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Redeeming Free Grace: Thomas Hooker and the Contested Language of Salvation[1]

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It was with a flourish of grace-borne optimism that Thomas Hooker opened his massive redaction of a career's worth of "preparationist" theology, the posthumously published *Application of Redemption*. The sermons in which this two-volume work consists were published in London in 1656, under the editorial direction of the Independent divines Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye, but had been preached in New England in the aftermath of the "free-grace controversy" of the mid-1630s and rewritten by Hooker in the 1640s in order to "refine and expand" his previous explications of soul work.[2] Setting concerned sights upon old England's luxuriant antinomian problem, Goodwin and Nye turned to Hooker, late of Chelmsford and Connecticut, in hopes that a strong dose of spiritual discipline might restore moral order to a disordered land. The God of the preparationists, it has been remarked, contributed centrally to an "emerging culture of stamina and rigor"; by the 1650s, however, the God who made his orderly favors known "by a long procession of hints, of interpretable suggestions" had relinquished the reins of moral control.[3] None was better qualified than Hooker to interrogate fault for the sake of the regaining of favor.

Among puritans, Hooker's was the premier voice of contrition, of the penitential abjection of the soul, of the cultivation of grief and self-loathing—a tumultuous process of severance from sin that initiates the sinner's purification in readiness for union with Christ. Commending Hooker's treatise, Goodwin and Nye expressed misgiving at the morbid consequences of their man's fondness for preparatory hardships of soul. Sin musters a formidable capacity to preserve itself against grace. Grace,

[1]Michael McGiffert read the article in draft and administered both hearty encouragement and acute criticism. I cannot thank him enough. I am also grateful to the journal's two readers, who asked me to rethink a host of matters of substance and style.

[2]Sargent Bush, Jr., *The Writings of Thomas Hooker: Spiritual Adventures in Two Worlds* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 152–153. For a superb analysis of the free-grace controversy, see Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636–1641* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[3]Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 51.

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indeed, surprises for its seeming fragility; it appears too thinly spread to contain the constantly mutating machinations of Hookerian sin. The reader of Hooker's *Application of Redemption* is in the presence of puritanism in authoritative, yet excruciated, deliberation. The pages of the book are saturated by sin—its conspiracies and rebellions, its unholy alliance with Satan, the pains for which it is responsible and the sorrows that it occasions, the all-but-endless lengths to which it will go to elude the pursuing posse of Christ, Spirit, and conscience. Frequently enough, in the dramas staged by Hooker's "practical" voice, the power of grace seems to be mismatched in contest with its more resourceful enemy; sin, time and again, is too foxy for grace.

The puritan idiom of "free grace" had been appropriated by heretics. David Como, focusing on the London of the 1620s and early 1630s, has given us a splendid account of this story of appropriation; and Michael Winship has deftly explored the tug of war over free grace that raged, shortly afterward, in New England.[4] How are we to assess Hooker's response to the crisis of free grace? Preparation for conversion possessed his thinking. Conversion itself, and the consciousness of conversion—special fruits of free grace—seem to tug, intermittently, at a mind given to concerns of a more preparatory character. Did Hooker, then—obsessed by the task of articulating the plan and pitfalls of preparation—simply evade the challenge posed by adversaries on the field of free grace? Did he relinquish a lexicon for which preparationist discourse is not particularly well fitted? Or did he take the fight to outrageous enemies for the sake of stinging where he might and reclaiming what he could?

Hooker did take the fight to his enemies. And in so doing he sought to make his own redemption of free grace, which heretics had unconscionably dissevered from the ways of godliness. This is not a line of inquiry that scholars have disposed themselves to pursue. Hooker's preparationist theology has been expounded, with fine-grained sensitivity, by Sargent Bush. Bush took care to observe that Hooker could speak of the freeness of grace, but in the context of a comprehensive analysis of Hooker's many writings the matter of the preacher's free-grace commitment remained relatively unelaborated.[5] Andrew Delbanco has mapped Hooker's exemplary deportment—rancorous, sarcastic, self-obsessed—in advancing a new-world "transition from a religion of grace to a culture of discipline." Hooker's New England discourse consumes itself, paradigmatically, in self and sin, undercutting "God's sovereignty and the possibility of redemptive ecstasy." The "rule-monger" takes his leave of free grace, an idea now too dangerous

[4]David R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre–Civil-War England* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004); Winship, *Making Heretics*.

[5]Bush, *Writings of Hooker*, 254, 277, and, for preparation, esp. chaps. 7–9.

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to handle.[6] More recently, a hefty chunk of Michael Colacurcio's *Godly Letters* has addressed the preparationist "violence" of Hooker's soundings from his New England pulpit—soundings, sprinkled with allusions to "free grace," that stretched out, endlessly, toward the goal of the sinner's possession of Christ but never definitively broke off from the soul-piercing application of contrition.[7] The distention of preparation—contrition followed, eventually, by humiliation; acts of painful "cutting off" from corruption presaging the "fitting" and "hewing" of the tormented soul—can be thought of as a Hookerian specialty. Yet the point has been made that puritan divines, in general, were practitioners of preparation for conversion, that each, in his own way, was a preparationist, for whom various conceptualizations of preconversionary experience were available.[8] Even the less law-minded of puritans could esteem the conscience-shaking gift of preparation. This, as Mark Dever has noted in a study of Richard Sibbes, could be thought of as a gift of the Holy Spirit.[9] And no less a "spiritist" than John Cotton acknowledged that the Spirit works preparatively upon the unconverted, first by binding them "under the sense of [divine] wrath unto fear of Damnation" and then—having come as an "earthquake" to press them "down to the nethermost hell"—by requiring them to experience a "burning" and "blasting" of the "iron" heart's "fleshly" piety, a renunciation of "false confidence" in "legal" deeds.[10]

But Cotton, insistent advocate of free grace, was not one to distend preparatory process; and a case has been made for the construction of twin orthodoxies in seventeenth-century Massachusetts. Of these, one is identified as "preparationist," "cooperative," "introspective," "moralist": attributes of a religion to which Hooker is said to have subscribed. The other—less given to intense scrutiny of the soul's pious pains—is noted for its fixedness on the

[6]Delbanco, *Puritan Ordeal*, 179–183.

[7]Michael J. Colacurcio, *Godly Letters: The Literature of the American Puritans* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 254, 277, 325.

[8]Winship, *Making Heretics*, 69–70, 268 n. 14, 269 n. 18, 270 n. 25; William K. B. Stoever, *"A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven": Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 192–199. Winship and Stoever valuably correct Perry Miller's influential "'Preparation for Salvation' in Seventeenth-Century New England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (June 1943): 253–286.

[9]Mark E. Dever, *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2000), 125–132, a discussion that judiciously rectifies the analysis of Sibbes offered in Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966).

[10]John Cotton, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (London: Peter Parker, 1671), 14–19, 24, 34–36, 52, 114–120, 127, 170; *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History*, ed. David D. Hall, 2nd ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), 54, 178. For an insightful comparison of Hooker and Cotton on preparation, see Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 80–85.

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"benevolence" and "transformative love" of a merciful God, before the gift of whose "free grace" the soul stands unencumbered by Hookerian "conditions and contracts." For Janice Knight, Hooker and his preparationist colleagues presided over the new-world transplantation of William Ames's "contractual" piety; contrariwise, Cotton diffused a "Sibbesian" spirituality in Massachusetts, giving voice to the "more emotional and even mystical" strain of orthodoxy pioneered by Richard Sibbes and John Preston.[11] Knight's thesis, delivered with refreshing panache, comes at the cost of a distorting, and impoverishing, pursuit of master tropes and dominant tendencies. The "orthodoxies in Massachusetts" seem to be too neatly packaged into their discrete compartments; propensities too keenly favored effect a straitjacketing of discourses. The model of twin orthodoxies suppresses the preparationist impulses of Knight's "Sibbesians"—their esteem for therapeutic wounds and sorrows, their commendation of introspective disciplines. Theodore Dwight Bozeman offers a powerful and erudite alternative, but the law-wrought rigors of the "precisianist strain" are overdrawn, rendering Bozeman's precisianists too forgetful of Christ and his grace. Hooker, curiously, holds little interest for Bozeman; but, in Knight's analysis, Hooker dilates with singular conviction upon the themes of divine sovereignty and wrath and of human sin and devotional toil. Absent from Knight's treatment of the Hookerian lexicon is "free grace"—a term operative at the epicenter of doctrinal controversy in both Englands.[12]

Free grace need not be wrenched apart from sin suppression, as if each energized its own orthodoxy. Sibbes presented himself as a judicious, almost diffident, wielder of the preparatory hammer: the application of the remedy needed to be proportionate to the debilitation of the malady.[13] Cautious lest the sinner be crushed by the rod of discipline, Sibbes, however, was not binding himself to be soft on sin, the presence of which provoked sightings of divine justice and majesty. Sibbes is at his most arresting when pronouncing upon preparation. God operates by "contrary" turns: terrorizing in order to comfort, dispensing wrath before love, propagating law before gospel, abasing then glorifying.[14] Relations with Christ were effortful;

[11]Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 2–3, 119, and passim.

[12]On the "precisianist" accents of Sibbes, Preston, and Cotton, see Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 5–6, 108, 111, 140, 142–143, 152 n. 11, 153 n. 13, 201, chap. 11, 242–243, 260, 263–264, 268 n. 21. Bozeman speaks of Hooker's "elaborate preparationist rituals" (235), but his piety is not subjected to close scrutiny. For Knight's Hooker, see *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, esp. 78–81, 96–99. "Free grace," for Knight, is exclusively the property of the "Sibbesians": 82, 112, 121–122.

[13]Richard Sibbes, *Works*, ed. Alexander Grosart (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1862–1864), 1:55.

[14]Ibid., 1:85, 122–123, 207, 227; 3:467; 4:203–204, 216, 219, 221–223, 285.

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a daily casting of spiritual accounts was required. Healing by way of the law's pedagogic "lash"; the "bitter" then the "sweet"; "sorrow" before "joy": these were Sibbesian essentials.[15] "Comfort" might begin with "despair," so why go "sound to hell" if you can go "bruised to heaven"?[16] Preston, too, vouched for the incipient marks and ongoing means of preparation's tough love, likening God-given sorrow to a "spring" that "runnes constantly." "An assiduous and daily repentance" would punctuate the godly life henceforth from the point of humbling.[17] Antinomians excoriated the misfit between grace and pain. Sibbes and Preston—and Hooker, relentlessly—delivered a contrary lesson: that God's procedural mode as disciplinarian and purifier is not retrenched by his free grace. Free to commit himself to operational rules of his own determination, God resolves to observe a process in fitting the soul for Christ. His mercy administers experimental tutelage, for the sake of which he casts the soul into depths in order that he might lift it up, requiring that the soul, during its descents and ascents, make use of its own affections and capabilities in the course of its struggles with sin. So conceived, free grace manifests itself in the very preparation that heretics, in the name of free grace, aspersed for its privileging of law over gospel, of grief over gift.[18]

I would like to argue that Hooker was deeply unsettled by the threat that an assortment of heretics—most spectacularly, law-hating "enthusiasts" and "Familists"—posed to the integrity of free grace, and that he set himself to reclaim, for godly use, that besieged article of puritan faith. To argue thus is not to question the profundity of Hooker's allegiance to preparationist divinity, nor to deny that Hooker was disconcerted by Cotton's predilection for a construal of grace characterized by "immediacy" of intervention and "absoluteness" of application. I wish simply to insist that we diminish Hooker's achievement if we overlook the evangel that he enunciated and for whose sake he fought battles with heretics.

The opening of Hooker's *Application of Redemption* fittingly sets a scene for present purposes. Of the gospel's "heavenly Truths," the application of the "rich Redemption" purchased by Christ is designated the most "precious." Here, in the first sentence of his treatise, Hooker speaks as one well versed in the relative

[15]Ibid., 3:226; 1:44, 46, 235.

[16]Ibid., 1:157–158, 216, 46–47.

[17]John Preston, *The Golden Sceptre* (London: R. Badger, 1639), 41, 86; John Preston, *The New Covenant, or, the Saints Portion* (London: I. D., 1629), 248; John Preston, *Liveles Life: Or, Mans Spirituall Death in Sinne* (London: I. Beale, 1633), 34, 63; John Preston, *Remaines of That Reverend and Learned Divine, John Preston* (London: R. B., 1637), 198; John Preston, *The Doctrine of the Saints Infirmities* (London: Henry Taunton, 1638), 186–187. On puritan repentance, see Cohen, *God's Caress*, 106–108.

