

Richard Hooker, Reformer and Platonist, W.J. Torrance Kirby, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005, (ISBN: 0-7546-5288-2), xi + 112 pp., Hb \$99.95

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In this collection of six tightly argued essays plus an informative introduction to Hooker's life and work, Professor W.J. Torrance Kirby discusses important aspects of the philosophical and theological grounding of the major works of Richard Hooker. Additionally, he repositions Hooker's work within the context of sixteenth century English religious reform in a way distinctly different from that of much recent scholarship. As would be expected, each essay addresses a particular element of Hooker's writing. All the essays have been published previously, most within the last eight years. Kirby is seeking to extend his arguments regarding what he views as a more appropriate evaluation of the importance of this foremost apologist for the Elizabethan religious settlement. He began his reassessment with his 1990 book *Richard Hooker's Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy* and has continued it with this series of papers.

In his preface to the essays, Kirby explains that his ongoing rationale for these papers was to present a challenge and correction to the current interpretation of Hooker's work within the paradigm of an Anglican *via media* or a middle ground between Roman Catholicism and the continental reformers. He views this paradigm as 'essentially anachronistic and therefore fundamentally inaccurate' (p. ix). In his succinct introductory chapter on the Life and Thought of Richard Hooker, Kirby reminds the reader of the course of Hooker's career, much of which was spent in theological controversy. Additionally, Kirby reminds the reader of the significantly different tone of Hooker's work from that of others engaged in these disputes. Personal invective forms no part of Hooker's argument but rather he returns to fundamental theological assumptions with the 'professed aim of securing conscientious acceptance of the Settlement' (p. 3).

While focusing on Hooker's major treatise *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie (Lawes)*, published in its first form in 1593, Kirby lays out the basic framework of the eight books of the treatise as well as the essentials of the arguments Hooker uses. In the first book, Hooker links his definition of law to the Aristotelian tradition as well as adopting the arguments of 'Aquinas' Neoplatonic metaphysical logic'. Thus, Hooker expresses his understanding of external eternal law in the classic neoplatonic system of dual modes – a process both *from* and *return to* the origin of external eternal law.

The second book of *Lawes* discusses the questions surrounding the authority of scripture. While the third book addresses issues of the laws of the visible church and their relationship to the authority of natural law, reason, and custom, the fourth book continues with a discussion of the external rituals of the church and the underlying legal principles. In the fifth book, a book which is a third longer than the first four books together, Hooker examines the 'outwarde forme' of religion. These things include architecture, public offices, set forms of common prayer as well as many others. Then Kirby reviews the difficulties and issues found with the sixth, seventh, and eighth books, all of which were published posthumously. It is Kirby's view that the wide variety of claims made during the seventeenth century and later regarding Hooker's work reflect 'the complex and elusive character of his thought, and possibly also its claim to comprehensiveness' (p. 9).

In the first of this set of essays *Polemics and Apologetics: The Case for Magisterial Reform*, Kirby addresses the popular idea of Hooker as a proponent of the so-called Anglican *via media*. In Kirby's view, this is an anachronistic concept which is useless at best. It prevents a true appreciation of just what Hooker was trying to accomplish through his arguments. Kirby's intention in this essay is to demonstrate that throughout Hooker's attempts to define what it meant to be reformed, he shared the same theological roots as the other magisterial reformers while developing a distinctive ecclesiology and political theory. Kirby's contention is that Hooker upheld a clear delineation between matters of faith and action. In this way, he believes Hooker placed himself clearly within the distinctions made by other magisterial reformers, most particularly that of his patron Whitgift, related to the two realms of active and passive righteousness (p. 27). It seems to this reader that Kirby is most persuasive in his arguments calling for this need to reevaluate Hooker based on Hooker's stated aim for his apologetics.

