

## **The Eucharistic Life** *Participation in the Life of God for the Life of the World*

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The judicious Richard Hooker, a prominent figure frequently referenced throughout Anglican history, is oftentimes misrepresented by progressives and conservatives alike; both parties acknowledge his place in our ethos and influence upon our polity, yet his voice is repeatedly silenced by individuals who claim statements he never made or intended to make. A perfect example of this is witnessed in the acclaimed three-legged stool, but the absurdity of those who advocate this foolishness as a teaching of Hooker have sorely misread (if they have read him at all) and applied him to fit whatsoever agenda they aspire to put into motion. It is entirely sorrowful, and rather repugnant, that so little attention and study is given to perhaps one of the greatest minds of Anglicanism, for encountering Hooker's writing is like stumbling onto an immense treasure chest, which continually bestows tremendous tokens of wealth to its finders.

One of these riches of immeasurable importance and worth is the notion of participation in the *vita Dei* through Jesus Christ, a misplaced concept needing to be recovered within the Anglican tradition, and a topic quite crucial to theological giants such as Hooker, Lancelot Andrewes, and Edward Pusey. Within Hooker's English summa, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, readers discover his perception regarding how human beings partake in the divine life in Christ and how the mutual indwelling of a shared life begins in the mystical waters of Baptism and is continually nourished by consuming the Holy Eucharist. Divine grace is assuredly imparted to the faithful in the Sacraments, but failure to connect participation in the *vita Dei* with joining in God's mission to the world, the *missio Dei*, is frequently neglected in the realignment of North American Anglicanism. Therefore, drawing upon Hooker's understanding of participation, particularly in feasting upon the Blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion, the Eucharistic life which the Church has and shares in Christ is to be lived, poured out, and laid down for the life of the world: a natural overflow of a shared life in Christ revealed and offered for the sake of those not yet reborn "to a living hope."<sup>1</sup>

### **Richard Hooker: A Biographical Synopsis**

Richard Hooker was born in 1554 around Exeter and was instructed by Bishop John Jewel at Corpus Christi College in Oxford, eventually becoming a Fellow in 1577 where he was made a deputy professor in Hebrew studies.<sup>2</sup> Although the date of Hooker's ordination remains uncertain<sup>3</sup>, his first public appearance was his sermon delivered at St. Paul's Cross in London in 1581 where he offered a moderate view of Calvin's predestination, which many scholars later on considered to be Arminian.<sup>4</sup> His first parish was in a village near Oxford; however, within three months Hooker was appointed as Master of the Temple, in 1585, where he had more direct contact with Puritans.<sup>5</sup> It was within this environment the appointed reader and former assistant to the previous Master, Walter Travers, argued for a presbyter system of church governance in

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<sup>1</sup> *English Standard Version Study Bible*. 1 Pet. 1:3 (Crossway, 2008) 2405.

<sup>2</sup> Cross, F.L. and E. A. Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church: Third Edition Revised* (Oxford University Press, 2005) 793.

<sup>3</sup> Paget, Francis. *An Introduction to the Fifth Book of Hooker's Treatise of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Clarendon Press, 1907) 102.

<sup>4</sup> Archer, Stanley. *Richard Hooker* (Twayne, 1983) 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

alignment with the biblical polity of the New Testament; nevertheless, although Travers was considered too radical to become Master, an arrangement was made where Hooker preached in the mornings and Travers in the afternoons.<sup>6</sup> This ultimately created conflict resulting in the silencing of Travers before his removal altogether.<sup>7</sup>

Hooker's marriage in 1588 to Joan Churchman, a daughter of one of his supporters in London, is oftentimes considered to be a most unhappy affair<sup>8</sup> although this has been frequently disputed amongst historical scholars; during his tenure at the Temple Hooker stayed with the wealthy and well-respected merchants, but overall the marriage was considered a "judicious" one no doubt due to the published work by C.J. Sisson on the covenant relationship.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, Hooker appears to have enjoyed a fruitful marriage, having spawned several offspring and benefited from financial stability. Sisson concludes:

His marriage was beyond question judicious, and we may believe that it was happy. It gave him an assured position, not only as the master of the Temple, the friend of Edwin Sandys, and one in favour at Canterbury, but also as a member of the family circles of a great London citizen of wealth and civil rank. And his wife's dowry provided financial security for himself and his children.<sup>10</sup>

Hooker began work on his magnum opus, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, during his time as Master of the Temple albeit the actual dating remains unknown: the work was constructed to defend and warrant the configuration of the Elizabethan Church, although the work "embodied a broadly conceived philosophical theology."<sup>11</sup> Challenging the literal interpretation of the Puritans, Hooker responded by constructing a theory of natural law, "which governs the universe and to which both ecclesiastical and civil polity are subservient, is the expression of God's supreme reasons, and everything, including the Scriptures, must be interpreted in the light of it."<sup>12</sup> In 1585 Hooker became Rector of Bishopsbourne in Kent where he served until his death in 1600.<sup>13</sup> Izaak Walton depicts Hooker in this manner: "an obscure, harmless man; a man in poor clothes, his loins usually girt in a coarse gown, or canonical coat; of a mean stature, and stooping, and yet more lowly in the thoughts of his soul; his body worn out, not with age, but with study."<sup>14</sup> To this day, Hooker is considered among the greatest theologians in the Anglican tradition, if not their chief.