[18]For antinomian "free grace," "free gift," "free way," see Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted: Being the Compleat Works of Tobias Crisp, D.D.* (London: William Marshal, 1690), 33–40, 90–92.

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values of divine offerings. The enterprise of "application," Hooker continues, is "made good to the hearts" of the elect as the fulfillment of divine promise and the satisfaction of human hope. Instantly the reader happens upon an assuring scene of God's unconstrained giving and humankind's unmerited having. One wonders at the need for the torrential outpouring of print in which Hooker's text embodies itself. For Hooker seems, as early as the first couple of pages, already to have incarnated a felicitous ending. Here the "sinner" presents to the reader as a soul in "possession of all those treasures of grace" for whose sake God has played his promissory, hope-answering part. Such is the all-is-well, end-of-story flourish with which Hooker makes his beginning, though a foreshadowing of unfinished business is soon apparent. As if to unleash a jab ahead of the battles with heretics that will be waged henceforth, Hooker closes his first paragraph with a consolatory re-appropriation of "free grace."

And so Hooker proceeds, not yet designating his foes but contenting himself with evocations of the "rich mercy" of God and the sufficient "merits" of Christ, and taking care to notice the "plentiful redemption provided by both." But divine provision obeys a process, and process requires narrative relation, analytical consideration, and ministerial direction. A troubled soul—not yet becalmed by God's "plentiful" provision—draws from the author an explanation for the torrent of words. Attending to the "misery and distress" engendered by consciousness of unapplied redemption, Hooker intimates that an alleviating "way" is available. At a stroke, and by way of response to desperate necessity, Hooker establishes the application of redemption as a story in need of its telling. Hooker's beginning, then, has not reached too far ahead of itself after all. The destination is delivered in a rush of mellifluous language, but the sighting of immiseration makes plain that a journey, and by the look of Hooker's two-volume book a long journey—prescribing a "great quantity" of spiritual "Physick"—remains to be undertaken. Still, we are assured that the journey is well worth the expenditure of effort. Recapturing the upbeat opening, Hooker encases in light a scene that had suddenly darkened. He ensures that the clouds of misery and distress quickly scatter before the "dispensation of Gods grace" and the "work of his Spirit in the Soul"—mysteries announcing the conveyance of "comfort unmatchable."[19]

The Application of Redemption opens in high praise of free grace—this in a work whose author reveals himself to be, in the matter of salvation, a master of deferral. Too frequently, it seems, Hooker sets forth Christ's blessings, only to have them cast aside, or at least indefinitely postponed, by the rebellions and

[19]Thomas Hooker, *The Application of Redemption, by the Effectual Work of the Word, and Spirit of Christ, for the Bringing Home of Lost Sinners to God: The First Eight Books* (London: Peter Cole, 1656), 1–2, and, for the spiritual "Physick," see the second volume of the *Application of Redemption*, comprising books 9 and 10, 342–343, also 355–356.

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lusts of the insufficiently contrite. How efficacious can grace be if it is routinely deflected by sin? And is it truly a "free" grace whose release must await the completion of disciplines that purify the spotted soul in preparation for union with Christ? The wonder of free grace resides precisely in its being unconstrained by considerations of human performance. Free grace is the substance of a pure gift, a no-strings-attached resolution on God's part to forgive and to bless: an act of mercy flowing in a channel of love. Hooker, as Janice Knight avers, does not present himself as an obvious choice for placement in this conceptual world. And yet he patrolled its borders, entering the polemical fray against those who, in both Englands, were putting the "mainstream" puritan world at risk by placing unusual stress on particular threads of its doctrinal texture. The "magic circle of godliness," as Peter Lake styles that world, required careful management on the part of its clerical champions, who knew both that they were being targeted by ecclesiastical authorities and that their dearest verities were being debased by sweet-speaking heretics.[20]

God might have become reticent in the wake of heresy, retreating into a "permanent distance," as Andrew Delbanco puts it.[21] Distant, perhaps, but not disinterested; God, Hooker maintains, does not renounce his privilege to interact, whether by humbling law or by free grace—or by both at once—with his regenerable creatures.

I. The Antinomian Challenge

Hooker served in the front line of the orthodox campaign against New England heresy. He took on the heretics in pulpit and print, played a part in the effort of New England brethren to contain the damage caused by the diffusion of John Cotton's spiritist novelties, and, with Peter Bulkeley, presided over the three-week synod that assembled in Newtown in August 1637, remembered for its condemnation of enumerated errors, its orchestration of a brittle ministerial solidarity, and its provision of grounds for "remedy" against John Wheelwright, Anne Hutchinson, and others. The Hutchinsonian matter spectacularly dramatized the divisive possibilities of theological error, bringing in its train the prospect of rampaging moral obliquity, culminating,

[20]Peter Lake, "Puritanism, Familism, and Heresy in Early Stuart England: The Case of John Etherington Revisited," in *Heresy, Literature, and Politics in Early Modern English Culture*, ed. David Loewenstein and John Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 102. On the "mainstream" puritan world and its self-splintering troubles with a disputatious and complexly heretical "underground" of its own making, see Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, and Peter Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge: "Orthodoxy," "Heterodoxy" and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[21]Delbanco, *Puritan Ordeal*, 182.

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as clerical suspicions would have it, in the "abominable opinion" of the community of women.[22]

Prior to the outbreak of New England's free-grace controversy, ministers had been engaging with antinomians in an effort to prevent the splintering of a community of faith. In *Blown by the Spirit*, David Como meticulously excavates the structure, and analyzes the mentality, of this London-based puritan community of the early Caroline period. Como uncovers the puritans' struggles with a complex and learned antinomianism that exerted, from within the community, a dangerously centrifugal pressure. While denizens of the "antinomian underground" were fraying puritan tempers in London, Hooker revealed his nomistic credentials in a sermon delivered at Dedham and published, fifteen years later in 1644, as *The Faithful Covenanter*. Hooker spoke words that antinomians would have relished: "we are not bound to the strictness and rigor of the law"; eternal life does not depend on our fulfilling every legal "jot"; we are "free" from the law's "curse" and "punishment." But faithful covenanting attests itself in "evangelical obedience." And here the law returns, in alliance with grace. Evangelical obedience is "obedience to the law of God according to moderation and the mitigation of the gospel." We do not pursue the holy walk for the sake of "life and salvation," but the legal obedience that prevails "in token of our thankfulness" is no trifling matter, for it is "the tenure of the covenant made with us," it is "required" and "exacted" by God, and it is "an evidence and sign" of our justification.[23] And though we are said to be "free" from the curse, we continue to apprehend its menace. Having prepared his listeners with prior talk of "vengeance" and "rods" and the "plagued" sinful, Hooker thrusts forward the curse that looms against those who "do not walk precisely and exactly" in God's "law and covenant." Before long, the audience is given foresight of its destiny, assembling at "bonfires" in the nether world; "A Dedham drunkard, or hypocrite, careless carnal gospeller, or covetous one, the devils will rejoice for him when he comes to hell."[24]

Nomistic exertion mitigated by covenantal grace yet stiffened by consciousness of rod and curse: this is the tense framework of Hooker's religion. But God is not constrained to bless the obedient; his grace is free, and it brings freedom. Only the sin against the Holy Ghost will "limit" the "riches of God's free grace"; the Lord knocks at the door even of the "adulterous wretch," purposing to "bring comfort, and sup with him" if

[22]Winship, *Making Heretics*, 70, chaps. 8–10; Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 362–363.

[23]Thomas Hooker, *The Faithful Covenanter*, in *Thomas Hooker: Writings in England and Holland, 1626–1633*, ed. George H. Williams, Norman Pettit, Winfried Hergert, and Sargent Bush, Jr. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 197–199.

[24]Ibid., 193–194, 204, 217.

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the door will but be opened.[25] Indeed, so "miraculous," Hooker would declare, is the work of Christ's grace, so "wonderful" is its "mysteriousness," that it "prevails most powerfully" when sinners "do most of all oppose it"—when they appear "riveted in their wretched courses" and "intrenched" in the "strongholds of their prevailing corruptions and lusts." To such, Christ comes "suddenly" and "unexpectedly" with "effectually" applied grace.[26] Grace, operating with this degree of freedom, will rectify the unrepentant. And, in a different setting, it will reorient the legalist. Como notes Hooker's cameo appearance within the milieu of spiritual doubt and seeking that engendered controversy in London. Edward Fisher was a theologically gifted layman who would breathe "the atmosphere of London's antinomian subculture," but he had once played the "proud Pharisee," and it was Hooker the evangelist who delivered him from the snare of legalism by showing him "the way of faith and salvation by Christ alone."[27] John Eaton and Tobias Crisp, notoriously, embraced "Christ alone"; and it was perhaps a standard professional hazard for soul physicians such as Hooker to find themselves unintentionally clearing a path for erstwhile nomists that would end, courtesy of "Christ alone," in unseemly renunciations of the moral law. Hooker preached in and around London during the 1620s, and his salutary conference with Fisher probably belongs to the late 1620s or early 1630s, before his departure for the Netherlands in the spring of 1631[28]—the period of antinomian troubles.

Much was made, at this time, of the heresy of "Familism," something of a catchall term that was put about by alarmed guardians of orthodoxy in London and would later serve Hooker and his heresy-hunting colleagues in New England. Familism—so named from the late-sixteenth-century "Family of Love," founded by the Dutch mystic Hendrik Niclaes—was a discrete strand of antinomianism whose practitioners occupied themselves, most shockingly for their puritan enemies, with heretical doctrines such as mortalism, deification, and perfectibility, and with Spirit-borne revelations that superseded the text of scripture and overturned the canons of social propriety.[29] Familists, moreover, had cut devotional ties with the moral law,

[25]Thomas Hooker, *The Poor Doubting Christian Drawn unto Christ*, in *Hooker: Writings in England and Holland*, 156. See also, on law, obedience, and gracious mitigation, Thomas Hooker, *The Saints Dignitie and Dutie* (London: G. D., 1651), 81–96, 104–119.

[26]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 77–78; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 289–290, 372–374.

[27]Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 6, 3.

[28]Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620–1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11, 155–156.

[29]For the many-sided ideological career of Familism in seventeenth-century England, see Como, *Blown by the Spirit*; Lake, "Puritanism, Familism, and Heresy"; Lake, *Boxmaker's Revenge*. For New England, see Winship, *Making Heretics*, 22–23, 25–26, 36, 52, 66–67, 91–92, 154,

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and in this sense they were antinomians; but, as Michael Winship has noted, if all Familists were antinomians, not all antinomians were Familists.[30] Thus, Como's theorists of "imputative" antinomianism focused on Christ's redemptive blessings but kept themselves anchored to holy writ and presented themselves as the true heirs of the Protestant magisterium. Christ, dying on behalf of sinners in order to satisfy the justice that loomed menacingly against them, performed his office with such efficacy as to remove the sight of sin from the divine eyes, thereby rendering sinners "pure" in the presence of God—their inherent vileness notwithstanding. A collateral blessing was that the moral law need no longer oblige sinners' piety nor bear upon them as a rule of life.[31] Hooker adopted the commonplace of referring to his enemies as "Familists," though it is not always evident that Familist heresies are uppermost in his mind. As Winship remarks, "the heinousness of opponents needed to be magnified in order to get people to perceive them as opponents."[32] The charge might sensationalize the crime, particularly if the miscreant has commandeered for perverse ends the most cherished idioms of the establishment's faith. Hooker, roused by antinomian misuses of "imputative" doctrine—a theological complex "at or near the heart of puritan practical divinity"[33]—did not scruple to play the "Familist" card. It helped, when reprobating corruptions of theological truth, to take taxonomic liberties. I will attempt to specify Hooker's targets by referring, as the context permits, either to "Familists" or to "antinomians," assuming that if the latter term was not stated it can be said to have been implied.

The preparationist style of theology upon which Hooker built his reputation manufactured, for antinomian challengers, too many accommodations between law and grace. Among the more law-minded of puritans, Hooker made his pastoral mark by prolonging the painful undertakings of preparation. It was to Hookerian preparation, perhaps, that the antinomian Tobias Crisp was alluding when he censured the "Long Way" to salvation that—by the 1630s, though Crisp specifies neither the when nor the where—had captured a host of parochial loyalties. Sinners who trek the long way become lost in "labyrinths," Crisp warned, or sunk in "quagmires," their ears battered by talk of the law's "curse," their souls wounded by pietistic applications of its

188–189, 192–193, 200–201, 229; Stephen Foster, "New England and the Challenge of Heresy, 1630 to 1660: The Puritan Crisis in Transatlantic Perspective," *William and Mary Quarterly* 38:4 (October 1981): 624–660.

