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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

RICHARD HOOKER.

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THE reign of Queen Elizabeth stands out in the annals of our country with something of the glory of a golden age. It was an epoch of high achievement in statesmanship, in commercial enterprise, in world-wide travel, in romantic adventures beyond the seas. But chief amongst its splendours will always be reckoned its surpassing triumphs in the field of literature. In a short space of ten years' time—the last decade of the sixteenth century—there were published, Spenser's *Faery Queene,* Bacon's *Essays* and the earlier plays and poems of Shakespeare. Within the same period of time were published Five Books of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* of Richard Hooker. It will be evident from the very name of his treatise that it could not have so wide or so intimate an appeal as the poems, dramas and essays of the others. But, in its own field, it stands supreme; and its author, whether he be regarded as writer or as thinker, has his place secure in the foremost ranks of the Elizabethan worthies.

The book is a vindication of the equilibrium in which the Church of England had come to rest in the later years of Elizabeth's reign, after the violent oscillations of the earlier Reformation period. As the composition of it arose out of the immediate events of the time, it may be useful to recall for a moment the outlines of the ecclesiastical position.

In the reign of Edward VI the English Church had advanced far on the path of reform—though not so far as some of the more ardent spirits, inspired by the continental reformation, could have wished. In Mary's reign there was a stern and drastic reaction. It was her ideal to bring England—at any cost—back in humble obedience to the Papal See. The queen's frantic efforts not only alienated the mass of the people at home, but drove into exile many churchmen, who at Zurich, Frankfort, Geneva and other rallying grounds, imbibed still more deeply the principles of the continental reformation both in doctrine and in discipline. The result was, that on the accession of Elizabeth there was a great influx of returning exiles, animated by a zeal not only for Calvin's theology but also for his system of church government.

To adopt these would have meant, for the Church of England, a complete departure from all its ancient traditions—a departure abhorrent to the minds of Elizabeth and her ecclesiastical advisers. The problem for them was to steer the ship between Rome on the one hand and Geneva on the other—between the Scylla of Romanism and the Charybdis of Puritanism. By Puritanism, it should be remembered is not meant something analogous to the Nonconformity of our own time—the Chapel as distinct from the Church. The

Puritans at this stage were a body of men within the Church of England who hoped radically to transform it, both in the externals of worship and in the form of its constitution. In contrast with Romanism, which was an external foe, Puritanism was a disturbing element within the household.

Elizabeth and her advisers had no great difficulty in rallying the people as against Rome. The recollections of Mary's reign, the Bull of Excommunication launched against Elizabeth by Pius V in 1570, the various attempts to assassinate the Queen, the attack of the Spanish Armada in 1588, all helped to harden the people in a spirit of anti-papal patriotism.

In this spirit Puritan churchmen heartily participated. They loathed both Spain and Rome with a fervent hatred. But from Elizabeth's point of view, they too formed an exceedingly intractable element. In the earlier days of the reign, their attention was chiefly focused on details of ritual. They wished to reduce all worship to "purer" forms. Everything that recalled the old régime was to go—even the surplice being regarded as a "papistical rag." In a reformed church nothing must be allowed to remain that could not produce the express warrant of Holy Scripture. After 1570 disputes about ecclesiastical dress receded into the background, yielding place to a larger controversy on the question of church government. Episcopacy was the enemy attacked, and the object was to remodel the church on Presbyterian lines—lines which they held to be discoverable in Holy Scripture.

It is perhaps only fair to the Puritans to say that there were many practical abuses of the time that rightly deserved their censure. To discuss these lies outside the scope of this paper. But their attack on the ritual and constitution of the church, as framed by Elizabeth and her advisers, was a formidable thing. What the church needed was a champion who should give such an answer for her to the Puritans, as Bishop Jewel's *Apology* had given to the Romans. She found the champion she needed in Richard Hooker. No stronger weapon has ever been forged in her defence than his treatise on the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.