### **Participation in the Vita Dei**

For Hooker, true happiness could not be found outside of participation in the life of God; to this end, namely union with God, humanity was created, yet "participation in God (and God in us) does not destroy our individuality", for such mystic intimacy nurtures and fosters distinctiveness "in community, the commonweal of mutual participation as it is meant to be."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Paget, 103.

<sup>9</sup> Archer, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Cross & Livingstone, 793.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 793.

<sup>13</sup> Archer, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Mursell, Gordon. *English Spirituality: From Earliest Times to 1700* (WJK, 2001) 314.

<sup>15</sup> Booty, John E. *Reflections on the Theology of Richard Hooker: An Elizabethan Addresses Modern Anglicanism* (The University of the South Press, 1998) 171.

To be sure, *theosis* is only fathomable “when seen in relation to a world filled, or rather drenched with Deity, a world of which it is possible to say, ‘The Word of God, who is God wills in all things and at all times to work the mystery of his embodiment.’”<sup>16</sup> The human heart, restless as it is, will only find bliss and solace in God; therefore, true contentment and ecstasy cannot be obtained by anything but desiring and enjoying God. Hooker states:

No good is infinite, but only God; therefore he our felicity and bliss. Moreover desire tendeth unto union with what that it desireth. If then in Him we be blessed, it is by force of participation and conjunction with Him. Again, it is not the possession of any good thing can make them happy which have it, unless they enjoy the thing wherewith they are possessed. Then are we happy therefore when fully we enjoy God, as an object wherein the powers of our soul are satisfied even with everlasting delight; so that although we be men, yet being unto God united we live as it were the life of God.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, those whose mental capacities pursue the ideal good and move ever forward to possess it “can rightly be said to be recipients of grace and participants in God through Christ—imperfectly as yet, but truly.”<sup>18</sup> Hooker notes:

Complete union with him must be according unto every power and faculty of our minds apt to receive so glorious an object. Capable we are of God both by understanding and will: by understanding, as He is that sovereign Truth which comprehendeth the rich treasures of all wisdom; by will, as He is that sea of Goodness whereof whoso tasteth shall thirst no more. As the Will doth now work upon that object by desire, which is at it were a motion towards the end as yet unobtained; so likewise upon the same hereafter received it shall work also by love....Whereas we now love the thing that is good, but good especially in respect of benefit unto us, we shall then love the thing that is good, only or principally for the goodness of beauty in itself. The soul being in this sort, as it is active, perfected by love of that infinite good, shall, as it is receptive, be also perfected with those supernatural passions of joy, peace and delight. All this endless and everlasting.<sup>19</sup>

As human beings participate in the life of Christ, they follow a trajectory out of decay and death unto life, and thus grow in the chief theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, so that they are led “slowly from this world of time into the great world which lasts forever.”<sup>20</sup> Yet this journey’s end is only made possible due to the reality and fact that the second Person of the Trinity became incarnate and came to our world in complete obedience to the Father to show us the path which leads to everlasting life.

While Hooker has a robust understanding concerning God, his perception regarding humanity is quite striking too, for although he acknowledges the frail and feeble nature of man, he remains incredibly optimistic about the potentiality of infinite possibilities: “The theological

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<sup>16</sup> Allchin, A. M. *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (Morehouse Publishing Company, 1988) 8-9.

<sup>17</sup> Hooker, Richard. John Keble, ed. *The Works of Richard Hooker: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity and Other Works as Edited by John Keble Arranged with Hooker’s Blueprint by Michael Russell*. Vol. I: I.XI.II (Create Space, 2010) 225.

<sup>18</sup> Booty, 171.

<sup>19</sup> Hooker, Vol. I: I.XI.III, 225-226.

<sup>20</sup> Allchin, 11.

virtues are in some sense natural to him. He can grow into faith and hope and love, in a way which is at once both human and divine. He can come to share in the object of his love.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Hooker’s understanding of participation is all about God’s gracious gift of grace, for salvation is none other than union with God, and this came at a great cost, as Athanasius affirms: “He indeed assumed humanity that we might become god.”<sup>22</sup> Oliver Loyer unpacks Hooker’s reckoning of participation as a gift even further:

Participation stresses at once the transcendence and the immanence of God. At the level of creation, God is in us, hidden at the centre of our being, precisely because he creates this being from nothing and is thus intimately exterior to it. At the level of redemption precisely because he gives us his grace, and in so doing, reveals his complete sovereignty. This is the paradox of Christianity, difficult to grasp but essential. It is the very paradox of gift. Being and grace are truly ours because God really communicates them to us; they are not simply lent to us. And yet they are not ours, for they do not belong to us by our own right.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, participation in the *vita Dei* is a most gracious gift to be received, entered into, and tangibly experienced by creatures that have no claim upon such a life-giving union apart from the lavishly, gracious charity of their Creator.

