher good, and lest there be an infinite regress, “some thing ther must be desired for it selfe simplie and for no other” (I.11.1; 1:111.24–25). For animals, mere continuance in being is an end in itself, but not for man. For man, as the highest order of being,

doth seek a triple perfection: first, a sensuall, consisting in those things which very life it selfe requireth as necessary supplementes, or as beauties and ornaments therof; then an intellectuall, consisting in those things which none underneath man is either capable of or acquainted with; lastly a spiritual and divine, consisting in those things wherunto we tend by supernatural meanes here, but cannot here attaine unto them. (I.11.4; 1:114.18–25)

This last, the “spiritual and divine” good, must be infinite, for it is that final good “which is desired altogether for it selfe,” a desire that would be evil if bestowed on anything finite (I.11.2; 1:112.3–4).

So what is this final spiritual good, this supernatural end? It is union with God, the only infinite good and the object of our desire: “Then are we happie therfore when fully we enjoy God, as an object wherein the powers of our soules are satisfied even with everlasting delight: so that although we be men, yet by being unto God united we live as it were the life of God” (I.11.2; 1:112.17–20). Hooker goes on to specify further this condition of blessedness: it must be “according unto every power and facultie of our mindes apt to receave so glorious an object”—“both by understanding and will”; it must be perpetual, a perpetuity that cannot proceed from any natural necessity within us, but “from the will of God, which doth both freely perfect our nature in so high a degree, and continue it so perfected” (I.11.3; 1:113.7–9, 26–27).

Now this desire for supernatural happiness, Hooker is at pains to establish, is itself *natural*, for all men have it. It is not in our power *not* to desire this, he says. Therefore, being naturally desired, it must in some sense be within natural capacity since “It is an axiome of nature that naturall desire cannot utterly be frustrate” (I.11.4; 1:115.15–16). So man’s reason is not enclosed within the bounds of creation, but naturally transcends these bounds, by desiring and striving unto the

supernatural end of union with God.<sup>37</sup> If natural desire, then, is not “frustrate,” is natural reason capable on its own of achieving this end?

Certainly not as man now finds himself, which brings us to Hooker’s second argument. For “this last and highest estate of perfection whereof we speake is received of men in the nature of a reward” (I.11.5; 1:115.25–26), for works of obedience to the Creator. This would have been Adam’s path to perfection and bliss had he not fallen. However, Hooker is careful to qualify here that we do not speak of this reward in terms of strict justice, as something that God *owed* to man, but “by the rule of that justice which best beseemeth him [God], namelie the justice of one that requireth nothing mincingly, but all with pressed and heaped and over-inlarged measure” (I.11.5; 1:117.25–27), and the perpetual continuance of that blessedness infinitely transcends mere natural justice. In any case, however, says Hooker, this is beside the point, for Adam failed, and what man now living can present his works, such as they are, before the throne of the Almighty as worthy of his favor? “There 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 extraordinarilie” (I.11.5; 1:116.4–7). Thankfully for us, this latter is the case, and God has revealed a means, transcending any capacity of reason, whereby we might be granted this highest end of our desire.

The supernatural duties thereby revealed are faith, hope, and charity, and are not merely beyond natural capacity to do, but even to know. Hooker thus describes these as supernatural “both in respect of the manner of delivering them,” coming to us by divine revelation, “and also in regard of the things delivered, which are such as have not in nature any cause from which they flow.” As matters beyond the scope of nature, they are “by the voluntarie appointment of God ordeined . . . to rectifie natures obliquitie withall” (I.11.6; 1:119.18–24).

This reference to the rectification of “nature’s obliquity” merits closer consideration, and leads us to Hooker’s third argument. Thus far, we might be excused for understanding Hooker to say that fallen nature falls short only of encompassing its naturally-desired supernatural end, but not of merely natural ends. On this reading, the revelation of divine law would serve merely to establish

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<sup>37</sup> Hooker’s Aristotelian line of argument in these paragraphs resembles that of Aquinas in *ST II-I* q. 1 and q. 3, a. 1. But see also Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 21–41. For a comparison of Vermigli and Thomas on this point, see Eric Parker, “A Christian and Reformed Doctrine of Right Practical Reason: An Examination of Thomistic Themes in Peter Martyr Vermigli’s *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*,” unpublished M.A. dissertation (Jackson, MS: Reformed Theological Seminary, 2009), 102–117.

supernatural duties, which would serve merely to lead us to God, while reason remained perfectly adequate to guide us in natural, civil duties toward our fellow man. Certainly Hooker has already said a great deal in praise of reason's ability to guide us in such endeavors, and will continue to say a great deal throughout the *Lawes*. After all, God's wisdom comes to us in many ways—from "the sacred bookes of Scripture; . . . by the glorious works of nature; . . . by spirituall influence, . . . by worldly experience and practise"—all of which are to be respected and valued in their particular place: "We may not so in any one speciall kind admire her that we disgrace her in any other, but let all her wayes be according unto their place and degree adored" (II.1.4; 1:148.4–6). However, Hooker does not in fact think that the law of reason has no use of scriptural illumination within the realm of natural duties (the conclusion that VanDrunen sometimes implies). Nor does he think the converse, which proceeds from the same misunderstanding: that the supernatural law, being once delivered, can serve as a substitute for the law of reason (the conclusion that the puritans implied).

Rather, he declares at the outset of ch. 12, "When supernaturall duties are necessarily exacted, naturall are not rejected as needlesse. The lawe of God therefore is though principally delivered for instruction in the one, yet fraught with precepts of the other also. *The Scripture is fraught even with laws of Nature*" (I.12.1; 1:119.26–29; italics mine). In re-directing us to our final end, Scripture cannot but re-direct us also with respect to our finite ends, since these are ultimately oriented toward that final end of union with God. If we ought to pursue finite goods with a view toward possession of God as highest good, then our dis-orientation from our final end, as a result of sin, cannot but distort our grasp of finite ends. Consequently, the re-orientation provided by revelation will set us back on our natural path and illuminate that path again for us.

We may thus distinguish between "supernatural law" in the sense of origin and object. Inasmuch as divine law reveals supernatural duties, it is, as Hooker has just said, supernatural both in respect of its origin (we could not know it but by special revelation) and in respect of its object (it concerns those duties which comprise our supernatural path to our final end). However, divine law also reveals natural duties; in these it is supernatural in respect of origin, but not of object. Hooker accordingly seeks throughout the *Lawes* to maintain the principle of *sola Scriptura* within the arena of supernatural duties, while insisting that Scripture and the law of reason can be mutually interpreting in the arena of natural duties. Let us then look more closely at how Hooker describes the inadequacies within the law of reason, and the reason for divine law's restatement of certain of them.

*The Limits of Reason*

Although Hooker is often thought to be dismissive of the effects of the Fall,<sup>38</sup> and inattentive to the limitations within the law of reason, in fact, he is careful to enumerate these limitations not once but twice within these chapters. In chapter 8, where he provides his first survey of the law of reason, he qualifies its capabilities with three caveats. First, he says, it is not that the principles of the law of reason are in fact known to all men, but that they are such that “being proposed no man can reject [them] as unreasonable and unjust” and such that “anie man (having naturall perfection of wit, and ripeness of judgment) may by labour and travayle finde out” (I.8.9; 1:90.16–17). They are in themselves knowable by all men, but that does not mean that a lack of such labour and travail may not leave many in ignorance of them. He returns to this theme in I.12, saying that for this reason, the divine law’s “applying of them unto cases particular is not without most singular use and profite manye waies for mens instruction” (I.12.1; 1:120.10–12).<sup>39</sup> And when we are vexed with doubt as to whether we have determined and applied the law of reason correctly, the clear divine authority of these specific pronouncements is a great help to us. Hooker considers this a limitation of “sincere” (i.e., unfallen), not “depraved” nature, though sin exacerbates this considerably, so that “concerning the duty which natures lawe doth require at the handes of men in a number of thinges particular, so far hath the naturall understanding even of sundry whole nations bene darkned, that they have not discerned no not grosse iniquitie to bee sinne” (I.12.2; 1:120.22–121.2).

Indeed, this is because of a second limitation that sin particularly introduces, that of “lewde and wicked custome,” which, “beginning perhaps at the first

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Lake speaks for many when he declares, “compared to the views of other Protestants, Hooker’s vision of sin . . . seemed almost benign” (AP 150). See also Egil Grislis, “Scriptural Hermeneutics” in *BCRH* 297–99 for an attempt to distinguish between Reason I (unfallen reason), Reason II (fallen reason), and Reason III (redeemed reason) in Hooker’s thought. While the proper distinctions are there, Grislis believes, they are not always made clear: “At times in praising Reason I, he seemed to ignore his own comments on the corrosive influence on Reason II by original or actual sin” (297–98). However, as even Joyce acknowledges, Hooker was quite unambiguous about total depravity in his earlier works (*RHAMR*, 92–93), perhaps varying his emphasis here in the *Lawes* based on the polemical context (p. 97). It also bears emphasizing that Hooker’s Reformed predecessors were not always so dour about the capacity of human reason as often portrayed. Vermigli, for instance, was capable of considerable optimism, as we see throughout his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* (see also Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 44–48). Even Calvin often evinced considerable optimism regarding human nature post-Fall (see William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* [Oxford, 1988], 142).

<sup>39</sup> Hooker’s remarks here, and indeed most of what he says about the value of divine law, closely approximate Aquinas’s in *ST* II–I, q. 91 a.4.



amongst few, afterwards spreading into greater multitudes, and so continuing from time to time, may be of force even in plaine things to smother the light of naturall understanding" (I.8.11; 1:91.30–33). By this means, it would seem, many of the key principles of the law of reason could become thoroughly obscured by sinful man. Related to this is Hooker's discussion of our fallen propensity to "to fawne upon our selves, and to be ignorant as much as may be of our owne deformities" (I.12.2; 1:121.2–4) so that we need to be told where our faults are and how they are to be fixed. Our nature has been distorted by sin, but that very sin keeps us from so much as recognizing the deformity; hence divine law comes to our aid and points it out to us. An example of this is the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus reveals even secret concupiscence to be sin, where we might have deceived ourselves into imagining that the natural law required only outward purity (I.12.2).

The third qualification we have already mentioned: that the faculty of reason always depends upon the "aid and concurrence" of God, which, should we "cause God in his justice to withdraw," then we can expect only the darkness described in Romans 1, "even men indued with the light of reason notwithstanding 'in the vanitie of their minde, having their cogitations darkned, and being strangers from the life of God through the ignorance which is in them, because of the hardnes of their harts'" (I.8.11; 1:92.27–93.1).<sup>40</sup> After the Fall, then, although God continues to extend enough of his favour to most men to enable them to discern some knowledge of moral laws, their grasp is no longer clear and reliable, particularly when we move beyond natural law's first principles to second-order deductions. Hence, there seems to be the need for a supplementary source of revelation that will pierce through the self-imposed darkness of sin.

For all these reasons, then, we may be immensely grateful to God for providing in Scripture not merely a guide to the path of salvation, but considerable instruction in natural moral duties as well. Hooker summarizes the relationship of natural and divine law at the end of Book I:

The lawe of reason doth somewhat direct men how to honour God as their Creator, but how to glorifie God in such sort as is required, to the end he may be an everlasting Saviour, this we are taught by divine law, which law both ascertaineth the truth and supplyeth unto us the want of that other law. So that in morall actions, divine law helpeth exceedingly the law of reason to guide man's life, but in supernaturall it alone guideth (I.16.5; 1:139.4–10).

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<sup>40</sup> Nigel Voak has argued for understanding this "aid and concurrence" in terms of the Reformed doctrine of common grace, which helps to make sense of how Hooker can hold together total depravity and relative optimism about fallen human capabilities (*RHRT*, 100–112).

Indeed, such is the unity of the law of nature, and so extensive is Scripture's republication of it, that Hooker will happily admit that, in principle, one *could* derive a complete rule of moral action from Scripture. So where is his difference from Cartwright?

It is first metaphysical, in his different answer to the *Euthyphro* dilemma: that things are commanded by God in Scripture because good, not good because commanded. This leads him to conclude that although in the order of knowing the good, Scripture may sometimes precede nature, this is neither necessary nor always expedient: "it sufficeth if such [moral] actions be framed according to the lawe of reason; the generall axiomes, rules, and principles of which law being so frequent in holy scripture, there is no let but in that regard, even out of scripture such duties may be deduced by some kinde of consequence" (II.1.2; 1:145.24–28). Indeed, as Hooker will go on to sketch in chapter 15, the divine law of Scripture also contains a good deal of positive law corresponding to "human law"—that is to say, particular applications of natural law (whether that be known naturally or by aid of Scripture) for the needs of particular human communities. Both the civil laws of the Old Testament, and a variety of New Testament commands for the order of the church, he argues, fall under this heading.<sup>41</sup> Hooker then also differs from Cartwright in that he understands these divine commands to function as human laws, and thus to be, despite their supernatural origin, mutable in respect of their object; as applications of laws of reason, they may be re-specified by reason should circumstances change. In the final section of this chapter, when summarizing the role of Scripture in guiding human law, we will return to consider in more detail how Hooker distinguishes the various categories of divine positive law.

