

the golden thread that binds together this excellent resource for Anglican theological education and formation.

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Arthur Stephen McGrade (ed.), *Richard Hooker, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: A Critical Edition with Modern Spelling* (3 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), ISBN 978-0-19-960495-1 (hbk). £225.00.
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Richard Hooker (d. 1600) has been credited with the ‘invention of Anglicanism’ (Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker*, 1998) and as the carpenter *par excellence* of its so-called ‘three-legged stool’ of Scripture, tradition and reason. His monumental eight-book *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, the last three books of which were published posthumously, provides a foundational text and key reference point for much (perhaps most) subsequent Anglican ecclesiological thought. However, as Arthur McGrade observes in the Preface to this edition, neither of the standard editions of the *Laws* (Keble’s nineteenth-century one, nor the Folger Library Edition published between 1977 and 1998) is readily accessible to ‘the whole range of readers whom it might interest’ (Vol. 1, p. x). Such accessibility is, McGrade suggests, the ‘special goal of the present edition’ (*ibid.*). The text and its critical apparatus achieve this admirably, and the edition is beautifully presented, but in three hardback volumes, at a cost of £225, it is hard to see how the edition will possibly be accessible to that range of envisaged readers.

That aside, this edition is a remarkable achievement, reflecting the editor’s extensive scholarship of Hooker. Unlike the Folger Edition (to which significant debt is acknowledged), the spelling is modernized, which facilitates reading Hooker’s sometimes dense, unwieldy prose. Simple things make the extensive and wide-ranging text of the *Laws* much easier to navigate: a complete contents page in each volume, an extensive glossary, a guide to the persons and sources mentioned by Hooker, and comprehensive indices (running to nearly 90 pages in total) of Scriptural Citations, Persons, and Subjects, all combine to make the text much more approachable. McGrade recognizes that the *Laws* is ‘an extraordinarily dense text’ (Vol. 1, p. xxx), and to make such a text more accessible is no mean feat. This is most admirably exemplified in McGrade’s Introduction, which deserves to appear on student reading lists in its own right as an essay on Hooker, his context, and his thought. In laudably concise terms, the theological landscape of late sixteenth-century England is mapped, and Hooker situated within it. The driving motivation of the project is summed up in these terms: ‘He is not offering information about something that may be of merely historical interest. Rather, he presents the polity of the English Church before the Reformation and Counter-Reformation world for trial and judgement’ (Vol. 1, p. xxv). It is refreshing to see Hooker’s work thus placed in

the wider context of Reformation theology (despite that it was written in English not Latin), rather than solely in terms of the internal debates with Puritan critics of the English Church as established by the Elizabethan Settlement.

Furnished with what McGrade describes as an 'Itinerary', the reader is then taken on a tour of the *Laws*, outlining the major features of Hooker's argument (pp xxxii–xciv), and of key aspects of scholarly debate. While this is no substitute for engaging with Hooker's own text, it is a most valuable guide to it, furthering the stated aim of accessibility. Equally helpful is the integration of key critical questions, such as the debate surrounding the status of 'Book VI' (published in 1648, and argued by some, including latterly the Folger editor W. Speed Hill to have no place in the *Laws*, but retained here). This 'tour' is summarized as 'a polemical historically orientated Preface, four books of "general meditations on law, Scripture, reason, and the churches of the Reformation"; and another four books on "particular decisions" about worship, ministry, and the authority to make decisions about such matters' (p. xciv). The work is then considered from the perspectives of Hooker's intended readers, its subsequent reception, and present-day importance, and the scholarly consensus of the 'striking ... breadth of appreciation for his work through the years' is noted (p. xcix). This introductory essay, especially the tour of the *Laws*, is clear and measured, and happily stops short of idealizing either Hooker himself or the church he defended. Anticipating the substantial appendices and indices at the end of Vol. 3, the Introduction concludes with a very helpful bibliography, which would be a good starting point for any reader who wished to explore the recent scholarship on Hooker in more depth.

So to the text itself. As McGrade's Note on the Edition recognizes, it has much in common with the Folger edition (aside from the modernized spelling). The decision to place the editorial contribution in separate sections is explained as 'to enable readers to go through the *Laws* alone, on their own, without distraction' (p. cxiii). This definitely does serve to make Hooker's text more manageable than it would be if it were surrounded by extensive footnotes, but does also result in some necessary juggling of volumes, or moving backwards and forwards. But it is extremely clear, and the modernized spelling makes a difference that this reader, accustomed to using the Folger edition, would not have anticipated. If I have one complaint, it is born of familiarity with that Folger edition: given the emphasis placed in the Introduction on Hooker's readers, and the reception of the work, it is disappointing that the edition has not followed the Folger Library in including the text of the *Christian Letter* (the only contemporary Puritan response), or other fragments of Hooker's writings, perhaps especially the *Essay on Justification*, which would have enabled readers to situate the *Laws* within that broader theological framework.

But this is minor quibbling about what is a superb edition of a work so important in a range of spheres: theological, philosophical and political, and simply as a substantial piece of English prose. It is indeed to be hoped that this excellent critical edition with welcome modern spelling opens Hooker's *Laws* up to a wider range of readers, and further encourages the continuation of scholarship which – like this edition – is the acknowledged legacy of its Folger parent.

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