Our information about Hooker's personal history is chiefly derived from Isaac Walton's attractive biography. Walton, in spite of the quaint simplicity of his style, was a skilled artist, and we have to bear this in mind rather carefully when we survey the details of his picture. In depicting Hooker as the humble saint, the scholar and the thinker, he may somewhat have intensified the light and shade of the background against which he stands, as well as that of some of the subsidiary figures in the picture.

We learn from him that Hooker was born at Heavitree near Exeter, about March (1552) according to our present reckoning 1554. In earlier generations his family had been of repute and importance in the city of Exeter; but his father was so poorly off that he intended to apprentice Richard to some trade. The boy, however, showed such capacity and high promise for the future that his

schoolmaster pleaded earnestly for his being sent forward to the University. Persuaded by his arguments, an uncle named John Hooker, a leading citizen of Exeter, undertook the charge of the boy's further education, enlisting in addition the sympathy and help of his friend Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury. Jewel himself was a distinguished alumnus of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, a foundation wholly devoted to the advancement of the New Learning. By his influence Hooker was admitted to a "clerk's place" at Corpus in 1569, in the fifteenth year of his age. He became successively scholar and fellow of his College. He evidently gained a reputation in the University for the wide range of his learning, because on the illness of the Professor of Hebrew, he was appointed to act as substitute and read the lecture. One of the most delightful features of his University life was the devoted friendship that sprang up between him and two pupils committed to his care, Edwin Sandys, son of Sandys who was then Bishop of London and afterwards Archbishop of York; and George Cranmer, a grandnephew of the Archbishop of that name. These became the chief friends of his after life and to their criticism he submitted his projected works.

In due course he took orders and about 1581 was invited to preach at St. Paul's Cross. His visit to London for that purpose is important in his life because it led immediately to his marriage.

According to Walton's account, his marriage was unfortunate. It is here, however, that we may perhaps suspect his picture of being somewhat overdrawn. It is obviously his purpose to depict Hooker as the good man bearing adversity with meekness; and behaviour on Mrs. Hooker's part, that to a dispassionate observer does not seem aggressive or unkind, is recorded as calling for our sympathy. It is also to be remembered that Walton drew his information from a highly prejudiced source. It seems to have come, ultimately, from the two pupils, Sandys and Cranmer, who conceived, after a visit paid to Hooker in his country parsonage, an intense antipathy to Mrs. Hooker.

Walton's version, in brief, is this. That when Hooker went to London, to preach at St. Paul's Cross, he stayed with a certain Mrs. Churchman, who not only made him very comfortable but nursed him to health during a brief ailment. This home comfort kindled in him a desire for its continuance in a perpetual form. In fact, Mrs. Churchman strongly urged that, in view of his "tender constitution," he ought to have a wife. He, therefore, not remembering that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light," and like a true Nathanael, "fearing no guile," besought Mrs. Churchman to seek out a suitable wife for him. Without undue loss of time she discharged her commission by providing her own daughter Joan, who brought him "neither beauty nor portion," so that the good man had no reason to "rejoice in the wife of his youth," but too just cause to say with the holy prophet, "Woe is me, that I am constrained to have my habitation in the tents of Kedar."

He goes on to relate how Cranmer and Sandys paid a visit to

their old tutor in his country living of Drayton Beauchamp, and found him watching his small flock of sheep in the field, with a copy of the *Odes* of Horace in his hand. On being released from this task, he was summoned to the house " to rock the cradle." There is no great hardship in either of these occupations, though they were both somewhat removed from the academic atmosphere his visitors had shared with him at Oxford.

They evidently sympathized with him as a hardly used man, and it is possible that his marriage was an ill-assorted one. Still, as Professor Dowden truly says, " The wife of an exalted scholar cannot always maintain the adoring attitude assumed by her husband's passing admirers," and it is significant that Hooker so far trusted his wife's judgment that he made her his sole executrix and residuary legatee.