Hooker's recapitulation at the conclusion of chapter 12 admirably summarizes the three points we have established in this section, the triple dependence of nature on the supernatural:

We see, therefore, that our soveraigne good is desired naturally; that God the author of that naturall desire had appointed naturall meanes whereby to fulfil it; that man having utterly disabled his nature unto those meanes hath had other revealed from God, and hath received from heaven a lawe to teach him how that which is desired naturally must now supernaturally be attained; finallie we see that because those later [the supernatural] exclude not the former [the natural] quite and cleane as unnecessarie, therefore together with such supernaturall duties as could not possiblie have been otherwise knowne to the world, the same lawe that teacheth them, teacheth also

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Aquinas, *ST II-I* q. 104 a. 3 (see also William S. Brewbaker III, "The Bible as Law Book? Thomas Aquinas on the Juridical Uses of Scripture," *Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion* 12:76 (Fall 2010), 102–105); Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 58–59.

with them such naturall duties as could not by light of nature easilie have bene knowne (I.12.3; 1:121.29–122.5)

### III. “An Associate of Deitie”: Hooker’s Christology

Readers of Hooker have too often been tempted to read the *Lawes* from the outside in, highlighting Book I, with its sweeping, magisterial survey of law in general, and Book VIII, with its readily recognizable concerns such as royal supremacy and its obvious contributions to political theory. Books II through VII, and especially the massive Book V, can too easily appear as tiresome and arcane quibbling about long-forgotten disputes. However, there is something to be said for reading the *Lawes* from the inside out, seeing the discussion of Christology in the middle of Book V as the linchpin and beating heart of the whole work. Indeed, given the space and care that Hooker devotes to this question of systematic theology, in the midst of a discussion of disputed liturgical practices, it is surprising that it has not received more attention. Torrance Kirby, however, has again done us great service in his *Richard Hooker’s Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy*, arguing for the centrality of the Christological “paradigm” in underpinning the logical structure of the *Lawes*.<sup>42</sup>

This basic paradigm, we shall find, follows the logic of nature and grace just sketched above. In the Incarnation of the Word, our natural human desire for union with God is met; in Him, the final end for humanity is brought to pass, but in a form beyond nature’s own capacity. In Jesus Christ, we see that, in devising a supernatural means for mankind’s return to God, God did not leave nature behind; rather, nature is preserved whole, and indeed, restored to a perfect condition, in the Incarnation. Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it. The Incarnation thus follows Hooker’s *processio/reditus* pattern, and the logic of distinguishing and differentiating in order to harmonize and unify appears in his Christological exposition. So Hooker is keen to emphasize that the perfections that are bestowed on Christ’s human nature by its union with the Word, while constituting an advancement, do not constitute an advancement beyond the human or the natural human condition; human nature is enriched in a manner suited to its creaturely capacity. In other words, correspondent with what we saw above regarding Scripture and the natural law, the Incarnation does not merely offer the introduction of a new divine element, entirely beyond nature; it simultaneously renews, restores

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<sup>42</sup> Kirby notes that Lionel Thornton observed in 1924 “that the section of the *Lawes* dealing with Christology ‘is like a central tower’ around which the whole argument of the treatise is constructed” (RHRP 91, quoting Thornton, *Richard Hooker: A Study of his Theology* (London: SPCK, 1924), 54).

and elevates nature, without compromising its identity as nature. This conviction, as we shall see, plays a very important role in Hooker's political theology.

Under these three headings then—the personal union of humanity with divinity, the continued distinction of human and divine natures, and the perfection of human nature within the bounds of its natural capacity—we may summarize the basic arguments of Hooker's investigation of Christology. The discussion of Christology proper occupies chapters 51–55 of Book V of the *Laws*, and in it, Hooker seeks to thread the needle of orthodoxy, avoiding both the Eutychian temptation to so fuse the two natures within the one divine-human person that their separate natural properties are merged, exchanged, or confused, and the Nestorian temptation to completely bracket off the natures from one another, so that Jesus's actions in the flesh cannot really be predicated of the divine Son. These fifth-century disputes, after relative dormancy in the Middle Ages, had been resurrected as part of the fierce Lutheran-Reformed polemics on the subject of the Eucharist. Many Lutheran theologians, seeking to establish a basis for the ubiquity of Christ's incarnate body, argued that by a "communication of attributes," divine properties were transferred to or merged with the human. To the Reformed, this doctrine, as well as Catholic sacramental teaching, threatened a Eutychian confusion of the two natures of Christ, and their predication of a communication of attributes was rigorously circumscribed with an emphasis on the continuing integrity of each nature. Naturally, this prompted accusations of Nestorianism from their opponents. Although, as so often throughout the *Laws*, Hooker leaves these debates and interlocutors below the surface of the text, his treatment of Christology clearly represents an attempt to offer a persuasive and balanced Reformed Christology, which meets Lutheran objections but also attempts to establish as much common ground as possible on the disputed question of ubiquity. However, for the sake of space, I will generally confine myself to highlighting those elements which will be of significance in Hooker's revisitation of Christology in Book VIII.

The burden of chapter 51 is to establish that it is truly the divine person of the eternal Word that has become incarnate in Christ Jesus, and that in this union, he has not left behind his divine nature, so that "undoubtedly even the nature of God it selfe in the only person of the Sonne is incarnate, and hath taken to it selfe flesh" (V.51.2; 2:210.13–14).<sup>43</sup> He then asks why it is that redemption should have

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<sup>43</sup> In one of the few recent discussions of Hooker's Christology (though it occupies only four pages!), David Neelands summarizes Hooker's as a Cyrilline Christology: "Christ *is* divine; Christ *has* human nature" ("Christology and Sacraments," 371). He notes that some, notably Ronald Bayne (*Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, The Fifth Book* [London: Macmillan, 1902], cix) have seen in this a sympathy with Luther rather than the putatively more Antiochene or

taken place by such an extraordinary means—why should the eternal Word himself be the agent of our salvation? He answers this question in terms very reminiscent of Athanasius’s renowned *De Incarnatione*, highlighting the relationship between creation and redemption: “It seemeth a thinge unconsonant that the world should honor any other as the Savior but him whome it honoreth as the creator of the world . . . it became therefore him by whome all thinges are, to be the waie of salvation to all, that the institution and restitution of the world might be both wrought by one hand” (V.51.3; 2:210.18–20, 211.6–9). This tight link between the redeeming work of God and his original creating work is one of the ways in which Hooker highlights that the Incarnation represents the perfection, not the eclipse, of nature.

Hooker then proceeds in the next two chapters to carefully analyze the hypostatic union, first focusing on the personal unity between the two natures, which enables us to speak truly, and not merely metaphorically, of a *communicatio idiomatum*, whereby we predicate human actions of the divine, and divine of the human. “For as much therefore as Christ hath no personal subsistence but one whereby wee acknowledge him to have bene eternallie the Sonne of God, wee must of necessitie applie to the person of the Sonne of God even that which is spoken of Christ accordinge to his humane nature.” This enables Hooker to affirm in the strongest terms against Nestorianism “that no person was born of the Virgin but the Sonne of God, no person but the Sonne of God baptized, the Sonne of God condemned, the Sonne of God and no other person crucified” (V.52.3; 2:215.6–9). But it also means, as Hooker will have occasion to emphasise shortly, that the works of divinity may now also be predicated of the fully human person Jesus Christ. Almost immediately, however, he moves on to qualify these strong statements of unity, insisting that the conjunction of natures involves

no abolishment of naturall properties apperteininge to either substance, no transition or transmigration thereof out of one substance into an other, finallie no such mutuall infusion as reallie causeth the same naturall operations or properties to be made common unto both substances, but whatsoever is naturall to deitie the same remayneth in Christ uncommunicated unto his manhood (V.53.1; 2:216.23–28).

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even semi-Nestorian Reformed tradition (371–72). However, the difference is one of emphasis at most. See Wendel, *Calvin*, 220–25 for a comparison of Calvin’s Christology with Luther’s, and Kirby, *RHDS*, 111–17 for a correlation of Hooker’s Christology with that of Calvin’s. Indeed, a comparison of Hooker’s Christological exposition with that of Reformed stalwart Girolamo Zanchi in ch. 11 of his *De Religione Christiana Fides—Confession of the Christian Religion* (2 vols.), ed. Luca Baschera and Christian Moser (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1:199–229, see also his *Observations* on ch. 11 in 2:535–51, and his *Appendix* to ch. 11, 2:635–57) reveals them to be in agreement on every point of substance, and should put to rest any assumption that “Cyrilline” and Reformed christologies are incompatible.

Thus, while we may speak of the divine doing human actions, and the human divine actions, we must subsequently clarify, explaining that the one person acts in each by virtue of the nature to which such actions are proper. To speak with precision, then, some things Christ does as God, others as man, others as both conjointly. Hooker thus proposes as a rule for deciding all doubts “that of both natures there is a *cooperation* often, an *association* alwayes, but never any mutuall *participation* whereby the properties of the one are infused into the other” (V.53.3; 2:218.30–219.3). By virtue of this distinction, Hooker’s concern is not so much to preserve the divine nature from the stain of finitude or passibility (as this doctrine is often criticised for doing), but to preserve the full integrity of the human nature. He wants to avoid any implication that Christ’s human nature is anything other than fully human, that it is merged with his divinity in such a way as to be swallowed up in it or essentially changed: “Wee may not therefore imagin that the properties of the weaker nature have vanisht with the presence of the more glorious, and have bene therein swallowed up as in a gulf” (V.53.2; 2:217.18–21). Here, as throughout his theology, we see his concern to preserve the full integrity of nature even as it is graced.

However, Hooker does not want to rule out any influence upon the human nature, as if in the Incarnation, God simply attached himself to humanity without humanity being in any way altered thereby. On the contrary, by virtue of the Incarnation, Christ’s “humane nature hath had the honor of union with deitie bestowed upon it . . . [and] by means thereof sundrie eminent graces have flowed as effectes from deitie in to that nature which is coupled with it” (V.54.1; 2:220.24–27). These graces, Hooker emphasises, although focused on the particular human being Jesus, are given to human nature as a whole, since Christ has assumed “that *nature* which is common to all” (V.52.3; 2:213.21); but again, this “gracing” of nature somehow does not “denature” nature: “The verie cause of his takinge upon him our nature was to change it, to better the qualitie and to advance the condition thereof, although in no sorte to abolish the substance which he tooke, nor to infuse into it the naturall forces and properties of his deitie” (V.54.5; 2:223.16–20). Hooker goes on to elaborate this statement with many careful qualifications. The properties of human nature, he says, are not “so much altered, as not to staie within those limites which our substance is bordered withall” (V.54.5; 2:223.25–27)—the advancement that occurs is one that is within the potentiality of man’s nature. Clearly, Hooker can make this claim because of his insistence back in Book I that the supernatural end of union with God is one that is naturally desired, and one we are naturally capable of receiving.

In what this does this advancement consist? Hooker will distinguish the “grace of union” from the “grace of unction,” and in the cases of both, he is careful to qualify that the full graces obviously belong uniquely to the man Jesus Christ, that “man with whome deitie is personallie joined” (V.54.5; 2:224.12); although we have been made sharers with him in them. By virtue of the former grace, human nature is taken up into the history of God, and made to share in all the honors and activities pertaining properly to the Logos: “to be the way, the truth and the life; to be the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, resurrection . . . [are] true of Christ even in that he is man. . . . [W]ee cannot now conceive how God should without man either exercise divine power or receive the glorie of divine praise. For man is in both an associate of Deitie.” (V.54.5; 2:224.5–6, 11, 16–18). By virtue of the latter, Christ’s human nature was made capable of operations beyond the ordinary power of human nature. Hooker qualifies this, however, by saying that it receives “all such perfections as the same is anie waie apt to receive” (V.54.6; 2:225.1–2)—that is to say, with the elevated perfections that human nature is somehow predisposed to receive, that human nature can receive without going beyond what it means to be human. On this basis, he will exclude the Lutheran doctrine of ubiquity, as positing a “perfection” of human nature that goes quite beyond the capacities of human nature, so as to overturn that nature entirely, for “Supernaturall endowments are an advancement, they are no extinguishment of that nature to which they are given” (V.55.6; 2:230.28–29). However, Hooker clearly is prepared to argue that human nature is destined for, capable of, a greater perfection than that which it had at the beginning, and that in Christ, this perfection is reached.

#### **IV. The Reign of the Son of Man**

Now, what does all this have to do with political theology, with the nature of a Christian commonwealth? Judging by most expositions of Hooker’s political thought, we would have to conclude, “Not much.”<sup>44</sup> This oversight, however, is quite remarkable when we consider that Hooker himself makes the application quite directly and explicitly in Book VIII, chapter 4. For Hooker, the royal supremacy, and indeed, the whole identity of a Christian commonwealth, rest firmly on a Christological foundation. In establishing this foundation, he responds

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<sup>44</sup> Torrance Kirby is the notable exception, arguing in *RHDS* that “the Chalcedonian formula and the systematic theology which developed from it are at the heart of Hooker’s thinking and provide it with its essential coherence. . . . the Christological ‘paradigm’ is the indispensable key to an interpretation of Hooker’s defence of the union of Church and Commonwealth” (24–25).

directly to Cartwright's invocation of Christology, but also, as we shall see, to VanDrunen, for both have advanced the same argument.

In *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, VanDrunen lays great weight on what he calls the Reformed doctrine of the "two mediatorships," a doctrine forcefully asserted by Cartwright in his engagement with Whitgift, and common among both English puritans and Scotch Covenanters. As articulated by many Reformed theologians, and recently well-summarized by John Bolt, the doctrine seems a natural implication of the *extra Calvinisticum*, the Reformed insistence that Christ remained, in his divine nature, present always and everywhere *etiam extra carnem*—"even outside the flesh":

As mediator, the divine Logos is not limited to his incarnate form even after the incarnation. He was mediator of creation prior to his incarnation and as mediator continues to sustain creation independent of his mediatorial work as reconciler of creation in the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>45</sup>

This distinction may be a useful heuristic device, but it runs into trouble when forced to bear too much ontological and ethical weight, as in Cartwright and the puritan tradition, which VanDrunen follows in his *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*. Here the doctrine takes on troubling dimensions, suggesting a permanent disjunction between the order of creation and the order of redemption, a disjunction found within the person of Christ himself. The result is not merely the Nestorianizing impulse of which the Reformed were often accused, but an abstraction of the work of redemption from the creation it is meant to redeem. This comes into particularly sharp focus in the doctrine of the ascension, as VanDrunen asserts that the glorified and ascended Christ continues to execute both offices simultaneously and separately.<sup>46</sup> The purpose of this doctrine in VanDrunen's theopolitical schema, as in Cartwright's, is readily obvious, for if Christ exercises two separate kingships, this authorizes the two-kingdoms distinction.<sup>47</sup> VanDrunen, we will recall, correlates the civil kingdom to creation, encompassing phenomena such as politics, economics, and culture, and the spiritual kingdom to redemption, encompassing the church and its work.

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<sup>45</sup> John Bolt, "Church and World: A Trinitarian Perspective," *Calvin Theological Journal* 18:1 (Apr. 1983): 30.

<sup>46</sup> *NLTK* 75, 182. As noted in chapter 1, however, VanDrunen has quietly backed away from his most problematic formulations here in his more recent *LGTK*, 118.

<sup>47</sup> See McKay, "From Popery to Principle," 135–50, for an account of how this same two mediators distinction was used to undergird a similarly strict two-kingdoms separation in 17th-century Scotland.