[30]Winship, *Making Heretics*, 25; also Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 39.

[31]See Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, esp. 40–41, chaps. 6 and 9.

[32]Winship, *Making Heretics*, 68.

[33]Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 207.

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"rod" and "rack."[34] Crisp's preaching created a stir in London in the early 1640s, though the style of theology that he delivered from the pulpit had been circulating by less spectacular means for some time, and its reach may have extended to Massachusetts. Crisp and his kind contemptuously oppugned not only the puritans' "gracious qualifications" of soul but also their "legal" walk of righteousness: good works are conductors of sociability—and must be pursued with due care, being "profitable to men"—but Crisp, with eyes only for Christ, shriveled their part in God's plan to less than a "jot."[35] God, to be sure, will sanctify, but his law is a "tyrant's" instrument, and the "marks and signs" of legal obedience engender "extreme" puzzlement and "much" trouble. It is for the Spirit, not for the "hard condition" of the law, to supply evidence of the soul's interest in Christ.[36] Punctilious efforts to medicate the soul against the contagion of sin simply compound the problem by expanding sin's dominion; and in their "run" to the legal regimen of "tears," "humiliations," and "sorrows," Crisp spied the puritans' abandonment of "free grace" and neglect of Christ. The beauty of grace lay in its capacious mercy—in its unconditioned acceptance of the sin-struck ugly. Grace, Crisp put it in memorable defiance of the disciplinarians, took no interest in "handsome" or "lovely" souls.[37] Hooker recognized the misconceptions and omissions that vitiated this kind of theology, and he resolved to make amends for damage done.

Viewing the sinner from God's perspective, Crisp would find it easy to repudiate the legalities of preparation in deference to the blood of redemption; Hooker, invariably peering through a sinner's eyes at the numberless horrors of sin, knew that law and grace worked in mutual dependence to deliver a durable course of "Physick." Hooker admonished the sinner to be vigilant in maintaining the flow of sorrows, given sin's astounding combination of cunning and stamina. For Crisp, however, sin-drenched acts of piety were distinguished simply by their putrescence, and an error condemned at the Newtown synod of 1637 evinces a similar cast of sin-minded quietism: "All the activity of a beleever is to act to sinne."[38] Hooker stood firm against such abominable perversion of the doctrine of free forgiveness. Defeat the law-haters by pounding away at the hard arts of contrition: Hooker pursued this option, seemingly with incandescent zeal. And he was not stationed distantly apart from Sibbes and Preston, or even

[34]Crisp, *Compleat Works*, 40–41, 49–50, 116–121, 458.
[35]Ibid., 46, 73, 100–103, 125.
[36]Ibid., 120–121, 457, 460–494.
[37]Ibid., 108, 256, 265. Though the redeemed man is "loathsome . . . in himself, and in his own Nature; yet here is perfection of beauty, and that through the comeliness of Christ": 158.
[38]For Crisp, see ibid., esp. 49–50, 225–240; for the Newtown synod, see error numbered 36 in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 228.

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from Cotton, in teaching that grace was wholly in God's free hand to give but that the giving was framed by a process, of God's making, that mandated a phase of preparatory humbling for recipients of the gift.

It was a moot point whether the more mature phase of sanctification vouchsafed fruits in evidence of a secure "estate"—Cotton and his supporters cast abundant doubts and denials, while Hooker backed the majority view, which espoused the collection of evidence from the perceptible marks of holiness, from "conditional" promises. The law was serviceable here, and Hooker readily mobilized it against his enemies. Cotton, too, wary lest his preaching be misapprehended as "Antinomianism," confirmed that saints took instruction from the Mosaic law—a preventative against outbreaks of misbegotten ease. Divine vengeance is tensed to rectify those minded with antinomian thoughts to "make bold with the treasures of the grace of God." Still, however, Cotton manages to propound the blessings of an easier way, eclipsing the do-or-die resolution of the legal mind. The saving covenant's grace certifies at least an easing of affective tumults: "he that is freed from the Covenant of works, is freed also from expecting salvation, or fearing damnation for what he doth."[39]

Adducing a theological context for the New England propagation of the "faire and easie way to heaven," William Stoever turned to English antinomians. The likes of John Eaton, John Traske, and Tobias Crisp, Stoever shows, were easing the journey to salvation by removing the need for created graces and the grace-enabled acts of the chosen soul that were customarily acknowledged to occasion justifying faith, as well as the sanctification and assurance ordained to follow. So considered, the enactment of salvation replaces the creaturely with the divine, abandons the "conditionality" of the human works of faith and obedience for the "absoluteness" and "immediacy" of God's free intervention. Stoever argues that the English antinomians reconciled the fact of regeneration with the obliteration of created agency by positing a "duality of natures" within the regenerate soul: a human nature that, in its utter sinfulness, contributes nothing of value and a divine nature that, alone, empowers the course of regeneration.[40] In Crisp's case, however, the keynote can be said to have fallen more assuredly upon Christ's redemptive substitution than upon his regenerative intervention. The importance of this substitutionary focus lies in its tendency to permit the supersession of all agency whatsoever—with the exception of Christ's historic act of atoning death. Having himself "done all" in manifesting the saving covenant and then meeting its requirement of blood, Christ relieves sinners of their penitential burden by announcing that

[39]Cotton, *Covenant of Grace*, 87, 85.
[40]Stoever, *"Faire and Easie Way,"* chap. 8, 165–167, 172–173, 180–183, 195–196.

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God, now, as Crisp and Eaton put it, expects "nothing." Puritans of high celebrity—such as William Perkins, Richard Sibbes, John Preston, Robert Bolton, and Peter Bulkeley—dignified this way of speaking,[41] and Hooker, as will be seen, felt its attraction too. But the likes of Crisp, impatient with the "conditional" piety beloved of the "work-mongers," followed the logic of substitutionary language to its antinomian terminus. For his part, Crisp hastened to call on the redeemed to "sit" in Christ-borne calm—released from obligation to "run" the enervating "mileage" of the law's course of righteousness. This is "Free Grace."[42]

To turn from Crisp to Hooker is to notice a perspectival shift, massively consequential for theology and praxis. Both men perceive the ravages of sin, and both view the sinner's God as gracious and merciful. What sets the antinomian apart is the tenor of his apprehension that Christ's blood purifies not by progressively suppressing sin but by sending it, in an instant, to "a land of forgetfulness."[43] Sins need not torment the sinner's conscience, since, on account of Christ's death, they no longer assemble before God's punitive gaze. Hooker would not have sins so conveniently forgotten; his whole enterprise as spiritual physician was predicated on the *persistence* of God's tussle with efflorescent sin, and, accordingly, on the sinner's consciousness of the sin-suppressing obligation that prevails from day to day. Whereas Crisp's sinner is granted quick relief from the peril of sin, Hooker dramatizes the exquisite tension in which the soul experiences its preparatory comings and goings, its affective falls and flights—its fierce confrontations with sin.

Crisp, laying down the kind of challenge to which Hooker made it his business to rise, professed himself unable to discern value in the preparatory procedures that drive sinners to "their wits ends." Penitent works were but commissions of sin, Crisp argued, and "God will never let any Soul come near unto him, that comes to him with any sin whatsoever; If there be any

[41]Crisp, *Compleat Works*, 33, 90, 420, 561; John Eaton, *The Honey-Combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone* (London: R. B., 1642), 83; William Perkins, *The Workes of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M. W. Perkins* (London: John Haviland, 1631), 3 (second pagination): 363–364; Sibbes, *Works*, 3:23; John Preston, *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love* (London: R. Y., 1634), pt. 1, 14, 35, 38, 62, 76, 79, 84; Robert Bolton, *Instructions for a Right Comforting Afflicted Consciences* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1631), 422; Peter Bulkeley, *The Gospel-Covenant; or, the Covenant of Grace Opened* (London: Matthew Simmons, 1651), 337.

[42]Crisp, *Compleat Works*, 40–42, 82–84, 91–92, 460–461, 482, 494. For Crisp as polemicist and quietist, see David Parnham, "The Humbling of 'High Presumption': Tobias Crisp Dismantles the Puritan *Ordo Salutis*," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56:1 (January 2005): 50–74; David Parnham, "The Covenantal Quietism of Tobias Crisp," *Church History* 75:3 (September 2006): 511–543; David Parnham, "Motions of Law and Grace: The Puritan in the Antinomian," *Westminster Theological Journal* 70:1 (Spring 2008): 73–104.

[43]Crisp, *Compleat Works*, 158, 169, 285, 386–387, 420 (mispaginated as 408), 623.

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one sin, all must be undone, a Man must begin, again, as they say."[44] Such legal drudgery had been abolished by Christ; but Hooker, unashamedly agonistic at the sharp point of the soul's pains, filled the hole of Crispian incredulity. Repentance, indeed, must be ongoing, enabling the soul constantly to strive against sin. As if in direct response to Crispian ease, Hooker solemnized protracted penitential anguish; he considered it a "ground of Encouragement" for the soul—tormented under the multiple press of diabolic assault, entrenched corruptions, an accusing conscience, and a vengeful God—to find itself at its "wits end." It was possible to contemplate, from such abjection, the prospect of imminent relief: "Stormy gales at Sea toss a man most, but soonest land him."[45] Then again, Hooker had never conceived the marrow of conversion to lie in its imminence: what is "tedious" now will not be repented of in the end, whenever the end arrives; "the longer seed time, the greater harvest." Simply, "it is not for us to know the times and seasons."[46]

In *The Soules Exaltation*, in *The Saints Dignitie and Dutie*, and in *The Application of Redemption*, Hooker jousts with Crisp-like deniers of divine law; he is exercised by antinomian heretics who use the language of atonement to legitimate abandonment of the necessary, painstaking deeds of piety. His worry is the teaching that sin need no longer be minded, since Christ has "undertaken for sin," and his response is to commit the believer "to see and examine the sinfull carriages of his soule: whether distempers inwardly, or ungodly practices outwardly." With this he couples a scorching message of therapeutic justice: one must "consider of" one's sins, and "judge of" them, certain in the knowledge that "even the least of them is sufficient to make [the believer] guiltie of eternall death, and to bring condemnation upon him." Though it might multiply sin and condemn the guilty, the law constitutes a rule of life, for whose sake grace serves as means to end: grace "doth give us dispositions inward, answerable to the outward commands of the Law of God."[47]

That Hooker was agitated by a heresy of antinomian complexion during the early 1630s is suggested by his condemnation, in *The Saints Dignitie and Dutie*, of Crisp-type teaching. Sargent Bush argued in favor of a Boston provenance for the sermons in which *The Saints Dignitie and Dutie* consists, but several references to the "city" wherein the preacher locates himself

[44]Ibid., 54, and 119 for penitential "doings that are impossible to be attained."

[45]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 198, also 247–248, 299; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 29–30.

[46]Thomas Hooker, *The Soules Preparation for Christ. Or, A Treatise of Contrition* (London: Robert Dawlman, 1632), 198; Hooker, *Poor Doubting Christian*, 158.

[47]Thomas Hooker, *The Soules Exaltation* (London: John Haviland, 1638), 181–182; Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 109 (mispaginated as 119), 112–114.