In the second essay, *Grace and Hierarchy: Hooker's Two Christian Platonisms*, Kirby considers the uses Hooker has for the Neoplatonic ontology as described by the sixth century theologian Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite usually referred to as the *lex divinitatis*. In *Lawes*, Hooker specifically endorses the idea that the church should be modeled on this hierarchy of angels. For Hooker Christian polity is liturgical (p. 30). What seems to complicate Hooker's hierarchical model are the elements of his soteriology that appear to contradict the model. As Kirby notes, many scholars have debated at length this apparent contradiction. To Kirby, this is another instance of a creative tension which Hooker is able to maintain between the two Christian philosophical traditions, that is that of Pseudo-Dionysius and Augustine. After a detailed review of the two models, Kirby suggests that

for Hooker 'God is thus an end to himself in the process of both *exitus* and *reditus*. The seemingly endless and immeasurable diversity of life in its many forms is stabilized and contained by an order which is nothing less than the divine self-identity' (p. 42). Throughout this essay, the detailed explanations and references in the footnotes are most helpful for understanding Kirby's detailed analysis of these complex concepts.

With the third essay, *Creation and Government: Mediation of the 'Aeternall Law'* which is the shortest of all the collection, Kirby provides a comprehensive summary of the way in which Hooker approaches law. For Hooker, there is Eternal law and all other law derives from it. Within this derivation, there is a further division in that 'Eternal law is the "highest welspring and fountaine" of all other kinds of law within the subsidiary law, that is the law of nature and the law of revealed Scripture' (p. 45). Once again, Hooker sees a hierarchy in that the work of the creation is ranked below that of the Creator, the source (archē). Kirby points out for the reader the interesting way in which Hooker is able to find a compatible Logos theology in the pagan understanding of law just as he is able to more readily see it in the theology of Aquinas. Further, Kirby emphasizes the basic theological principle underlying Hooker's division of law. For Hooker, there is the law relative to the regulation of unfallen creation versus that of fallen creation. Kirby is at pains to remind the reader of the structure of the divisions of Hooker's understanding of law that Kirby lists as encompassing three main points. First, there is the dual character of God's role as 'Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible'. Second is the difference Hooker notes between God's governing of all creatures and the different rule for rational creatures. Third is the dual nature of government as a result of the Fall (p. 55). As Kirby concludes 'with the various forms of human law the descent from the perfection of the eternal law is complete' (p. 56).

In the fourth and longest essay in this collection, *Reason and Natural Law: 'Duplex Cognito Dei'*, Kirby addresses the question of the relationship of Hooker's use of natural law to his understanding of religion versus that of the continental reformers. In Kirby's estimation, Hooker is fairly closely aligned with Martin Luther, Phillip Melancthon, John Calvin, and Heinrich Bullinger in his approach to employing natural law theory in his religious discussion. Kirby carefully demonstrates in this discussion the many instances in which Hooker employs the same arguments as these authorities and relies on references to their work in the building of his apologia. Hooker's aim is to convince his Puritan critics of the sufficiency of the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559. It is Hooker's opinion that the changes represented by the settlement are adequate to meet the requirements for the reformation of the church.

Kirby reviews in detail uses these four continental reformers made of natural law and the ways Hooker aligned with their arguments. Throughout this essay, Kirby makes clear how very complex the dialectic of both the continental reformers and Hooker really was. It is understandable, given the demonstrated complexity, that Hooker could have been so misjudged by his contemporaries as well as by those who later sought to place Hooker within his sixteenth century milieu. Kirby does a great service for the reader by clarifying the connections between Hooker and the other magisterial reformers' use of natural law theory. The balance they all sought to achieve between the claims of scripture and natural law is indeed a carefully calibrated one as Kirby so clearly shows.

In the essay *Christ and Church: A 'Chalcedonian' Ecclesiology*, Kirby draws the readers' attention to the emphasis, which Hooker places, on the connections between Christology and the doctrine of salvation and the church. To an even greater extent than in the other essays, Kirby uses quotations from Hooker to give the reader a very satisfactory sense of the elegance of Hooker's working out of the seeming paradox of man left as a sinner while yet receiving the grace of salvation through Christ. For Hooker, reference to the Council of Chalcedon's formula is basic to an understanding of the question. The passage Kirby uses to illustrate this point, taken from *Laves* Vol. V, is a delight to read. It also suggests additional ways in which Hooker's thought aligns with that of the other magisterial reformers as to the doctrine of the two kinds of righteousness – both the grace of justification and the grace of sanctification.