However, Hooker emphasizes that the personal unity of the Incarnate Word ensures that creation and redemption can hold together as two works of the same agent and that these are not two unrelated works, but the latter renews the former and brings it to perfection. By distinguishing the two works, then, we do not necessarily underwrite any strict separation of church and state, of the norms of redemption from the norms of creation. To achieve such separation, VanDrunen has to resist any *communicatio idiomatum* whereby the human acts of the work of redemption can be predicated of the eternal Word and the divine acts of creation and governing creation can be predicated of the Son of man. VanDrunen thus asks us to separate out these two “capacities”: “The Son of God rules the temporal kingdom as an eternal member of the Divine Trinity but does not rule it in his capacity as the incarnate mediator/redeemer.”<sup>48</sup> When VanDrunen goes so far as to speak of “distinct identities”<sup>49</sup> within the incarnate Word, so that we cannot rightly name him as “Christ” if referring to his creative and sustaining role, we may wonder whether his zeal to de-Christianize the political order has not led him astray from the path of orthodoxy:

To distinguish between the Son as creator and the Son as redeemer entails that the title of ‘Christ’ belongs only to the latter . . . in his special mission of becoming incarnate for the particular work of saving his people. The Son redeemed the world, but did not create the world, as the Messiah, the Christ. . . . If the Son of God creates in a different capacity from his capacity as redeemer, then he does not create as ‘Christ,’ and the terrain of common grace, grounded in the creation order, is not ‘Christian,’ no matter how noble it becomes.<sup>50</sup>

Distant as these Christological concerns may seem from politics, Cartwright’s debates with Whitgift reveal him drawing very similar implications from such a doctrine. In his debate with Whitgift over the relationship of the two kingdoms, Cartwright developed an account of the two mediatorships, which he pursues at some length in his *Second Replie*. In attacking Whitgift’s account of the civil and spiritual kingdoms, Cartwright argues that “yt confoundeth and shuffleth together the autoritie of our Saviour Christ as he is the sonne off God onely before all worldes coequall with his father [his authority over kingdoms]: with that which he hath gyven off his father and which he exerciseth in respecte he is mediator betwene God and us [his authority over the church].”<sup>51</sup> Further on, he explains,

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<sup>48</sup> *NLT* 181.

<sup>49</sup> *NLT* 182.

<sup>50</sup> *NLT* 313–14.

<sup>51</sup> *SR* 411.8–13.

Let yt be considered fyrst that our Saviour Christ ys in one respecte creator, and preserver of mankinde, in another redeemer, and upholder of his church. For he created once and preserveth daily as God coequal with his Father, and holy spirite, but he both redemed once, and daily gathereth his church, as mediatour of god and man, in which respect even yet in his infynite glory he enjoyeth, he is, and shall be under his father, and holy ghost, untill having put downe all rule and power, he shall render the kingdom to his father. Secondly yt ys to be considered, that as our Saviour Christe doth these in dyvers respectes: so he doth them by divers means. To wyt that as God symply he hath ordeined certein means to serve his providence in the prservation of mankynde; so as God and man, he hath ordeined other certein, for the gathering, and keping off his church. Thes groundes laied, yt is to be considered, whether the exercise off the sworde by the magistrate, come from our Saviour Christe preserver off mankinde, wherein he is coequal to his father, or as mediatour off his church, wherin he is inferiour.<sup>52</sup>

In these passages, Cartwright is attempting to assert a Christological basis for a separate government of church and state. These institutions, says Cartwright, serve to provide for the ongoing work of redemption, and the ongoing government of creation, respectively. Accordingly, they are not simply under the government of Jesus Christ in the same way, and cannot be mixed together. In particular, Cartwright's point here is to insist that we cannot speak of a human head of the church, because the church already has a human head, Christ Jesus, who answers to God. As governor of the church, "our Saviour Christ himselfe hath a superior, which is his father." However, Cartwright does want to allow for human heads of state, and thus argues that these are subordinated to Christ only as he is God: "in the governement off kingdomes . . . he hath no superior, but immediate autoritie with his father."<sup>53</sup> Torrance Kirby explains that for Cartwright: "Christ has a *double* role or function as the 'God-man'. On the one hand, he is the source of all authority in the secular political order by virtue of his being the Son of God; on the other hand, he exercises ultimate power as head of his body, the church, through his Manhood."<sup>54</sup> With two distinct heads, then, the civil and spiritual kingdoms function in Cartwright's account as two distinct, personally separated bodies.

VanDrunen approvingly cites Samuel Rutherford advancing a similar, though perhaps even more starkly stated account, insisting that because the temporal kingdom is under "God the creator" and the spiritual under "Christ the redeemer," it follows that civil magistrates are "not subordinate to Christ as

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<sup>52</sup> SR 416.36–417.17.

<sup>53</sup> SR 411.15–18.

<sup>54</sup> RHDRS 104.

mediator and head of the Church” and are not “the ambassadors of Christ” but “the deputy of God as the God of order, and as the creator.”<sup>55</sup>

Lurking behind this sort of account is the spectre of Nestorianism, the implication that we must treat the Incarnate God-Man as a separate agent from the eternal Word, and must strictly avoid predicating of the one functions carried out by the other. Hooker is alive to this danger, and also to its larger consequences, recognizing that, in Kirby’s words, “such a separation within the source of authority, and its consequent ‘personal’ separation of the civil from the ecclesiastical community implies an inevitable de-Christianising of the secular political order.”<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, he responds to Cartwright’s claims from the *Second Replie* in a masterful stretch of argument in VIII.4.6, drawing on the Christological principles laid down already in Book V.

He begins, “As Christ being Lord or Head over all doth by vertue of that Soveraigntie rule all, so he hath no more a superiour in governing his Church then in exercising soveraigne Dominion upon the rest of the world besides.” On this basis, he will argue “that all authoritie as well civill as Ecclesiasticall is subordinate unto his” (3:363.26–27). One cannot, as Cartwright does, separate Christ’s kingship over the church as man from his divine kingship. Hooker constructs his argument carefully, beginning with the eternal Son’s sharing in the rule of God the Father:

That which the Father doth work as *Lord* and *King* over all he worketh not without but by the sonne who through coeternall generation receiveth of the Father that power which the Father hath of himself. And for that cause our *Savioures* wordes concerning his own Dominion are, ‘To me all power both in heaven and earth is given.’ The Father by the sonne both did create and doth guide all (3:364.7–14).

So far, VanDrunen and Cartwright would probably concur—the second person of the Trinity, by virtue of his divinity derived from the Father, is creator and ruler of all things. However, Hooker insists at this point on the *communicatio idiomatum*:

there is no necessitie that all things spoken of Christ should agree unto him either as God or else as man, but some things as he is the consubstantiall word of God, some thinges as he is that word incarnate. The workes of supreme Dominion which have been since the first begining wrought by the power of the Sonne of God are now most truely and properly the workes of the Sonne of man. The *word*

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<sup>55</sup> *NLTK* 181, quoting from Samuel Rutherford, *The Divine Right of Church Government and Excommunication* (London: 1646), 510–11.

<sup>56</sup> Kirby, *RHDSR*, 106.

made *flesh* doth sitt for ever and raigne as Sovereaign *Lord* over all (3:364.23–365.4).<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, at stake here is not merely the doctrine of the incarnation—by virtue of which divine agency can be predicated of Jesus of Nazareth—but the doctrine of the ascension, by virtue of which the man Jesus Christ has been elevated, in his human nature, to kingship at the right hand of God over all his works. Whereas VanDrunen asserts, and Cartwright implies, a version of the *extra Calvinisticum* which permanently sunders the human being Jesus Christ from the lordship exercised by the divine Son,<sup>58</sup> Hooker insists that all that the Son worked as God he works now also as man, and what the Son works as man, he now does by divine power: “And yet the dominion wherunto he was in his humane nature lifted up is not without divine power exercised. It is by divine power that the Sonne of man, who sitteth in heaven, doth work as *King* and *Lord* upon us which are on earth” (3:367.10–14).<sup>59</sup> The two natures, in short, are united in one agency, one dominion, a dominion over not only the church, but all creation.

It is thus as both God and man that Christ rules over his church, and as both God and man that he rules over the kingdoms of this world. The basis of all earthly government is not merely from God the Creator, but now also through the God-man, the Redeemer, who as man sits on the throne at the right hand of God, as redeemer of the world exercises his rule over creation. All that the Son has and does by virtue of divinity, his humanity is made sharer in, and all that Jesus Christ has and does by virtue of his humanity, the divinity is made sharer in. This, Hooker has

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<sup>57</sup> Zanchi would support Hooker, rather than VanDrunen here, asserting in his *De religione Christiana fides*, 217–19: “whatsoever Christ is or doeth according to the divine nature, that same whole Christ, the Sonne of man, may be said to be or to doe. And againe, whatsoever Christ doth or suffreth according to his humain nature, that same whole Christ, the Sonne of God, God himselfe, is said in the holie scriptures to bee, to doe and to suffer. . . . Yea, Christ the mediatur according to his humanitie never did or doeth anie thing, wherein his divinity did not or doth not work together, and he never performed anie thing according to his divinitie, whereunto his humanitie was not assisting or consenting.”

<sup>58</sup> For a helpful analysis of this *extra Calvinisticum* in its original theological context, see E.D. Willis, *Calvin’s Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin’s Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

<sup>59</sup> This is stated even more clearly back in Hooker’s Christological discussion in Bk. 5, which he is clearly drawing on at this point: “that deitie of Christ which before our Lordes incarnation wrought all thinges without man doth now worke nothinge wherein the nature which it hath assumed is either absent from it or idle. Christ *as man* hath all power both in heaven and earth given him. He hath *as man not as God only* supreme dominion over quicke and dead. For so much his ascension into heaven and his session at the right hand of God doe importe. . . . Session at the right hand of God is the actual exercise of that regencie and dominion wherein the manhood of Christ is joyned and matchet with the deitie of the Sonne of God. . . . *This government [over all creation] therefore he exerciseth both as God and as man*, as God by essentiall presence with all thinges, as man by cooperation with that which essentiallie is present” (V.55.8; 2:232.16–22, 233.12–14, 28–30; italics mine).

argued, is simply the orthodox doctrine of the incarnation. One cannot then say that as divine Son, the Word exercises a dominion in which the man Christ Jesus has no part, or that as redeeming man, Christ exercises an office in which the divine Son has no part. Rather, all things on heaven and earth are made subject to the Word made flesh. For that reason, to return to the terms introduced earlier in this chapter, there is no part of the natural order that has not been united to, and perfected in, the order of grace.

Just as the implications of Cartwright's semi-Nestorian move for political theology are profound, so the implications of Hooker's response supply him with a strong foundation not merely for his defence of the royal supremacy, but more generally, for his account of the Christian commonwealth. Civil magistrates hold their authority derivatively from God through Christ, and thus are accountable to Christ for the outward protection of his kingdom.<sup>60</sup> Because we cannot sever Christ's redemptive work from his work of creating and governing, it follows that magistrates are responsible not merely for preserving the created order of human society, and witnessing to God's rule over it, but also for encouraging the redemption of society, and witnessing to the kingship of Christ the redeemer. For Hooker, this is not a denial of his clear insistence on the integrity of the natural order, and of natural law as a means for governing this order. Rather, as we have seen, he has maintained throughout that human nature seeks its proper fulfillment in union with God, a union that is perfectly exhibited in the glorified and ascended Christ. Now that this *natural* end has been achieved by virtue of supernatural grace in the incarnation, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, one cannot speak of the natural order without reference to its rightful king, Christ the Redeemer. In him, human nature has not been destroyed, nor transformed into something else; rather, it has been restored from its fallen condition, and advanced to a higher perfection, a perfection not beyond nature but proper to it. Accordingly, the political order, while falling within the realm of nature, is not unaffected by the work of Christ; it cannot carry on as though it existed only under the banner of a generic deity. Rather, it is subject to the God-man who sits now in heaven as king and judge. By the same token, natural law cannot do without the revelation of Christ and his Word, despite having its roots in creation rather than redemption.

In the following two sections, we shall synthesize all these points to show how Hooker situates the role of religion, both natural and revealed, in the

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<sup>60</sup> *LEP* VIII.4.6 (*FLE* 3:369.1–24).

commonwealth, how he explains the duty of the magistrate to care for the souls of his subjects, and what role Scripture can play in framing human law. We shall once more witness the pattern of *processio/reditus*, of distinguishing and harmonizing, as Hooker seeks to knit together the two kingdoms under the kingship of Christ, but does not confuse the work of prince and priest, confining the magistrate's role to the external protection and nourishment of the church.

## V. The Soul of a Christian Commonwealth

Throughout this chapter, we have repeatedly called attention to Hooker's application of the dictum *grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it*. Nowhere is this more true than his treatment of the role of religion in the commonwealth. We will recall already from chapter 5 that Hooker understands public religion as a natural and civil phenomenon, not as exclusively Christian or spiritual. Of course, this did not mean it was a mere simulacrum of the spiritual; rather, as we saw with his discussion of liturgy, although achieving its effect through natural and outward instruments, Christian worship can serve as a real pathway toward our growth in grace. The key point, however, was that the civil kingdom, in addition to being concerned with all the mundane concerns of public order, economic prosperity, and outward protection that characterize our modern conception of the domain of politics, was also properly a religious order; it existed under God, toward God, and animated and structured by worship.

Given what we have seen in Chapter 5, and in section II of this chapter, it is not hard to see why this should be the case. Human nature is not satisfied with mere finite, earthly ends, but constantly seeks a happiness beyond the bounds of temporal existence, a happiness to be found in God. This restless longing for God, which subordinates and orders all other desires, will always, thinks Hooker, be reflected in the life of human society, which will always establish some kind of religious devotion at the heart of its public life. Because of the centrality and ultimacy of this religious devotion, worship is not merely of value for its own sake, but serves as an anchor for the public life of the community, guaranteeing unity around a common object of love, and reverent esteem for the magistrates who are the guardians of this common life. At the outset of Book V, Hooker describes religion as "the highest of all cares apperteyninge to publique regiment," especially "for the force which religion hath, to qualifie all sortes of men, and to make them in publique affairs the more serviceable, governors the apter to rule with conscience, inferiors for conscience sake the willinger to obey." In short, "if the coorse of politique affairs cannot in any good sorte goe forward without fitt instrumentes,

and that which fitteth them be their vertues, let politie acknowledge it selfe indebted to religion, godlines being the cheifest top and welspringe of all true virtues, even as God is of all good thinges." Hooker then goes on to outline how religion helps preserve and perfect each of the four cardinal virtues, to the great benefit of the commonwealth, going so far as to say, regarding the greatest of the cardinal virtues, "So naturall is the union of Religion with Justice, that wee may boldlie denie there is either, where both are not" ((V.1.2; 2:16.26–17.13).

Hooker will return to this argument early in Book VIII, where he constructs his defence of the Royal Supremacy on two chief pillars. The first is the personal identity of the visible church (being an outward society of those who profess the faith—see Ch. IV above) and the commonwealth in Elizabethan England. The other, however, is the natural responsibility of commonwealths for religious concerns:

for of every politique societie that being true which Aristotle hath, namely, "that the scope thereof is not simplie to live, nor the duetie so much to provide for life as for meanes of living well," and that even as the soule is the worthier part of man, so humane societies are much more to care for that which tendeth properly unto the soules estate then for such temporall thinges as this life doth stand in need of. Other proof there needes none to shewe that as by all men "the kingdome of God is first to be sought for": So in all commonwealths things spirituall ought above temporall to be provided for. And of things spirituall the cheifest is *Religion* (VIII.1.4; 3:321.7–17).

