
Hampton, Stephen. *Grace and Conformity: The Reformed Conformist Tradition and the Early Stuart Church of England*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Historians seem never to tire of investigating the theology and history of the Puritan tradition and its foil, Laudianism. Although this ecclesiastical dichotomy is clean cut for many, Stephen Hampton demonstrates that it does not account for the true theological breadth of the Church of England in the early modern period. Rather than a polarized two-party system, some of the seventeenth-century's most significant figures in the established church belonged to the Reformed Conformist tradition.

The Reformed Conformists included those clergy who were adamantly committed to the doctrine of the Reformed tradition but were also dedicated to the structures of the established church, including its liturgical forms and polity. Hampton's thesis is that this tradition was not only prominent within the early modern English church but was the mainstream. Admittedly, Puritanism has received the bulk of attention in secondary literature, but perhaps that is because of its inherent controversial nature, since it grows out of debates within the established church and is fostered by the full social upheaval of the English civil war. By contrast, Reformed Conformity followed the set patterns of English divinity, striving to promote Reformed orthodoxy from within the confessional and ecclesiastical commitments of the Church of England.

This study focuses on ten Reformed Conformist figures—including John Prideaux, Daniel Featley, John Davenant, and George Downname—who exemplify various features of this tradition. Hampton explores a handful of events and topics that masterfully demonstrate the strength of the Reformed Conformist tradition under the reigns of James I/VI and Charles I. He shows how the main university commencement lectures were dominated by the promotion of Reformed theology and the doctrines of grace, formulated carefully to display their coherence with the confessional heritage of the Church of England. Further, as various controversies unfolded throughout the seventeenth century, even with the differences among these various theologians, the Reformed Conformist leaders maintained a strong front that the Reformed understanding of grace, justification, and the sacraments does justice to Scripture and the patristic tradition as well as the divinity expressed in the Thirty-nine Articles, Book of Common Prayer, and canon law.

One of Hampton's most astounding observations is the resilience that characterized the Reformed Conformist tradition. Its adherents did not passively accept the English style of divinity and polity, nor accidentally remain committed to it or Reformed orthodoxy. Rather, through a series of pointed debates, they produced strident and sophisticated formulations of their tradition, arguing that it is the most fitting expression of Reformed theology and churchmanship. The Synod of Dort is perhaps the most well-known example of this, as Reformed Conformists composed the British delegation sent to the gathering and contributed several overt defenses for specifically English views, making sure that room was left for their position in the Synod's final documents.

On the other hand, although experts in the period will be aware of it, a lesser-known instance that reveals the strength of the Reformed Conformist tradition is the Richard Montagu affair. Montagu released several controversial publications that many interpreted as having Arminian leanings. Although Montagu's publications may be somewhat unknown, Hampton explores the lasting effects of this controversy in shaping the plethora of publications by Reformed Conformists who responded to Montagu not just on the issue of grace and human will but also on the sacraments. Montagu's provocative contribution left a lasting mark on English divinity, even to some degree prompting the suppression of predestinarian teaching that began in 1626 and intensified in 1628. Montagu's works and the Reformed Conformist responses, therefore, occupy a more significant place in the early modern English context than has been previously noted. This is of course relevant not only for further studies of this Conformist tradition but for investigations into Puritanism, Laudianism, and seventeenth-century politics.

In sum, Hampton's study is a tour de force of early modern Reformed theology. Whereas the early chapters demonstrate how the theologians in question were thoroughly Reformed in their theological commitments, the final two chapters unpack how they coupled this with a loyalty to episcopacy and the established liturgical practices of the Church of England. These final two chapters perhaps break the newest ground for the field, exploring more richly the intersection between Reformed theology and a diversity of ecclesiastical practices.

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