

IN DEFENSE OF
REFORMED CATHOLIC
WORSHIP

*Or, the fourth book of
Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*

By RICHARD HOOKER

Edited/translated by
Bradford Littlejohn, Brian Marr, and
Bradley Belschner

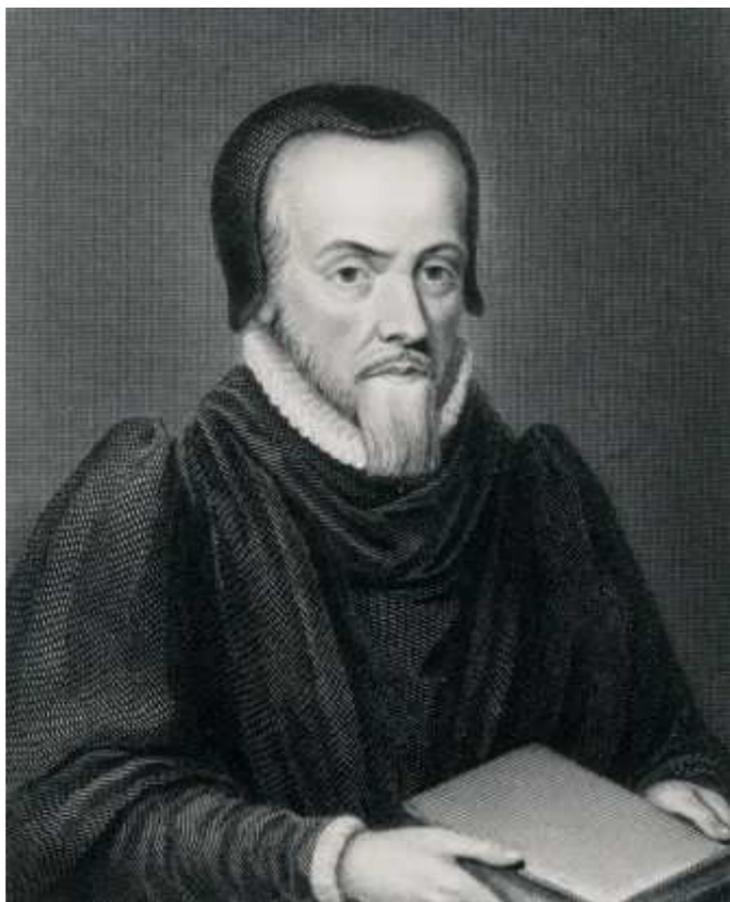
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ISBN-13: 978-1-949716-97-9

Front cover image taken from Hugo Vogel (1855–1934), Martin
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Richard Hooker
by Wenceslaus Hollar

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INTRODUCTION

Bradford Littlejohn

A Contested “Middle Way”

Although the Protestant Reformation provoked fierce conflict wherever it broke out, the English Reformation is notorious for being particularly chaotic. Beginning with Henry VIII’s fitful and inconstant reformation, prompted more by dynastic and fiscal concerns than theological convictions, the Church of England lurched, in just a fifteen-year period, through at least four distinct phases. In 1546 it was autonomous from Rome but still traditionalist Catholic in its doctrine and practice. It then witnessed first a thoroughgoing embrace of Reformed theology and rapid reformation of worship under Edward VI, then a violent Roman Catholic counter-Reformation under Queen Mary, and finally Elizabeth I’s imposition of a moderate Protestantism that owed much to Melancthonian Lutheranism.

It is something of an accident of history that this last phase produced an Anglican Church renowned for its middle-of-the-road moderation and judicious balance of reformation and tradition. In the early years of the Elizabethan Settlement, all of Elizabeth’s bishops expected further reformation to move forward in due course, once the dust

had settled from the chaos of the recent violent transitions. Elizabeth herself, however, seems to have genuinely favored a more ceremonial mode of worship, and feared the religious radicalism that she attributed to the two-hour long sermons favored by more zealous reformers. Besides, the maintenance of some outward trappings of the old medieval religion (whether it be the threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons, the special vestments worn by priests while celebrating the liturgy, or the retention of ceremonies like confirmation) was, Elizabeth realized, politically desirable. After all, the mere accession of a Protestant monarch had hardly converted the whole kingdom to the new Reformed faith; many thousands of closet Catholics, some among the high nobility, remained throughout the realm, their loyalty to the new regime uncertain. By retaining many forms of worship familiar to them, Elizabeth deemed, she could make their outward conformity easier and reduce the risk of rebellions or conspiracies—ever-present threats throughout her long reign. Just as importantly, she could ease the alarm of Catholic monarchs abroad, especially King Philip II of Spain, who was on the lookout for any opportunity to reassert control of an island kingdom he had briefly gained through his marriage to the short-lived Queen Mary. Spanish diplomats could be selectively shown the more traditionalist worship of the cathedrals and royal court and left with the impression that perhaps England wasn't too Protestant after all.¹