As Andre Gazal has noted, this represents a dramatic hermeneutical shift from the prevailing apologetic strategy of English defenders of the Royal Supremacy.<sup>61</sup> Although Hooker will cite scriptural precedents for the *cura religionis*, ultimately it is a duty of natural, not divine law.

From all this, however, it might appear that Hooker has been so eager to demonstrate nature's receptivity to the supernatural, religion's integral place in the commonwealth, that he has perhaps naturalized religion altogether, reducing Christianity to a mere prop of political order. He anticipates this objection in V.1 and V.2, attacking both atheists, who conclude from the "politique use of religion ... that religion it selfe is a meere politique devise" (V.2.3; 2:25.25–26), and skeptics, who suggest that if religion as such benefits the commonwealth, it doesn't much matter "of what sorte our religion be" (V.1.3; 2:19.23). Against these objections, he takes care to argue that on the contrary, it is not merely religion, but *true* religion,

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<sup>61</sup> Gazal, *Scripture and Royal Supremacy*, 495–519. However, as I have argued in "More than a Swineherd: Hooker, Vermigli, and the Aristotelian Defense of the Royal Supremacy," *Renaissance and Reformation Review*, forthcoming 2013, a very similar line of reasoning had been employed by Peter Martyr Vermigli in his defense of the royal supremacy four decades before.

after which all men instinctively seek, and that finding the true religion, Christianity, makes a great difference, both in this life, and in that which is to come. He has no hesitation in recognizing the many virtues and benefits which flowed from heathen religion, as “certain sparkes of the light of truth intermingled with the darknes of error,” (V.1.5; 2:22.20–21) but he maintains nonetheless that “the purer and perfecter our religion is, the worthier effectes it hath in them who stedfastly and sincerely imbrace it” (V.1.4; 2:21.28–29).

Hooker thus develops his account of public religion under his overarching logic of nature and grace. The desire for and worship of God is natural to man, and indeed, so central to human nature that it serves to ground and orient the other virtues, and is a mainstay of civil polity. Fallen as man is, however, this religious devotion is tainted with “heaps of manifold repugnant errors” (V.1.3; 2:21.25–26), on account of which we desperately need the gracious revelation of true religion. This true religion, then, serves not only to set us on the path to everlasting life, which the false religions cannot even begin to do, but also reorients our temporal existence, crowning the natural virtues with a perfection beyond the capacity of false religion, and enabling a more harmonious life together in civil society. For all these reasons, Hooker can argue for the Christian magistrate’s overarching concern for the spiritual well-being of his subjects, which is found only in their redemption by Christ; for in this rests their ultimate good, to which they are naturally oriented, and from it flows all subsidiary goods which will ensure a peaceful and virtuous life for the commonwealth. On Hooker’s definition, then, the church, considered as an external, visible society, is a commonwealth ordered toward the true religion:

the care of religion being common unto all *Societies* politique, such *Societies* as doe embrace the true religion, have the name of the *Church* given them for distinction from the rest; so that every body politique hath some religion, but the *Church* that religion, which is only true. Truth of religion is that proper difference whereby a *Church* is distinguished from other politique societies of men (VIII.1.2; 3:318.15–21).

He concludes, therefore, attacking what he perceives as the disastrous implications of the Presbyterian separation of church and commonwealth, “A grosse error it is to think that regall power ought to serve for the good of the bodie and not of the soule, for mens temporall peace and not their eternall safetie; as if God had ordained Kings for no other ende and purpose but only to fatt up men like hogges and to see that they have their mash?” To be sure, it does not belong to kings “to leade men unto salvation” either inwardly by “secret, invisible, and ghostly regiment” (as Christ only can do), or by “the externall administration of thinges



belonging to priestly order,” the word and sacraments, but there is “no cause in the world to think them uncapable of supreme authoritie in the outward goverment which disposeth the affayres of religion so farr forth as the same are disposable by humane authoritie” (VIII.3.5; 3:352.20–31).

This passage highlights at the same time to Hooker’s haste to qualify what he envisions by the magisterial care for religion. After all, if the prince is responsible for the good of his subjects, and their highest good is to be found in union with God, then does this not make the prince the *pontifex maximus*, both priest and king, arbiter of his subjects’ eternal destiny as much as their temporal? Certainly, in some of the ambitiously caesaropapist declarations of the Henrician era, these implications would not have been far from the surface. Hooker protects himself against these excesses by two sets of distinctions. The first, of which we have already seen a good deal, is his two-kingdoms doctrine, which we see here in his qualification that “secret, invisible and ghostly regiment” belongs to Christ alone, as he works the salvation of believers by his Spirit invisibly in human hearts. External means he might use to ready the soil and water the sapling, but only he could plant the seed of spiritual life. No human servant can usurp his kingship here; they can only point to it.

The second distinction, mentioned here in Hooker’s reference to “the externall administration of thinges belonging to priestly order,” designates a distinction of roles or orders, within the one civil kingdom. While insisting that church and commonwealth are one society, he is careful to preserve a diversity of duties within this society, so that those activities in which the activity of the spiritual kingdom is outwardly manifested—the preaching of the Word, leading of worship, and administration of sacraments—are entrusted to priests, not kings. He resists, however, the implication that “they that are of the one can neither appointe, nor execute in part the dueties which belong unto them which are of the other” (VIII.1.2; 3:318.8–10). On the contrary, throughout his argument for the royal supremacy, he maintains that the monarch, by virtue of his office as supreme judge of all causes within his realm, ought in England to have final (though not sole) authority for correcting faults within the church, and directing her various offices toward the good of the whole.<sup>62</sup> In other words, while the magistrate’s arena of direct concern is temporal affairs, and he can by no means lay claim to the power of *order*—which is the priestly authority over word and sacrament—he nonetheless

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<sup>62</sup> LEP VIII.3.4 (FLE 3:349–350).

exercises *dominion* over all causes in his realm, as the repository of sovereignty and the deputy of Christ in the civil kingdom.

By virtue of these distinctions, Hooker tries to resolve the ambiguity inherent in the puritans' constant insistence that the affairs of the visible church are "spiritual" and hence belong to Christ's "spiritual kingdom"; he is willing to accede to this language, so long as it be qualified rightly:

To make thinges therfore so plaine that henceforth a Childes capacitie may serve rightly to conceive our meaning, we make the *Spirituall* regiment of *Christ* to be generally that wherby his *Church* is ruled and governed in things spirituall. Of this generall wee make two distinct kindes, the one invisibly exercised by *Christ* himself in his own person, the other outwardly administred by them whom *Christ* doth allow to be the *Rulers* and guiders of his *Church*. (VIII.4.9; 3:377.3–10)

This outward administration of the "spiritual regiment," is "externall and visible . . . exercised by men" (VIII.4.9; 3:378.10), and therefore subject to, though distinct from, the human dominion of the magistrate in the "civil regiment," which encompasses the entire commonwealth, in both its spiritual and temporal concerns.<sup>63</sup>

## VI. Scripture as a Rule for the Christian Commonwealth

As Christ's rulers and guides over his church, which is to say, in Hooker's terms, over a political society oriented toward the true religion, by what rule ought Christian princes to govern: by natural law or by Scripture? While it is common to imagine that the reformers' insistence on *sola Scriptura* precluded a serious appeal to natural law, even in political life, we have seen enough to realize that this was far from the case. VanDrunen is right at least to recognize that the two-kingdoms

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<sup>63</sup> Hooker elaborates these several distinctions with relation to his arguments about the headship of Christ. In the spiritual regiment properly so-called, Christ alone is head, "neither can any other Creature in that sense and meaning be termed *Head* besides him, because it importeth the conduct and governor of our Soules, by the hand of that blessed *Spirit*, wherwith we are sealed and marked, as being peculiarly His." However, "As for the power of administring those thinges in the *Church of Christ* which power we call the power of order, it is indeed both spirituall and *His*; *Spirituall*, because such dueties properly concerne the *Spirit*, *His* because by Him it was instituted, howbeit neither *Spirituall* as that which is inwardly and invisibly exercised nor *His*, as that which *He* himself in person doth exercise. Againe that power of dominion which is indeed the pointe of this *Controversie* and doth also belong to the second kinde of *Spirituall regiment*, namely unto that regiment which is external and visible, this likewise being *Spirituall* in regard of the matter about which it dealeth . . . must notwithstanding be distinguished also from that power whereby he himself in person administred the former kind of his owne spiritual regiment because he himself in person doeth not administer this. We doe not therefore vainly imagine but truly and rightly discerne a power external and visible in the *Church* exercised by men and severed in nature from that *spirituall* power of Christ's own regiment, which power is termed *spirituall* because it worketh secretly inwardly and invisibly; *His*, because none doth or can it personally exercise either besides or together with him" (VIII.4.10; 3:377.13–16, 377.22–378.14).

doctrine, for Protestant leaders such as Luther and Calvin, meant that Scripture was not primarily concerned with offering a blueprint for political life, and sources of natural reason could be safely consulted in this sphere. As we have also seen, however, the imprecision this left in judging what laws were appropriate, particularly on the vexed question of church-state relations, drove many Protestants to “precisianism,” in which Scripture was taken to provide very clear criteria of what government should do or of what it should not do. The result was a classic example of the “clash of loyalties,” in which believers found their duty to God at odds with their duty to the prince.

Hooker’s harmonization of these loyalties therefore involves, as we have seen, a harmonization of natural and divine law, an insistence that Christian princes must govern by both, mediated, of course, through human law. We will recall above Hooker’s programmatic summary of the relation between the “law of reason” and “divine law”:

The lawe of reason doth somewhat direct men how to honour God as their Creator, but how to glorifie God in such sort as is required, to the end he may be an everlasting Saviour, this we are taught by divine law, which law both ascertaineth the truth and supplyeth unto us the want of that other law. So that in morall actions, divine law helpeth exceedingly the law of reason to guide man’s life, but in supernaturall it alone guideth (I.16.5; 1:139.3–10).

It is the realm of “moral actions” that politics is to govern, and for this realm, we have been given the gift of the law of reason, and the capacity to apply it in the form of human laws (both mixedly and merely human) to the needs of particular societies. But as the law of reason admonishes the prince of the paramount importance of religion to an ordered and moral society, and of not merely religion, but the true religion, then revelation about this religion cannot but be essential for good government. Scripture, as we have seen, not only teaches us new duties, but clarifies, illuminates, and applies those duties that we already had by the law of reason. For this reason, in establishing the best human laws to govern a Christian society, “partely scripture and partly reason must teach us to discern” (III.9.1; 1:236.8). Indeed, so thoroughly do these two complement one another in this task that Hooker will all but equate the two:

as a man liveth joynd with others in common societie, and belongeth unto the outward politique body of the *Church* albeit the sayd law of nature and scripture have in this respect also made manifest the thinges that are of the greatest necessitie; neverthelesse by reason of new occasions still arising which the *Church* having care of soules must take order for as need requireth, heerby it commeth to pass, that there is and ever wilbe great use even of humane lawes and ordinances deducted by way of discourse as conclusions from

the former divine and naturall, serving for principles therunto (VIII.6.4; 3:389.12–21).

Although when it comes to laws of civil polity, Hooker has given us little guidance as to how this deduction might proceed (this not being the immediate point at debate with the puritans), he gives us a very thorough treatment of the relation of “conclusions” and “principles” in the establishment of laws of ecclesiastical polity in III.9–11. Scripture, he says, gives us three kinds of direction: examples, laws natural (which is to say, restatements of principles contained in the law of reason), and laws positive. Examples, he says, “can but direct as precedents onely”; natural laws such that “in all thinges we must for ever doe according unto them”; and positive laws, “that against them in no case we may doe any thing, as long as the will of God is that they should remaine in force.” For each of these, reason is still needed:

Howbeit when scripture doth yeelde us precedents, how far forth they are to bee followed; when it giveth naturall lawes, what particular order is therunto most agreeable; when positive, which waye to make lawes unrepugnant unto them; yea though all these shoulde want, yet what kind of ordinances woulde be moste for that good of the Church which is aimed at, al this must be by reason founde out (III.9.1; 1:236.15–21).

Clearly enough, these three forms of direction apply not only to ecclesiastical polity, but to civil polity as well—in Scripture, we find many examples of political rule and temporal laws, we find also the restatement of natural laws such as those found in the second table of the Decalogue, and we find a great many positive laws, at least in the Old Testament.

These positive laws, often designated as the “judicial laws” (as contrasted with the “moral” and “ceremonial” laws of the Old Testament) can be discerned by the fact that they are laws in which the *end* (public order, justice, peace, etc.) is permanent—at any rate, permanent until the eschaton—but in which the *matter* (the circumstances upon which the laws are brought to bear) is changeable. Hooker is not unaware that some of his puritan adversaries are of the view that even Old Testament judicial laws remain binding; this rests, he says, on two misunderstandings: that the divine authority of the lawmaker renders a law unchangeable, and that any law with a permanent end must be unchangeable, as if that “which he by lawe did establish as being fittest unto that end, for us to alter any thing is to lift up our selves against God and as it were to countermaund him” (III.10.3; 1:242.6–9).

To this Hooker replies, as we have seen above in Chapter Four,

they marke not that lawes are instruments to rule by, and that instruments are not only to bee framed according unto the generall ende for which they are provided, but even according unto that very particular, which riseth out of the matter wheron they have to work. The end wherefore lawes were made may bee permanent, and those lawes neverthelesse require some alteration, if there bee anye unfitnes in the meanes which they prescribe as tending unto that end and purpose (III.10.3; 1:242.9–16).

In other words, the ever-changing character of human social and political life ensures that the presence of positive laws in Scripture will never obviate the need for careful rational reflection (making use of the law of reason) on which laws are most appropriate for a particular society. But this in no way renders Scripture irrelevant to the task. We must still diligently seek to understand the general end provided for in biblical laws, and ensure that that same end is met in our own legislation (a process of exegesis and application which Hooker will repeatedly undertake in Books V–VIII of the *Lawes*, explaining how various Old Testament laws are and are not relevant to the task of framing a godly order for the Church of England). Moreover, we must learn from scriptural examples as well as positive laws. Finally, we must submit absolutely to scriptural natural laws, so that “in all thinges we must for ever doe according unto them,” and, where necessary, enact laws that specify them and bind us to follow them in particular contexts.