During the Reformation, the juggernaut issue of the time was concerning justification by faith, but whereas Martin Luther and Thomas Cranmer make the case that people “are saved by something that happens ‘out there’; and the spiritual life is a response, itself actuated by God’s grace, to what has already happened,” Hooker would not divorce 1) the divine initiative and human response, and 2) the internal and external processes of justification.<sup>24</sup> In Hooker’s mind, justification could not be separated from the notion of participation in the *vita Dei* through Jesus Christ, for he depicts participation in the divine life as “that mutual inward hold which Christ hath of us and we of him, in such sort that each posseseth other by way of special interest, property, and inherent copulation.”<sup>25</sup> In Christ, God became a human being, and because of the wondrous miracle of the Incarnation—of God taking on flesh—humankind is propelled into the life of God; however, as Hooker notes, justification is more than just the outward, salvific acts of Christ, but also

...our actual and real adoption into the fellowship of his saints in this present world. For in him we actually are by our actual incorporation into that society which hath him for their Head, and doth make together with him one Body, (he and they in that respect having one name,) for which cause, by virtue of this mystical conjunction, we are of him and in him even as though our very flesh and bones should be made continue with his. We are in Christ because he knoweth and loveth us even as parts of himself... We are

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>22</sup> Athanasius and C.S. Lewis. P. Lawson, trans. *On the Incarnation: The Treatise De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*. (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998) 93.

<sup>23</sup> Alchin, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Mursell, 316.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 316.

therefore adopted sons of God to eternal life by participation of the only-begotten Son of God, whose life is the well-spring and cause of ours.<sup>26</sup>

Hence, justification is more than just an external act of God's love to which we must respond (although that certainly is crucial), but it is also our adoption as the children and heirs of God whereby we have life-giving union with Christ. Mursell explains:

We participate in Christ partly by imputation, when what he did and suffered for us is imputed to us for righteousness; and partly by 'habitual and real infusion', when grace is bestowed on us both here and (more fully) in the world to come. The extent to which we participate in him depends not on the imputation of righteousness (by which we are adopted as God's children), but on how far we allow his grace to be infused into our lives.<sup>27</sup>

Participation in the *vita Dei* through the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist then are thus most necessary for union with Christ and "not optional", for "they are effective instruments of divine grace" by which we have a mutual indwelling: we in Christ and Christ in us.<sup>28</sup> Hence, the Sacraments not only point to our shared life in Christ, they are essential for life-giving union.

### **Sacraments and Participation**

Hooker postulates the Sacraments can only be offered by the Church, who is the "very mother of...new birth" for believers; only within Her bosom is satisfaction and regeneration offered, for regeneration does not stem from the reading and proclamation of the Word of God alone, but also from the administration of the Holy Sacraments.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Baptism and Eucharist would hold no meaning outside the Church, thus the explication of the Church as mother, for She is the vehicle by which new life is offered. Indeed we are in a sense born by the ministries of Word and Sacrament: the Church nourishes Her children so that they may have and mature in lively faith, keeping them in eternal life. This is why Hooker understood the Sacraments to be instrumental for keeping Christians in eternal life, for when the Sacraments are received, believers become participants in the life of Christ:

Sacraments are the powerful instruments of God to eternal life. For as our natural life consisteth in the union of body with soul, so our life supernatural in the union of the soul with God. And forasmuch as there is no union with God with man without that means between both which is both, it seemeth requisite that we first consider how God is in Christ, then how Christ is in us, and how the sacraments do serve to make us partakers of Christ.<sup>30</sup>

For Hooker, there can never be transformational change in the life of the faithful without the regeneration and spiritual nourishment which comes from partaking of the Sacraments.

The Church as our mother offers the Sacraments, but the enormous power received from these Sacraments stems from the quickening nature of the Holy Spirit. Hence, grace is essential

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 317.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 317.

<sup>28</sup> Booty, 112.

<sup>29</sup> Hooker, Richard. John Keble, ed. *The Works of Richard Hooker: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity as Edited by John Keble Arranged with Hooker's Blueprint by Michael Russel*. Vol 2: V.I.I. (CreateSpace, 2010) 277.

