

November 4 **Richard Hooker** Priest, 1600

In any list of Anglican theologians, Richard Hooker's name would stand high, if not first. He was born in 1553 at Heavitree, near Exeter, and was admitted in 1567 to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, of which he became a Fellow ten years later. After ordination and marriage in 1581, he held a living in Buckinghamshire. In 1586, he became Master of the Temple, in London. Later, he served country parishes in Boscombe, Salisbury, and Bishopsbourne near Canterbury. A controversy with a noted Puritan led Hooker to prepare a comprehensive defense of the Reformation settlement under Queen Elizabeth I. This work, his masterpiece, was entitled *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Its philosophical base is Aristotelian, with a strong emphasis upon natural law eternally planted by God in creation. On this foundation, all positive laws of Church and State are grounded—from Scriptural revelation, ancient tradition, reason, and experience. Book Five of the *Laws* is a massive defense of the Book of Common Prayer, directed primarily against Puritan detractors. Hooker's arguments are buttressed by enormous patristic learning, but the needs of the contemporary worshiper are paramount, and he draws effectively on his twenty-year experience of using the Book. Hooker's vast learning and the quality of his style reveal him to be a man of moderate, patient, and serene character. Concerning the nature of the Church, Hooker wrote: "The Church is always a visible society of men; not an assembly, but a Society. For although the name of the Church be given unto Christian assemblies, although any multitude of Christian men congregated may be termed by the name of a Church, yet assemblies properly are rather things that belong to a Church. Men are assembled for performance of public actions; which actions being ended, the assembly dissolveth itself and is no longer in being, whereas the Church which was assembled doth no less continue afterwards than before." Pope Clement VIII is reported to have said that Hooker's work "had in it such seeds of eternity that it would abide until the last fire shall consume all learning.

Collect

O God of truth and peace, you raised up your servant Richard Hooker in a day of bitter controversy to defend with sound reasoning and great charity the catholic and reformed religion: Grant that we may maintain that middle way, not as a compromise for the sake of peace, but as a comprehension for the sake of truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Lessons**

1 Corinthians 2:6–10, 13–16

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written:

"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—

the things God has prepared for those who love him— these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of

God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

**Psalm 119: 1-11**

- 1 Happy are they whose way is blameless, \*who walk in the law of the Lord!
- 2 Happy are they who observe his decrees \*and seek him with all their hearts!
- 3 Who never do any wrong, \*but always walk in his ways.
- 4 You laid down your commandments, \*that we should fully keep them.
- 5 Oh, that my ways were made so direct \*that I might keep your statutes!
- 6 Then I should not be put to shame, \*when I regard all your commandments.
- 7 I will thank you with an unfeigned heart, \*  
when I have learned your righteous judgments.
- 8 I will keep your statutes; \*do not utterly forsake me.
- 9 How shall a young man cleanse his way? \*By keeping to your words.
- 10 With my whole heart I seek you; \*let me not stray from your commandments.
- 11 I treasure your promise in my heart, \*that I may not sin against you.

**John 17:18-23**

As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.