We have seen in this chapter how Hooker’s nuanced understanding of nature and grace, as always distinct yet harmonious, underlies his entire political theology. Nature has its own proper end and mode of operation, and yet is perfected by union with a supernatural end, in which it participates, according to a finite mode, in operations beyond its capability. For Hooker, this paradigm finds its fullest expression in the person and work of Christ, in whom the Word has taken up human nature and made it an “associate of Deitie” without abolishing its humanity. By this union, Jesus Christ is made, even as man, a sharer in God’s reign over nations, and both churches and nations must acknowledge this kingship. In doing so, however, we have seen that they merely “perfect” that to which they are already drawn by nature—namely, a commonwealth ordered around public religion. In specifying the graced form of this natural duty, the laws and narratives of Scripture are an essential resource for lawmakers, and yet one which must be adapted to the times, places, and circumstances of particular commonwealths, “framed unto that very particular wheron they have to work.”

All of this requires a far more subtle and supple sense of how both law operates, and how Scripture norms our crafting and discernment of laws, than

Cartwright's precisianist dictum that "it is the virtue of a good law to leave as little as may be in the discretion of the judge." For Hooker, on the contrary, a good judge is indispensable, as is a wide scope for the exercise of prudence. Such is the rich variety and ceaseless change in the realm of mortal affairs, especially when political societies are involved, that no lawbook, be it never so elaborate and detailed, can provide sufficient instruction. Consciences are not to be satisfied by false claims to provide certainty beyond what the nature of the matter in question can yield, but by inclining themselves "which way greatest probability leadeth," which will often mean resort to arguments from reason and consensus. Hooker's rehabilitation of reason does not then represent, as some interpreters would have it, an enthronement of reason as the source of a certainty and exhaustive knowledge that Scripture is incapable of providing. Instead, it represents his conviction that all knowledge of ethical and political duties is provisional and more inferential than deductive, limited by the mutability of human affairs. Rather than seeking in vain to resolve all uncertainties in advance, then, we must learn the art of living with uncertainty, the art of living in a culture of persuasion, by the virtue of prudence.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### “THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE”: THE PROMISE OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

This thesis began with an apparently straightforward question: how might we go about “transferring” the spiritual liberty promised to the justified believer from the inward forum of conscience to the outward forum of civil society; by what means was this liberty before God to be rendered into a liberty before human authority? After all, such a transfer seemed quite evidently to have happened, as a matter of historical record. Protestantism proclaimed the freedom of the conscience from papal authority, and to be consistent, they had to proclaim the freedom of the conscience also from all earthly authorities, and with it, in due course, the freedom of the conscientious believer to serve his or her God as he or she felt called to do. By this means, we are told, Protestantism served as a midwife of the separation of church and state, the distinction of the “just bounds” of their authority that was to resolve the conflict of loyalties to God and to man.<sup>1</sup> This narrative, however, founders on the rocks of Calvin’s strict warning about these two liberties that “when the one is considered, we should call off our minds, and not allow them to think of the other,”<sup>2</sup> and the fact that, to most if not all Protestant reformers, the link between Christian liberty and civil liberty was not remotely obvious. As we have seen, many defended a *denial* of civil liberty in religious matters precisely on the basis of the doctrine of Christian liberty.

After all, inasmuch as Christian liberty was to be asserted as a right, a sphere of immunity within the social order (as John Witte seeks to narrate it), individual liberty was inevitably to be brought into a clash with institutional liberty, since the freedom of a community to order its affairs required the imposition of certain limits on the actions of its members. Witte accordingly laments the shift in John Calvin’s thought away from an emphasis on the Christian liberty of the individual toward an emphasis on the liberty of institutions, to whose order believers were called to “freely” conform themselves.<sup>3</sup> Witte, at least, is aware of the tension in a way that VanDrunen does not seem to be. In the latter’s exposition, Christian liberty

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<sup>1</sup> The language of “midwife” is Witte’s (*Reformation of Rights*, 2), the language of “just bounds” is Locke’s (*Letter Concerning Toleration*, 15), and this narrative of the emergence of liberalism, as we have seen, is VanDrunen’s.

<sup>2</sup> *Institutes* III.19.15 (1:847).

<sup>3</sup> Witte, *Reformation of Rights*, 56–58.

demands the institutional autonomy of the church, the proper home of such liberty, from the state. But the liberty of the church is understood quite strictly as a freedom to obey God's law, without leaving room for creativity of action. The result is a complete sundering in VanDrunen's paradigm of positive and negative understandings of freedom, of freedom as *potency* and freedom as *possibility*. Within churchly affairs, the Christian is left only the positive freedom of fulfillment in obedience to God's commands; within civil affairs, only the negative freedom to be left alone. Indeed, his paradigm is not even that satisfactory, for it leaves little reason to be confident that the integrity of the civil sphere of negative liberty will be maintained. The only safeguard is the clergy's conviction that divine law has not, in point of fact, addressed the duties of rulers, a conviction that many in VanDrunen's Reformed tradition did not share. Such an attempt to "transfer" the doctrine of Christian liberty from spiritual to civil seems to succeed not only in undermining the former, but in rendering the latter unstable as well. The "clash of loyalties," then, is hardly resolved, but instead rendered potentially more explosive.

Historically speaking (for VanDrunen's trajectory, as we saw, presented itself in many key respects already within the sixteenth century), I have sought to show that this wrong turn resulted from the unhealthy sundering of the third principle of Christian liberty, that of "indifference," from the first two, justification and willingness. Or, to speak more precisely, I would suggest that it stems from the dislodgement of the doctrine of Christian liberty from its proper foundation on justification by faith, onto the foundation of *sola Scriptura*. By conceiving Christian liberty primarily within the terms of what Scripture commanded or left indifferent, Protestants set the stage for a clash of loyalties, as individuals, clerics, and princes drew different boundaries as to where Scripture had and had not spoken. The greater the clash, the more precisely disputants sought to draw the boundaries, raising the stakes even higher for subsequent clashes. Only by re-situating Christian liberty on the foundation of justification, and describing the authority of Scripture from this starting-point, as I have suggested Hooker sought to do, could Protestants maintain the believer's "spiritual liberty" and seek to resolve the clash of loyalties. And yet this did *not* mean forfeiting any externalization of this liberty, any implications for civil liberty. The emergence of liberal institutions within the bosom of Protestantism is not, in fact, a red herring for the historian, and in this conclusion, we will suggest a few ways in which Hooker's work points forward to such developments.

*Misunderstanding "Freedom"*



In *Resurrection and Moral Order*, Oliver O'Donovan provides us with a useful framework for considering the elusive concept of freedom:

In saying that someone is free, we are saying something about the person himself and not about his circumstances. Freedom is 'potency' rather than 'possibility'. External constraints may vastly limit our possibilities without touching our 'freedom' in this sense. Nothing could be more misleading than the popular philosophy that freedom is constituted by the absence of limits. There is, to be sure, a truth which it intends to recognize, which is that the 'potency' of freedom requires 'possibility' as its object. For freedom is exercised in the cancellation of all possibilities in a given situation by the decision to actualize one of them; if there were no possibilities, there could be no room for freedom. Nevertheless, there do not have to be many. . . . Where the popular philosophy becomes so misleading is in its suggestion that we can maximize freedom by multiplying the number of possibilities open to us. For if possibilities are to be meaningful for free choice, they must be well-defined by structures of limit. The indefinite multiplication of options can only have the effect of taking the determination of the future out of the competence of choice, and so out of the category of meaningful possibility for freedom. . . . Decision depends upon existing limits and imposes new ones.<sup>4</sup>

This relationship of *potency* and *possibility*, I would suggest, lay at the roots of the travails of the doctrine of Christian liberty in the Reformation.

We have noted that the doctrine could take as its starting point either the material principle of the Reformation—justification by faith—or its formal principle—*sola Scriptura*. While we saw that for Luther, the former was clearly the starting-point, there was a tendency early on to develop the doctrine from within the latter mold. Conceived this way, Christian liberty came to be seen primarily as a positive freedom to obey God's will, and a negative freedom to act as we desired beyond the bounds of God's revealed will. The bounds of Scripture defined the boundary between these two types of freedom. Within the domain of what Scripture commanded, we were bound to obey; there was no freedom in the sense of *possibility*, the power to choose between a variety of options. However, there was freedom in the sense of *potency*; the Christian is enabled, by God's grace, to fulfill all these commands, and desires to do so. In successfully doing that which we desire to do, we experience delight in doing so, in doing the will of the true authority. Outside of what Scripture commands, we have freedom of possibility, to choose among whatever options we want, because these are "indifferent."

This way of conceiving things, which we shall call the *formal* doctrine of Christian liberty, created difficulties within both domains, as well as at the

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<sup>4</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 107–108.

boundary between them. This boundary, after all, of *what Scripture commands*, proved extraordinarily difficult to pin down. The formal doctrine has thus tended to oscillate between a kind of legalism and a kind of antinomianism. If the arms of Scripture are very long, embracing almost all of Christian life, then our only freedom is the freedom to obey, a freedom of potency, maybe, but not of possibility. If the arms of Scripture are short, leaving most of life unregulated, then our freedom is mostly only the freedom of possibility.

The problems with the latter are perhaps more self-evident. Christian liberty, on this construal, degenerates into relativism and indifferentism, and becomes in practice paralyzing, as freedom requires limits and authority to orient its choices. It was for this reason, ultimately, that Luther's early proclamation of a freedom to "make new Decalogues" was quickly circumscribed. Of course, for Luther, this was a freedom *for* the neighbor, a freedom to be exercised in obedience to the law of love, but that law needed to be given some content to be useful; otherwise, the believer was confronted with unlimited possibility, crippling to individual and institutional liberty alike. For O'Donovan notes that, defined as the realization of potency within limited possibilities, freedom is "*the realization of individual powers within social forms.*"<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the freedom of society and of the individual go hand-in-hand, and the crisis of the Reformation was that it had upended the social forms that had constituted the framework for the exercise of freedom, however oppressive they were, in Western Europe. The result was the danger both of individual and social unfreedom:

But we can be deprived of the structures of communication within which we have learned to act, and so we can find ourselves hurled into a vacuum in which we do not know how to realize ourselves effectively. . . . But what we can say of the individual in these circumstances, we can say equally of the society. It is not free unless it can sustain the forms that make for its members' freedom.<sup>6</sup>

O'Donovan will thus speak of authority not as the antithesis to freedom, but "the objective correlate of freedom."<sup>7</sup> However, on this construal of Christian liberty the paradigmatic form of authority was simply the divine authority of Scripture, and the realm of adiaphora was taken to be simply the absence of such authority, a vacuum constituted by the absence of limits; in such a view, the constraints imposed by political authority could not but seem arbitrary, generating resentment.

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<sup>5</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment: The Bampton Lectures, 2003* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 68.

<sup>6</sup> *Ways of Judgment*, 67.

<sup>7</sup> *Resurrection and Moral Order* 122.

Individual and institutional liberty were thus set at odds with one another, and each thereby put into disorder.

The solution attempted by the precisionists was to re-establish the social structures of communication within the framework of the authority of God's word, that is, to extend the scope of scriptural commands so that little if any of the social world remained "indifferent." What was the problem with this, the legalistic alternative? We have described the liberty to obey Scripture as a freedom of *potency* that lacks freedom of *possibility*. But is that really a problem? O'Donovan notes, after all, that "Even in deciding whether we will accept an inevitable situation cheerfully or resentfully, we exercise our freedom in choosing between alternative possibilities of conduct."<sup>8</sup> To cheerfully obey God's word, then, is perfect freedom, is it not? Cartwright was not wrong when he said, "the greatest libertie and freedom off Christians is to serve the Lord according to his revealed will, and in all things to hang upon his mouth."<sup>9</sup> O'Donovan praises this kind of freedom: "We discover we are free when we are commanded by that authority which commands us according to the law of our being, disclosing the secrets of the heart. There is no freedom except when what we are, and do, corresponds to what has been given to us to be and to do."<sup>10</sup> Richard Bauckham too speaks of the perfect reconciliation of heteronomy and autonomy in the believer's submission to the will of God: "When I love God and freely make God's will my own, I am not forfeiting my freedom but fulfilling it. God's will is not the will of another in any ordinary sense. It is the moral truth of all reality. To conform ourselves freely to that truth is also to conform to the inner law of our own created being."<sup>11</sup>

The problem here, then, is more subtle, and is threefold. First of all, such free service must be the freedom of liberated sons, not of slaves; it must proceed from the confidence of a justified conscience. In other words, such obedience to the revealed will of God must be the response to a declaration that we *have been set free*, rather than the means by which we seek freedom. In the latter case, uncertainty and fear enter into the equation, and nothing is so contrary to the concept of freedom as that of fear; coercion is best defined as inducing action through the power of fear.

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<sup>8</sup> *Resurrection and Moral Order* 107.

<sup>9</sup> SR 442.30–32.

<sup>10</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 252.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 46.

An obedience that does not proceed from the assurance that God is well-pleased, must seek to use such obedience to gain his pleasure and to avoid his wrath. While precianists never denied justification by faith, we have noted that they certainly shifted the emphasis. The result is the distorted motivation in Cartwright's statement, that unless we "have the word off God goo before us in all our actions . . . we cannot otherwise be assured that they please God."<sup>12</sup> Inasmuch as the puritan appeal to Scripture arose out of a lack of assurance, an uncertainty that their actions pleased Him and a desire to resolve that uncertainty through precise guidance, it had lost the spirit of evangelical liberty. To the extent that Hooker rejected any hint of works-righteousness and reasserted the centrality of justification by faith alone, he succeeded in demoting again the status of adiaphora so that they might not become a burden unto the conscience. Our conduct in adiaphora still mattered, but as things indifferent, they fell within the realm of probability and hence our consciences might be adequately assured that they pleased God by resorting to the moral law within them, and to the prudential application of scriptural norms. This leads to consideration of the two other respects in which the puritan turn to Scripture was antipathetic to evangelical liberty.

Although never denying the natural law as such, precisianists clearly enthroned divine positive law as the paradigmatic form of law, rendering natural law secondary and perhaps unworthy to be considered law in the fullest sense. Since the essence of law was in command, and its perfection in precision, the concept of an innate but imprecise moral disposition hardly appealed to puritans such as Cartwright. No wonder, then, that they were prone to make Scripture the only rule of moral action, suggesting that even things indifferent could only be so by the positive command of Scripture. The precisianist conception of God's will, then, remained irreducibly heteronomous. For Cartwright, despite his insistence that it is "the greatest libertie . . . to serve the Lord according to his revealed will," we have no sense that this will has ever been revealed internally, and hence no hint of O'Donovan and Bauckham's notion of "the inner law of our own created being." Hooker, however, by his forceful recovery of the natural law tradition (one which the leading Protestant reformers had not rejected, but which had lost some of its richness and centrality in most Protestant churches), decisively reconfigured the paradigm for understanding God's will. Although the extrinsic gift of justification was necessary for us to rediscover a right sense of the will of God, the believer did not encounter this will merely as a command from without, but as an impulse from

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<sup>12</sup> SR 61.9–12.

within. For Hooker, then, it was clear that obedience to God was realization of freedom as *potency*, freedom to be ourselves most fully; the precisianist might do lipservice to this idea, but could provide no convincing ground for it.