<sup>30</sup> Hooker, Vol 2: V.I.III, 278.

when discussing the spirituality of participation, for according to Hooker, grace “is God’s favor toward us, God’s taking the initiative working in us through the activity of the Spirit.”<sup>31</sup> Booty affirms:

Both baptism and Holy Communion, and the Word in and through them, are medicines of immortality and means of grace, instrumental to our participation in Christ. By them we live and grow in Christ’s Body, the church. Spirituality has to do with participation in the sacraments, which enable our participation in Christ and the mutual participation of the people of God as Christ indwells them by his Spirit. The Sacraments are not mere observances but instruments powerful to change us, reconciling us to God and to one another, turning us from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and from meaninglessness to meaning.<sup>32</sup>

Sacraments are purposed for this life to reconcile, transform, and renew, and are thus most necessary for participation in Christ. However, although the Eucharistic life is one which can only exist by incorporation into the Pascal Mystery through the mystical waters of Holy Baptism, the life-giving, mutual indwelling union to which the Eucharistic life testifies demonstrates the reality that Christians continually need to feast upon God in order that true lasting sustenance and nourishment can be obtained. In other words, in Baptism, new life in Christ begins; in the Eucharist, that life is fed and sustained.

### **Hooker’s Understanding of Holy Eucharist**

In V.67 of *Laws*, Hooker believed a person should not partake and receive the Holy Eucharist before being incorporated into the life of Christ and the Body of the Church through Holy Baptism “because no dead thing is capable of nourishment”; thus, before one is to be well supplied with spiritual food and drink, one must first be born.<sup>33</sup> Like Baptism, the Eucharist lavishes grace upon the beneficiary, but whereas Baptism commences our life in Christ, Eucharist renews it, for the souls of the faithful “need this Sacrament just as a body needs nourishment”, and “the grace of the Sacrament is as present as the food that we eat and drink.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, life is the chief *telos* of humanity, and the life begun in Baptism must be fed in the Eucharist.

Hooker compares and contrasts the experiences between Baptism and Eucharist, noting how in the prior grace is received “without any sense or feeling of the gift which God bestoweth,” and in the latter “we know by grace what the grace is which God giveth us.”<sup>35</sup> Yet, how is Hooker’s definition of sense or feeling distinguished from knowing? Vince comments: “The distinction between “feeling” and “knowing” can be explained by reference to the different mental capacities of the baptized child and of the adult communicant.”<sup>36</sup> Regardless, grace is freely given in the Eucharistic feast and is a means by which we partake in Christ and participate in the life of God. Hence, Hooker emphasizes a real participation over that of real presence because the soul is the recipient of Christ; it should be noted that Hooker does not unequivocally

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<sup>31</sup> Booty, 173.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 174-175.

<sup>33</sup> Hooker, Vol. 2: V.LXVII.I, 406.

<sup>34</sup> Russel, Michael. *The Works of Richard Hooker: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity and Other Works as Edited by John Keeble Arranged with Hooker’s Blueprint by Michael Russell*. Vol. 2 (CreateSpace, 2010) 46.

<sup>35</sup> Hooker, Vol. 2: V.LXVII.I, 406.

<sup>36</sup> Vince, 426.

repudiate either the Roman concept of transubstantiation or the Lutheran notion of consubstantiation, but rather affirms that within the Eucharistic setting, “implied in the idea of participation, the static either-or of such answers by implication renders the questions meaningless.”<sup>37</sup> What is explicitly apparent within Hooker’s writing is the concept that “this heavenly food is given for the satisfying of our empty souls, and not for the exercising of our curious and subtle wits.”<sup>38</sup> Simply, the feast is too wondrous for our human faculties.

In V.67.5, Hooker elaborates on Eucharist as a real participation of Christ, whereby we receive eternal life through participation: “Our eternal life is the effect of a cause, the receipt of the body and blood.”<sup>39</sup> Borrowing from his former mentor, Bishop John Jewel, who distinguished between the *sign* of the bread and wine and the *signified* of the body and blood, Hooker offers explanation of this association:

The bread and cup are his body and blood because they are causes instrumental upon the receipt whereof the participation of his body and blood ensueth. For that which produceth any certain effect is not vainly nor improperly said to be that very effect whereunto it tendeth. Every cause is in the effect which groweth from it. Our souls and bodies quickened to eternal life are effects the cause whereof is the Person of Christ, his body and his blood are the true wellspring out of which this life floweth. So that his body and blood are in that very subject whereunto they minister life not only by effect or operation, even as the influence of the heavens is in plants, beasts, men, and in every thing which they quicken, but also by a far more divine and mystical kind of union, which maketh us one with him even as he and the Father are one.<sup>40</sup>