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seem better to suit a London than a Boston setting, and the theology that concerns him here has a strong flavor of the imputative strand of antinomianism that Como uncovered in London and that Crisp, during Hooker's time there, may already have been in the process of developing and disseminating.[48] In the 1630s, moreover, Hooker would draw out from the doctrine of substitutionary atonement the ungodly consequences that Crisp, in self-defense, would find the need to repudiate from the pulpit in the early 1640s, namely, that a "ground of comfort" was also a "ground of loosnesse, for drunkards and carnall libertines: for they may say, why should wee not live in our sinnes, seeing Christ hath taken the guilt of them upon him, and will deliver us from them." Such were the "fond conceits" of the "loose libertines of this last age of the world": conceits not of "antinomians," but rather, according to Hooker, of "Anabaptists" and "Familists." But the conceits are Crispian, strikingly redolent of sentiments enunciated in, and implications that could be drawn from, the discourse of Tobias Crisp. Moreover, if Hooker touched what would prove a raw nerve in Crispian theology—that of the carnal libertinism that must surely be entailed by the atonement's supplanting of repentance—he also picked out the authentic voice of Crispian deliverance. Too-hasty presumption of mercy, according to Hooker, engendered an affectivity that scattered anxious responsibility. It was for the presumptuous "never to be troubled for, nor affected with the burthen of their sinnes and rebellions any more, because Christ stands charged with their sinnes." Hooker recognizes his pastoral predicament: heretics "sucke as much poyson" from the doctrine of Christ's substitutionary atonement as God's people derive from it "an unspeakable, and an unmeasurable measure of comfort." Crisp would have few disputes with Hooker's depiction of the poison-sucking "opinionists," who deem

[48]Bush, *Writings of Hooker*, esp. 78–88. I concur with Michael Winship (*Making Heretics*, 290–291 n. 62) that the *Saints Dignitie and Dutie* does not occupy itself with doctrinal matters specific to New England, and that Hooker seems, here, to have English antinomianism in his sights. Noteworthy, for example, is the absence of interest in the Spirit's "immediate" voice and in the credentials of "absolute" and "conditional" promises, which agitated Hooker greatly in New England. Como sights Crisp in London in the mid-1630s, and notes his occasional preaching in the city as well as his association with John Emerson, a member of the "Eaton" antinomian circle and a compurgator for Crisp in the latter's 1634 High Commission trial. Como speculates that Crisp's active involvement in the London religious scene may have preceded 1634, though evidence is lacking. Crisp's friend, Robert Lancaster, has Crisp preaching free grace in advance of his acquaintance with Eaton's work or reputation, which, if true, points to an early date, given that Eaton died about 1630 and that, by then, his divinity was finding legatees and attracting the attention of ministers, including Hooker, who wished to prevent spread of the contagion. If Hooker did not know of Crisp before his flight to the new world, it seems more than likely, given Crisp's notoriety in the early 1640s, that intelligence concerning Crisp and his divinity would have reached Hooker by the time that preparation for *The Application of Redemption* was under way. See Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 59 n. 59, 63–64, nn. 68–69, 434; Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 186–189.

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it "unprofitable for a beleever to trouble himselfe for his sinnes, and to goe up and downe with his heart full of griefe, and his eyes full of teares; and they thinke it unwarrantable and unlawfull, and therefore grow carelesse of sinne."[49] Troubles and tears, indeed, held no warrants for Crisp.

We will see that Hooker's later polemics maintain the rage against antinomianism. *The Application of Redemption* addresses spiritist notions advanced in New England, and brands them, appropriately, with the "Familist" label; but Hooker continues to be worried by the antinomians' paired tactics of magnifying grace and renouncing law. He registers aversion to the immoral product of this pairing, refusing to tolerate a willful misconstruction of grace designed to disable the law's sin-cutting capacity.

II. Ebb and Flow: Idioms of the Preparing Soul

It was regrettable that "Men bathe their sinnes with teares, but they doe not drown them." "A little painted sorrow" was not to the purpose of conversion, Hooker had let it be known; the heart must be brought to "a right pitch of sorrow," broken in regard of its "many distempers" and "abominations." Sin's vileness would become evident in the "tumult" occasioned by holy wounds, revealed through the blows of "the hammer of Gods Law." The law's enforcer seems an unlikely candidate for the work of redeeming free grace. Hooker's puritan editors entertained their own doubts: Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye conceded that Hooker, for all his prestige within the brotherhood, played true to himself—"this deeply humbled man." And granting the timeliness of Hooker's work in these humiliation-hating days, it was worthy of remark that that which is "*Preparatory*" may be "too much" insisted upon, so that "a man may be held too long *under John* Baptists *water*."[50]

[49]Hooker, *Soules Exaltation*, 181–182, also 190–191. Crisp fiercely assaulted the "selfish" focus of puritan praxis, its privileging of penitential "performances" and "qualifications" of soul over the gift of Christ's sacrifice. But, though its trajectory is quietist, Crisp's divinity prized itself apart from intimations of moral laxness. Crisp took care to refute the charge that the disarming of the law gives rise to irredeemable sinfulness. For his denial that free grace entails "licentiousness" and "looseness"—despite being available to the "ungodly," to "enemies" of Christ, and to the likes of adulterers and murderers—and for his affirmation that Christ both "restrains" behavioral excess and may be "walked with," see *Compleat Works*, 21–22, 25, 46, 73, 114–115, 126, 306–310, 494, 549–562. See also the apposite remarks in Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2001), 33–34.

[50]Hooker, *Soules Preparation*, 193, 198–199, 136; for Goodwin and Nye, see the preface to both volumes of Hooker's *Application of Redemption*; also Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 111; Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 450.

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Hooker did not give his all to the Baptist. Repentance might "drown" a soul, but the Spirit might send it "flowing" to God. There are moments when, speaking of the experience of grace, Hooker could sound like Richard Sibbes. The Spirit, Hooker put it at one such moment, presents to the soul "the right of the freenesse of Gods grace," soaks in "the relish of the freenesse of Gods grace." The Lord provides "some relish and taste of the sweetnesse of his love, some sent and savour of it," with which the soul is "deeply affected" and which "kindles" and "inflames" it. "Love and joy" will grow upon the "root" of "Gods favour" applied to the soul, now "refreshed" with the "sweet comforts and consolations of his Word."[51] And to affectivity, Hooker could link causality: a man lacks "legs of himselfe to bee carried to Christ," so the gospel—unlike the law—"gives" the "abilitie" that it "requires" and "inables" the soul's journey.[52] Upon a "humbled and enlightened" soul, free grace operates with God's Spirit and mercy. The operatives draw the soul as the moon does the water:

> there is no power in the soule to goe any further than it selfe, to flow unto a Christ, and to goe towards the promises, further than the Lord lets in, by the power of his Spirit, the beames of his mercie, upon the soule, and sheds in the freenesse of his grace into the heart, and that makes the soule flow againe, so that as it ebbed and went away from God by sinne, so it now flowes and comes to God againe; but this is by the power and Spirit of God.[53]

Hooker invested greater rhetorical energy in "ebb" than in "flow," and flow, when it came to mind, was more likely to be spoken of in England than in New England. A more usual predilection for Hooker was to voice an idiom of estrangement—one that fastened rather on the soul's ebbing from God toward sin than on the Christward flowing of the inspirited child of grace. Disconcertingly, he could mix the language of ebb with that of affective delight in speaking of the "temporaries that flew off from Christ" and ended their days in hell. There are some who, though they "fall short of the spirituall worke," had nevertheless been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, had "tasted of" the Word and received it with "joy," had apprehended the "sweetnesse of the truth," had been "marvellously tickled and ravished" with a "glimpse" and a "flash" of the "grace of faith." The "carnall hypocrite" comes close to inheriting the promise but delivers a painful lesson to

[51]Thomas Hooker, *The Soules Vocation or Effectual Calling to Christ* (London: John Haviland, 1638), 45, 118, 217–225, 239–241, 289–292; Thomas Hooker, *The Soules Implantation* (London: R. Young, 1637), 162, 171–172, 175, 178. For Sibbes, see, for example, *Works*, 1:60; 2:152, 238, 415–416, 466; 4:271; 6:541. On the energy of puritan love, see Cohen, *God's Caress*, 124–131.

[52]Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 288.

[53]Ibid., 289; also Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 90–91; Hooker, *Soules Exaltation*, 33–34.

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heavenly aspirants: "I had thought I was in heaven, and yet because I have no faith, I am now cast downe to hell."[54]

Antinomians rejected such puritan pain; they stopped seeing the need for hurtful disciplines of soul that seemed to mock the efficacy of Christ's generosity. Hooker, famously, prosecuted the pain, and lavished upon it the formidable resources of his ingenuity and erudition.[55] He plumbed the many-sided provenance of therapeutic affliction. The moral law played its humbling part, as did the sin-revealing light of Christ and Spirit, the tearing hooks of the conscience, the reproofs of the preacher, and grace's campaign to break the resistance of the will—for an "unwilling will" must be made "willing."[56]

But Hooker and the antinomians might agree on this, that fallen humanity was sunk in sin. So efficacious was antinomian free grace that sin's contagion had been cast from God's memory. Hooker, hoping for flow but caught in the drift of ebb, could not sanction the passage of sin into oblivion without purificatory painstaking on the part of sinners. Sins must be lamented and severed; there must be "sorrow" and "sequestration."[57] Is this Hooker's free grace? Does free grace hold as its particular mission the reversal of ebb into flow? If so, the changing tide must not be treated as a given, for all that grace was a free gift. The gift followed a process—one that protracted itself into a lifetime's passage from one holy "ordinance" to another. This in itself engendered temptation to anarchy: rigor too severely applied stimulates the antinomian desire for release. Such danger penetrated the cyclical imagery of ebb and flow: in waiting for the flow that seems never to arrive, the "distempered" heart might think again, indulge its pride, and abandon its piety.[58]

Hooker well knew the fixity of ebb-tide indulgence, of the will's determination to resist God. "Corruption," he said, "crosseth the work of grace," preventing the performance of holy services; corruption was "opposing and thwarting the worke of the Spirit." This was the immoral analogue to the doctrine of total depravity, according to which, in Hooker's

[54]Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 464–468; also Thomas Hooker, *The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons, Viz. Selfe-Deniall and Selfe-Tryall* (London: T. B., 1640), 233–238.

[55]On Hooker's deep yet lightly worn erudition, see Cohen, *God's Caress*, 82 n. 18.

[56]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 384–385; Thomas Hooker, *The Unbeleevers Preparing for Christ* (London: Thomas Cotes, 1638), 26–43, second pagination: 68–69.

[57]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 16, 671, 700–701.

[58]"A man that is to take a journey by sea, if the comming of the tide be not for his turne, and is gone backe, hee must waite untill it commeth againe; so it is with God in this kinde, there is a flow of grace and mercy with him, now sometimes God withdraweth his grace from his poore creatures, but yet let them cry still, and pray still, and resolve so to doe still; doe not say, If God will not succour me, and bestow mercy and grace upon me, now seeing I have waited so long, I will pray no more, I will expect no longer": Hooker, *Unbeleevers Preparing*, 24, 25–26.

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rendition, the fallen human will was "totally infected with corruption, which overspreads the whol man." "Apostacies" constituted the "corrupt heart," along with "backslidings, and departings from God, and swervings from his righteous Law."[59] The soul's incorrigible ebbing suited an admonitory register, and the preacher retreated neither from the penitential "cutting," "hewing," and "squaring" that attended the journey to heaven nor from the "heed"-worthy wretchedness that awaited the "firebrand" in hell.[60] Hooker, departing Sibbes's proverbial lightness of touch, would minister to the penitent soul by applying the "hardest blows" with the "heaviest" mallet.[61] "You must not think to go to heaven on a feather bed," Hooker once warned. Moral lapses could be everlastingly expensive: "If you will live in your sinnes here," he thundered elsewhere, "expect to be damned with them hereafter."[62] The temptation to merriment might ease "terrors" in the present life, only to multiply "torment" in the next. "What availeth it to live frolickely here and miserably hereafter?"[63]

Certain as he was that Christ's expiation redeemed believers from sin's power, guilt, and punishment,[64] Hooker's eyes for the world of humankind were nevertheless fastened in penetrating gaze upon sin. Sin, Hooker knew, maintained a treacherous and embittering presence in human lives; what was the unregenerate heart but a "store-house" or "dunghill" of "abominations"?[65] Are we not "in Covenant with our sins, and married to them"? Sin "takes possession" of the soul, binding it with "fetters," "chains," and "bolts"; but the "root" of the matter was the "will of sinning," and it was in the will that repentance must do its main work.[66] Accordingly, contrition's sin-sorrowing vigilance deserved full-throated attention in the

[59]Thomas Hooker, *The Soules Humiliation* (London: I. L., 1638), 41; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 315.

[60]See, for example, Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 205, 219–220, 242–244; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 56, 180–185, 225–226, 253–256, 357, 417; Hooker, *Soules Preparation*, 15, 55–56, 107–109; Hooker, *Soules Exaltation*, 301–302; Hooker, *Soules Humiliation*, 159; Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 127–128; Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 215.

[61]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 342, 355; cf. Sibbes, *Works*, 1:55.

[62]Hooker, *Two Chiefe Lessons*, 64; Thomas Hooker, *The Soules Possession of Christ* (London: M. F., 1638), 157–158; and, similarly, Hooker, *Soules Humiliation*, 55, 158, 204; Hooker, *Unbeleevers Preparing*, second pagination: 91; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 86, 92, 296, 307; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 11, 72–73, 124; Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 150.

[63]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 241; Hooker, *Unbeleevers Preparing*, 184.

[64]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 114; Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 23–39.

[65]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 169–170, 327, 440; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 404–405; Hooker, *Two Chiefe Lessons*, 250.