The visit of his two pupils had an important result for Hooker's future life. Edwin Sandys pressed on his father, now Archbishop of York, the urgent need for some advancement and change of life for his old tutor. It was in consequence of this that the Mastership of the Temple was offered to Hooker, which, with some real reluctance, he eventually accepted. The following events are very familiar to all readers of English Church History. Hooker found himself in close association with Walter Travers, one of the ablest and most uncompromising Puritan leaders, who held the Readership of the Temple. It was customary, then, as now, for the Master to preach in the morning, and the Reader in the afternoon. A wide divergence of ecclesiastical outlook between the two very quickly revealed itself. The Reader lost no time in controverting the teaching of the Master, and so the same pulpit, in Fuller's famous phrase, "spake pure Canterbury in the morning and Geneva in the afternoon." Or, as Walton puts it : " At the building of Solomon's temple neither hammer, nor axe, nor tool of iron was heard therein ; whereas, alas, in this temple, not only much knocking was heard, but (which was the worst) the nails and pins which one master builder drave in, were driven out by the other." It is pleasing, however, to remember that the controversy was purely doctrinal, and was waged without any cessation of warm personal regard between the two men. Still, the situation was an impossible one, and Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury, did what he could to end it by discovering pretexts to remove Travers from the Readership. Hooker, for his part, conceived the design of a work which should survey the whole field of the controversy and reinterpret its details in the light of fundamental first principles.

He began his work at the Temple, but found the surroundings there so uncongenial that he besought the Archbishop to transfer him to the country. In 1591 he removed to the living of Boscombe, near Salisbury, where he completed the first four of the projected eight books of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*. In 1595 he accepted the Crown living of Bishopsborne near Canterbury, which he held till his early death in 1600 at the age of forty-six.

Our chief concern here is with Hooker's published work. But

the interest of the work is enhanced when we recall something of the appearance and character of the writer. To do this adequately would involve a recital of a large part of Walton's *Life.* It must suffice for our present purpose to say briefly that he depicts for us a man of poor clothes, of mean stature and stooping, with a somewhat unhealthy appearance, due to lack of exercise and sedentary life. His eyesight was weak and his humility of character so great that neither in early days nor in his later life did he ever willingly look any man in the face. He was "of so mild and humble a nature that his poor parish clerk and he did never talk but with both their hats on, or both off, at the same time." This humility of demeanour was part of his reasoned theory of life. "There will come a time," he wrote, "when three words uttered with charity and meekness shall receive a far more blessed reward than three thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpness of wit." The words remind us of a sentence in Professor Mackintosh's appreciation of the late Professor Denney: "He wrote no paradoxes: to him all epigrams had falsehood written on their face." In the pulpit, too, Hooker had no arts of persuasive eloquence. His eyes, when he was preaching, remained from first to last fixed on one spot. He seemed to be thinking as he spoke, and the prolonged sentences in which he uttered his thought often seemed to his hearers tedious and obscure. Yet, with all this, his fame for learning was so great that scholars constantly turned out of their way, simply to see him in the seclusion of his country home. He probably neglected all the laws of health, as we now understand them, with the result that a severe chill acting on a frame that had little power of resistance, carried him off in the early years of middle life.

The treatise on which his fame rests is *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Eight Books*. Of these, the first four were issued in 1594; the fifth book, which itself is longer than the whole of the previous four, was published under Hooker's supervision, in 1597. These five books only were published during the author's lifetime. Of the three remaining books, the so-called sixth one, and the eighth, were published half a century afterwards, in 1648. The sixth book, as a matter of fact, though derived from Hooker's notes, can hardly with fairness be called his at all. The seventh, which was not issued till 1662, is Hooker's work, but it has been mutilated, possibly by Mrs. Hooker's Puritan friends and relations. The eighth book, which was in a fragmentary condition, has been restored by Keble after a comparison of various manuscripts. It will thus be seen that only in the first five books have we Hooker's work as he himself gave it to the world.