The third problem with the precisianist concept of freedom as “hanging upon the mouth” of God has been hinted at in our mention of prudence at the end of Chapter Six. We have observed already that the precisianist sought to find in the word of God the certainty that seemed to be lacking in all other sources of authority, and hence saw its perfection chiefly in its precision. The significance of Cartwright’s dictum “It is the vertue off a good lawe to leave as litle as may be in the discretion off the judge”<sup>13</sup> cannot be overstated here. The goal of Scripture, in this understanding, was to take out of the hands of humans any need for exercising interpretive discretion (although as we have seen, this being impossible, the practical effect was to put all such interpretive discretion in the hands of the Presbyterian ministers). Scripture was to be made always and everywhere active, so that the believer could be, before it, wholly passive. This, however, served again to render the believer’s obedience slavish, rather than free. Bauckham notes that the slave’s obedience is *blind*, unlike the Christian’s: “Like Jesus himself in obedience to his Father, his friends know the aim his commandments have in view, and they accept that aim.”<sup>14</sup> This is another way of saying that Cartwright’s concept of obedience is one that fails to render the believer a fully moral agent, which is central, on O’Donovan’s account, to evangelical liberty,

The Spirit evokes our free response as moral agents to the reality of redemption. . . . He confirms and restores us as moral agents, which is to say, as the subjects of our actions. . . . It is this freedom that makes Christian ethics meaningful, and indeed demands it. For freedom is the character of one who participates in the order of creation by knowledge and action. That man is free implies that he can know and act; thus moral enquiry is a meaningful undertaking for him.<sup>15</sup>

Central to the proper expression of Christian freedom is the maturity of sonship by which we think the thoughts of our Father, by which we understand the end at which his commands aim, and are thus invited to actively apply that end to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. We are all invited to exercise the discretion of the judge, the virtue of prudence, perfected by faith as the virtue of charity. It is this, I have argued, to which Richard Hooker summoned the believer

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<sup>13</sup> SR, Appendix p. i.21–22.

<sup>14</sup> *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 86.

<sup>15</sup> *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 106–107.

by his forceful emphasis on the immense variety of circumstances in which the believer is called upon to apply the will of God, his rehabilitation of probable reason as a tool for making such applications, and his constant distinction between the *end* of a law and its particular form.

In addition to these three respects in which the precisianist turn endangers true liberty of conscience, we find it also undermining the liberty of institutions. This is unsurprising, given our observation that the freedom of society and of the individual go hand-in-hand, but is particularly significant for projects such as VanDrunen's, which promised to resolve the conflict of loyalties by giving to the state a wide sweep of institutional liberty. Again, Cartwright's maxim, "It is the vertue of a good lawe to leave as litle as may be in the discretion off the judge" identifies the problem for us, and indeed even more pointedly than it did with respect to liberty of conscience. For the referent of the word "judge" here is of course a political authority, and by this statement Cartwright dramatically limits the scope within which rulers and judges can wield such authority. If it is the essence of human law, as Hooker argues, to improvise as changing circumstances dictate, discarding laws that have no longer become effective unto their intended purposes, and crafting new structures in their place (although with a wary and conservative eye on tradition, to be sure), then *discretion* is precisely what must be left to the judge and lawmaker. Of course, it was often the contention of the precisianists, as it is certainly the contention of VanDrunen, that the tight constraints of divine law apply only to the church, and not to the civil authorities. However, their tendency to overstep this boundary-line should not surprise us; after all, if good law is defined by its narrow precision, then natural law can only be a rather shabby, second-rate sort of law, the sort of thing you would only want to base human law on in very trivial matters. This mindset, accordingly, tends to generate a situation in which the Christian's loyalty to civil authorities will either be challenged by the claims of the church, who insist upon divine law as the standard for human, or marginalized as something of relatively little significance beside the much more important ecclesiastical sphere.

#### *Toward A Truly Protestant Freedom*

In contrast to this formal doctrine of Christian liberty, then, I have suggested the superiority of a *material doctrine*, that self-consciously takes justification by faith as its starting-point, and from this derives the principles of willingness and indifference. Such an approach, as we see explicitly with Luther, and I would argue implicitly with Hooker, understands that the chief freedom worth having is the

freedom that consists in freedom from fear, and that the greatest fear at all is the fear of God's wrath. Christian liberty thus consists, first and foremost, in the assurance of forgiveness, in the experience that God is well-pleased with oneself. And if God be for us, who can be against us? From this standpoint of confidence, the Christian is liberated from the motivation of fear in all her actions, and receives instead the motivation of love: "Perfect love casts out fear."<sup>16</sup> The liberty of a Christian that begins in justification, then, issues forth in love of God and love of neighbor, a free desire to serve them.

This freedom faces both limit and possibility, and charity dictates the response in both cases. In the face of limit, which is to say the moral law, Christian liberty engenders the principle of willingness, which is a free embrace of that limit for the sake of love of God who has placed it there. Moreover, confident in God's good pleasure toward her, the Christian perceives these limits not as artificial constraints, but as there precisely for her good, as laws that enable her to be who she is meant to be. The law outside of her answers to the law of charity within her, directing her as to the form of her obedience to God. Beginning in faith, such law-obedience never risks collapsing into the fearful legalism that we have seen above. It enables an experience of freedom as fulfillment, and it invites the believer into the maturity of sonship, perceiving the heart of God and seeking to imitate it in her own actions, rather than simply obeying commands blindly. In the face of possibility, which is to say the contingent circumstances in which the will of God meets the believer, Christian liberty engenders the principle of indifference. Indifference here does not designate the mere negative possibility that we saw above that is directed to no object. Rather, freedom here is directed toward the object of love of neighbor; it is thus a freedom to improvise as this love seems to demand, untrammelled by fear. It consists in the prudent application of the will of God which the believer has come to discern to the concrete circumstances into which God has called the believer. Invited to exercise maturity as a free agent, the believer displays the fruits of this maturity in his love of neighbor.

It is within this material doctrine of Christian liberty that a more promising reconciliation of individual and institutional liberty can be found. Within the formal doctrine, as we saw, possibility and limits stood in simple contradiction to one another, with the sphere of indifference being defined solely in terms of the absence of limits, and the individual and social left to vie for supremacy in this sphere. The

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<sup>16</sup> 1 John 4:18 (ESV).

material doctrine, however, takes as the paradigmatic operation of freedom the acceptance of limits as means of achieving the love of neighbor in the sphere of contingency, so this concept of freedom has no conflict between the individual and the social. While Luther's doctrine is capable of such expression, we find Hooker in particular making the key moves that will ensure the harmonization of individual and social liberty. For Hooker in particular, the limits of the moral law that condition the believer's freedom find expression also in the limits of human law, the concrete form in which we normally encounter the norms of both divine and natural law. Accordingly, the principle of willingness, by which the believer freely made God's will his own when confronted the moral law, could find expression also within the sphere of human law: the subject could be brought to an authentically free obedience of civil authority.

Hooker achieved this, as we have seen, by at least three important lines of argument. One was his rehabilitation of reason, by which the subject was invited to perceive the goodness of laws, and willingly embrace them on that account. As we have noted, it is such a conscious, rather than blind, obedience to God that makes the Christian a son, not a slave, and Bauckham argues for the same principle in the political sphere: "Good citizens obey laws because they think they are a good idea and want to be good citizens, not merely because they fear punishment. . . . the notion of obeying laws need have nothing to do with the blind and fearful obedience of the slave."<sup>17</sup> The second was his thoroughgoing concept of government as the agent of the corporate will, so that the believer's vocation to prudentially apply the law of love to concrete circumstances is fulfilled as much through law-making as through individual action. The third, which is foundational to the other two, is his own robust emphasis on justification by faith, and distinction of morality and politics from soteriology. Despite his clear emphasis on the importance of political institutions, Hooker shows that the believer can sit loosely with respect to them, knowing that his true identity and freedom is secured already by God, that he may face without fear the provisional structures of the civil kingdom as he navigates their ethical mazes.

Or we might, following O'Donovan, speak rather of "vocation" than "identity": "'Vocation' takes us beyond identity, to a fulfillment in service that is extended to us personally by God. And this provides us with a third sense of the term 'freedom,' as the individual's discovery and pursuit of his or her vocation from God. It is to this that Christians have pointed when they have spoken of 'evangelical

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<sup>17</sup> *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 86.



liberty’.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, it is at this point that we may at last point the way forward from the doctrine of Christian liberty to the emergence of modern civil liberties. Though we have critiqued the route by which most scholars today seek to join these two notions, their instinct is not altogether wrong. There does lie such a link, although deeper below the surface than most are inclined to look. It consists not in the ordering of human institutions *per se*, whether that be, in a Calvinist separation of church and state (as VanDrunen would have it), or in Hooker’s defense of constitutional government,<sup>19</sup> but in the relation of all such institutions to their Lord. The two-kingdoms doctrine instilled in the Christian a sense of healthy detachment toward earthly loyalties, a healthy realism about what earthly institutions can accomplish, and offered consolation when they failed to achieve their lofty aims. It discouraged any attempt to make the kingdom of God a complete outward reality here and now by force, whether by holy war or holy law. In this doctrine, the authority of political institutions is quite limited: they may command the body, to the extent that the demands of civil order and justice require, but they cannot command the mind or the conscience. Each subject remains, in the last analysis, answerable to the Lord who made and redeemed him, not to his prince.<sup>20</sup> To this extent, we might fairly say that the contribution of Protestant political theology is simply a radicalization of the contribution of Christianity. The success of early-modern liberal societies, says O’Donovan, lay in “the moment of self-abdication instilled by their monotheistic faith. Through that religious moment they directed

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<sup>18</sup> *Ways of Judgment*, 71.

<sup>19</sup> This, of course, is the point at which many Whig historians have claimed Hooker as antecedent for liberalism, an argument recently given an impressive new defence by Alexander Rosenthal in *Crown Under Law*, one which is, however, considerably weakened by its inattention to theological foundations.

<sup>20</sup> O’Donovan offers a similar assessment in *Desire of the Nations*: “Modern liberalism is not yet ready to leap fully armed from the head that first conceived this thought. This is not yet ‘freedom of conscience’ in a generalized sense. It is ‘evangelical liberty’, which is to say, the freedom freely to obey Christ. Yet evangelical liberty has proved to be the foundation of a more generalized freedom, including a certain, not indefinite liberty for misguided and erroneous judgment. The logic which leads from the one to the other is that of St. Paul, writing about the ‘weaker brother’: ‘Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls’ (Rom. 14.4). Which is not to say that there is no such thing as evident and unarguable error; nor that each person’s vocation is so hidden that the right and wrong of what he thinks and does is obscure. It is simply that he has (*has*, not *is*) his own master, and his master is not the ruler who governs him in the order of civil society. There are some judgments that may be evident enough, but which do not fall to the ruler to make. The ruler has to establish a prima-facie interest in the implications for civil order before intervening between any man or woman and the God who commands. That is the correct way of stating the liberal doctrine which is often put misleadingly as ‘the separation of law and morality’. There can be no separation of law and morality; but what there can be, and is, is a sphere of individual responsibility before God in which the public good is not immediately at stake” (254).

their members to become critical moral intelligences, and taught them to see themselves as answerable directly to God.”<sup>21</sup> We should not underestimate, then, the trend of Erastian political theorists, from Hooker to Grotius and on through the 17th century, to justify legal impositions in religious matters solely in terms of the needs of civic order, rather than theological necessity, and thus, to gradually reduce the number of such impositions.<sup>22</sup>

By the exercise of such critical intelligence, which as we have seen is one of Hooker’s great themes, the citizen is rendered free even in the moment of obedience. Again, O’Donovan captures the essential insight that we have claimed for this doctrine of Christian liberty: “sovereignty properly belongs not to law but to truth, for only a perception of the truth can lead us to whole-hearted action. The marvel, we may say, is not that the community can demand conformity; the marvel is that conscience can secretly transcend that conformity and pass judgment upon it in the light of truth.”<sup>23</sup> But of course, in passing such judgment and when necessarily challenging the sovereignty of law, the conscience presses inexorably beyond the bounds of interiority. While evangelical liberty must be understood as an inward, rather than outward, freedom, it cannot content itself with only inward expression, for the hope that sustains the free mind in the midst of oppression is the hope of a future in which circumstances may change and outer freedom become a possibility: “The point is that real freedom cannot be confined to one dimension. Inner freedom cannot rest content with outer unfreedom, though it may have to suffer the contradiction in circumstances where outer freedom is unattainable.”<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, in due time, Protestant jurists took the lead in constructing institutional forms for the expression of public consent or dissent, for enabling the judgment of each conscience to have a voice in the making of laws and sometimes even an exemption from their binding force.

Finally, we may note that the development of two-kingdoms political theology upon the foundation of the material doctrine of Christian liberty, provided a bulwark against an overly faith-based politics, but without renouncing Christ’s lordship over the commonwealth. Against the overextension of the *sola Scriptura* principle, to which many Protestants were tempted, it safeguarded the continuing value of natural reason and prudence to guide political deliberation. Two-kingdoms

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<sup>21</sup> *Ways of Judgment*, 76.

<sup>22</sup> See especially Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), ch. 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 131.

<sup>24</sup> Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 24.

thinkers such as Hooker resisted any idea of a scripturally-mandated blueprint for politics or jurisprudence, allowing space for the exercise of discretion in judgment. However, if Hooker's theology was in this respect amenable to liberalism, it provided what many Christian defenders of liberalism have lacked: a basis for secularity in the sense of *non-ultimacy*, but not in the sense of *non-religiousness*. For Hooker, the civil kingdom, although never to be confused with the spiritual, remained both informed by and concerned with the exercise of true religion. For all the value of natural law, Scripture remained its most authoritative interpretation, and the redemption wrought in Christ, although fully realized only in the eschaton, had implications for civil rule inasmuch as it disclosed the proper, restored order of fallen creation. Since grace perfected nature, good religion conduced to civil peace, and hence a good ruler could not be entirely indifferent to the promotion of true religion, although he must never seek to compel belief.