[66]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 91, 322, 329, 344–345, 384–388; Hooker, *Unbeleevers Preparing*, second pagination: 4–14; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 388–396.

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pulpit. The difficulty was that sin thrived off its own contagion: "Men naturally are most secure in their sins, when they are most under the power and plague of them." The "distempered heart" would rather be indulged with "toothless discourse" than be subjected to "sharp and soul-saving Preaching," would rather have its itching ears "scratched" than "buffeted." There was need for ministerial "rough dealing": sinners needed to be shown "their condition" by the "Candle of the Law."[67] If only preachers "would speak against sin with a holy indignation, it would make men stand in aw of sin." Diffidence would hasten parishioners' "destruction."[68] Preparing souls must know themselves to be a "company of poor, miserable, sinful, and damned Creatures, sinful dust and ashes, dead dogs."[69] The "venomous pollution" of sin needed to be treated, for the sake of which Hooker called sinners to "labour" for a humbling. He propounded fierce penitential disciplines, deeds of self-surveillance and self-correction that were "hard to flesh and blood."[70]

And yet it reverberates as one of Hooker's central messages that the soul was fettered—willingly—to sin, and was more likely to consolidate its estrangement from God than seek a way to flow back to Him. The impression builds that Hooker witnessed more cavorting with lusty bosom companions than communing with blessings of grace. "Wicked men," he observed, set "carnal reason" against the work of the Spirit, convinced that the latter would effect "ruin of their lusts."[71] And even those who appear to belong in the company of the contrite—whom Christ is at the point of making his "proper possession"—learn the "counterfeit" quality of their contrition. With the condemning sentence passed that they "never shared in the work," these merely nominal Christians find themselves unable to resist the "deceivable lusts" lying in wait to ensnare the unwatchful, unable to perform the duties expected of the godly, unable to appreciate the danger of ever-present, still-ebullient sin.[72]

Nearing the end of his enormous book on contrition, Hooker has the pertinacity—the impudence, almost—to dwell on the marks and manners of

[67]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 286, 295; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 201.

[68]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 217; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 355.

[69]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 200; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 206; also, Hooker, *Soules Implantation*, 49; Hooker, *Unbeleevers Preparing*, 26; Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 212.

[70]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 199; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 408; Hooker, *Soules Humiliation*, 209, 212; Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 84, 90.

[71]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 386. The corrupt man, Hooker observes wryly, "may lose his life and soul, but is like never to lose his lust, that wil go to his Grave, and so to Hell with him": 124, also 419–421.

[72]Ibid., 693.

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four such species of the incorrectly contrite. So enduringly, the reader might protest, have we been schooled in the progress and pitfalls of preparation that there is but thin warrant for this last lesson. But Hooker will have his word. Once more we are thoroughly instructed in several of the ways in which the soul surrenders to sin. And again we are made sensible of a sin-hating deity. God's hatred carries us to the book's final page, whereupon love glimmers through the gloom. With a very large "if"—given the tribe of casualties undone by sin—Hooker relates the message, one last time, that the soul will encounter God's love if it will but set its sins aside. Mercy will be available for the self-bemoaning.[73]

One strains to imagine the shape of such heroes of self-disrespect; can many have passed through "full and substantial" contrition and survived the experience? Hooker set exacting standards: "true broken godly sorrow is rare in the world"; "millions" had not progressed past the counterfeit version.[74] But for the few who do make Hooker's way back to God, the journey would be painful and methodical, endlessly self-referential: demanding structured attention to "sad thoughts of heart," punctilious keeping of an "audit" of soul.[75] Onward the soul would go, step by step—each step complicated, seemingly, by adjustments and deferrals on God's part and equivocations and backslidings on the penitent's. It was the sort of regulated and self-contorting religious experience that antinomians loathed.

Ultimately—for Hooker and for the antinomians—Christ was both sole savior and a reservoir of free grace. Differences of structure and procedure, however—steps demanded by the one and repudiated by the others—raised storms of controversy out of commonly held doctrine. For Hooker, as we shall see, free grace would superintend the soul's return to God. But it would do so by counteracting the depravations of sin. The soul must collect "evidence" of God's favor; it can be assured of its estate only by surmising from the perceptible operations of a sin-hating God. Redemption brings "libertie and freedome from iniquitie," but in response to the "some" who "might say, we are cleansed already," Hooker declares our commitment to the "fight," our need to "wage the battels of the Lord."[76]

And yet sin-killing deeds seem to be slippery signs of divine favor, evidences so full of trouble and anguish, so put at risk by devilish temptations and refractory wills, as to draw attention to their congenital uncertainty. How might such troublesome purifications answer antinomian reprehensions of

[73]Ibid., 693–702.

[74]Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 87; Hooker, *Soules Preparation*, 257; for the "millions" who perish, see, for example, Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 195; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 368.

[75]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 215.

[76]Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 38, 101.

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puritan piety? In *The Saints Dignitie and Dutie*, Hooker conceded to the Crisp-like antinomian that a drunkard or a whoremaster illustrates a reality: "that Gods people and others are all sinners." But, crucially, the godly differ from the mass of profane humanity in not being ruled by sin as "subjects" are by their "Soveraign." They escape this bondage by maintaining "invincible opposition" to their sins, apprehension of the burden of which works an evidentiary miracle that, clearly, cannot also be felt by the profane subjects of sin's "fetters." Purifying work must be performed "over & over"; the conscience must be awakened "againe and againe; it is not a little examination, nor a little sorrow will serve the turn."[77] One wonders at what point the apprehension of sin so moistens the soul with sorrowful tears as to enable it to know that therapeutic burden has ousted fettered bondage. Do penitential tools have the power to effect this change? Do puritans truly appreciate the virulence of sin and the impotence of humankind?

Hooker might have felt himself particularly vulnerable to such interrogation. He related with indefatigable dedication the monstrosity and durability of sin, but then mobilized godly souls to wage the Lord's protracted battles against it. The believer, Hooker informed his "Familist" enemies, needed to "examine" the condemnable heart, to experience the Lord's displeasure to the point of "humiliation, terrour, and vexation," to "repent and sorrow for sinne." Only a humbled heart will appreciate the "need of Christ." Much was at stake here—questions of causality and commitment, of regeneration and responsibility—and Hooker danced carefully around the nettling process of the will's conversion from the life of sin. "Free grace" was available to be "rested upon," but the will that so rests must be "persuaded" by the Spirit; however, such passivity must not be thought to erase the will's responsibility: it is the will that "saith Amen to the businesse" of rejecting sin and receiving Christ.[78] Against "Pelagians," therefore, Hooker needed to eviscerate the will of any prevenient and concurrent causality, which either exalts nature above grace or enables the will somehow to "close" with grace in the absence of grace's "power." But, against the licentious, he needed to show that the will was a responsible if subordinate agent in the business of breaking the hold of sin—that the will truly consents to a conversion in which it is "forced" to "suffer" yet not have its "liberty" put to "prejudice." Grace converts with irresistible efficacy, yet the will yields consent to its conversion. The will's breaking from sin occurs definitively, if convolutedly, at the level of scholastic disputation.[79] Hooker's practical divinity, however, makes liberation from sin's bondage well nigh impossible.

[77]Ibid., 97–98; Hooker, *Unbeleevers Preparing*, 140; Hooker, *Soules Preparation*, 11.

[78]Hooker, *Soules Exaltation*, 181–191; Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 283–284, 295, 451–452.

[79]The consenting will "moves only as under the power, and in the virtue of the motion of the Spirit." The consent yielded is not "of" us, yet nor is it "without" us. Hooker tensed his mind to

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We shall see that Hooker's moving from preparation toward sanctification offered better prospects for counteracting antinomian heresy. Sin, to be sure, is never perfectly suffocated within sanctified souls—sins continue to be committed by the godly, rousing hate and shame. But sanctification's demand for righteousness gives rise to "qualifications," "conditions," "dispositions"—infusions of grace upon which assurance-seeking sights can be focused, and for whose sake praise ought be returned to the grace giver. These were the "signes and certain evidences" that Hooker, speaking the idiom of free grace, could confidently hurl against nay-saying antinomians.[80]

Grace inscribes marks on the soul, gives it rules of direction, imposes on it a procedure. Readers of *The Application of Redemption* are transported, very early in the piece, to the structured terrain of a "manner of proceeding." It becomes apparent that the dispensation of grace and the work of the Spirit will require painstaking abidance by a "method" to render them capable of elucidation. "Flowes" of the Spirit-possessed soul seem unlikely to be encountered where the scaffolds of method rule the page. The cost in lost spontaneity, perhaps, will be recovered in the deflection of the sort of spectral perversions to which antinomians were considered particularly susceptible—phantasms of the distempered imagination, delusions that oust truth for fakery and frantic heresy. Antinomians might confect a Spirit that blows as it lists—listing, most alarmingly, to blow away the structures of divine law—but Hooker notifies the reader that he, applying the skills of discursive anatomy, will construct his story of grace with due care and precision, knitting together the "whole frame" of his treatise by the "joints and sinews of distributions and divisions."[81]

III. Polemic in Print: The Smoking Shot of Hooker's Anger

The opening book of *The Application of Redemption* addresses its subject in broad strokes—redemption conceived as a generality.[82] The strands of the "general" subject are put to view under the aspects of formal theology and

make sense of the causal forces at work here: "There is no power in the soul, by which as a principle and beginning of the work it's carried to the work, but acts as prevented by the impression of the power and motion of the Spirit, in vertue whereof it's acted and enabled to this consent; so that the act of Gods exciting and working Grace, doth not concur with the power that is in the will, to put forth this consent, but as a principle leaves an impression of power upon the will, by the vertue whereof it's moved, and so moves in and to this consent": Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 392–394.

[80]Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 37, 73.

[81]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 3.

[82]Ibid., 6.

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casuistic argumentation, but they are not delivered coldly, do not amount to stony rehearsals of doctrinal and practical commonplaces. Hooker speaks heatedly, angrily. Christology is a dominating concern of this section of text, and Hooker does not equivocate in making his orthodox case that Christ, by virtue of his substitutionary atonement, is the singular satisfier of divine justice and the sole savior of humankind. The preacher is mindful that challenges have been leveled in this "general" region of soteriology, and he soon warms to the task of throttling them. Book 1 does not hold itself to taking cues merely from the discourses of contrition and humiliation; it is apparent that Hooker had a controversial purpose in mind in adopting an elastic idiom. Simply put, he had decided on polemic before preparation. Matters of faith, justification, and sanctification—stages of the *ordo salutis* beyond the range of the soul's preparatory fitting—are summoned in book 1 for disputative service. Taking the preceptor's part to oversee the passage from Christ's redemption of sinners to his regeneration of souls, Hooker wages learned holy war with the antinomians.

Enemies and their errors soon populate the text, stimulating wrangling as well as reasoning. Various voices, some more clamorous than others, compete for the attentions of Hooker's intellect. Papist and Arminian exalters of human capacity are paraded before the reader, and given their comeuppance; and antinomian catch cries are captured for bilious demolition. Hooker finds corrective filters in the dispensation of prevenient and irresistible grace, in the evidentiary complexion of divine promise, and in the harvesting of "sanctified reason." His allowance that reason is "sanctified" alerts us to his migration beyond the confines of the theology of preparation. In this section of text, Hooker conducts reconnaissance and makes engagement in post-preparatory territory—territory more amenable (than that of the soul's preparation) for the task of vanquishing antinomians. He shows himself determined to recover for orthodox uses the language of "free grace," taking care to argue that its freeness does not compromise God's soteriological order nor obviate the need for the saint's responsible piety. It does not surprise, therefore, that Hooker chose to begin with the atonement. His purpose was to harrow the antinomians in their field of dreams.