The idea of the treatise was suggested to Hooker by the Puritan controversy in general, and more particularly by his own disputes with Travers at the Temple. It is well known how the Protestantism of the age, after the repudiation of Rome's infallibility, threw itself on the infallibility of Scripture, and how, consequently, the cardinal principle of Hooker's Puritan opponents was the sole and exclusive

authority of Scripture. All laws found in Scripture are of permanent and universal force; no law derived from any other source can be of permanent obligation. Hooker held this exaggerated theory of the purpose and function of Scripture to be a fundamental error. The theory he opposed to it was, that the true rule of life is not to be drawn from one source alone even if that source be Holy Scripture, but from all the various sources of light and truth by which our life is encompassed. As Dean Church puts it: "Take which you please, reason or Scripture, your own reason or that of others, private judgment, or general consent, one presupposes the existence of others, and it is not intended to do its work of illumination and guidance without them; and the man who elects to go by one alone will assuredly find in the end that he has gone wrong."

In other words, over against the principle of Scripture as the sole law, Hooker sets the larger conception of law as a whole—in the widest, most inclusive sense of the term. Accordingly, in his first book he undertook an investigation of the ground and origin of all law, the law which rules the universe as a whole; which rules, too, in the realm of nature, as well as in the sphere of human society; hoping by the investigation to show which laws are of permanent obligation, and which have only temporary effect. There is something majestic and sublime in this first book—a survey of the whole world as under a reign of law, and that law both in its general principles and its detailed application an expression of the Divine Will. The book is philosophical rather than theological in character, and it is the one book in the treatise that has a permanent interest for all readers, being not merely ecclesiastical, but speculative in its character and outlook.

It should be remembered, of course, that Hooker's outlook is fundamentally theistic. He begins by treating law as a manifestation of the Divine Will. A spirit of reverent humility controls all his speculation. We cannot fully comprehend the Most High

> "Whom, although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His name, yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not as indeed He is, neither can know Him; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence, when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon the earth; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few."

So far, however, as we can understand God at all, it must be from the point of view of our own highest faculties. We must conceive of Him as essentially Will with Reason as its rule. This Reason, or Wisdom, which is the rule of God's own being, is called by Hooker the "First Law Eternal." When that same Divine Wisdom rules all the created universe, it is called the "Second Law Eternal."

How does this divine law operate in its application to the human spirit? Hooker's answer is, in effect, the answer which Browning

gives in some of his most characteristic poems. It is the law of man's being to aspire constantly to perfection, to be reaching ever upwards towards God. His intellect seeks after knowledge and his will aspires to goodness. But how are we to recognize goodness? By means of reason, says Hooker, including our own private judgment, always however supplemented and corrected by the general reason of mankind. For no man can attain to perfection in solitude or isolation. He is essentially a social being and needs the aid of his fellows. Hence arise communities, both political and ecclesiastical. The particular form of the community is a matter of common consent. Hooker is quite innocent of any doctrine of the divine right of kings.

The laws which govern our relations with God are delivered to us by revealed religion. But reason is not thereby displaced. It is reason which warrants our acceptance of the claims of revelation. It is reason which enables us to draw the distinction between "natural" laws which are of permanent obligation, both for individuals and societies, and "positive" laws, which though equally divine in origin, are not necessarily invariable. Here we reach the point that touches Hooker's immediate controversy with the Puritans. Under the head of "positive law" he distinguishes between those which, once they have been promulgated, have universal and permanent authority, and those which, referring to temporary conditions, are only of temporary application.

The Puritans asserted that no law which is not found in Scripture can be of permanent obligation. Hooker replies that there are many "natural laws" discoverable by human reason, which are of permanent obligation. The Puritans asserted that every rule and regulation found in Scripture is a law for all time. Hooker replies that such rules and regulations may be permanent, or they may be temporary. If they deal with things unchanging, they are themselves unchanging; if they deal with what is transitory, they also are transitory.