In other words, participation is not the melding and synthesis of divine and human life, but rather, a “mutual dynamic relationship” which Hooker further explicates by expanding on the soul as the recipient of Christ through the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>41</sup> What this appears to suggest is that the evidence of Christ’s presence within the recipient can only be distinguished and made known through experience; the bread and wine are taken into a human being and function in the same manner as water does within Baptism, for like the water, “they cannot be held to “contain” grace before it is received by the communicant.”<sup>42</sup> Hooker’s spirituality regarding the Eucharist here suggests that recipients “are capable of being transformed or transfigured only to the extent to which we are united with Christ, because the Eucharistic presence is always primarily personal.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, it is a vain thing to seek explanation on how the grace of Christ is imparted when Hooker argues that Christ truly does fulfill His promise to the faithful:

A thing which no way can either further or hinder us howsoever it stand, because our participation of Christ in this sacrament dependeth on the co-operation of his omnipotent power which maketh it his body and blood to us, whether with change or without alteration of the element such as they imagine we need not greatly to care nor inquire.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Vince, 428.

<sup>38</sup> Hooker, Vol. 2: V.LXVII.IV, 409.

<sup>39</sup> Russell, 47.

<sup>40</sup> Hooker, Vol. 2: V.LXVII.V, 410.

<sup>41</sup> Vince, 430.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 431.

<sup>43</sup> Mursell, 318.

<sup>44</sup> Hooker, Vol. 2: V.LXVII.VI, 411.

Therefore, as Hooker has articulated, the fruit of this Holy Meal is none other than “participation of the body and blood of Christ.”<sup>45</sup> Christ accomplishes what He has clearly pledged—a shared life of everlasting union.

In V.67.7, Hooker identifies participation in Christ as a mystical union by which the complete Person of Christ “as a mystical Head” is transmitted to the communicant, and every soul which has received such incorporation is thus “a mystical member” of Christ.<sup>46</sup> Because of this participation in Christ, the recipient not only receives Christ, but also, the Holy Spirit “to sanctify them as it sanctifieth him which is their head”; this ultimately leads to “a real transmutation of our souls and bodies from sin to righteousness, from death and corruption to immortality and life.”<sup>47</sup> This astonishing and gracious transformation expresses the utter dependence of humanity upon the power of the divine life at work within the mystical union:

In the sacraments which are perceived by the senses there is the effect of eternal life, and we are joined to Christ, not so much by a bodily as by a spiritual union. For He is made bread and flesh and blood, He too is made the food and substance and life of His church which He calls His body, giving to it a participation of the Spirit.<sup>48</sup>

Hence, no boasting can be made concerning the power of feeble men, women or children; only true and rightful praise can be given to the mighty strength and awesome power of Christ.<sup>49</sup> In other words, the power and presence of Christ within the Eucharist changes us for the better, for by consuming it and taking it into ourselves, we have real participation in Christ: “Participation in the body and blood of Christ does nothing else but unite us to that which we take, so that in all things spiritual and corporal we bear about Him in Whom we die, in Whom we are buried, in Whom we are raised up again.”<sup>50</sup> The consumption of bread and wine is certainly a physical act itself, but this particular deed is not the eating and drinking to which Christ referenced in John 6:52-58; the feasting of the flesh and blood of Christ is that of mystical participation, which is life-giving<sup>51</sup>, for “when we eat it, then have we life in us, being joined to that Flesh which has been made life.”<sup>52</sup>

The *via media* of Anglicanism then is defended in V.67.11 as Hooker seeks to bring the Church Fathers to aid his position. In this, Hooker claims that Christ is really present in the Eucharist, although not corporally, and that only Christ can transform the consecrated elements into “what they would not otherwise be”; in addition, for recipients the elements become “mystical instruments” which bring about participation in Christ.<sup>53</sup> Hence, mystical participation is what Hooker presents, and as Russell highlights: “It is hard to find any or even one of the Fathers who conceived anything other than a mystical participation”<sup>54</sup> concerning Holy Eucharist. The Roman, Lutheran and varied Reformed views of how Christ is present in the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 411.

<sup>46</sup> Hooker, Vol. 2: V.LXVII.VII, 412.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 412-413.

<sup>48</sup> Hill, W. Speed, ed. *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker: Vol. VI, Part II—Introductions; Commentary Books V-VIII* (Medieval & Renaissance Text & Studies, 1993) 768.

<sup>49</sup> Hooker, Vol. 2: V.LXVII.VII, 413.

<sup>50</sup> Hill, 768.

<sup>51</sup> Hooker, Vol. 2: V.LXVII.IX, 414.

<sup>52</sup> Hill, 769.

<sup>53</sup> Vince, 435.

<sup>54</sup> Russell, 48.

