CHAPTER FIFTEEN
ORDERS OF MINISTRY

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A Definition of Ministry

Richard Hooker begins the exposition of his doctrine of orders with a fundamental definition of Christian ministry.¹ He works from the assumption that all things pertaining to Christian ministry have a firm anchor in the very being of God.² This means that nobody can either claim or possess orders by his own proper power; rather they are obtainable exclusively by means of an external power, which is evidently the external work of God.³ Moreover, Christian ministry cannot be conveyed in any which way, but only in a manner in accordance with certain regulations. Hooker is concerned to establish the exclusive character of the orders of Christian ministry by showing that a God perfect in all things appoints them. This is a clear indication that Christian ministry is essentially good and strongly rooted in the revelation of God because all human beings benefit from the light of God’s truth.⁴ It is equally important for Hooker to explain that Christian ministry is fundamentally soteriological because initiated by God’s mercy and God’s authority. Those who work in Christian ministry are foremost ministers of God,

¹ Pastoral ministry was very important for Hooker. His early works are actually sermons offering details about the doctrine of salvation. See for details Corneliu C. Simuț, The Doctrine of Salvation in the Sermons of Richard Hooker (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 1.
⁴ Christian ministry has authority because it is part of revelation, which is a divinely guided process. See Egil Grislis, ‘The Hermeneutical Problem in Hooker,’ in W. Speed Hill (ed.), Studies in Richard Hooker: Essays Preliminary to an Edition of his Works [SRH] (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), 190.
not of men, and they must always be accountable to God himself and his spiritual authority, an authority exercised by Christ in the church without any mediation.\(^5\) In other words, the ministers of the church are servants of God, not mediators between God and humanity. The ministry of God is spiritually oriented because it has to do with the souls of men and women. Hooker underlines that God’s ministry is spiritual because God alone is the father of all spirits and Jesus Christ has purchased the souls of human beings.\(^6\)

For Hooker, Christian ministry is dependent on God in all respects for the simple reason that Christ himself, who is the Lord of the church, commanded his ministers to feed the church, preach the Word of God, baptize and forgive sins in the name of God, and administer the Eucharist in remembrance of Christ.\(^7\) Hooker is very clear about the fact that these are not human instructions but divine commands. This is another indication of the soteriological essence of God’s ministry. Hooker highlights that the ministry of God is utterly concerned with the salvation of man, and thus depends upon the dialectics of humanity and divinity. Actually, Christian ministry originates in God’s salvation and it is concerned with man’s transfer from darkness to glory and from earth to heaven. It is important to observe, however, that Christian ministry does not only involve man’s upward movement from the reality of history to the reality of God but also God’s downward movement from his divine existence to the historical life of humanity.\(^8\)

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\(^6\) \textit{Laws} V.77.1: 2:424.8–29.


\(^8\) For more information about Hooker’s idea of humanity as historical beings, see Rowan Williams, ‘Hooker: Philosopher, Anglican, Contemporary,’ in Arthur Stephen McGrade (ed.), \textit{Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community} (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1997), 375.