Additionally, as Kirby points out, for Hooker the 'problem of soteriological mediation is radically Christocentric, and in this respect he is a close follower of the theological approach adopted by Calvin' (p. 85). As might be expected, Hooker also shares with Calvin the concern as to an understanding of the process by which salvation is worked by Christ alone and yet not a misunderstanding such that a soul might be caused to be paralyzed (p. 87). Thus, Hooker insists on the separation of the two modes of grace to preserve the foundation of faith. He reiterates the formula of 'Christ in us' versus the sense of 'ourselves in Christ' (p. 89). While these modes must be viewed as separate, he maintains that the soul is present in both modes at the same time not in some sort of progressive hierarchy.

When Hooker deals with ecclesiology and political order he retains this dual mode of description. If the head of the church has two natures, so too does the body, the church. In Hooker's formulation 'divine authority is mediated through human means' 'by the grace of union' (p. 94). So the church is 'mysticall' and 'politique'. As Kirby restates Hooker's formula 'The authority exercised by Christ in the "body mysticall" is unmediated; the authority he exerts over the "body

politique" is mediated by external and visible representatives' (p. 95).

The final essay in the book is *Common Prayer and Commonwealth: 'Publique Religion'*. As Kirby expresses it 'for Hooker, the end of prayer is nothing less than *theosis*, the attainment of eternal rest through union with the divine' (p. 98). In some very important ways, this essay brings the reader full circle. Once again, Kirby reminds one of the very different mindset of the sixteenth century person. For a pre-Enlightenment thinker, there is no truly private religion. The alignment between the church and the commonwealth is considered to be basic to the well-being of individuals and the state. It is most important to remember this fact in evaluating the import of the underlying principles of Hooker's approach to common prayer and the sacraments of the church. For an examination of this concept, Kirby refers to the fifth book of *Lawes*, in which Hooker is concerned to explore both the principles of common prayer, but just as importantly Hooker examines the fundamental meaning and purpose of prayer. Once again, Hooker sees a duality in a concept. For him, prayer is the total of messages sent to the soul by God as well as those sent from the individual soul to God. It is also double in the sense that prayer is both praise and supplication. Hooker's phrase 'commerce betwene God and us' (p. 101) gives a clear sense of the continual nature of this dual interaction.

Additionally, as Kirby reminds the reader, Hooker shares with his contemporaries the sense that religion is a public and political matter. There is a sense that the community is basic and inseparable for orthodox religious doctrine. Just as many others did, Hooker uses the Geneva translation of the bible and understands the Greek word *koinonia* to be communion in preference to other possible terms, such as society or association. Hooker understands the union or community that the individual soul has with God in much the same way as he understands the trinity. Kirby asserts that 'This union of God and man in Christ is the key to everything Hooker has to say about prayer and the common life' (p. 106). In distinction from Hooker's approach to prayer is his approach to the sacraments. Hooker understands the sacraments to be 'the meanes effectuall whereby God when wee take the sacraments delivereth into our handes that grace available unto eternall life, which grace the sacraments represent or signifie' (p. 110). In sum, Kirby suggests 'through common prayer the whole of life lived in the Commonwealth is lifted up before the throne of the heavenly king' (p. 112).

After studying the evidence presented in these essays and being convinced of the essential soundness of Kirby's arguments, I am left with one major question. It comes from my understanding of sixteenth century theological disputation. I would be interested to learn what factors Kirby feels might have led other contemporary scholars

of the period to arrive at the view that seems to be so anachronistic to him? Indeed, I am intrigued by the continuity of what Kirby labels as a longstanding misapprehension regarding Hooker's meaning. Were even Hooker's peers led to misevaluate his intentions by a need to create a distinct Anglican *via media*? Was their response to Hooker's work a reflection of their need to discern a uniquely English aspect to the reformation? Did they want to separate their work and Hooker's work from the continental reformers for some political reason? Did they seek to deny the very continuity and influences that Kirby illuminates for some specific purpose? What evidence either within Hooker's writings or in the response of Hooker's contemporaries might have suggested to these other scholars that Hooker was intending to develop a *via media*? In a like way, might the work of twentieth century Anglican scholars who seem to detect this *via media* in Hooker's work reflect a need to distinguish this much respected founding father of Anglican theology from his contemporaries so that he might be seen to support certain strains in current Anglican theological thinking? Furthermore might their interpretation of Hooker still have some merit even allowing for the evidence produced by Kirby?