Eucharist are not to be given much thought or time according to Mr. Hooker; his main concern is how the grace and life of Christ are experienced in the life of the recipient because whereas Baptism begins our life in Christ, Eucharist “consummates or makes perfect” that life.<sup>55</sup>

### **A Participatory Spirituality of the Eucharist**

According to Hooker, the Eucharist is most necessary for a life which participates in the *vita Dei*, for by partaking of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, we are well satisfied. This nourishment is not only a healing balm which soothes the ailments our physical bodies, but is also sustenance for our souls keeping us in eternal life. Naturally, the words of our Lord and Savior come to the forefront of our minds, for there is no life within us unless we partake of Christ’s Body and Blood.<sup>56</sup> When receiving the Eucharist, the story of God is recapitulated, emphasizing the divine initiative and the gift of new and unending life bestowed upon us due to the salvific acts of Christ. In partaking of Christ in the Holy Meal, believers are replenished in order that they might produce good fruit, continuing to be conformed more fully to the *imago Dei*. This fruit is a result of the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of the believer, and it not only exists for the transformation of the saints so that they may have union with God, but also so that they may be engaged in *missio Dei*. Thus, as it is in Prayer Book liturgy, the faithful who have received the Holy Eucharist are then sent out to live the Eucharistic life within the world. Beyond the walls of the sanctuary and the grounds of the church campus lies a vast mission field, and the saints of God, who have been imparted with the grace and life of Christ, are meant to participate in God’s mission wherever they happen to be. This is beautifully expressed within the post-Communion prayer in the Irish Prayer Book:

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ’s body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name...<sup>57</sup>

The *vita Dei* which the Church participates in is for the life of the world, which, if truly fathomed, radically shifts individual and communal thinking and praxis because the Church exists for the *gloria Dei*, and the people of the reign of God are meant to reveal that glory to the world. Thus, union with Christ propels the saints into the heart of mission.

### **The Eucharistic Life and the Gloria Dei**

Much has been written, taught, and preached over the last several decades concerning the missional Church, however, the Church existing for the *gloria Dei* is not widely emphasized within academia or the neighborhood congregation. Although the efforts of recapturing a theology of the Gospel, the kingdom, and cultural engagement are extremely invigorating and correct, the crucial notion that the Body of Christ reflecting the glory of God and revealing it to the world remains repeatedly undeveloped. To continue to forsake this important topic of the *gloria Dei* is not only an injustice to missiology, but also the extraordinary gracious and salvific acts God has done on behalf of humanity. Moreover, when this subject is continually neglected

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>56</sup> Jn. 6:53.

<sup>57</sup> *The Irish Book of Common Prayer* (The Columba Press, 2004) 220.

it robs the Church of one of its key characteristics relating to its *telos* in the divine plan: the redeemed *laos* of God have not only been brought into another domain where Christ reigns in majesty, splendor, and victory, but they have also been brought into, and participate in, the *vita Dei*, the divine life.

Consequently, it is because of this grandeur which the Church knows by its union with Christ that, like a mirror, it reflects the radiance of God back to its divine source in worship, but also reveals said glory outwards toward another kingdom living in the shadow of decay and death. In other words, *reflection* and *revelation* convey the *gloria Dei*. This is the purpose of the new humanity bestowed with the name, *ecclesia*. In a similar way the moon reflects the sunlight and illuminates the darkness of night, so too, the Church emulates God's glory to the world: it is by its participation in the divine life that the Church finds itself for the life of the world.

### **The Glory of the Gospel**

The metanarrative of the Bible unveils the loving intentions of a Trinitarian God for creatures who had rebelled and fallen into the captivity of sin and death. The opening chapters of the biblical story testify that humankind was envisioned to be unlike any other aspect of the created order having been made in the image and likeness of God. When humanity fell, the likeness remained but the image became distorted and thus needed restoration. As Richard Bauckham notes in *Bible and Mission*, the redemption plan unfolding within the pages of salvation history stresses God's movement from the particular to the universal. This trajectory demonstrates the divine initiative to restore the image to its fullness: God calls to one man and makes out of him a nation and people who are not only to glorify him, but also to reveal his glory to the surrounding nations, namely the whole world.<sup>58</sup> Yet this chosen people struggled with such a relationship and purpose, failing to reflect and reveal the glory of God. In these ashes where the Old Testament concludes, the promised hope comes in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Daystar, who is the light of the world and the true Israel, announcing and embodying the Good News of God's reign—the kingdom of God.

The origins of the Church are found in the Paschal Mystery, specifically the life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.<sup>59</sup> Through Christ, the people of God are invited to participate in the divine life, receive the gift of the kingdom and enter into it, and exist as God's new society amidst the old epoch. The *imago Dei* is restored by Christ taking on human flesh in order that humanity might share in the life of God. To participate in this life in Christ is to abide under the reign of God; Jesus introduced this message within the Gospels by calling for *metanoia* and faith—a realignment of life to God's rule. This rule is eschatological in two distinct ways: 1) an 'already' aspect of the kingdom, meaning the new age has been inaugurated in the Person of Jesus Christ, particularly by means of his saving death and victorious resurrection, and 2) a 'not yet' aspect of the kingdom, which will be consummated at the *eschaton*. In other words, God's new age of justice, truth, and peace has invaded and broken into the old era of injustice, falsehood, and violence while we wait for Christ's exultant return.