¹ Even so, however, Elizabethan worship was far more minimalist and Reformed in appearance than most Anglican worship today; candles and crucifixes were so scandalous that they were used only in the Queen's private chapel, and incense and images were out of the ques-

Unfortunately for Elizabeth, some of her more zealous subjects could be left with that impression as well. Beginning with an outbreak of controversy over the required clerical vestments in 1564–66 (the so-called Vestiarian Controversy), Elizabeth and her bishops found themselves facing a series of reformist agitations, each seemingly more comprehensive and uncompromising than the last. The situation was the more difficult for the bishops, since they by and large sympathized with the protests and hoped to see significant further liturgical reform. However, they admitted that there was nothing genuinely sub-Protestant about the debated ceremonies, which ultimately concerned matters of *adiaphora* or “things indifferent,” practices on which Scripture was silent and concern for edification of the body should guide us.² Although many had objected precisely on grounds of edification that weak Christians were being led astray by this visual continuity with Rome, the bishops could contend, with some plausibility in their context, that some uniform national practice was necessary to prevent strife, and the Queen’s proposals for uniformity were reasonable enough.³ This was at any rate the line they took publicly, whatever their private reservations; this succeeded in quelling the immediate controversy, but laid the foundation for a wider one.

By 1572, the movement (eventually known as Puri-

tion.

² For an excellent discussion see ch. 5 of W.J. Torrance Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

³ It should be noted that scarcely any party in late 16th-century England, and very few even in the early 17th century, questioned the notion that national uniformity of religious practice was desirable. Thus the Puritans tended to argue not so much for freedom to dissent as for replacing the Prayer Book with a new, biblically-mandated order of worship.

tanism) was calling for a root-and-branch re-reformation of the English church that would not merely purge the church of popish ceremonies, but also of the now-unpopular bishops, replacing them with a presbyterian system of equally-ranked ministers and lay-elders. This call first appeared in John Field and Thomas Wilcox's *Admonition to Parliament*, but the task of defending this somewhat intemperate document fell largely to the ousted Cambridge don Thomas Cartwright, who fiercely debated Church of England leader John Whitgift in print for the next five years while taking refuge on the Continent. Returning in the 1580s to England and gaining some political protection, Cartwright and his associate Walter Travers worked with other Puritan leaders to build an underground network of presbyterian pastors and to draft legislation for Parliament seeking a complete overhaul of the Church of England. A ferocious new phase of literary conflict raged from 1585–91, before a temporary imprisonment of several of the Presbyterian leaders and heavy-handed official crackdown on dissent quieted the conflict for the last decade of Elizabeth's long reign.

It was in this context that Richard Hooker took up his pen to write a thoroughgoing examination of the Presbyterian cause that would, he hoped, not merely beat it over the head with appeals to the Queen's authority (as many of his predecessors had done), but meet its accusations on the grounds of Scripture and reason, and demonstrate the flawed principles that underlay their protests. In the introduction to the first volume of our modernization, *Radicalism: When Reform Becomes Revolution*, we have offered a fuller account of Hooker's life and work and his motives in writing the *Lames of Ecclesiasticall Politie*. So we will confine

ourselves here to a consideration of the themes specific to this volume.

The Purpose of Book IV

Here in the fourth book of his *Laws*, Hooker finally begins to get down to business and address some of the concrete charges that Puritans had lodged against the Church of England and that he had taken up his pen to address. At the outset of his work he had promised to pursue a systematic method of exposition, beginning with general foundation-laying and gradually proceeding to the more detailed questions under debate: “throughout this work I have tried to make every premise support what follows after it and to make every conclusion shed further light on what came before. So if men suspend their judgments while we go through these first more general arguments until it is clear where they lead, what might seem to be dark at first will turn out to be quite apparent, just as the later specific determinations will seem much stronger on the basis of what came before.”⁴

Thus, after his rousing polemical preface⁵ he began in Book I⁶ with a magisterial account of the theological foundations of law in general, and the relation between natural law, divine law, and human law in both state and church. Having laid this metaphysical and ethical founda-

⁴ I.1.2; *Divine Law and Human Nature: Book I of Hooker's Laws*, ed. Bradford Littlejohn, Brian Marr, and Bradley Belschner (Lincoln, NE: The Davenant Press, 2017), 2–3.