Antinomians gloried in Christ's dispensing of free grace. Their center point was the substitutionary atonement, which radiated destructive and disabusing possibilities. If Christ, as sole savior, had died for the sins of all the elect, and in so doing had satisfied the justice of God, did it not follow that justice no longer enjoyed a rightful capacity to fill redeemed minds with fears of its curse? Sinners might be disabused of their various discomforts; God, now pacified by the "price" of Christ's blood, requires no other price, needs no further satisfaction. So considered, free grace takes its name and promulgates its attraction from its liberating virtue—it disburdens sinners from legal

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affliction, sooths their self-lacerated hearts. Antinomians seldom saw past the terroristic dimension of the law—the dark marrow of what has been called the "Perkinsian moment."[83] Rarely did they make allowance for the law's preparatory and sanctificatory blessings. The opinion was voiced in both Englands that souls are "freed" from the law as a "rule of life," but this putative exaltation of grace, when viewed through preparationist eyes, is as much as to say that "Christ came to set hell gates open for men to do what they please." Christ blesses in disciplinary ways. "You may be vessels of [the Lord's] glorious grace," Thomas Shepard thundered, by undergoing "hewings and hammerings," by being knocked to pieces, melted, and cast anew.[84] This, for the antinomian, was wrongfully to attempt augmentation of the atonement. It was to fail to apprehend that God, satisfied by Christ's unrepeatable sacrifice, required "nothing" of the sinner; that his saving covenant did not concern itself with the meeting of "conditions" preparatory to entry to it; that it was not his way to commend surveillance of grace-borne "qualifications" as a means of acquiring assurance of salvation. It was also to ignore the Spirit. As Michael Winship has shown, antinomian free grace made its most inflammatory contribution to New England spirituality as the substance of "Familist" revelation. The "immediate" voice of the Spirit conveyed the message of freedom from the law's rules and duties, and even from Christ's gifts and graces. The Spirit, not the fruits of faith or the works of the law, fed the appetite for assurance, therein confirming the "easie" corollary of the atonement, namely, that the redeemed "have nothing, but waite for Christ to do all."[85]

Appalled by this colossal perversion of glorious doctrine, Hooker undertook a polemical redemption of free grace. Heretics incurred Hooker's wrath by disdaining the supervention of preparatory motions and sanctificatory qualities, and by disregarding the evidentiary partnership of law, Spirit, and faith. "Christ alone" might satisfy divine justice, but salvation was a process that worked fruits of piety; it was not a revelation that fired the crop. In being "fitted" for the infusion of faith and the implantation into Christ, the soul, it is true, is passive, "content that Christ should do all" in disarming sin and Satan, and subjecting itself to the Spirit's governing agency.[86] Hooker had known the "hand of the Spirit" to be a felt but ineffable occurrence, one

[83]Michael McGiffert, "The Perkinsian Moment of Federal Theology," *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (April 1994): 117–148.

[84]Thomas Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* (Orlando: Soli Deo Gloria, 1990), 205, 104.

[85]See Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 220–242 (many of the errors enunciate the supersession of legal duties and evangelical graces), 263–264, 301–303, 352, 374–376. See discussion in Winship, *Making Heretics*, 151–162, chap. 10; Stoever, *"Faire and Easie Way,"* chap. 9.

[86]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 149–151, 394; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 6, 309, 392.

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that fashions a "curious frame in the soule." Reframed, and set on course to sanctification, the soul "runneth right toward God and every holy dutie."[87] In preparing the soul, the Spirit comes to it as a "motion," as a "powerful" and "gracious impression." There is, Hooker says, no "habit" of grace or "power" in the soul or "act" of the will to "concur" with God's preparatory work, since a heart "fastened to its lusts" cannot also be in possession of a "disposition to receive" a divine gift; rather, preparation itself must "make way for the habit." Operating in sole agency, then, the Spirit irradiates the soul with "powerful light"; this dazzling "flash of truth" is also Christ, who knocks at the soul's door, lifts the latch, and makes the truth break in like sunlight "through the least crevis."[88]

But much remains to be done. The soul, now, is pursued, relentlessly, by Christ and mercy; hooks of conscience tear it from its distempers; finally, the Spirit solicits its consent to break the covenant with sin. The soul is God's patient—"arrable ground" that "may be plowed."[89] Nevertheless, Hooker will tell the preparing soul—and the antinomian enemy[90]—that though the "Blessing" is the Lord's, the "Endeavour" is ours, that we should do what we "can" even though we cannot do as we "ought." We have the promise of God's ear, so let us pray and "walk painfully in doing our Duty."[91] Eventually, the will discovers the gift of "spiritual ability," enabling it to enact the righteousness of sanctification.[92]

Such demanding spirituality competed with quieter and easier alternatives, the latter putting to spoil the good name of free grace. Advocates of the so-called "immediate revelation from Heaven" had made an "Egyptian fog" out of the Spirit, darkening even the "everlasting Covenant of Gods free grace." For Hooker, the "delusion" of spiritual immediacy "cuts the sinews of sincerity, and eats out the blood and spirits of the power and presence and life of Grace; and under a pretence of advancing Christ and Free Grace, destroies his Kingdom."[93] This was the work of the "do nothing" thesis

[87]Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 209–210; Hooker, *Soules Preparation*, 167.

[88]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 354–357, 375, 412; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 41–42, 50–51, 389–396, 675–676, 678–679; also Hooker, *Unbeleevers Preparing*, second pagination: 29–30; cf. Sibbes, *Works*, 3:470–471. On the theology of habits and acts, see Stoever, *"Faire and Easie Way,"* 41–44, 64–72, 99, 104, 117, 123, 132, 172; Cohen, *God's Caress*, 96–98.

[89]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 153, 360–373; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 394–395, 441, 692; Hooker, *Unbeleevers Preparing*, second pagination: 40–70.

[90]See, for example, errors numbered 1, 2, 15, 43 in Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 219–220, 223, 231.

[91]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 224; Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 83–84, 111–114.

[92]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 410–412.

[93]Ibid., 159–160.

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in which antinomians proclaimed the all-sufficiency of Christ. It was a thesis of whose at-root orthodoxy Hooker was well aware. In *The Unbeleevers Preparing for Christ*, Hooker had so stressed the freeness of grace as to notice that "we have nothing [that] can purchase grace, wee can do nothing that can procure grace." To say otherwise might be to fall into the trap of intimating that God, in "bestowing" his mercy, had been "moved" by human merit rather than by "free mercy" itself. But God, though not moved by the beneficiaries of his favor, resolved nevertheless to intervene, movingly, upon them. Grace moves the soul to seek purity.[94] Hooker fortified a scale of causalities besieged by extravagant free grace: the Lord's enabling intervention within the covenant of grace was not designed to supersede human endeavor; his promissory disposition "doth not mean that [his people] should be idle, and look that he should do all." It was a point of comfort for antinomians that puritan disciplines had been rendered superfluous by grace. Hooker rebutted with a disciplinary call to "comfort"—a call that reckoned on discipline's giftedness, on doings that are in our power to do, though only derivatively: "what God hath commanded, he will make us able to doe, therefore let us up and be doing, and beleeve the promises, and we shall prevail to an Evangelical obedience."[95]

It was a "vain conceit of the Familists," Hooker growled, that "a man may sit still and do nothing," that, because the Lord has done "all," it follows that "nothing is required of us." God opened channels of causality in effecting the process of salvation. To the "Almighty Power" of his own "Principal" causality he added "instrumental causes of application": the Word accompanied by the Spirit, and the Word "rightly opened" and "rightly applied" by the ministry of preachers.[96] The process made use of the law's cutting blade and pounding hammer, though the soul that was "lanced" by the law's knife and its "dreadful curse" was also "searched by the soul-saving preaching of the Gospel."[97]

Hooker's was not a Spiritless universe. It *was* a universe, however, that required a divinely wrought mechanism to engage its orderly effects before the Spirit spoke a word of assuring "witness" to the soul. Thus, the Lord's way of infusing faith was to provoke "legall humiliations" as "harbingers," to rend the heart "with the mighty winde and purging fire of his word," to cause an "earthquake in the soule." This was an "order" that God prevailed upon himself to observe, and it required him to hold his tongue until such time as soul matters had been settled. As Hooker remarked, it is in the

[94]Hooker, *Unbeleevers Preparing*, 13–14, 16, 21, 112, 178–180.
[95]Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 81–83, 91.
[96]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 132–135; also Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 310; Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 34–35.
[97]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 345.

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"calme after a boisterous storme" that the Lord "speakes peace" to the soul.[98] Only upon finding a "condition" or "qualification"—an interior gift of grace—might the Spirit end its silence. Hooker anathematized the construal of "free grace," dear to John Cotton and his followers, according to which the Spirit witnessed in an "immediate" voice to an "absolute" promise.[99] God was not so capricious as to descend, in order to mediate a quick and easy assurance, on an unprepared and unsanctified soul. Assurance was available for the having, but it occupied its established place in a scenario in which conditional promises were made and gifts were given—as promised—to enable the gathering of evidence. This, in turn, triggered the Spirit's assuring witness.

In arguing so, Hooker rejected the implication that he was leaching power from God by conceding efficacy to resources within the human soul. Others—Papists, Pelagians, and Arminians—were propagating this sort of impiety, setting "mans free Will above Gods Free Grace," and needed to be put to correction with due technicality.[100] Law-hating heretics, attacking from another direction, built their conceits on the absoluteness of God's grace, on its totalizing management of salvation. Hooker had a ready answer, awesome and comforting. Grace, for all that it might evince a procedural temperament, was *irresistible*. It did not relinquish any power by diffusing its benefits in an orderly manner. To say that "a man opposeth and resisteth the work of Grace" was to say more about humanity's criminality than grace's efficacy. A soul might not "frustrate" God's work—this was simply "impossible."[101] Grace, moreover, was *free*. Hanging not upon the "hinge" of human works, grace revealed God in the "sovereign freedom of his pleasure, that he may do with his own what he wil." Grace was not released as a reward for anyone's "sufficiency" or "worth," was not constrained to satisfy anyone's "thirst" or "desire," was not the refreshment that anointed anyone's "endeavor." God is not moved by "talent" or "worth"; he respects neither "person" nor "place." The water of life is a "gift, and free also."[102]

But if God is not indebted to a sinner's deserving, he might yet inspire the sinner to deeds of thanksgiving, and a free gift might shape the

[98]Hooker, *Two Chiefe Lessons*, 252.

[99]See, for example, Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 49–51, 80, 91–100, 105, 141, 147, 189, 202, 223, 230, 232, 238, 263–264, 337; Cotton, *Covenant of Grace*, 19–21, 37–38, 61, 66, 133, 179–180, 190–191.

[100]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 20–22, 135, 409–435; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 297–314, 387, 394–395.

[101]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 37–38, 78–79, 135–136, 426–427; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 357, 388–393, 395, 400, 675, 677–678, 680.

[102]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 299; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 229, 232, 236–238, 265.

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circumstances in which it dispenses itself, rendering its operation explicable and predictable.[103] Hooker's God had chosen to distribute his beneficence as a network of occurrences that congealed into a series of stages. There was no doubt about where the initiative lay: the *ordo salutis* was of divine authorship, and God reserved to himself the prerogative to give freely. There was no constraint hampering God's liberality, no diminution of his operational capacity—but he had written a "connexion of things" into the script of grace's work.[104]

Hooker's sacred etiology was prepared to maintain a link between the dispensation of free grace and the witness of the Holy Spirit. But the *ordo salutis* drew connections between intervening occurrences, thus disallowing the temptations to "enthusiasm" that flocked around spiritual "immediacy." Hooker expended much argumentative precision upon the need to prevent the convergence of two, distinguishable, expressions of divine beneficence. Between God's decision to administer free grace and the Spirit's arrival as witness bearer there was much, for the graced soul, to experience. A series of stages—not an undifferentiated mediation—operated here. Grace asserted itself procedurally; it followed an order, intelligible to sanctified reason. That order disallowed the Spirit's witnessing to the soul in the absence of a qualification, such as faith, that had been "implied" by a conditional promise. A consequence of this empirical dealing in conditions and qualifications was that the soul, in becoming conditioned and qualified, was necessarily altered for the better—was regenerated.

Hooker's polemical fury did not burst the decorous banks of rational disputation. "Reasons," "objections," "answers," and "inferences" required working through; "cases of conscience" threw up a flurry of "imaginations" and "conceits" demanding sedulous correction; and words whose contestable meanings were at the heart of Hooker's concern needed to be handled with precision. Hooker's anger transfers its energy to the disposition of technicalities and to the articulation of a reasonable, responsible, and biblically authorized piety. Disparaging words bubble here and there to the surface, but the polemic, for the most part, is disciplined and scholarly; the disputant fashions his paper bullets out of sanctified reason operating in deference to God's Word.

God, Hooker announces, "rests satisfied" in the infinite efficacy of Christ's blood. A "complete payment" has been made to divine justice; the Father's "direful indignation" has been pacified. And so, Hooker insists, "it is out of *free mercy* . . . that Redemption is given to us."[105] An important task is to

[103]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 233–234, 240.
[104]Ibid., 81, 161, 165.
[105]Ibid., 6–8, 16; Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, sermon 1, also 94–95.

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show how this redemption can be appropriated by its beneficiaries, to show, that is to say, how evidence of divine favor can effectuate the soul's assurance of its salvation. But how is spiritual evidence gathered, and who gathers it? And how do such matters serve Hooker's polemical turn?