Kirby's essays are packed with so many clear examples of the ways in which Hooker is orthodox in his reasoning as he proceeds from his understanding of the Chalcedon council's decision and employs classic Platonic, Aristotelian, and Augustinian arguments as well as those of the continental reformers. Even with these questions, I am thankful that such a slender volume of essays adds so greatly to a clearer understanding of the essence of Hooker's role in the developing Elizabethan settlement.

Response to Mary E. Coleman

By W.J. Torrance Kirby

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I thank Mary Coleman for her thoughtful and thorough review of *Richard Hooker, Reformer and Platonist*, and I am especially grateful for the very astute and penetrating questions put toward the conclusion of the piece. Her questions go directly to the heart of the revisionist proposal and thus to the underlying and connecting critical theme of this set of essays. What exactly was Hooker's general apologetic intention, and why has it been subject to such longstanding dispute? Coleman asks in particular what factors might have led Hooker's contemporary critics to arrive at an estimate of his theological stance that is in essential agreement with what I have identified as the anachronistic judgment of nineteenth and twentieth century critical

scholarship, namely Hooker's putative creation of the so-called middle way of Anglicanism. An implicit suggestion in this formulation of the question is that there may, in fact, be no anachronism at all in the '*via media*' approach to Hooker as this was also the view taken by sixteenth century observers.

Throughout my attempt to build up a critical reevaluation, I have been impressed by the remarkable degree to which the sustained criticism of Hooker's theological position by Walter Travers in the 1580s and by the anonymous author of *A Christian Letter* (1599) is in basic agreement with certain of the assumptions made by the much later *via media* interpretation. Both Hooker's sixteenth century Puritan critics and many of his nineteenth century and twentieth century admirers see his theology as essentially a compromise of Reformed principles. Some of Hooker's contemporaries excoriated his sustained defense of the authority of reason and natural law, the freedom of the will, ecclesiastical tradition, the 'beauty of holiness' as manifest in the splendor of church architecture and liturgy, the hierarchy of bishops, and even the royal headship of the church as clear evidence of his abandonment of mainstream Protestant orthodoxy, as a retreat into 'the darknesse of Schoole learning', a therefore as a fatal compromise with 'Poperie', as *A Christian Letter* puts it. John Henry Newman, John Keble, and many Victorian and later Anglican scholars influenced by what might be termed 'the *via media* hermeneutic' (e.g. Harry Porter, Lee Gibbs, and William Haugaard) took – and continue to take – very much the same view of the substance of Hooker's position on many of these substantive theological questions, *except* that they are by no means critical of such an apparent abandonment of Reformation principles, but rather welcome and praise this approach as striking a middle path between Rome and Geneva and thus as definitive of the peculiar character of the Church of England and of Anglicanism. Diarmaid MacCulloch has neatly summarized the *via media* hermeneutic in his description of the English Reformation as a 'theological cuckoo in the nest' where the 'egg' of Protestant doctrinal reform is laid and hatched in a 'Romish' ecclesiastical nest. As a consequence, the promoters of the *via media* argue that England failed to achieve a complete Reformation, but rather sought a common-sense compromise between Rome and Reform. This is the 'exceptionalist' reading of the English Reformation, and the putative theological 'father of Anglicanism', Richard Hooker, is held up as the first and greatest exponent of this way of theological compromise.

As some of Hooker's own contemporaries saw him as insufficiently 'Reformed', Coleman is quite right to query my representation of the *via media* hermeneutic as inherently anachronistic. My argument is that though they may share the view that Hooker is not wholly 'Reformed', Hooker's contemporary Puritan critics and his later

hagiographers are completely at odds so far as their motivation is concerned. The former denounce Hooker's theology, while the latter praise it for one and same characteristic. On my reading of Hooker, however, the former are mistaken in their judgment that Hooker's position is inconsistent with magisterial Reformed orthodoxy. The latter as promoters of the *via media* hermeneutic are anachronistic in their attempt to read back into Hooker a romantic ideal of the Church of England which is largely the invention of Victorian high churchmen. It must be remembered that one of the most formidable proponents of the *via media* ideal was John Henry Newman, at least in his early career, and that John Keble influenced generations of Anglican scholars with his reading of Hooker as the exemplary theologian of this middle path. The irony of this hermeneutic is that it works from the same assumption of Hooker's sixteenth century critics, namely that a radical, Geneva-inspired Disciplinary Protestantism lays reasonable claim to be definitive of magisterial reform, and that to depart from this Puritan ideal of reform is *ipso facto* to depart from the Protestant mainstream.