⁵ Published as *Radicalism: When Reform Becomes Revolution: When Reform Becomes Revolution*, ed. Littlejohn et al. (Lincoln, NE: The Davenant Press, 2016).

⁶ Published as *Divine Law and Human Nature*.

tion, he turned in Books II and III⁷ to the epistemological question of how much we are meant to rely on Scripture in matters of human law and church polity. This required him to address questions such as the purpose of Scripture, the nature and reliability of human reason, and just as importantly the nature of the Church. It was the dual identity of the Church as visible and invisible, temporal and eternal, Hooker argued, that precipitated many of the confusions over how Scripture should regulate the Church's life; since matters of faith and matters of action were, he argued, very different, and the latter were "daily changeable,"⁸ the outward order of the Church could not be subject to detailed and timeless Scriptural regulation, but was left largely to human discretion.

The groundwork of Books I-III left Hooker prepared to tackle, in the remainder of the *Laws*, the two chief areas of concern raised by the presbyterian protests: (1) liturgy and church ceremonies; (2) episcopacy and church government. The former was to comprise Books IV and V, the latter Books VI-VIII. More specifically, Book IV—continuing Hooker's movement from general to particular—was meant to provide a response to their general accusations against the Church of England's liturgy, while Book V would then take up particular disputed practices—from preaching, to prayers, to sacraments. In both of these books, he was to move considerably beyond his Elizabethan predecessors in articulating a positive case for the value of the traditional ceremonies, ceremonies that Eliza-

⁷ Published as *The Word of God and the Words of Man: Books II and III of Richard Hooker's Laws*, ed. Littlejohn et al. (Lincoln, NE: The Davenant Press, 2018).

⁸ III.10.7, *The Words of God*, 111.

beth had retained more for political than theological reasons, and which her bishops had defended mostly on the grounds of her authority.

Hooker thus begins Book IV by laying down a maxim that would justify, at least in principle, much of the scenic apparatus of English worship:

In determining the outward form of any religious action, our chief goal should be the edification of the church. Men are edified either when their minds are led by such actions to the consideration of some truth that demands our attention, or when their hearts are moved with any suitable affection—when they are in any way stirred up to an appropriate reverence, devotion, attention, and due regard. Therefore, not only speech, but also many different sensible means have always been thought necessary for this purpose. (1.3; *our version*, 4)

Few had been willing to venture such a claim in the polemically-charged context of the later 1500s, in which claiming any kind of spiritual benefit for a ceremony sounded suspiciously like “instituting new sacraments.”⁹ Hooker answered this objection deftly by stating:

Among great ceremonies, some of them *are* sacraments, whereas some are merely *like* sacraments. Sacraments are the signs and tokens of some general promised grace, which always

⁹ So Walter Travers had charged in *A Full and Plaine declaration of ecclesiastical discipline out off the word off God and off the declininge of the churche of England from the same*, trans. Thomas Cartwright [Heidelberg: M. Schirat, 1574], 51.

truly descends from God to the soul that duly receives them. Other significant tokens are only like sacraments, yet not sacraments. (1.4, *our version*, 7)

The Arguments of Book IV

With this foundation laid, he uses chapter 2 to canvas the various objections that the Puritans have lodged against the English ceremonies. Such objections may be either general, aimed at the English liturgy across the board, or more specific, touching certain kinds of ceremonies. The former he lists here in chapter 2 and then addresses sequentially in chapters 3–10; the latter (of which he identifies two) he tackles one after another in chapters 11 and 12. In an unusual lapse for Hooker, he begins by noting, “One may object to rites and ceremonies for being of the wrong sort or being too numerous,” and then attends wholly to the former sort of objection, never returning in the course of Book IV to objections that concern the *number* of ceremonies—even if he might easily have related this concern to the first objection he lists. This, he says, is that “we have departed from the ancient simplicity of Christ and His Apostles, replacing it with outward show” (2.1, *our version*, 8). He identifies here an irrational primitivist impulse that assumes that earlier is better, that the Church was pure and healthy in her first days and our task must be to purge her of all the corruptions that have crept in since:

For our opponents take it for granted that the first condition of the Church was the best, that the faith of the Christian religion was soundest in its beginning, that God’s Scrip-

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tures were then best understood by all men, and that all manner of godliness then abounded. (2.1, *our version*, 8).