In other words, the Divine Reason is manifested not only in revelation but in human reason. To set up Scripture as the sole rule of life and to degrade reason has the appearance of humble piety. It is, in truth, disguised arrogance, because in the very process it opposes the human will to the Divine.

I have tried to sketch in outline the argument of the First Book. It would be beside our present purpose to follow out its detailed application in Book II, which refutes the Puritan thesis that Scripture is the only rule of all things which man may do in this life; or in Book III, where he applies his principles to Church Government, showing that government by Bishops was primitive and was practically excellent, though not indispensable; or in Book IV, which vindicates the moderation of the English Reformation against the Puritans, who held that the Church of England still needed to be cleansed of many Popish orders, rites, and ceremonials; or in Book V, in which he vindicates our Anglican Prayer Book worship, with its orders, its occasional services and its sacraments. I can

only say that those who are interested in the discussion of these subjects will find our Church of England worship expounded and defended with calmness, dignity and persuasive reasoning.

Our present interest is with the form rather than with the matter of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*. In the history of English literature Hooker holds a high and conspicuous place. As Dean Church has said: the book "first revealed to the nation what English prose might be: its power of grappling with difficult conceptions and subtle reasonings, of bringing imagination and passion to animate and illuminate severe thought, of suiting itself to the immense variety of lights and moods and feelings which really surround and accompany the work of the mind; its power of attracting and charming like poetry, its capacity for a most delicate or most lofty music. The men who first read the early books of Hooker must have felt that their mother-tongue had suddenly appeared in a form which might bear comparison with the great classical models for force or beauty." Dean Church goes on to refer to the verdict of Hallam, in the chapter on the literature of Europe, in his *Constitutional History*, an often quoted passage which will bear repetition.

> "(Hooker) has abundant claims to be counted among the luminaries of English literature. He not only opened the mine, but explored the depths of our native eloquence. So stately and graceful is the march of his periods, so various the fall of his musical cadences upon the ear, so rich in images, so condensed in sentences, so grave and noble his diction, so little is there of vulgarity in his racy idiom, of pedantry in his learned phrase, that I know not whether any later writer has more admirably displayed the capacities of our language, or produced passages more worthy of comparison with the splendid monuments of antiquity."

Hallam, too, in his *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, does not hesitate to assert that "the finest, as well as the most philosophical writer of the Elizabethan period is Hooker. The first book of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* is, at this day, one of the masterpieces of English eloquence."[1]

Estimates such as these, from critics so well equipped to pronounce judgment, may reveal to us something of the greatness of Hooker's work; how in wealth and stateliness and strength of diction, he stands indisputably in the very first rank of English writers. It must be admitted, indeed, that to the modern reader Hooker's English would not seem easy. The reading of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*—like matrimony, is "not by any to be enterprised nor taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly." The reason for this does not lie in the fact that his vocabulary is archaic. It is true that, when it serves his purpose, he can use quite homely expressions. He speaks of a "mingle-mangle"[2] of religion and superstition. When referring to the affected atheism of some men, he speaks of the "spit venom"[3] of their poisoned hearts. But the

[1] Vol. II, Part II, Chap. VII, Section I, § 16.
[2] Sermons V, 7. [3] *Eccl. Pol.*, V, 2, 2.

difficulty for the modern reader does not lie in expressions like these. It lies rather in the fact that Hooker's prose was largely influenced by the Latin models with which he, like the other learned men of his day, was so intimately familiar. Following these examples, he arrays his words in an order which, while it corresponds most closely to the sequence of the thought, seems to us rather artificial and unnatural. And yet, what appears to be an almost perverse intricacy, is really a fitting arrangement of all the component parts, which are so hinged together as to give compactness and strength.