How then were Hooker's peers led to misevaluate his intentions? Hooker's marginal notes written on a copy of *A Christian Letter* clearly indicate his increasing loss of patience with his Puritan critics for precisely this claim. In this connection, it should be remembered that the Elizabethan Settlement was largely designed, implemented, and consolidated by a group of returned Marian exiles who had spent their years abroad in Zurich and Strasbourg. No less than seven of Elizabeth's bishops as well as several heads of Colleges appointed after 1559 had lived in Heinrich Bullinger's house in Zurich. They were still very much under the spell of their teacher and mentor, Peter Martyr Vermigli, who had been professor at Oxford and who eventually died at Zurich in 1562. Vermigli's *Common Places*, together with Bullinger's *Decades*, were to become the principal theological textbooks for the next two generations at both universities. In short, for much of the reign of Elizabeth, England was decisively under the influence of what has sometimes been called 'the other Reformed tradition'; that is the tradition of the Reformation in Zurich. Hooker's critics were Disciplinary Puritans who favored the Genevan model of reform, and they were as sharply critical of John Jewel, John Whitgift, and other defenders of the Elizabethan Settlement as they were of Hooker, and on the same theological grounds. The main point here is that the definition of what it is to be Reformed is itself in dispute in Hooker's time.

Hooker, following Jewel and Whitgift, argues for an interpretation of magisterial reform substantively in the theological tradition of Vermigli and Bullinger. Hooker has some relatively small differences with Calvin on certain matters of ecclesiastical discipline, but on

the large questions of systematic doctrine – Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and the sacraments – there is full agreement. Hooker's famous sermon on Justification by Faith agrees in every respect with the position laid out by Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559). Hooker's defense of the authority of reason and natural law are fully consistent with similar arguments made previously by both Bullinger and Calvin. The biblicizing tendency Hooker's late-Elizabethan Puritan critics is a distortion of the Reformed dictum '*sola scriptura*' worthy of the Anabaptist radicals, and in this Hooker of their hermeneutics he is in full agreement with Whitgift, Jewel, Bullinger, Vermigli, and Calvin.

There is indeed a unique aspect to the English reformation when compared with other European reformations, notably those of Zurich, Geneva, Strasbourg, and Wittenberg. However, matters frequently identified as peculiar to the English church – the hierarchy of bishops, the retention of medieval Cathedral foundations, the ceremonial of worship as defined (somewhat obscurely) in the Ornaments Rubric, etc. – are all matters defined by Hooker as belonging to the realm of *adiaphora* or 'things indifferent', and not to matters of saving doctrine or belonging to the *esse* of the church. Yet, it is Calvin who defends the institution of bishops for the churches of England and Hungary, and Bullinger who defends the traditional vestments of the clergy during the Vestiarian Controversy of the 1560s and Vermigli who allows that the worshipper may in good conscience bend the knee before the elements of the Eucharist. The fundamental issue here, as John Whitgift framed it, is 'what is to be Reformed?' It is owing chiefly to confusion over the definition of 'Reformation' itself that *both* Hooker's contemporary Puritan critics *and* modern proponents of the *via media* hermeneutic find difficulty in reconciling Hooker's theology with magisterial Reform.