In response, he first argues that Scripture provides us no such clear and certain description or rule of apostolic liturgical practice, on the basis of which we could undertake such a reformation. Moreover, he goes on, building on his claims in Book III about the changeability of church ceremonies, that even if we did know apostolic practice with certainty, that would be no guarantee that it remained the best practice for us to follow today. Israel herself worshipped rather differently in the Davidic period than she had in the Mosaic period, and Scripture does not suggest that for her, earlier was better.

Having met this first line of argument, he turns to consider the second main complaint, which will occupy him, in its various forms, for most of the remainder of Book IV. This was the Puritan idea, which had first provoked the Vestiarian Controversy, that English ceremonies erred simply by too closely resembling Roman Catholic practices. By tackling this argument head-on, Hooker offered English Protestants a classic statement in defense of a reformed catholic worship—a liturgical practice committed to purifying the Church of corrupt and superstitious practices, without throwing the baby out with the bathwater and assuming that good Protestants must reject all continuity with medieval (and much patristic) practice.

Hooker distills no less than eight different versions of the “Too much like Rome” objection, culling arguments from across Cartwright’s lengthy 1570s engagement with Whitgift. These are as follows:

- 1) Augustine said that we should follow the customs of our forefathers in the faith; and the papists, being heretics, do not qualify (answered in chapter 5).
- 2) Even where popish ceremonies do not contradict Scripture, we can improve upon them, and so should discard them (answered in chapter 4).
- 3) Just as the Jewish ceremonial law deliberately sought to differentiate them from Canaanite idolaters, lest they be infected by too much conformity, so we must be as different as possible from Rome (answered in chapter 6).
- 4) Similarly, God was particularly concerned to differentiate the Israelites from the Egyptians that they had so recently lived among; likewise, we must be as different as possible from the Roman church we have just left—so much so that we would be better off conforming to Muslims (answered in chapter 7).
- 5) The best way to cure the evils of popery is to go as far as we can in the opposite direction; one extreme must be cured by another extreme (answered in chapter 8).
- 6) England's conformity to Rome gives papists an occasion to blaspheme by claiming that the Church of England cannot survive without the support of popish ceremonies (answered in chapter 9).
- 7) The continued presence of Roman ceremonies in the Church of England gives pa-

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pists in England false hope that their religion will be restored (also answered in chapter 9).

8) These ceremonies are a source of grief for the godly within the Church of England (answered in chapter 10).

In addressing these arguments, many of them admittedly rather weak and offered by Cartwright only in passing, Hooker showcases his polemical wit more brilliantly (and brutally) than we have yet seen in the *Laws*. For instance, meeting Cartwright's rather absurd claim about the need to cure one extreme by another extreme in chapter 8, Hooker writes:

We, however, are of the view that he who wants to restore a diseased body to full health should not seek to bring it to a state of simple contrariety, but rather to a state of proper balance in opposition to those evils which need to be cured. He who seeks to cure heat-stroke by putting the body in extreme cold shall certainly remove the disease, but along with it, the diseased! (8.1, *our version*, 36)

Likewise, dismissing the sixth and seventh arguments as hardly deserving a response, Hooker says in the following chapter:

Indeed, even if it were true that we were so dependent on the Roman church for these things, does our reputation rest on being able to say to another church, 'We need you not'? Some people might be so vain that they cannot do anyone a favor without pointing it out, but surely a wise man will not on this account refuse to accept the favor; if his foolish

neighbor shares some kindling with him to start a fire, and then taunts, ‘If it weren’t for me, you would freeze,’ he will ignore the taunt rather than extinguish his fire out of spite. (9.1, *our version*, 40)

Indeed, he is not above using clever puns to give his put-downs added weight. Meeting the last argument about the grief that “the godly” in England bear on account of these ceremonies, he says:

Surely they would not like to be comforted at the expense of the Church, and if we were to remove everything out of our church which seems to give them grief, it would cause great harm, as far as we can tell. Until they can persuade us otherwise, they will need to find some other means of cheering themselves up. Perhaps looking at the example of Geneva will do the trick. Do not the Genevans retain that old popish custom of using godfathers and godmothers in baptism? And that old popish custom of administering the holy Eucharist with wafer-cakes? The godly saints of Geneva seem able to digest these things well enough, so why is it so difficult for the godly here? (10.1, *our version*, 44)

Still, there are arguments of real substance and enduring interest in these pages. For instance, he notes in chapter 4 that even his opponents do not really mean that “*all popish ceremonies*” should be abolished, or even “*all popish ceremonies not commanded in the Word of God*”; rather, when pressed, their claim is “*all popish ceremonies not commanded in the Word of God that can be replaced with better ones.*” But this, he notes, amounts to a difference of

practical judgment, not of principle. Of course we should replace popish practices where we have found better ones! But who is to judge which ceremonies are better? Following the epistemological and political principles he has laid down earlier in the *Laws*, Hooker insists that when in doubt, we should be more ready to trust established public authority than mere private judgment:

the burden of proof rests on them. It is hardly fair for them to first say that we must not use any ceremonies of the church of Rome that are bad, and then to presume until proven otherwise that all those which they happen to dislike qualify as bad. (4.2, *our version*, 20)

He also observes in chapter 9 the persistent human tendency to oppose some practice or policy just because “That’s what our enemies would want,” acting on the basis of passion rather than prudence.

We judge best when we consider matters dispassionately, and set aside such intemperate emotions. When we are angry and irritated with the church of Rome, and decide to consider the rites of our church when in that mood, our judgment will be clouded if we are too preoccupied with what Rome might think of this or that ceremony and we reject or approve it on that basis alone. (9.2; *our version*, 40)

These words of wisdom are still strikingly applicable to modern Protestants, who frequently react viscerally against some liturgical practice or other merely because it is associated with Rome (or “liberals,” or “fundamentalists,” or

“charismatics,” for that matter), rather than on the basis of any principled evaluation of its biblical basis and spiritual value. It should be noted, moreover, that the logic of his argument does not depend on defending Rome as “not that bad after all,” as Hooker is sometimes accused of (or praised for) doing¹⁰; on the contrary, he deftly sidesteps that question and for the most part argues on the basis of “even supposing Rome were that bad....”

The biggest intellectual heavy-lifting, though, is reserved for chapters 11, 12, and 13. Here he addresses two particular charges aimed at certain English rites—first, that they were borrowed from Jewish ceremonies, and second, that they have caused weaker Christians to stumble—and finally the demand from peer pressure: that England should conform itself to the practice of the best Reformed churches abroad. However, this introduction has gone on long enough and these excellent chapters can largely speak for themselves; so I will confine myself to a couple brief remarks. Chapter 11, penned against the backdrop of a pervasive early-modern anti-Semitism, offers a rich and illuminating discussion of the distinctions between Old Testament practices that (a) must of necessity continue, (b) must of necessity be done away with, and (c) were no longer necessary to continue, but which we were also not obliged to discontinue. Chapter 12 tackles what Hooker, with more pastoral sensitivity than he is often credited with, acknowledges to be “the argument which most demands to be taken seriously.” Here too he makes a series of careful distinctions as to what the terms “scandalous”

¹⁰ Cf. the helpful discussion in Richard Bauckham, “Hooker, Travers and the Church of Rome in the 1580s,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 29.1 (1978): 37–50.

and “weaker brethren” do and do not mean, while acknowledging that if a ceremony really is doing harm to the church, and can be discontinued without doing greater harm, it should be abolished. This question, however, must be determined on a case-by-case basis, which is what he promises to undertake in Book Five. Finally, chapter 13 presents an intriguing counter-example to the usual picture of Hooker as the champion of imposed religious uniformity. On the contrary, Hooker represents his Puritan opponents as those who want to impose uniformity on the Church of England by forcing it to conform to international Reformed practice, rather than allowing local (i.e., national) churches the freedom to craft their own practices for their own contexts. Hooker’s arguments here anticipate various themes in the later intellectual tradition of political and cultural conservatism that argued in favor of local custom and against internationalist movements.