In addition to its eschatological features, the kingdom also is covenantal; it entails a completely fresh reorientation of life conformed to the image of Christ. This is no more clearly visible than in the Beatitudes found within the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel:

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<sup>58</sup> Bauckham, Richard. *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Baker Academic, 2005) 11.

<sup>59</sup> Küng, Hans. *The Church* (Sheed and Ward, 1967) 14.

The issue becomes not benefits to be received, but conversion: a change of mind, a change of actions and relationships, a total reorientation of life. God does indeed bless human life, but the blessing of the reign of God flow out of a new relationship with God that is expressed in radical discipleship. The call is to hear the teaching of Jesus—to learn from him—and, forsaking all other obligations and loyalties, to trust and follow only him.<sup>60</sup>

This ethic is given for the new covenant community, who is reconciled not only to God through Jesus Christ, but also to one another; its life, faith, and witness is thus a sign pointing toward the “future-present”<sup>61</sup> reality of God’s kingdom. All these characteristics as the people of the reign of God hone in on the recovery of the *imago Dei*—its significance and beauty—and participation in the divine life, reiterating the wisdom of Irenaeus: “For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God.”<sup>62</sup> The glory of the Gospel then is the announcement of the reign of God, which calls for human beings to respond with a comprehensive alteration of life to the conformity of the image of Jesus Christ—a life that participates in the *vita Dei*; this total reorientation of existence is a gift of God’s saving grace demonstrated by the ongoing sustaining power of the Holy Spirit and *sapiential*<sup>63</sup> knowledge. Simply put, the people of the reign of God reflect the glorious *imago Dei* through participating in the divine life, and this magnificent life is practiced, offered, and revealed for the sake of the world.

### **Reflecting the Glory through Lively Faith**

In discerning the glory reflected in the life of the Church, one must first start within the confines of corporate worship. It appears overtly obvious that American Christians should indeed expect to encounter the divine as they are called out to gather to worship and exalt the Triune God. Unfortunately in many churches this is not the case, however, if such an encounter occurs (as it should), it leaves us unsettled in a beneficial, convenient manner, for worship should certainly foster effective change within the covenant community, not leaving the *laos* of God in neutral stagnation to where they revert to former ways of living within the city of man:

If we truly meet God, we will never be the same. Yet in our worship practices, we have a tendency to stay the same. We go through the motions again and again, either failing to meet God or not prepared to let it affect us. We are like people who go through years of therapy because they seem to like the talking, but they do little of the work that fosters real change. Millions of American Christians spend hours in worship and yet lead lifestyles indistinguishable in priorities, values and practices from those in the broader culture.<sup>64</sup>

This lukewarm nature is why Eucharistic participation is always a timely topic to emphasize, for within the Sacrament the people of God encounter Christ in the Bread and the Wine, partaking of

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<sup>60</sup> Brownson, James V., Inagrace T. Dietterich, Barry A. Harvey, and Charles C. West. *StormFront: The Good News of God* (William B. Eerdmans, 2003) 106.

<sup>61</sup> Küng, Hans. *The Church* (Sheed and Ward, 1967) 56. This language is yet another way of explicating the already and not yet dimensions of life in the kingdom of God.

<sup>62</sup> Irenaeus. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. “Against Heresies.” *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Vol. 1—The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus* (Hendrickson, 2004) 490.

<sup>63</sup> *Sapiential* knowledge is obtained by that of participation or union; it is a wisdom-love comprehension and understanding of the Godhead which can only be recognized by being called and brought into the divine life.

<sup>64</sup> Labberton, Mark. *The Danger Act of Worship: Living God’s Call to Justice* (IVP, 2007) 73-74.

the divine life. In the Anglican tradition, after eating this spiritual food, the Church is then sent out to live the Eucharistic life in the world. Thus, in Holy Communion, there is always a divine encounter where participants come in great anguish, need, and longing, finding food which nourishes and satisfies and a chalice that overflows with grace and tremendous blessing. Sacramental participation is rudimentary for the Church to enjoy the bliss of mystical union with Christ; furthermore, as believers inwardly digest the life of Christ, they are equipped with grace and power to go forth from the boundaries of the sanctuary walls to join God in whatsoever he has called them to do as co-heirs of the kingdom.