Close study of Hooker's Preface to the *Lawes* will reveal that his plain intent is to win the conscientious acquiescence of Puritan critics of the Elizabethan Settlement by his demonstration that the institutions and liturgy legislated in 1559 are wholly reconcilable with the theological precepts of reform – there is no need of 'further Reformation' as Reformation has been fully achieved. To understand the force of this argument, we must first recognize the tensions and divisions among the reformers themselves. There is a division, first of all, between the 'magisterial' reformers (e.g. Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Bullinger, Calvin, Bucer, Cranmer, Whitgift) and the 'radicals' (Anabaptists, Sattler, Hubmaier, Grebel, Muntzer, Martin Marprelate, Greenwood) on a considerable number of soteriological and ecclesiological questions. There is also a distinction between Lutheran and Reformed on the basis of sacramental differences, among Lutherans themselves on the moral authority of law, and

further, between the Reformed of Geneva and of Zurich on questions of discipline. Once these different versions of reform are sorted out, the matter of interpreting where Hooker stands becomes clearer. He agrees with the magisterial reformers on the substantive doctrinal matters, but criticizes the English Disciplinary Puritans for leaning in the direction of Anabaptist radicalism, particularly in their opposition to bishops and royal headship of the church. Hooker's ecclesiology has much in common with Calvin's and Bullinger's, for example on the question of the '*notæ ecclesiæ*', but leans heavily toward Zurich on the matter of excommunication and the close relation of Church and Commonwealth. The attribution of the *via media* to Hooker is in large part grounded in a lack of nuanced appreciation of these distinctions of 'what it means to be Reformed'.

It was an error on the part of the Disciplinary Puritans of Hooker's time to equate scholastic method with showing favor toward Rome – Hooker is much less of a scholastic than Vermigli, for example. Although Vermigli's Aristotelianism was condemned by some radical Protestants, no one ever accused him of being an exponent of the middle way. It was equally an error to insist that a scripturally prescribed *Disciplina* was necessary to a true Reformation. The Disciplinary Puritans sought to drive a wedge between Hooker and international Calvinism, but on grounds of which Calvin himself would have most heartily disapproved. Hooker agrees with Calvin that Discipline cannot be an essential 'mark' of the true visible church – that distinction belongs properly to 'the true preaching of the Word and the right administration of the sacraments'. There is no third mark, and thus Calvin affirms the institution of bishops in both England and Hungary. The Puritan wedge-issue of discipline actually serves to highlight a key distinction between radical and magisterial versions of reform where Hooker lays reasonable claim to the latter ground in the company of both Calvin and the Zurich reformers. Nonetheless, the arguments of these Puritan critics are taken up by modern scholars as evidence of Hooker's departure from the path of magisterial Reform and onto the 'middle way'.

Comparison of Hooker's writings on a broad spectrum of theological *loci* with those of other continental reformers – notably Calvin, Bullinger, and Vermigli – reveals that the Elizabethan divine is completely in the mainstream of magisterial Reform. That his theology comes to be viewed according to the *via media* hermeneutic as a departure from that mainstream appears in part to be owing to a lack of clarity concerning some of the finer distinctions among the various kinds of Reform. If mainstream Protestantism is conflated with any of these individual types of Reform and Hooker is found to differ, then this 'otherness' can lead very quickly to the assertion of promoting a theological '*tertium quid*'. Hooker is not a Calvinist, yet on many

central and substantial points of his theology, and especially in his Christocentrism, he stands squarely in agreement with Calvin. Nor is he a Zwinglian, yet his civil theology is heavily influenced by the Zurich model. Nor is he a Lutheran, although his treatment of Justification by Faith and his liturgical conservatism are strongly tinged by sympathy in that direction. Hooker puts together a methodically Reformed theological view on all substantive questions – anthropological, soteriological, ecclesiological, sacramental, and political. In short, there is no justification for the interpretation that would see him setting out to construct a *via media* between Rome and Protestantism any more than there is in the writings of these other magisterial reformers. All of them in their various ways sought to redefine the Catholic faith, and all, like Hooker, set very considerable store by the definitions of Catholicity set out in the decrees of the first four Ecumenical Councils. Yet all, including Hooker, nonetheless affirmed the break with the See of Rome on grounds of differences over soteriology and ecclesiology, and on these grounds Hooker is in full agreement with the magisterial reformers. The more I study the works of the continental divines, the more I am thoroughly convinced that Hooker understands the theology and the premises underpinning the institutions of the Settlement of 1559 to be consistent with the mainstream of continental reform.

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