
Thomas Hooker, one of the most eminent of Puritan divines to emigrate to New England, has so far been sadly neglected: none of his works have received a modern edition. The volume that is now available (also from Scholars Press, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana) promises to remedy this situation. Except for the lengthy treatise on *The Soul’s Preparation for Christ*, all the works which Hooker is known to have published before his departure for New England in 1633 are here assembled, altogether ten documents ranging from a funeral sermon of 1626 to the Preface to William Ames’ *A Fresh Suit Against Ceremonies* of 1633 and comprising letters, tracts, sermons, prefaces, and Hooker’s Answers to twenty questions posed to him by John Paget of Amsterdam.

The volume is the combined effort of four scholars who are experienced in Puritan studies. They have distributed the burden of editing among themselves and each has contributed an essay which in turn illuminates the life, thought, and writings of Hooker. In Essay I “The Life of Thomas Hooker in England and Holland 1586–1633” George H. Williams has brought together all that is known of Hooker’s life before his departure to the New World. Norman Pettit, author of *The Heart Prepared*, in the second essay called “The Order of Salvation in Thomas Hooker’s Thought” argues – to my mind not altogether convincing – that Hooker represented a kind of revisionist Calvinism that distinguished him from his colleagues in New England, notably from John Cotton. Essays 3 and 4 are concerned with problems of the published opus. Winfried Herget discusses “The Transcription and Transmission of the Hooker Corpus”, while Sargent Bush, Jr. has compiled the bibliography and discusses its problems in “Establishing the Hooker Canon”. The bibliography is not confined to Hooker’s European time but comprises the whole opus. It is the most complete ever assembled and lists 36 items plus 8 letters, adding new items to the canon while rejecting others. Various editions and their location in major libraries have not been consulted is to be regretted, particularly since one of the editors, Winfried Herget, is a German scholar. It seems quite possible that some of the translations of Hooker’s works into Dutch, which are listed in the bibliography, may have found their way into Germany.

While it is understandable and in many respects beneficial if several scholars combine forces in such an undertaking, a joint effort poses problems, particularly if none of the scholars involved serves as main editor. There are duplications but also omissions as well as divergencies in editorial policy. The most annoying omission is that, except for a few remarks in the introductions to individual documents, there is no discussion of editorial concepts and policies. It is in this respect that some questions have to be raised. Although the various editions of Hooker’s works are carefully listed in the bibliography, texts in this volume are not in all cases identified. Without an overall explanation of editorial policy the reader is confronted with an orthographically modernized text which neglects to reproduce the capitalization and italicization so characteristic of 17th century publications. The origin or meaning of isolated italicized words (like “they” on p. 197) is not explained. Quotations from other 17th century texts, however, which are included in the essays or in the introductions to the “Documents” are likely to appear in their original form as, for instance, the long quotation from Burgess, p. 305!

A note on p. 47 that Hooker used the Geneva Bible form of “charriets” for the word ‘chariots’ which appears in the standardized text makes the reader wonder how many, and which other changes remain unrecorded. Quite obviously, the editors have decided to offer a “readable” text. If this is a new trend in American scholarship, it might be justified for such works as Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*, but certainly not for a modern edition of Hooker’s writings the readership of which will be restricted to students of Puritanism. As a matter of fact, here the modernized text proves to be a severe handicap for the scholar. In Essay 3 Professor Herget explains that most of Hooker’s early sermons were published from auditors’ notes, while prefaces and the like were presumably printed from his manuscript. It should therefore be interesting to the Hooker scholar, and may perhaps yield revealing discoveries, to compare the original printed appearance of the two kinds of texts. In any case, charac-
Another editorial strategy to which this reviewer objects is the printing of “composite” texts (p. 275), as in the case of Document VIII, Hooker's answer to the 20 questions posed to him by John Paget whose colleague he was invited to be at Amsterdam. Of Hooker's answers two different 17th century transcriptions survive which have found modern printings. The editor's (George H. Williams) solution to this problem is to render a “composite” text of the two versions, in which one is basic; yet shifts to the other are made where the other “seems to have preserved Hooker more faithfully” (p. 275). This is very dubious editorial policy. The identity of the texts, each of which no doubt continues to offer many unsolved questions to the readers has to be clearly preserved for further scrutiny. Thus, the only clear-cut decision is to print what seems to be the better or more detailed version, and note the variations in the other. Or, if this is unsatisfactory, – to print them both.

Altogether, the editorial attitude in this first modern printing of Hooker's works is astonishingly authoritarian. With the Document X, at least, we seem to be back at the time when the Puritans were considered as nitwits who had to be corrected in every other sentence! It starts innocently enough in Documents I through III (editor Winfried Herget) where Bible quotations are completed and an occasional “[in]” is inserted before the Bible quotations strewn into the sermon by Hooker. Actually, the reader should be trusted to supply them himself, particularly since they are not always convincing or suited, as, for instance, on p. 97: “[In 2 Kg 7: 9 there they say . . . ]” Nevertheless, the reader is grateful for the fact that in Documents I–III he encounters few efforts to “improve” the text. But even the few are questionable. If on p. 101: “Answer: I answer: the saints may show forth godliness and yet not themselves, however [much] a carnal heart is ready to abuse the best duties sometimes,” a “much” is added, the editor ignores the insight into the oral nature of the sermons which he discusses in his essay. The “much” changes this oral structure as well as the meaning; a comma or a colon behind the “however” would have solved the problem.

It is in Document X, Hooker’s Preface to Ames’ Fresh Suit Against Ceremonies (editor George H. Williams) that editorial interference in the text reaches a proportion to which I would like to raise a strong cry of protest. The insertions fall into three main categories: additives for grammatical reasons, additives of supposedly missing words or parts, and interpretations. They are added as the editor tells us (p. 318) “for clarity’s sake,” yet they more often are superfluous, misleading, or even falsifying.

Particularly annoying are the insertions by which the editor apparently wishes to improve Hooker’s diction but actually corrupts it. An adulteration of Hooker’s essentially oral style is provided by the superfluous “thats” which are added, for example, on pp. 329 and 336, or the “how” and “they” on p. 333. Even more serious are the superfluous additions which dilute and weaken Hooker’s terse and idiomatic diction. Characteristic examples are to be found on p. 320: “. . . when the foulness of their stomachs and the noisome humors there cause that they cannot brook the sea but [suffer] with much tedious disquiet and sickness . . . ” Another example, out of many: “For the words run in force and [take the] form of a command” (p. 338) proves how much superior and stronger a stylist Hooker is as compared to his editor. These are narrow schoolmasterly corrections.

No less questionable are the editor’s interpretative additions. I cannot see the justification for the added “revealed” to “truth” on p. 320. The people referred to on p. 323, first line, were no doubt called “Elizabeth professors, as they are termed,” not “Elizabeth[an] professors,” as the editor wants it. Just two more examples of the editor’s misleading or questionable urge to complete or expand Hooker’s text: Since Hooker lists four “Causes for Declining” and speaks of a “Second Sort of Decliners” and a “Fourth Sort of Decliners,” the editor completes the heading on p. 321 thus:


First Sort [of Decliners]”

The logical addition, however, if any, would have been:

“First Sort [of Causes],” and it can be argued that in this first section emphasis is on causes, not on people, as it starts thus: “The cause of this declining is the entertainment of the truth upon false grounds.”