

Liturgical interpretation and Church reform in Renaissance Scotland c. 1488-c. 1590.

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Abstract

Liturgical interpretation is the application of the methods of patristic and medieval biblical exegesis to public worship. This thesis examines for the first time its importance in the religious culture of Scotland during a period of renaissance and reformation. The first section defines the genres and method involved with reference to the most popular liturgical commentary of that time, the *Rationale divinorum officiorum* of William Durandus of Mende (c.1230-1296). The reasons for the decline of this genre and its neglect by modern scholarship are then explored. The central section of the thesis employs a wide variety of evidence, including material culture, to argue, firstly, that liturgical interpretation was a fundamental

part of the culture of Catholic Scotland; secondly, that interest in it was a sign of commitment to Catholic reform. It is also argued that it had an important place in the education system and influenced the design and understanding of churches and their furnishings. Drawing upon inscriptions in liturgical commentaries, networks of clergy in Scotland committed to Catholic reform and the liturgy are identified. The 'Aberdeen liturgists' were the most significant group. Formed by Bishop Elphinstone of Aberdeen who was consecrated in 1488, it is shown that their influence lasted beyond 1560 and created a distinctive religious culture in the North-East. The final section examines what happened to this intellectual tradition during the period of the Scottish reformations, both the Catholic reform associated with Archbishop Hamilton in the 1550s and the Protestant reform which triumphed in 1559-60. While interest in liturgical interpretation survived in Aberdeen after 1560, its use by Catholic writers declined in the later sixteenth century. A Reformed version of liturgical interpretation did, however, emerge combining an anti-commentary on the Catholic liturgy with the use of aspects of the medieval method to interpret the liturgy of the Reformed church. This can be found in official Protestant texts and, in its fullest form, in the 1590 sermons on the Lord's Supper by Robert Bruce. This hitherto unnoticed genre demonstrates an important continuity across the Reformation divide. It suggests that 'the Scottish Reformation' is best seen as a phenomenon which was both Catholic and Protestant and that the reformers on both sides had more in common than they or subsequent historians allow.

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