Hooker identifies the gatherers in a platoon of capital letters. The capitals generate subtle doctrine and remarkable polemic, each worthy of attention. Hooker's *Application of Redemption* appoints itself to address the "special respect" under which the redeemed are said to have "part in Christs merits." One concession granted to antinomianism is that the "*precious blood of Christ was shed for Sinners*." And then follows the rider: "BUT NOT AS SINNERS." Christ's "merits and mediation . . . seem to challenge (in Scripture) some special respect in the party to himself and put on a new kind of relation and consideration upon him." Christ, that is to say, considers the beneficiaries of his blood in a relational manner, knowing that the blood he sheds "for" *sinners* is also accountable "as" they become *regenerate members of the Church*. Moreover, Christ did not give himself to the elect, considered in the abstract as objects of the divine "*goodwill and pleasure*"; rather, there must be a view to redemptive purpose, to what the "precious blood" will, in point of soteriological procedure, effectuate. So considered, Christ gave himself to the Church, "that is, the called & believing."[106] With this, Hooker strings a line from the cross to the *ordo salutis*, requiring that his "*Formalis ratio*" instruct the mind whenever the redeemed are considered. It turns out that denial of this "special respect" bears doleful consequences—universalism concerning the extent of the atonement and carnal security at the level of practical religiosity.

Hooker, making incisive polemical mischief, has found a way of herding Arminians into the company of antinomians. Romans 5:8 serves as the point of departure—the text speaks of Christ's dying for us "*While we were yet Sinners*," but, significantly, "not *As such*." With his crucial distinction made, Hooker proceeds to disgorge polemic upon the heads of non-distinguishers. Scholastic dignity prevails, however; Hooker presides over a scene of controversy as a master in possession of an "old rule":

> *A quatenus ad omne*, That which agrees firstly to a thing under such a respect, agrees to all that have that respect, and therefore if our Savior should die for sinners *as sinners*, then he should die for all sinners, and therefore for al men, because all are sinners. When our Savior professeth *Matth*.9.13. *He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, i.e*. there is none righteous, all men being sinners, but such sinners as are secure and carnally confident in their own righteousness, Christ came not to call them.[107]

[106]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 11, 13.
[107]Ibid., 12.

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Christ suffered for the "good, comfort, and encouragement" of the redeemed,[108] whose identity is rapidly becoming apparent. These fortunate ones will have particular qualities packed into their being. The elect, to be sure, will be redeemed. But the redeemed cannot be considered simply as the elect, and most certainly not "as sinners." The "special respect" under which we now know that the redeemed find benefit from Christ's blood prepares us to appreciate that Hooker will be thinking procedurally henceforth. Assurance of salvation will be on offer to those for whom Christ died, but the evidence that they will be called upon to collect is likely to bear relation to a *regenerative process*. Hooker stages a series of cases of conscience in order to formulate some practical theology and dish out further polemic.

May a man, the first case asks, "challenge any interest in any Spiritual Good in Christ, or . . . bring any proof to himself of any Spiritual Good received or belonging to him from Christ before he believe?"[109] The "conceit" that holds for proof in advance of faith undermines no less than four of the agencies through which God manages the spiritual affairs of humankind: covenant, scripture, grace, and the "scope" of Christ's redemption. And, once more, Hooker's "special respect" makes an appearance: divine "good" is intended only for "believing sinners"; Christ "suffered and performed" exclusively for such "sinners as be the seed of the Covenant, and shall be *begotten of him by spiritual regeneration*." God operates serially: "All Promises, all Blessings, all Life is in Christ: Therefore He must be had before they can be enjoyed. But there is no enjoying of Christ but by Faith." Faith, then, "is the only means to bring and derive life from God in Christ to us." Faith is the "condition" that Christ both "requires" and "enables," and "upon which he communicates" all "saving and spiritual good." It is the condition of faith that "brings" a man to the covenant of grace "and estates him in it." Faith is the "only way whereby Justification is dispensed."[110]

Spirit and Word operate together to generate faith. Familists needed reminding of this coupling, for they were pursued by a reputation for allowing Word to be superseded by Spirit. They needed reminding, too, of God's gradualist interest in regenerative conditions, and Hooker fixed on faithlessness and unregeneracy in a brisk assault upon the antinomian stronghold—the *unconditional* covenant of grace. If a condition "estates" a soul in the covenant, where will one stand who repudiates the condition? Hooker did not finesse the answer: "he that is without the grace of Faith, he is *Condemned already*: he is now under the Sentence and Doom of Utter

[108]Ibid., 15.
[109]Ibid., 23.
[110]Ibid., 24–25, 27, 394; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 302; also Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 40–41; Hooker, *Saints Dignitie*, 82.

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Condemnation, *Joh*.3.18." Summoning a syllogism to speak to the centrally important matter of assurance, Hooker imputes present uncertainty and eternal condemnation to those who refuse God's serial procedure. The condemned "cannot challenge any interest in eternal life, or have any evidence" of a "good" estate. But an unbeliever is condemned already. Therefore, the unbeliever "can Challenge no Interest in, nor hath any grounded Assurance of Eternal Life."[111]

Heretics had their own way of "challenging" interest in eternal life. The "evidence" that they collected bypassed a procedure requiring attention to gifts and conditions infused in the soul by grace. With this in mind, Hooker convenes a second case of conscience whose point of concern aims at the explosive matter of the Spirit's witness. May not the Spirit, "by a special and immediate revelation," witness to a man concerning his forgiveness, adoption, or justification "before he doth Beleeve?" The first case of conscience had established that a man's mere "discourse"—abstracted from faith—cannot certify a spiritual good. "But may not the Spirit of God witness to him without and before Faith?"[112]

Hooker runs directly to the "Negative" answer. The Spirit does not convey a "right" to "challenge" a "spiritual good in Christ" prior to belief. No such right is to be found in the Word, and the Spirit will not contradict scripture. Spleen is vented: Hooker sets himself against "Falshood," "Error," "Blasphemy," "a dangerous Opinion," "a desperate Delusion," "the testimony of the Devil." And while hurling disparagements at deviant "immediacy," Hooker introduces another technicality of learned discourse—the "gracious qualification" that is "implied" by any promise serving to "reveal" or "evidence" a "saving good" to the soul. Faith, again, is the key. It was "the plot of all prophaness [*sic*], the ground of all loosness and famalism [*sic*]" for a person to claim to be united with Christ, and so justified and adopted, prior to having received "any Faith or gracious qualification." Once more, heretics were spurning Hooker's "special respect," which knew the redeemed not "as sinners," but as the regenerate seed of the covenant—as those in whom a gracious qualification had been wrought; in a word, "believers." To have the Spirit witness to the estate of justification without its addressing the condition or qualification of faith was tantamount to having it witness to the estate of mere sin. The corollary was appalling in the extreme: "though a man fall into any Sin, or live in any sin whatever it be, he may have recourse to this Revelation, this witness of the Spirit, and that's enough."[113]

[111]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 26–27.
[112]Ibid., 27.
[113]Ibid., 28–30.

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The immediatist's "that's enough" is made to stand as a sorry default in the absence of a qualifying work of grace in the soul, and it prompts Hooker's report of a frenetic exchange that breaks out between defender and denier of the evidentiary office of the "gracious qualification." Several times the orthodox defender asks the deluded denier to "prove" his spiritist thesis. Bereft of substance, the thesis rapidly unravels and is shown up for a demonic whisper. "Forced to confess, I cannot prove [the witness of the Spirit] neither to my self, nor to another," it remains to the Familist merely to implore:

> only thus, I must believe it, and you must believe me: I was in trouble and distress about my Sins, and then there was a voyce from Heaven, the spirit did witness to me, That Christ was mine, and my Sins were pardoned, &c. This is a Spirit of Delusion, the Devil is there.[114]

IV. Reclamations: Grace, Spirit, Faith, Word

Hooker delivers up the heretic to a sweet-speaking devil, and proceeds to reclaim free grace. Sin suppression—the task that "flesh and blood" finds so hard—is a necessary part of the process. Christ is shown to hold the key, and the hardness of the task Hooker defers to the vast "practical" expanse of *The Application of Redemption*. Christ, as sanctifier, enters the heart to remove the "stain and pollution of sin"; whoever "abideth in Christ cannot abideth in sin." To this is attached an evidentiary claim that the soul bewitched by "delusions" refuses to accept. Saints must have "evidence" of the work of sanctification "before they can gain evidence that they are within the compass" of the saving covenant. The collection of evidence is an arduous business—a truth that Hooker does not seek to evade. A vast reticulation of graces and benefits spreads out before the evidence collector, and Hooker briefly recapitulates the links of his *ordo salutis*: preparation brings separation and removal from sin; effectual calling gathers the redeemed to Christ; adoption produces children for the redeemer; and so follows the inscription of his laws in their hearts, enabling them "to walk in his wayes." Then comes free grace's gift of justification: "I do justifie thee freely," says the Lord, "when I have made thee to beleeve by my free grace."[115]

Elsewhere, as will be seen, Hooker stations free grace at the very beginning of the *ordo*; here, bringing justification, it crowns a procedure. The procedure operates in stages, the conditionality of which occasions the gathering of evidence on the part of the assurance-seeking soul. A qualification of faith enables receipt of a spiritual privilege; a privilege applied to a believing soul

[114]Ibid., 30.
[115]Ibid., 31–32.

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generates evidence of a spiritual estate; "therefore," Hooker counsels, "without respect to a Qualification there is no Evidence given by the Spirit, nor enjoyed by the Soul." No "absolute promise" will vouchsafe assurance, for to such a promise the Spirit can bring no witness and the soul can collect no evidence; in such an unholy void the devil makes mischief, breathing his Spirit-like delusions into condemned ears. In language redolent of the "Elders Reply" to Cotton, Hooker proclaims free grace the guarantor of the soul's procession through the stages of salvation: "Free Grace is the Fountain of all: It makes the Condition, it works the Condition, it maintains the Condition which is wrought: *Ephes*.2.8. *By Grace are ye saved, through Faith*."[116] Free grace, moreover, does not give "for" faith, as though the latter were deserving of reward; faith, rather, is an "Empty hand to take all from Christ for whom both the Party and it self in its imperfections are pardoned."[117] Hooker, very deliberately, returns free grace to the core of a gradualist, procedural, and conditional playing out of salvation; at the same time, he explodes the suspicion that a condition can be answered by an autonomous deployment of human agency.

The elders had taken Cotton to task for severing the Spirit's witness from the "work of Christ in us";[118] and with this Hooker concurs, hammering the point that the Spirit does not give evidence without respect to a qualification. Years before, in *The Soules Vocation*, he had urged that the Spirit be consumed "abundantly," since, unlike wine, the Spirit does not inebriate.[119] But Bulkeley, having experienced the outrage of New England spiritism, decreed that we be "sober minded";[120] and Hooker, in *The Application of Redemption*, observes due circumspection. He will have the Spirit prepare souls and then, as procedure dictates, witness to the qualifications that it implants in them, but no longer does he imagine that the Spirit can be seized like a goblet. Putting Canticles aside, he will have the Spirit speaking in precisely delimited circumstances. In taking this route to rejection of the immediatist thesis—in holding, with St. Paul, that the Spirit of Christ "cannot be had without Faith"[121]—Hooker delivered his *bona fides* as an authentic child of the Spirit. Gradualist soteriology domesticates "almighty power"; the Spirit, Hooker affirms, works its effects for reasons that reason itself can comprehend for the sake of knowledge and assurance: "True it is the Grace and Habit of Faith is presumed, and was wrought before by the almighty power of the Spirit which raised Christ from the dead; but being

[116]Ibid., 42, 33, also 96; Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 67.
[117]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 39.
[118]Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 64–65.
[119]Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 411.
[120]Bulkeley, *Gospel-Covenant*, 150.
[121]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 37.