Likewise, the concluding chapter 14 provides a compelling statement of some of Hooker’s conservative principles, offering a spirited defense of the principles and practice of the early English Reformers. He acknowledges on the one hand that sometimes laws and customs that once served good purposes may become unhelpful over the course of time, but that does not mean we should rashly undertake to update every law in an instant, since every change to established law or custom undermines the authority of law. Accordingly, he praises the wisdom of the architects of the English Reformation in proceeding cautiously and gradually in their task of reform, and proposes the experience of the English Church as a model from which the rest of Europe, torn by religious strife and fanaticism, can learn.

Here, once again, we cannot help but look back and be amazed at how relevant his arguments remain. The particular church practices under dispute may not be the same (although in some churches, they are!) nor may we have to deal with arguments as poorly-conceived as some of those which Cartwright voiced. However, the restless spirit of revolutionary reform, that seeks to purify every corruption it sees in the Church, heedless of the consequences or the weight of history, is every bit as alive today as it was in Hooker's time. For us, too, these warring winds of private judgment have generated fierce conflicts and schisms when common cause is most needed. May we learn again from the wisdom of words such as these:

In the meantime, it might be that suspense of judgment and exercise of charity are safer and more fitting for Christian men than the hot pursuit of these controversies—in which those who are most eager to dispute may not always be the best able to judge. Our Lord shall in His own good time reveal those who are on His side, and those who are against Him. (14.6; *our version*, 90)

BOOK IV:

A reply to their assertion that our form of Church Polity is corrupted with Popish orders, rites, and ceremonies that certain Reformed Churches have removed and whose example we ought to have followed

THE IMPORTANCE OF LITURGY

How much use ceremonies have in the Church

(1.) IN ANCIENT times, such simplicity and gentleness of spirit prevailed in the world that highly esteemed leaders were always reluctant to pass judgment against anything that was publicly received by the Church of God, unless it was obviously evil. They were less inclined to the severity that delights to find fault with every small error, and more inclined to that charity which wants to give everything the benefit of the doubt. In this present age, zeal has conquered charity, and rhetoric has drowned meekness. Anyone can criticize anything, and no one is surprised by it. The rites and ceremonies of the Church—the very same ones that holy and virtuous men defended in face of profane and scornful foes—are now mocked by Christians themselves! Whether or not these criticisms are deserved will become apparent once we have heard their entire case against the established rituals of our church. Since our opponents themselves compare these matters to “mint and cumin,”¹ thereby admitting that they are not weighty

¹ Thomas Cartwright, *The Rest of the Second Replie Agaynst Master Whitgiftes Second Answer* [Heidelberg: M. Schirat, 1577], 171.

matters of polity, we hope that their wrangling over such small things will be neither too earnest nor too long.

(2.) Here we will not consider their particular objections against the orders of the church, but merely their general objections. Let us plainly distinguish the nature and use of these ceremonies, so that we may better know their different qualities. First we must take note that every public duty which God requires the Church to perform has not only essential, defining elements, but also a particular outward manner in which they are properly administered. The substance of all religious actions is declared to us by God Himself in few words; for example, in the case of the sacraments. Of these, St. Augustine says, “The word is added to the elemental substance, and it becomes a sacrament.”² Baptism is given by the element of water and with the prescribed words which the Church of Christ uses. The sacrament of the body and blood of Christ is administered in the elements of bread and wine, if the sacred words are added to them. However, a great deal more is necessary to properly administer these holy sacraments.

(3.) In determining the outward form of any religious action, our chief goal should be the edification of the church. Men are edified either when their minds are led by such actions to the consideration of some truth that demands our attention, or when their hearts are moved with any suitable affection—when they are in any way stirred up to an appropriate reverence, devotion, attention,

² Saint Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 55–111*, trans. John W. Rettig, Vol. 90 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 117 [Tractate 80, section 3].

and due regard. Therefore, not only speech, but also many different sensible means have always been thought necessary for this purpose. Of these, the eye is the most active and receptive of all our senses, the organ by which to best make a deep and lasting impression, and therefore we have not only prayers, readings, questions, and exhortations, but also visible signs, which are very effective at helping men to carefully know and remember the purpose for which they carry out such ceremonies. Nature itself must teach this, for do not men always mark any public actions of great weight (whether civil or sacred) with pomp and ceremony? Such visible solemnity, setting them apart from common actions, compels the eyes of the people to give them close attention. Words, both because they are so common and do not so strongly move our imagination, often fail to engage our attention, and so God has wisely provided that the public deeds of men should be marked not only with words, but also with certain visible actions, which make an easier and more memorable impression than mere speech.