Although Eucharist is usually celebrated weekly in most liturgical churches, there are a number of ancient, established tools which promote participation in the *vita Dei*. One fantastic routine demonstrating the Church reflecting the *gloria Dei* through lively faith can be found in the spiritual practices of praying the offices on a daily basis. The patterns of Morning and Evening Prayer were crafted in such a manner by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer to direct the desires of the English nation toward the divine by saturating worshippers in Scripture and prayer modeled after Benedictine practice. As British colonialism pervaded the globe, the discipline became established throughout the Empire. Additionally, in recent years, a number of Protestants have discovered the treasures of Prayer Book liturgy, arguing for Christians to embrace the ancient ways of prayer habitually throughout the week:

Celtic and Benedictine orders were formed in cultures radically different from our own, and yet they were also formed in times that had affinities with our moment. For the Celtic missionaries, the world was in flux, with little sense of solidity and direction...The Celts formed their movements of transformation in what for them were new spaces where the world seemed to be coming apart and everything was shifting and changing.<sup>65</sup>

This daily ritual of immersing oneself in the double-helix of Scripture and prayer is not only catechetical in essence for formation to Christ, it also expresses the concept that in giving glory to God in worship, the act itself changes the individual, equipping and filling them with grace so that what is reflected back is none other than a more developed image of Christ in the Beloved. In other words, in the sacrifice of praise, God is ever-changing his people in order that the *imago Dei* they bear might be conformed more fully to that of Jesus Christ. Participation in the *vita Dei* is the substance of true, lively faith; this faith is most evidently visible in the pursuit of the divine through partaking of the Sacramental life of the Church as well as the consistent chase of regularly seeking the radiance of eternal bliss through the transforming power of Word and prayer. In this way, the *gloria Dei* is reflected in the Church, which then reveals the divine glory to the world through prophetic witness.

### **Revealing the Glory through Prophetic Witness**

Living out the Eucharistic life in the world implies a sending and an incarnational presence patterned in a similar fashion after Christ; thus, the culture of the kingdom will meet the culture of the world, which is hostile toward the Gospel message and the people of God. Cultural engagement, therefore, is of vital importance and can be quite difficult, especially since western culture continually differentiates between two worlds of personal values and public facts: "...the Church and its preaching belong to the world of "values."...The Church is not generally perceived as concerned with facts, with the realities which govern the world and which

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<sup>65</sup> Roxburgh, Alan J. *Missional Map-Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition* (Jossey-Bass, 2010) 149-150.

we shall in the end have to acknowledge whether we like them or not.”<sup>66</sup> This sort of thinking is false, for the Gospel is not some message to be pushed or bullied to the private realm of personal values when the overall meaning expressed is universal; therefore, the Gospel is public fact, for it cannot be true only for some. Consequently, the Church reveals the *gloria Dei* by its very nature of being called out into the public sphere:

The public nature of the church’s identity, its message, and its vocation of worship and witness, places the people of God squarely in the public life of the world...Once we are clear that “church” is not an organization to which one belongs but a body of people sent, once we are clear on who we are, then where we are is not the facility on the corner but people pressed into the fabric of life, living it in all the public dimensions shared by others.<sup>67</sup>

This prophetic witness revealing the *gloria Dei* to the world carries with it the notion that the people of God are not just for the kingdom, but also, for the world in the hope that cultures and people groups may enter into and abide under the rule and reign of God, participating in the divine life.

This Eucharistic life is clearly seen within Raymond Fung’s, *The Isaiah Vision*, an evangelism strategy for local congregations. Being for the world, but obviously not of it, has gargantuan implications for prophetic witness, explicitly in these two dimensions: 1) the people of God living out the way of the cross by laying down their lives for the world in sacrificial involvement, and 2) eschatological elements where the Church embodies the new age in the midst of the present old one in terms of justice, mercy and reconciliation. All of this suggests the Church seeking out partners within the world, allowing the revelation of God’s glory to be an invitation to reflect and participate in the divine embrace. In other words, prophetic witness ends with challenge and encouragement to come reflect the *gloria Dei* and be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ by participating in life of God.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

If the reader takes Hooker’s understanding of participation, or union with God seriously, a whole new world of depth and prospects are possible in terms of how “further up” and “further in”<sup>68</sup> we can grow in our love and knowledge of God (which most naturally begins in this life and continues throughout eternity into new creation) and the ministries that flow out of that union for the life of this present world. If we follow Hooker’s leading, we can truly make the connection between Holy Eucharist and mission, coming to the conclusion that the Church is called to live the Eucharistic life—to be the light of the world—for the glory of God. Therefore, there is no need for church growth gimmicks, no need for smoke and mirrors, or fancy packaging and marketing. There is simply this: participation in the *vita Dei*; a chalice of wine, a paten of bread, and grace bestowed and given to the communicant to be lived for the glory of God in the world. The connotations of Hooker’s reckoning on union with Christ are gargantuan; he beckons his readers to hear, enter into, and continually experience a life-giving union which lasts forever, world without end.

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<sup>66</sup> Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Eerdmans, 1989) 7.

<sup>67</sup> Hunsberger, George R. *The Story that Chooses Us: A Tapestry of Missional Vision* (Eerdmans, 2015) 135-136.

<sup>68</sup> Lewis, C. S. *The Last Battle* (Harper Collins, 1984) 181.

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