One characteristic in which he differs from our present habits of writing is, that he uses the long sentence, composed of many dependent clauses, linked together by a large variety of connecting words, each clause related to the other in a proper subordination. Sometimes he reverses the order of a sentence, with a view to placing the emphatic word in the emphatic place. He will put the object or the predicate early, as suits his purpose, and often he will reserve the verb, which completes the meaning of the passage, to the very last place in the sentence. He will even so far imitate Latin, as to separate the relative from its antecedent, putting the relative first. His sermons were similarly constructed, and Fuller, speaking of them, says, "His style was long and pithy, drawing on a whole flock of clauses before he came to the close of a sentence," and he goes on to say that while many found him obscure, "such who would patiently attend and give credit to all the reading or hearing of his sentences, had their expectation ever paid at the close thereof."

This kind of writing and speaking, in the hands of a smaller man, might have led to inextricable confusion and hopeless pedantry. But Hooker was master of his own style; he could wield the language into the exact expression of his thought. And above all, he had a most exquisite ear for rhythm. His prose is always melodious, and often rises to absolute majesty in passages of uplifted eloquence.

The fact is, Hooker is the last author in the world to be skipped. He requires in his reader sustained thought and sustained attention, and, as Bishop Paget has well said: [1]

> "In the present day, when not only he who reads must run, but also he who writes is generally running too, there is a wholesome discipline and also an unusual satisfaction to be found in studying an author whose every sentence has been thoroughly and conscientiously thought out, who is never slovenly or tautologous, and for whose work the most noble language seems somehow the most serviceable and appropriate."

The epitaph composed for Hooker by Sir William Cowper contains in its opening lines the famous adjective by which he has become known to succeeding ages:

> "Though nothing can be spoke worthy his fame,
> Or the remembrance of that precious name,

[1] Introduction, p. 4.

Judicious Hooker; though this cost be spent
On him that hath a lasting monument
In his own Books, yet ought we to express
If not his worth, yet our respectfulness."

"Judicious" is a fitting epithet. It does not mean cold, unemotional or detached. He was the very reverse of all that. It means that he was a man of wide reading and profound thought. The writers to whom, in the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, he makes allusion—not only Fathers and Schoolmen, but Aristotle, Plato, Sophocles, Euripides, Demosthenes, Polybius, Philo, Pliny, Tacitus—show the range of his erudition. They show too how in him the spirit of the Renaissance, that liberal spirit which does honour to every human faculty, had modified the stricter temper of the Reformation. From his earliest days he had been laborious, and for the most part he laboured in despite of ill health and adverse circumstance. His work was in a sense unfinished. But what he has given us is an eternal possession for those who love the English language and those who love the English Church. And the spirit of his writing is greater even than the work itself—a spirit always serious, always reverent, always devout, and yet, with reverence and devotion, always paying the fullest honour to human reason. In his method and temper, he represents:

> "nothing less than the better mind of England; its courage and its prudence; its audacity and its spirit of reverence; its regard for principles and its dislike of doctrinaire abstractions; its capacity for speculation controlled by its consideration of circumstances; its respect for the past and its readiness for new developments; its practical tendency; its lofty common sense." [1]

[1] Dowden, *Puritan and Anglican*, p. 96.

THE DATE OF EASTER AND OTHER CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS. By David R. Fotheringham, M.A., F.R.A.S., Vicar of Charing. London: *S.P.C.K.* Paper, 1*s.* 6*d.* Cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.* net.

Lord Desborough contributes a Preface to this book which is the result of long and patient research in which Mr. Fotheringham has had the assistance of competent authorities. He possesses an intimate knowledge of astronomy and of Holy Scripture and is thus well equipped for the task he has undertaken. He sets out his reasons for regarding Friday, April 7, A.D. 30, as the date of the Crucifixion, and he suggests as the date for a fixed Easter, April 9, or the Sunday next after. The difficulty is that there would have to be agreement among the Christian Churches before the change could be effected and it is by no means certain that the proposal would be favourably regarded. This, however, in no degree lessens the value of Mr. Fotheringham's careful work.

S. R. C.