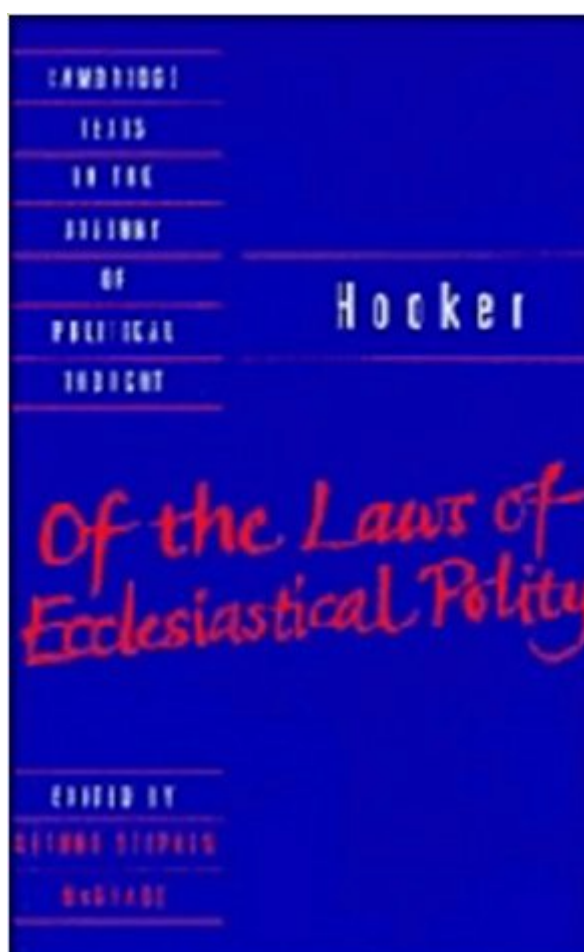


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Hooker: Of The Laws Of Ecclesiastical Polity (Cambridge Texts In The History Of Political Thought) (Bk.1 & Bk.7)



Synopsis

The great Elizabethan divine Richard Hooker has occupied a prominent place in the intellectual history of the Church of England and sixteenth-century Protestantism but his wider significance has often been neglected. In his introduction to this selection of books from *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Professor McGrade demonstrates clearly the continued relevance and importance of the particular politico-religious project Hooker undertook and shows that *The Laws* offer far more than simply an apologia for the Elizabethan religious settlement. The text of this version is based on the authoritative Folger edition and presents those sections of *The Laws* most important to an understanding of Hooker's wider aims and context.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The sections of *The Laws* considered most important are included in this edition of the great Elizabethan theologian's contributions to the intellectual history of the Church of England.

This is a text in the History of Political Thought series. As such the editor is concerned with Hooker's important role in that field rather than in the history of religion. Thus no Book 5 in which he sets out the enduring charism of Anglicanism. This is not really a book for Christian students, then, but one that helps to show how Hooker sets out the basis for constitutional monarchy and paved the way for Locke and thus for much of the thinking of America's first constitutional thinkers. Nevertheless it is

particularly interesting to see how his ideas about Natural Law and Reason echo those of the early Christian Apologists and before them the Stoic Heraclitus about the Logos.

Excellent

Arthur Stephen McGrade's selection from Hooker's "Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity" (1593-97) is a good introduction to Hooker's thought and his craftiness as a statist or "ecclesiastical" word pusher. Hooker seized upon advocating a "middle way" rather than following Scripture in order to maintain the status quo in State (Ecclesiastical) Religion. By pointing to statist Catholics and their extreme church statism as the opposite side from the Scriptural position of the Puritans and other Presbyterians on the other side, Hooker sought to present the Queen of England and her Church (Anglicanism) as the middle road, as the path between extremists on both sides. To argue for his conception of a middle way, Hooker appealed to natural law (Aquinas, Averroes, Ibn Tufayl). Whereas natural law actually justifies democracy, Hooker twisted it to justify monarchy and a monarchical church. Just as Ibn Tufayl advocated unthinking obedience to the monarch in his "Hayy Ibn Yaqzaan" 400 years earlier, Hooker does the same in his "Laws" in order to maintain the status quo - to defuse religion as the primer to political upheaval. Hooker argued that right reason is paramount when interpreting Scripture and whether laws have jurisdiction over a person and his property. The real issue behind Hooker's theological argument was the position of the Queen as the head of the church. Hooker worked from a position of natural law, but he twisted natural law to justify the State and state interventionism. There were good monarchies and bad ones, and that what mattered to God was the people's piety. Authority had to be obeyed, even if it was wrong, because it was commanded by Biblical teaching and by the practice of the early church, but it could be remedied by right reason and piety. Hooker believed that Christians should concentrate more on what united them, rather than on what divided them, and let the Queen remain in charge of religion. Hooker's "Laws" are important because they appealed to natural law, and later natural law would be examined by libertarians who would find that right reason and natural law advocate Liberty, not Power. By dipping from the well of liberty (natural law), Hooker unwittingly irrigated right thinking from the Reformists. And it is from the Reformation (the printing of the Bible in vernacular languages) that we eventually acquired our ideas on natural law, liberty and democracy.

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