Although imperfect and in need of considerable development, then, Hooker's paradigm may provide us with the rudiments of the solution for which we have been searching: a theological antecedent of liberalism that creates space for what is best in liberal political theory (freedom of conscience and contingency of laws and institutions) without sacrificing what is essential to Christian political theory (the authority of Christ and his Word). In these confusing times, when liberalism seems to be in crisis, we would do well in recovering the resources of the Protestant doctrine of Christian liberty and the theology of Richard Hooker.

## APPENDIX I

*Propositions or articles framed for the use of the Dutch Church in London, and approved by the Church of Geneva, for the putting an end to long controversies among the members of that' Church: being also very profitable to be setforth in these days, wherein new congregations do spring up [1566].*

Taken from John Strype, in his Life and Acts of Archbishop Edmund Grindal (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1821 [1710]), 519–27.

### **I. What is the Christian liberty**

Christian liberty is not a wandering and unruly licence, by which we may do or leave undone whatsoever we list at our pleasure; but it is a free gift bestowed upon us by Christ our Lord; by the which, the children of God (that is, all the faithful), being delivered from the curse of the law, or eternal death, and from the heavy yoke of the ceremonial law, and being endowed with the Holy Ghost, begin willingly of their own accord to serve God in holiness and righteousness.

### **II. How this liberty is transgressed**

Therefore, sith that he which is the Son of God is ruled by the Spirit of God, and that the same Spirit commandeth us, we should obey all ordinances of man (that is, all politic order, whereof the magistrate is the guardian), and all superiors, which watch for the health of our souls; yea, and that according to our vocation we should diligently procure the safeguard of our neighbour; it followeth, that that man abuseth the benefit of Christian liberty, or rather, is yet sold under sin, who doth not willingly obey either his magistrate or superior in the Lord, or doth not endeavour to edify the conscience of his brother.

### **III. Of private men's judgment in matters indifferent**

Moreover, what is profitable to edify, and what is not, is not to be determined by the judgment of the common people, or of some simple man, nor yet by the issue of men's actions; but rather sometime by the nature of those things, touching the doing or not doing whereof, question is moved. As if they be either commanded or forbidden by God, and be agreeable unto our calling, or not: and sometimes (as if the matters were otherwise of their own natures mean or indifferent), they are to be

considered by the circumstances of the times, places, and persons, weighed according to the balance of God's word.

#### **IV. Of conscience**

Conscience is the feeling of God's judgment, whether that a man be assured out of the word of God of that judgment, or that he make it to himself rashly or superstitiously. But whereas it is the duty of Christians to observe the commandments of their Lord, that indeed is properly called a right and good conscience, which is governed by the word of God. Whereby it cometh to pass, that every faithful man by that revealed word doth examine and weigh with himself, both what he doth, and also what he letteth undone, that he may judge of them both, which is just, and which is unjust.

#### **V. Things indifferent**

Indifferent things are called those, which by themselves, being simply considered in their own nature, are neither good nor bad, as meat and drink, and such like; in the which therefore, it is said, that the kingdom of God consisteth not; and that therefore a man may use them well or evil: wherefore it followeth, that they are marvellously deceived, which suppose they are called indifferent, as though without any exception we may omit them, or use them as often as we list, without any sin.

#### **VI. Indifferent things commanded or forbidden**

Things otherwise indifferent of themselves, after a sort change their nature, when by some commandment they are either commanded or forbidden. Because, neither they can be omitted contrary to the commandment, if they are once commanded, neither omitted contrary to prohibition, if they be prohibited; as appeareth in the ceremonial law.

#### **VII. Ceremonial laws**

Albeit the yoke of the ceremonial law be taken away by Christian liberty, and that it is not lawful for any mortal man to lay another yoke in the place thereof; yet notwithstanding, the confused use of indifferent things may be lawfully repressed, both generally and specially.

### **VIII. The use of things indifferent in general**

Generally, the use of these indifferent things is restrained by the law of charity, which is universal. This is belonging to all men, and to all things, and plainly forbidding, that nothing, otherwise indifferent and lawful, be done, whereby thy neighbour is destroyed; or that any thing be omitted, whereby he may be edified. But yet here are two things to be presupposed: the one, that judgment be taken out of the word of God, what may or ought to be done, or not done: the other, that every man have consideration of his calling. And so we say, the words of the Apostle are to be understood, *I was made all things to all men.*

### **IX. The use of things indifferent in special.**

Specially, the use of these things is forbidden by ecclesiastical or civil decree. For although that only God doth properly bind the conscience of man, yet in respect, that either the magistrate, who is God's Minister, doth think it profitable for the commonwealth, that something, otherwise of itself lawful, be not done, or that the Church, having regard to order, comeliness, and also edifying, do make some laws concerning indifferent things, those laws are altogether to be observed of the godly, and do so far forth bind the conscience, that no man wittingly and willingly, with a stubborn mind, may, without sin, either do those things which are forbidden, or omit those things which are commanded.

### **X. Circumstances in things indifferent be diverse**

And sith these things are not ordained simply for themselves, but in respect of certain circumstances, not as though the things themselves were of their own nature unlawful things (for it belongeth only to God to determine this) in case those circumstances do cease, and so be that offence be avoided as near as we can, and that there be no stubborn will of resisting; no man is to be reprov'd of sin, which shall do otherwise than those ordinances: as it is plain, by the example of David, in a case otherwise flatly forbidden, when he ate the shewbread.

### **XI. To forbid, or to command things indifferent, except for three causes, do offend. Also, they that rashly judge other men's consciences herein.**

They, which for any other cause either command or forbid at their pleasure the free use of indifferent things, than for one of these three, that is, neither for edifying, nor for policy, nor ecclesiastical order; and especially those which do rashly judge other men's consciences in these matters; offend heinously against God and against their neighbor.

**XII. Christian liberty is not to be prejudiced generally, but by circumstances**

Those which thus do, either by open wickedness, or by wilful ignorance, are not to be regarded. But those, which being deceived by simple ignorance, or by authority of ancient custom, have erred in these things, are to be borne withal, as much as may be; and yet but so far as Christian liberty be not generally prejudiced. Which thing is to be discerned by the circumstances, and by the spirit of discretion: as it appeareth, not only by the doctrine, but also by the doings of St. Paul, who reprehended Peter, circumcised Timothy, and again would not circumcise Titus. And therefore there is no cause why the Church should alter this or that being well ordained, for fear of offending some private men.

**XIII. They are to be reprov'd, which wound weak consciences in things indifferent.**

Even as they, of whom I spake a little before, do grievously offend against God and their neighbour, so are they be greatly to be blamed, who either by preposterous zeal, or by impatience, do quite overthrow the consciences which are weak, and not thoroughly instructed in indifferent things, either to do them, or to leave them undone. As likewise, they offend on the other side, which, by their winking, cherish and confirm the weakness of their brethren.

**XIV. Constitutions are some universal, and some particular**

These ecclesiastical constitutions being lawfully made in respect of certain circumstances (that is of order, and for common utility, and not as though there were any worshipping of God placed in them), are not only catholic, that is, universal, but also sometimes particular, for the manifold variety of the circumstances. And therefore, both these men offend, which do rashly change them that are catholic, and also those which do stiffly retain the same; albeit, there be special necessity to alter them: but chiefly, those, which by wrong judgment thrust particular ceremonies upon all men.

**XV. What the Church is; sometimes manifest, sometimes obscure**

The Church of Christ is a congregation of men professing Christ's Gospel, in the which the Gospel is purely taught, and the sacraments truly administered out of the word of God, by Ministers called to the same purpose. The which congregation sometime is small, and sometime sometimes great; sometime is seen of men (as when the ministry is sometimes public), and sometime hidden, and, as it were, for a

time overwhelmed, either by public corruption of all estates, or force of the enemy, or by both these mischiefs, God exercising his just judgment against man's wickedness, but never quite destroying his congregation.

**XVI. Every man must join himself to some particular Church, being visible**

So often as God doth ordain such visible companies, to make himself known in them, to call his elect, and to dispense the riches of his Spirit by the ministry of his word and sacrament; it is very manifest, that it is most necessary, that every man (which will not teach God and his wisdom to his own most certain destruction), according as opportunity is offered, do join and submit himself to some particular Church, as it were, to some certain parish in this great and wide city of God.

**XVII. No superiority in particular Churches**

Now, that the catholic Church of God may continue in unity, it is not lawful for any particular Church to usurp any supremacy or superiority over another, by authority to particular judge it, condemn it, or to separate herself from it, especially since it is manifest, that all the Churches of God are endowed with equal power.

**XVIII. Synods for to decide controversies**

Furthermore, if any particular Church find any fault in another, whether it be in doctrine or in manners, and then by brotherly conference, and godly exhortation, prevail nothing, the same must (avoiding all curiosity, which is able to set congregations at variance, and observing the band of common friendship) endeavour to refer the whole matter unto the Synod or Council, in the which the controversy may be tried only by the word of God. By the name of a Synod we understand neither an Oecumenical Council, as they term it (for who shall gather it together?), neither any such meeting, whereunto it is necessary that certain hundreds of Churches meet together, except the order of some region be such; but such an one, unto which, according to the place and time, other Churches near at hand, or far off, may be joined; which by the word of God may decide the controversy.

**XIX. Schisms and apostasy from the Church is to be avoided.**

Wherefore, to avoid the pestilent renting and tearing asunder of the whole body of Christ, we think it is not lawful for any man, for any cause, to depart from Christ's Church is Church; that is, from the church in which at the leastwise that doctrine is preserved whole and sound, wherein consisteth the soundness of religion, and



wherein the use of the sacraments, which Christ hath instituted, is preserved. And therefore we affirm, that not only heretics, but also schismatics do grievously offend. To depart out of Christ's Church, is not simply to go from one company to another, but as though thou remain in one place, to separate thyself from the fellowship of the congregation, as though thou wert no member thereof.

**XX. The lawful Ministers and Elders represent the Church**

In the Church of Christ, that is to say, in the house or city of the living God, the Consistory, or fellowship of governors, consisting of the Ministers of the word, and of Seniors lawfully called, sustaineth the person of the universal Church in ecclesiastical government, even as every magistrate in his commonwealth.

**XXI. Let no man trouble the congregation, but ask counsel of the pastors.**

If any man, either private, or bearing public office in the Church, do not agree unto the ecclesiastical constitutions now made and received, especially such as are catholic, he is bound to ask counsel modestly of the pastors and seniors, and to stand to their arbitrement, at the least thus far, that he trouble not the congregation; according to that saying of the Apostle, *If any man lust to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.*

But if there be any stir concerning the making of laws, then must nothing at all be rashly altered, no, not by the Consistory itself. And before any law be established, we must not only see whether it be agreeable to the word of God, but also whether it be profitable, and almost necessary to be brought in. But in case there be but a lawful suspicion, that some of the flock will be offended, and yet it is not meet the whole congregation give voice therein, and that the help of a good magistrate be wanting, the opinions of such men are to be asked and diligently weighed, that these which are weak may be instructed; and if any shall be stubborn, they may in time be admonished of their duty. Neither shall it grieve them, if the matter so require, to seek counsel of such Churches as are least suspected, or of some godly and learned men. So that nothing be decreed in the Church of God, but with fruit and edification.

**XXII. Such as resist godly laws, and conspire against God's Ministers, are to be handled as enemies to the Church**

Those which shall factiously set themselves against laws made after this sort, and will not be brought to their duty; and much rather those which conspire against

their Ministers and Seniors, are worthy to be handled as open enemies against to the Church.

**XXIII. How far the authority and duty of Ministers and Elders of Christ's Church is extended**

It belongeth only to the Consistory, to be occupied in making new laws of discipline, as we said, in the awe and fear of the Lord, and in applying such as are already made to the present necessity, and in admonishing, and also, if the last remedy must needs be used, either in suspending from the Supper of our Lord, or in once excommunicating them which have offended, according as the circumstances of the thing, the time and persons shall seem to require. For it is not written of the universal Church, nor of the whole congregation in any particular Church, but only of the foresaid governors of the Church (whom Christ instituted in his Church, according to the example of the former Church of the Jews), *Tell the Church: and if he refuse to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican.*

**XXIV. What excommunication is, and for whom of Christ ordained.**

Ecclesiastical excommunication is the public judgment of the Seniors of the Church, against a subject of the Church having fallen, and being unrepentant, and, after lawful examination and due admonition of his faults, pronounced in the name of Christ our Lord, and by the authority of his word. Whereby it is declared, that the same man (until he repent) is cast out of the Church of God and communion of saints, and given over unto Satan.

**XXV. All matters of injury ought to be prosecuted charitably and with modesty.**

If any man complain of injury done unto him, they shall first complain unto the Consistory, and that after a modest sort, and as it becometh Christians, rather confessing their faults than excusing them; that if it might be the matter ought to be determined and ended at home. But in case it cannot so be, either they must seek unto other Churches, or, if need be, they must go to the Christian magistrate, or refer the matter unto a Synod. That order, to be short, shall be observed, which is used in that country where any such thing shall happen. In the mean season, whosoever shall factiously prosecute the matter, and not rather peaceably follow the cause, he declareth himself worthy, even for that very thing, to be removed out of the Church.

**XXVI. Excommunicate persons not to be received into the congregation before manifest proof of unfeigned repentance.**

Those which be lawfully excommunicated, or have unlawfully departed from the Church with offence, insomuch as they are banished from the kingdom of Christ, and from salvation, they can in no wise be admitted unto any public function in the Church, or to the use of the sacraments, until such time as they have justly satisfied the congregation; neither can there be any company joined or kept with them, except it be such as may make to their amendment, or at the leastwise be politic and moderate, and after a civil manner.

**XXVII. Civil magistrates be of God and to what end of him ordained.**

The civil magistrate is an ordinance from God, by the which, through the help of the nobility, good men being protected, and wicked men corrected, godliness, honesty, and peace, are preserved amongst men.

**XXVIII. Civil ordinances made by civil magistrates ought to be obeyed**

Whosoever will not resist the ordinance of God, must, without any exception of persons, be also subject unto the magistrate, and obey his commandment, so that it be not repugnant to the word of God.

**XXIX. The godly magistrate, and also the wicked, be God's instruments; the one a blessing, the other a scourge.**

As the godly and faithful magistrate is an inestimable blessing of the Lord, even so a wicked, unfaithful, foolish, and tyrannical magistrate is stirred up of God in his anger, the wicked, to be a scourge and chastisement to punish the sin and wickedness of his subjects.

**XXX. It belongeth to the civil magistrates to defend the Church of Christ**

As it is the duty of the magistrate to maintain and defend the Church of God with the sword, even so it is the duty of the Ministers of the Church, in the behalf of the same, to crave his help against rebels, heretics, and tyrants, as often as they think need shall require.

