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Richard Hooker: Reformer and Platonist (Book Review)

Keith C. Sewell
Dordt College

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places and may be confusing to those not familiar with Bonhoeffer's ideas. One also wonders if incarnational youth ministry actually avoids the pitfalls of which he accuses evangelical relational youth ministry. Is not the goal of incarnational youth ministry to eventually bring young people into the Christian community, which might be the non-evangelical way of saying a "relationship with Jesus Christ?" How does the relationship still not become a "third thing"? For some of my undergraduate youth ministry students, Root has merely shifted the purpose of using relationships from a tool for bringing young people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to a tool for bringing young people into the Christian community.

Despite these issues, Root's book is a valuable asset to the field of youth ministry. In calling for an incarnational perspective of relational ministry, Root provides a biblical and theological foundation from which youth leaders can

establish meaningful relationships with young people. This book is not a practical "how to" manual, a fact which some may find frustrating, but the theological and philosophical ideas provide the groundwork for anyone seeking to develop a healthy congregational youth program. Root reminds us that we are not first and foremost working to make young people moral or calling them to transcend their humanity through guilt trips and altar calls; instead, we are calling young people to reclaim their humanity through baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the beauty and relevance of Bonhoeffer's theology: Although many cultural voices, including much of North American Christianity, call young people to transcend their humanity, Bonhoeffer reminds us that in Jesus Christ, God has come to give us our humanity back. This is a message that both our youth and youth leaders need to hear.

Kirby, W. J. Torrance. *Richard Hooker: Reformer and Platonist*. Aldershot, England / Burlington, VT, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005. xi + 138 pp. ISBN: 0754652882. Reviewed by Keith C. Sewell, Professor of History at Dordt College.

Richard Hooker (1553-1600), often referred to as "the judicious Hooker" by his admirers, was the Englishman who defended the "Elizabethan Settlement" of the post-reformation reformed Church of England (1558 onwards) from its "Puritan" critics, including Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603) and Walter Travers (d. 1635). These men and their followers held that the Church of England was but "half-reformed" in matters of worship, discipline and governance. These first Puritans advocated reform in church worship, discipline, and governance along more or less Presbyterian lines with multiple levels of ecclesiastical assemblies. This Reformed or Presbyterian approach reflected the new thinking about church polity that had emerged during the time of Beza and Knox and that its advocates often associated with the Geneva of John Calvin himself.

In his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594 onwards), Hooker famously utilized the triad—Scripture, tradition and reason—that inevitably involved the practices of the ancient catholic church and the will of the monarch (as in reasons of state) in the discussion. This approach was consistent with the retention of episcopacy in England, whatever other arrangements might be necessary elsewhere. For their part, the Puritans were on strong ground when arguing against the hierarchical episcopacy of their day (often referred to as "prelacy"), as offending the norm stated by Jesus himself: "You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them...but it shall not be so among you" (*KJV*. Matthew 20: 26-7). On the other hand, although Puritan supporters of Presbyterian-style alternatives might advocate their viewpoint with extensive proof texts from the New Testament, they were

hard pressed indeed to demonstrate that there was ever a functioning Presbyterian polity operating anywhere in the post-Apostolic church *prior* to the early rise of episcopacy. The truth is that the Reformed-Presbyterian polity was a product of the mid-late sixteenth century.

Neither side was able to convince the other, each having different starting points as to how the authority of Scripture was to function in matters of polity (cf. 76f.). Protestantism was tragically divided in England for many centuries as a consequence. Hooker's "Scripture, tradition and reason" formula, and the fact that many protestant churches in Europe emerged as non-Episcopal (for example: Scotland, France, the Netherlands, and the protestant cantons of Switzerland), meant that in the eyes of many critics the retention of bishops and ancient ceremonies in the Church of England amounted to its being semi-scriptural and but "half-reformed." Later advocates of "Anglicanism" embraced this viewpoint for their own purposes. Especially in the nineteenth century, they came to speak of an Anglican *via media*, as if Canterbury had deliberately adopted a mid-way position between Rome and Geneva (or Edinburgh) in the first place (60). While this *via media* characterization may have *some* validity in regards to church *polity*—after all, the Churches of Rome and England are both Episcopal—it forgets that *doctrine* (specifically the doctrines of grace) was the first and foremost issue of the protestant reformation.

Torrance Kirby, Associate Professor of Church History at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, is clear in his rejection of those who see Hooker as signifying and legitimizing a *doctrinal* "mid-way" position between Protestantism and Catholicism often attributed to

Anglicanism in the last two centuries (ix-x, 11-12, and 17f). In this respect Kirby is clearly in the right. Historically, Hooker stands between the early reformation, represented by Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, and the later array of personalities and developments that we associate with the “Heidelberg Calvinists” (Ursinus, Olevianus, Zanchius), and their much tighter notion of the “marks of the [true] church” (24). From the standpoint of Hooker, those who were so intent on enforcing “godly discipline” in this later era improperly employed the *sola-scriptura* principle to out-reformation the reformation itself (24, 27). Kirby argues that Calvin and Hooker had more in common with each other than with discipline-oriented Puritans *or* high churchmen who saw episcopacy as a divinely mandated requirement (25-26). Not all readers will accept this, and different conclusions will be drawn by those who do. Some will argue that it took more than one generation for the deeper implications of the reformation to fully emerge. Of course, all Christian traditions acknowledge the authority of Scripture (in some sense), all are guided to some degree of rigor by their traditions, and all lay claim to a level of cogency. All Christian traditions inevitably exhibit a more or less consciously achieved understanding of these inter-relationships. Nevertheless, where Hooker’s approach has been influential, it seems that the authority of Scripture has been all too readily overlaid and checked by both “tradition” and “reason.” It has tended to stand in the way of further reformation.

This book is a collection of essays, and it is therefore not so surprising that at some points Kirby repeats himself almost word for word (see pp. 18 and 63, for example). Moreover, while he effectively clears away misunderstandings left by John Henry Newman (1801-90), Kirby’s discussions only serve to bring other immense

questions into greater relief. Here readers are directed particularly to the chapters on “Grace and Hierarchy: Hooker’s Two Christian Platonisms,” and “Reason and Natural Law: the *Duplex Cognitio Dei*” (29-43 and 57-78 respectively). The entire question of the understanding and place of notions of “natural law” in the reformers’ thinking cries out for more attention and awaits in-depth, philosophically rigorous attention (cf. esp. pp. 77-78). Notions of “natural law” and “reason” function centrally in the divergent understandings of scriptural authority evident among the leadership of the magisterial reformation. Bound up with this problem is the profound issue of the influence of Platonic thinking on the mind of the reformation—an influence that the immense prestige of Augustine did nothing to eradicate. This was the outer conceptual framework that contextualized so much else.

Kirby certainly sees that the relationships between the Pseudo-Dionysian and Augustinian versions of Christian Platonism were an issue for Hooker and therefore for our understanding of him (36-42). However, Kirby does not seem to see Platonism itself as a problem—certainly not in the way that some reformational philosophers have by questioning the “great tradition” as represented by Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. It is this lineage that has so profoundly shaped our understanding of divinity, of what it is to be a creature, and of how God and creatures relate. Hooker builds upon the presumed legitimacy of this entire approach. Arguably, we need to critically reassess this “great tradition” and adopt an alternative point of departure, in order to achieve (among other things) an understanding of Hooker that is not entangled in his own Platonic-Christian synthesis. This work is an important addition to the literature on Hooker, but it lacks a starting-point grounded in such a foundational critique.