Let us not presume to condemn as follies the things which the long experience of all ages has proven profitable, just because we do not always know the reason for them. A mind disposed to mock whatever it does not understand might ask why Abraham told his servant to put his hand under his thigh and swear (Gen. 24:9), instead of simply showing the strength of his oath by naming the Lord God of heaven and earth without that strange ceremony. In contracts and bargains, a man's word is sufficient to express his will. However, "Now this was the custom in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning exchanging, to confirm all things: a man drew

off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel” (Ruth 4:7). The Romans had a similarly strange ceremony when freeing a slave: the master presented his slave in a court, took him by the hand, and not only said before the public magistrate, “I will that this man become free,” but also struck him on the cheek, turned him around, and shaved off his hair, before the magistrate touched him three times with a rod, and he was given a cap and white garment. What was the point of all these things? How strange and seemingly unreasonable it was among the Hebrews that when someone wanted to make himself a perpetual servant, he was not only to testify in the presence of a judge, but as a visible token of it he was to have his ear bored through with an awl! There are innumerable examples of such things in both civil and religious actions, for they have use and force in both. “Sacred symbols are actually the perceptible tokens of the conceptual things. They show the way to them and lead to them.”³

(4.) Someone might object that if we add significant rites and ceremonies to religious duties, we are instituting new sacraments.⁴ However, I am sure they will not say that Numa Pompilius ordained a sacrament when he commanded the priests to “make sacrifices with their hands wrapped as far as the fingers, thus signifying that

³ Pseudo-Dionysius: *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 205 [2.2]. Hooker translated it as “the sensible things which religion hath hallowed, are resemblances framed according to things spiritually understood, whereunto they serve as a hand to lead, and a way to direct.”

⁴ Walter Travers, *A Full and Plaine declaration of ecclesiastical discipline out off the word off God and off the declininge of the churche of England from the same*, trans. Thomas Cartwright [Heidelberg: M. Schirat, 1574], 51.

faith must be kept and that when men clasp hands, there too is the sacred temple of faith.”⁵ Again, we must remind our opponents that they themselves do not think that all significant ceremonies are sacraments, since they deny that laying on of hands is a sacrament, yet they still deem it a forceful sign and reminder, as they say: “The party ordained by this ceremony was reminded that he had been separated to the work of the Lord, and that he had been taken as it were by the hand of God from among others, so as to learn not to account himself his own, nor to act according to his own will, but to consider that God has set him to a duty. If he discharges and accomplishes this duty, he can rest assured of a reward at the hands of God, but if not, he can expect vengeance.”⁶ Among great ceremonies, some of them *are* sacraments, whereas some are merely *like* sacraments. Sacraments are the signs and tokens of some general promised grace, which always truly descends from God to the soul that duly receives them. Other significant tokens are only like sacraments, yet not sacraments—which is not our distinction, but theirs. For concerning the Apostles’ laying on of hands, they themselves say: “they used this sign, or as it were sacrament.”⁷

⁵ Livy, *The History of Rome*, Books 1–5, trans. Valerie M. Warrior (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006), 33 [1.21].

⁶ Travers, *Ecclesiasticae disciplinae, et Anglicanae ecclesiae ab illa aberrationis, plena e verbo Dei, et dilucida explicatio* (Heidelberg: M. Schirat, 1574), fol. 51.

⁷ Travers, *Ecclesiasticae disciplinae*, fol. 52.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Hooker (1553/4—1600) was the pre-eminent theological writer of the Elizabethan church, and many would say in the entire history of the Church of England. He achieved this status despite holding no high office during his life and authoring only one major work, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, which remained incomplete at his untimely death. Trained at Oxford under the moderate Puritan theologian John Rainolds, Hooker went on, after a high-profile conflict with the presbyterian leader Walter Travers, to undertake a systematic criticism of radical Puritan theology and practice, offering the most influential defense of the Church of England (not yet conceived of as “Anglican” in a theologically distinctive sense, but simply as English Protestant).

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RICHARD HOOKER
MODERNIZATION PROJECT

Radicalism: When Reform Becomes Revolution
Richard Hooker's *Laws*, Preface

Divine Law and Human Nature
Richard Hooker's *Laws*, Book I

The Word of God and the Words of Man
Richard Hooker's *Laws*, Books II-III

In Defense of Reformed Catholic Worship
Richard Hooker's *Laws*, Book IV

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