**XXXI. Every man in his vocation ought to live a subject**

If any man, against the laws and privileges of his country, advance himself as a lord or magistrate; or if he who is confirmed in the office of a magistrate, do wrongfully spoil his subjects of the privileges and liberty which he hath sworn unto them, or by

open tyranny oppress them; then ought the ordinary magistrate to oppose him; who, according to God and their duty, ought to defend the subjects, as well against domestical as foreign tyrants. *In this article (as our most worshipful brethren of Geneva did also admonish us) our mind is not to have any window laid open to any rebellion or injustice.*

**XXXII. Manifest and notorious crimes (of the inferior magistrate) are to be only punished by the Prince, and herein all private men and other, rather to suffer wrong, than to rebel**

But if there be some fault in his person, who, according to the laws and rites of the country, is lord and ruler either by close or open consent; to wit, that he is ungodly, or covetous, or ambitious, or cruel, or a fornicator, or unchaste, &c., it belongeth only to the superior magistrate and estates of the country to correct it. But it is the duty of all private men, and also of all inferior magistrates, that herein rendering due obedience, they rather choose to suffer wrong, than that leaving their vocation, wherein every man ought always to continue himself, to set force against force, and so to deal unjustly.

## APPENDIX II

### DEFINING PURITANISM

Although we have identified an aggressive biblicism and an independent clerical authority as key features of the new movement known as Elizabethan puritanism, it will not do, as many have attempted to, to define this movement simply in terms of a biblicistic rejection of adiaphora and a presbyterian rejection of the Royal Supremacy. Indeed, defining puritanism at all has proved to be a seemingly impossible task. Modern historians have vied with one another in expressing frustration with the elusiveness of the concept. Patrick Collinson likens it to an elephant whose shape and attributes are debated by a group of blindfolded men,<sup>1</sup> Christopher Hill to a “dragon in the path of every student of the period,”<sup>2</sup> and W.J. Sheils to a “protean beast.”<sup>3</sup> If I might add my own metaphor to the discussion, we might say that puritanism is like an impressionist painting, which appears luminous and distinct from a distance, but dissolves into a chaos of incongruous colors upon closer inspection. Part of the problem is of course that even though the Admonition Controversy unleashed a new, more radical wave of protest, not all who sought further reform in the English church signed onto this radicalism. Even in the most tumultuous decades of the 1570s and 1580s, there were more moderates, adiaphorists who wanted fewer corrupt ceremonies, than hardline presbyterians. We cannot simply let Thomas Cartwright speak for all “puritans,” many of whom were very much part of the mainstream of Elizabethan and Jacobean ecclesiastical sentiment, as modern historiography has increasingly realized.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Collinson, “A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31 (1980), 434. Quoted in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, “Introduction: The Puritan Ethos, 1560–1700,” in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, eds., *The Culture of English Puritanism: 1560–1700* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Hill, *The Economic Problems of the Church, from Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (1956), p. xii. Quoted in “Puritan Ethos,” 2

<sup>3</sup> Sheils, *Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1558–1610*, Northants Record Society, XXX (1979), 2. Quoted in “Puritan Ethos,” 4.

<sup>4</sup> Collinson's *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* first began this paradigm shift, particularly with Collinson's emphasis on the unrealized possibilities of Edmund Grindal's centrist platform—a model of episcopacy that shared most puritan ideals, and his later *The Religion of Protestants* develops this theme further. The fullest statement of the concept of “moderate puritanism” was given in Lake's 1982 *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*. Also crucial has been Nicholas Tyacke's work and his concept of a “Calvinist consensus” in the Elizabethan and Jacobean churches; on this reading, most Puritan theological emphases were in fact the dominant force in the early English Church, and it was only presbyterianism that was rejected. For a good survey of the resulting paradigm shift in puritan studies, see Lake's “Introduction: Puritanism, Arminianism, and Nicholas Tyacke,” in Kenneth Fincham

“Puritanism,” coined as a term of abuse, thus had far more unity in the eyes of its opponents than of its various advocates, who quarrelled with one another, each denouncing others as either extremists or time-servers, and claiming his own platform as a moderate middle ground. Indeed, even particular puritans like Cartwright were quite capable of shifting their ground according to polemical context, adopting the posture of a moderate reform-minded conformist when writing against Roman Catholics or separatists, but a prophetic firebrand when writing against conformist bishops.<sup>5</sup> Even his beloved presbyterianism is presented at times as a *sine qua non* for a church of Christ, at times merely as a desirable ornament. Amid the shifting rhetorical contexts in which puritan principles were advocated, and the at times turtuous attempts of puritan leaders to resolve the warring impulses within their own platform, it is no wonder that many modern historians have thrown up their hands in resignation at the attempt to describe a coherent theological or practical agenda for the movement.

Those who have made some attempt to identify the essence of puritanism have often pointed to its biblicism; as as Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales put it, “for the puritan the Bible was elevated to the status of the sole and complete repository of doctrinal and moral truth.” They go on to quote Jacobean puritan Robert Harley’s description of a puritan as “one that dares do nothing in the worship of God or course of his life but what God’s word warrants him, and dares not leave undone anything that the word commands him.”<sup>6</sup> Puritanism, on this reading, consists in the rejection of the concept of *adiaphora*.<sup>7</sup> Yet others have forcefully rejected this stereotype, showing that most puritans did not deny the concept as such, but merely defined it more narrowly, or emphasized the importance of Scripture in guiding the right use of *adiaphora*.<sup>8</sup> However, Stephen

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and Peter Lake, eds., *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England* (Woodbridge (Suffolk): Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 1–15, and Lake’s essay, “The Historiography of Puritanism” in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, pp. 346–72.

<sup>5</sup> See Lake’s summary in *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, 77–92.

<sup>6</sup> Jacqueline Eales, “Sir Robert Harley and the ‘Character’ of a Puritan,” *British Library Journal* 15:2 (1989), 150–52; quoted in “Puritan Ethos,” 16. See also New, *Anglican and Puritan*, 26–29; McGinn, *The Admonition Controversy*, ch. 4, and O’Donovan, *TLAER* 122–23.

<sup>7</sup> Again, see for instance, Durston and Eales: “the Puritans’ extreme reliance on scripture led them . . . to denounce the whole idea that certain religious observances were ‘*adiaphora*’—‘things indifferent’—and that the leaders of the church and government had the right to decide whether they were valid and binding” (“Puritan Ethos,” 17).

<sup>8</sup> See especially John S. Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England*; Peter Lake has also shown in *Moderate Puritans* how even Thomas Cartwright could extensively employ the *adiaphora* concept when critiquing separatism in the 1580s (pp. 77–92; for examples of

Brachlow cautions against disposing too readily of this stereotype, noting that harder-line puritans were subject to intense cross-pressures when it came to this question, unable to do away with the *adiaphora* concept in certain settings, but hardly comfortable with it.<sup>9</sup>

Other scholars, noting the recurrent warnings of the puritans' conformist opponents, have highlighted puritanism's seditious aspect, their rejection of the royal supremacy over the Church, ready to "spoil him [the magistrate] of the one half of his jurisdiction."<sup>10</sup> The prominence of this theme in recent scholarship, although clearly not unfounded, owes partly to an eagerness on the part of modern historians to find political implications to old theological controversies.<sup>11</sup> And yet here too the "protean beast" proves elusive, with puritans of all stripes vying with one another in the fervency with which they affirm their loyalty to the Queen and even her supremacy over the Church. John Penry, a radical if there ever was one, executed for sedition in 1593, calls the charge "plaine slandering" and protests "Looke whatsoever prerogative in ecclesiastical or civil causes hee or any man livinge can truly attribut unto the civil magistrate, wee do the same."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, even the separatist party, who seek a "reformation without tarrying for the magistrate,"<sup>13</sup> generally does homage to the concept of the royal supremacy, as Penry's example illustrates and as Stephen Brachlow has shown at length.<sup>14</sup> Of course, again, none of

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Cartwright's willingness to use the term even earlier, see *Replie*, 15, in *WW* I:194–95; *SR* 15–17, 119). On this basis, Daniel Eppley and others have denied that a rejection of *adiaphora* should be understood as in any way part of the Puritan platform (see *Defending Royal Supremacy*, 149–54).

<sup>9</sup> "As a general rule, then, it appears that radical Puritans would adopt an *adiaphora* defence in order to prove their loyalty to the established church against both papists and separatists. But when taking up the cudgels against the English episcopate, they were driven, by the confrontational nature of that undertaking, to jettison that rather flexible approach in favour of a more rigidly doctrinaire form of argumentation. In this case, they tended to appeal to scripture as a book of immutable rules which contained a detailed and perspicacious polity for the church that had been established by Christ for all succeeding generations" (Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, 26).

<sup>10</sup> *Whitgift's Works* I: 20. This claim, although prominent in almost all conformist polemics, reaches its highest pitch in Richard Bancroft's *A Sermon preached at Paul's Cross* of 1589 and his *Dangerous Positions and Proceedings* (1593).

<sup>11</sup> The most well-known example of this is Michael Walzer's 1965 *Revolution of the Saints*. Peter Lake, a much more careful historian, but underqualified as a political theorist, is eager to discern "a coherent presbyterian approach to politics" (*AP* 57)—one which emphasized popular government, representation, and perhaps even the lawfulness of resistance. Burgess offers an excellent concise discussion of Puritan political thought in *British Political Thought, 1500–1660*, 114–21; the fullest discussion remains Pearson's *Church and State*.

<sup>12</sup> Penry, *Briefe Discovery*, 39.

<sup>13</sup> This phrase was the rallying cry of Robert Browne's in his 1582 *Treatise of reformation without tarrying for anie*.

<sup>14</sup> See *Communion of Saints* ch. 7.

this necessarily means that the stereotype is altogether invalid; it seems clear again that we find strong cross-pressures which led more radical puritans to continue making affirmations that they had great difficulty squaring with their doctrine.

Given the evident difficulty of drawing stable generalizations about puritanism as either a theology or as a political-ecclesiastical program, and yet the seemingly indispensable value of the concept,<sup>15</sup> there has been a notable shift among historians in recent years toward thinking and speaking of Puritanism as a “culture,” an “ethos,” or a “*mentalité*.” Durston and Eales capture the new emphasis well in their statement “Above all else, puritanism was a movement grounded in a highly distinctive cast of mind—or to use a more fashionable term, *mentalité*—which displayed itself in the individual puritan as a peculiarly severe yet vibrant spirituality, and within groups of puritans as a unique and dynamic religious culture.”<sup>16</sup> The dominant theme of this culture was a desire for visible godliness, a zeal to move beyond an understanding of justification by faith alone that licensed apathy and complacency and to cultivate a more dynamic spirituality.<sup>17</sup>

With this new emphasis has come a tendency to rely less and less on polemical portrayals of Puritanism by its opponents,<sup>18</sup> given the obvious difficulty of mapping their stereotypes onto the messy reality, and more on more on the internal dynamics of puritanism in its various manifestations, as attested by its adherents and the products of its practical piety. Moreover, by focusing less on attempts to draw strict dividing lines between “puritan” and “Anglican,”

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<sup>15</sup> There have always been a few scholars arguing that the term is so vague and overused that it should be discarded altogether (e.g., Basil Hall, “Puritanism: The Problem of Definition,” in *Studies in Church History*, vol. 2 (1965), 287; C.H. George, “Puritanism as History and Historiography,” *Past and Present*, 41 (1968), 104, though most continue to insist that more would be lost than gained by such a rejection (see, for instance, William Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge, 1983), 145–46). Peter Lake, for instance, concludes his dizzying survey of the manifold uses and abuses to which the term has been put in “The Historiography of Puritanism,” by insisting, “there can be no doubting the continuing salience, the analytic relevance and bite, of the notion of Puritanism . . . despite the efforts of myriad historians to consign Puritanism, both name and thing, to the trash-can of exploded or abandoned concepts” (364).

<sup>16</sup> “The Puritan Ethos, 1560–1700,” 9. The essays in this volume are an excellent example of the new emphasis.

<sup>17</sup> See Brachlow ch. 3; Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints*, ch. 1. The recent *Puritanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), by Francis J. Bremer, adopts this as its dominant theme, noting in the introduction: “At the heart of puritanism was the attempt to transform society by first using grace to make God’s will one’s own. By doing so the individual would lead an exemplary life that would persuade others—family, friends, and the broader community—to follow the path of right belief and behavior” (p. 3).

<sup>18</sup> See for instance Lake, “Antipuritanism: The Structure of a Prejudice,” in Fincham and Lake, eds., *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England*, 91.



contemporary scholarship has been able to recognize much more clearly the extent to which aspects of puritan theology and culture permeated the Elizabethan and Jacobean churches. Accordingly, it seems that recent studies have grown increasingly tired of the tendency to rely on the “canonical texts” of puritanism—the writings of Thomas Cartwright and his close allies during and immediately following the Admonition Controversy—for an understanding the movement, deeming them to have been mined to depletion by now, unlikely to yield much fresh insight.<sup>19</sup> But although helpful in shattering sterile stereotypes and paving the way for fresh consideration of aspects of puritan life and piety, this new wave of scholarship risks sacrificing in depth what it has gained in breadth. There was certainly a puritanism that was much broader and more variegated than what we find advocated in the polemical writings of Cartwright and Walter Travers, but it is not for nothing that leading conformist writers such as Whitgift and later Hooker singled these out for criticism as representative of the logic of the movement. If we ignore the theological principles at stake in these debates, and their relation to the received principles and tensions of the magisterial Reformation, we will miss substantive emerging differences in ecclesiology and the theology of law and authority.<sup>20</sup> To be sure, many of the theological faultlines are implicit, and take the form of divergent emphases rather than fundamentally contradictory claims, but we must not let this fact—nearly always the case with historical theology—frighten us into saying nothing about the underlying trajectories of these doctrines.

Accordingly, in Chapter Three of the thesis, I take as my starting-point the conviction that we do have a great deal still to learn by attending to these key texts, and argue that, even when they represent more extreme perspectives that not all “puritans” shared, they can help us understand the theological anxieties at the root of the Elizabethan puritan protest.

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<sup>19</sup> Astonishingly, the controversy between Whitgift and Cartwright receives not a single reference in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (1996), and merits only the most fleeting mentions in the *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (2008), and Lake and Fincham’s *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England* (2006).

<sup>20</sup> A trio of fine exceptions are Peter Lake’s *Anglicans and Puritans?* (1988), Torrance Kirby’s *Richard Hooker’s Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy* (1990), and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan’s *Theology of Law and Authority in the English Reformation* (1991), each of which plays a major role in my own reading of the controversies. Unfortunately, each of these works are more than two decades old, and none interacts directly with either of the other two; nor have the three authors directly interacted with each other’s interpretations since.

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