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wrought, the truths of God under the exercise of sanctified Reason, will not only settle our judgement in knowing, but our assurance of Faith in more firmly beleeving and embracing; for first truths come to the understanding to be judged, before they be delivered up and presented to the heart to be beleeved."[122]

Evidence cannot be gathered otherwise, certainly not by a Familist's immediate visitation of the Spirit. Instead, at the "first call" the Lord lets into the mind an "irresistible light." This "makes way for Faith, and is a direct act of Knowledge which turns the eye of the Soul to look to that fulness of power and freeness of mercy, by which the heart is drawn to beleeve." Hooker, seemingly, had not felt Bulkeley's anxiety about faith's evidentiary poverty—that faith, being more "hidden" and "inward" than other graces, is relatively poorly placed to offer the soul the discernment that it needs.[123] Hooker's faith facilitates its own vision. Belief, in turn, does the work of collecting evidence of God's doings, to which both Spirit and covenant will give witness. It was therefore a vain task for the antinomian to ascend to the decree of election in pursuit of the estate of justification, since this was nonsensically to collapse a perceptible effect of grace into its recondite cause. An "eye," rather, must be given "to some spiritual disposition."[124]

Always, against his enemies, Hooker attaches free grace to the "special respect" by whose lights he views the redeemed and their evidentiary capacities. Unsurprisingly, a path is eventually cleared for the "reflect act of evidence"—that self-inspecting, reflexive motion of the graced soul "by which we are assured of what God hath done to us and for us, and whereby we see that we do see." This seeing, necessarily, is posterior to the cause that enables it; it comes "after" the light and mercy that brought faith, "and implyes the thing done before we see it."[125] Seeing is believing only if the gift of believing first gives eyes to see.

And truly, believing is receiving. In order to redeem free grace, Hooker needed to attend to the accusation—which John Cotton articulated—that its freeness suffered "prejudice" by the attendance of a condition or qualification. This could be answered by saying that the accusation itself nurtures its own prejudice by contradicting the gospel. Hooker sent his opponent to John 3:36 for a lesson on the relativity of unbelief and divine wrath. Likewise, unbelief prevents entry to the covenant of grace, and a man estranged from the covenant "cannot know himself in a good estate"—see

[122]Ibid., 36, also 119.

[123]Ibid., 37–38; also Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 76; Bulkeley, *Gospel-Covenant*, 263–264, 384–385. On Bulkeley, see David Parnham, "Soul's Trial and Spirit's Voice: Sir Henry Vane against the 'Orthodox,'" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70:3 (September 2007): 365–400 (esp. 382–385).

[124]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 38, 45–46, also 81.

[125]Ibid., 38.

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Galatians 3:9. A scriptural promise either expresses or implies a condition. Hooker urged that we look to the condition in order to determine our interest in the covenant; for Cotton, however, it was "the glory of grace to conceal all mention of works" when saving blessings conveyed their comforts. Cotton insisted that no "gracious qualification" could be reached "until we have first received Christ in the Promise."[126] But Hooker put his trust in the free-grace credentials of conditions and qualifications. That which is given is passive, unable to claim or discharge initiative unless the initiative itself is derivative. An "act of Receiving" proceeds in dependence upon the generosity of the giver, and in any case is "performed by a Qualification," such as faith, which is grace's gift. Rehearsing the case that believing is receiving, Hooker establishes a course to assurance through a structured pursuit of empowered doings.[127]

Hooker, we see, turned to scripture in finding ways to restore soteriological order and knowledge. The Spirit's unimpeachable fidelity to the written record of the divine plot for the soul played an important part in the preacher's shoring up of orthodox procedure against antinomian looseness. Not that Hooker was wishing to hobble the Spirit's efficacy: the Word "is but an Instrument or means, and therefore it works no further than the Lord Christ works with it by the operation of his Spirit." But nor did he consider that the operative Spirit possessed authority to render this partnership contingent, at least in the "common course" of divine dealings with humanity: "we must not looke for revelations and dreams, as a company of phantasticall braines doe." The Spirit, rather, "goes with" the gospel, and let no credit be given to "Eatonists and Familists," who "thinke they have the power of the Spirit in themselves."[128] The Spirit would not witness in breach of the Word whose agency it complements; and the Word spoke clearly and constantly of qualifications implied by conditional promises. Indeed, the overarching structure and specific operations of God's order could be assembled, with due taking of "inferential" pains, from the script of his Word. And this offered collateral polemical advantages; heretics, Hooker could aver, were not ones to digest the finer and more inferential fare of exegesis.

At one point, an adversary speaks his or her way into Hooker's *Application of Redemption*. A controversy ensues with this Cottonesque or Hutchinsonian presence—a skirmish within a battle that has erupted over a set of words fallen

[126]Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 111; Cotton, *Covenant of Grace*, 35, 134.

[127]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 39–40, 42–43. "Receiving and Beleeving are all one. Thus then, Without a Qualification of Faith, there is no Receiving; and without Receiving respected, there is no applying of any Priviledges; and without applying, no Evidencing; therefore without respect to a Qualification there is no Evidence given by the Spirit, nor enjoyed by the Soul": 42.

[128]Ibid., 133; Hooker, *Soules Vocation*, 62–63, 65.

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on difficult times. Inevitably, the two parties betake themselves to the Bible. The fight becomes a proof-texting exchange, with the security of a "conditional promise," or a "qualification," at stake. Hooker will have his victory by collecting due context from biblical script, his mastery of proof throwing into a poor light his interlocutor's precipitate clasp of ill-considered holy words.

The Spirit, Hooker has been insisting, "never Evidenceth without the Word." This biblical protocol (Hooker cites John 14:26) would be breached were the Spirit to "evidence without respect of a Condition." But only a conditional promise can offer evidence of our justification and adoption. Mark 16:16 and Romans 3:30 establish the procedural point—that a promise implies a condition—and specify that faith is both the condition implied by the promise of justification and the evidence by virtue of which the promise facilitates the blessing of assurance.[129] Grace, by Hooker's lights, dispenses empirical gifts that render solid the making of evidence, therein showing God's ways to be comfortingly predictable and dependable. Anxious souls, accordingly, may fasten on the certainty that follows from their knowledge of, and participation in, God's biblically testified procedure.

Hooker, in pugnacious mood, presses relentlessly on with his consultation of scripture. He folds sin suppression into the mix of evangelical evidence, and disagreement erupts over the legitimacy of the qualification (faith) that he has been carefully assembling from scripture. Then comes a display of the grit with which Hooker intends to police the conduct of theological discourse. Important words—their meanings long buffeted in fields of controversy—are chaperoned into the fray by biblical texts. God's "free" beneficence and his suppression of "iniquity" are now sighted, arm in arm, entering the economy in which faith brings assurance by manifesting itself as the implication of a divine promise. Hooker unleashes a triple-barreled spray of exegesis—a lesson that links faith, grace, and piety. "Here," at Isaiah 43:25, "are no Qualifications, you'l say"; and so Hooker, with exegetical bite nudging aside polemical bark, offers his rejoinder to the interjecting voice. Look, he admonishes, at foregoing verses from Isaiah 43, whose inferential riches will give definitive settlement to the case at hand—if necessary, in league with other inferences gathered elsewhere. The "chosen" of verse 20 are said in verse 21

> to be such as [God] *had formed for himself*: and vers.22. he calls them *Jacob and Israel*; that is, The *Israel of God* (as the Apostle calls them, Gal.16.16.) true believers. *Hos*.14.4. *I will love them freely*; therefore here's no Qualification because none expressed? But mark the 1, 2, and 3d. verses, you shall find who those are that the Lord loves freely, such as having

[129]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 43.

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> fall'n by their iniquitie, *Return to the Lord, saying, Take away all iniquity*, Asshur *shall not save us, in thee the fatherless find mercy*: that is, Those that have such Qualifications as these, they are the Persons whom the Lord loves freely.[130]

The exchange concludes with a biblical compression and summation of Hooker's victory over his foe. Romans 4:23 is adduced to proclaim the "impossibility" of God's operating otherwise than as Hooker has specified. For Abraham, that paradigmatic beneficiary of a procedurally consistent God, "was justified by Faith, and therefore there is no Promise revealing Justification or Adoption, but either it doth express or imply this condition of faith."[131] And with that, Hooker moves on to superintend another argument concerning the Spirit's evidentiary office, calling up a "Familistical Dream" to confront a colloquy of "sober-minded men" who can name a "Frenzy" when they encounter a Wordless "revelation."

V. Conclusion

It was one thing to extinguish the frenzied claims of heretics, but Thomas Hooker also found himself with work to do when preaching free grace in the presence of more run-of-the-mill Christians. Some, put at "wrack night and day" by terrors of conscience, might—upon hearing the message of "rich Redemption"—feel themselves able to "take Christ" and to "hang upon free Mercy." Such "presumptions" must be exploded, for they refuse to credit the core of free grace. Christ alone takes the initiative in putting souls "in possession" of spiritual good: a recapitulation of Hooker's message years earlier to Edward Fisher. Christ it is who gives a "heart to beleeve," who "keeps us by the power of God through Faith unto Salvation," who "dispenses" blessings that are "from him received," who provides both a "gift" and a "hand to take it." Christ's Spirit applies "himself to us, before we can apply him to our own hearts." There was a "liberty" in this dependence—to be "Seized of" Christian privileges was to be able to exploit the advantages of gracious tenure, "to use and improve Christ, and al he is, and hath, and doth for our Spiritual Advancement, and so to live upon our own, our Revenues, and comings in from Jesus Christ, *Gal*.2.19." As free grace "estated" the saint, so it offered opportunities to "grow rich in peace and comfort, and assurance, in grace and holiness, and all the good things of Jesus Christ."[132]

[130]Ibid., 43–44.
[131]Ibid., 44.
[132]Ibid., 88–96, 109.

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Setting himself, in *The Application of Redemption*, to deliver a fearsome admonition to deny the self, wholly base and wretched thing that it is, Hooker exhorted his audience to "dyet thy soul with a daily admiration of this rich Mercy of the Lord, as with thy daily bread." "Admiration" is at the point of being exchanged for more violent, more characteristically Hookerian, internal pursuits. We are shortly to be reminded, in best preparationist fashion, that "our empty and vain minds" are given to swelling "with big thoughts, and high overweening conceit of our own worth," and to be told, when this happens, that we must "stab and pierce our hearts with the righteous judgment of our own natural vileness, which will (or at least may) let out that frothy haughtiness that lifts us up beyond our measure." Such humbling took its place in the sequence of God's procedure, in which free grace also had its part, as we have seen. Stepping back a paragraph, to the one that precedes the fierce discourse of contrition, we encounter free grace giving itself to the composition of a very different affectivity, showing that Hooker could be a master of the promise, just as he was, famously, of the pain. "It was meer Grace that provided salvation," runs Hooker's application of Zachariah 4:7, "that revealed it, offered it; made thee able to receive it; therefore thou shouldest walk in the wonderment of this Grace and Mercy, all thy life long."[133]

The enchanting paragraph on grace and mercy seems to clash with its immediate successors, which cast before us the interior tumults of self-denial. But a point is reached in the tale of the humbling soul at which it fields a question that launches it, and the reader, into thoughts of grace: "*What hast thou that thou hast not received?*" And, returning once more to the matter of procedure, Hooker appends a further question: "How camest thou to be able to receive it?" The soul that only a moment before knew itself to be "stubborn" and "proud," "unteachable" and "unframable," to have been dug from a pit and hewed from a rock, now comes both to acknowledge its possession of gifts and to voice the praise that it owes the giver. It confesses its utter passivity: "I have received nothing further than Christ hath enabled me, and have nothing unless he give it, I do nothing unless he quicken me to the performance of it." Christ works not only the soul's believing and obeying, but also its humbling. "Those swelling conceits" of the proud soul need to be pulled away. One might expect Hooker, at this point, to thrust forward the mirror of the law that the soul might see its spots—or the hammer of the law, that the heart might be broken in order that its "crookedness" be "removed."[134] Instead, this is how

[133]Ibid., 98–99; also Hooker, *Unbeleevers Preparing*, 7–8.

[134]See, for example, Hooker, *Soules Preparation*, 39, 60–61, 90, 105, 136, 145, 182, 237–238, 247–248; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 256, 295; Hooker, *Application of Redemption: Ninth and Tenth Books*, 37–38, 40, 317, 332, 647.

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the humbled soul explains the sin-ridding motions within: "*It's not I, but the Grace of God in me*; Have I any power to be humbled, to beleeve, to be sanctified? No, it's not I, but Free Grace, that is the Author and Worker of all, let Grace therefore have the honor and praise of all."[135]

Free grace, it turns out, had kept a comprehensive watch; it presided over the entire scope of Hooker's *ordo salutis*: "from the first entrance of [the regenerate soul] in Preparation, till it come to be consummate in Glorification, all comes from the Favor and Free Grace of God."[136] Hooker took on the heretics and lashed them for their conceits and frenzies, but perhaps they had performed the service of pressing him to look again at free grace, and to settle a more focused admiration on its wonderment.

[135]Hooker, *Application of Redemption: First Eight Books*, 101.
[136]Ibid., 229.

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