in early modern Florence, as well as representations of vision, debates about optical functioning, and the presumed pedagogical aspects of seeing.

Rubin's textbook offers a compelling synthesis capable of inspiring students to grasp the richness of current scholarship on early modern Italian visual culture, encouraging them to explore the field more fully. The author provides extensive bibliographical notes as an addendum, describing additional scholarship on such themes as consumption, marriage, and the ethics of expenditure during the early modern period. Gender is only briefly mentioned, however, in a few chapters, even though the work of female artisans and the commissions ordered by female patrons are of current interest to scholars. The book also lacks a sustained consideration of the early modern trading practices which saw international objects flood into Florence, another issue increasingly scrutinized by specialists in the field. Anyone hoping to offer a complete overview would thus need to provide students with supplementary readings. All the same, the sustained focus of *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence* on such central concerns as visibility is most welcome. In the end, Rubin's up-to-date exploration of a limited time frame and cultural period is successful, and similar publications on other historical periods would be well received by both experts and students interested in the politics and practices of visual culture.

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John McAfferty

The Reconstruction of the Church of Ireland: Bishop Bramhall and the Laudian Reforms, 1633–1641

Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. pp. xiv, 268.

John McAfferty has written a solid and impressive account of the rise, contested implications, and eventual decline of the Laudian "reconstruction" of the Church of Ireland. His rigorous and careful argument will significantly advance scholarly understanding of a complex and confused movement in one of the most complex and confused periods of early modern Irish history.

McAfferty's study focuses on the clerical career of John Bramhall, a Yorkshire clergyman whose promotions in the Church of Ireland were fast-tracked from relatively humble origins through his associations among the ecclesiastical and administrative elite. Bramhall arrived in Ireland one century after the legislative

beginning of the Irish reformation. His arrival followed that of the new viceroy, Thomas Wentworth, and the appointment of William Laud as archbishop of Canterbury, and introduced him into a situation of overwhelming ecclesiastical decay, in which church buildings were being used as tennis courts and in which one bishop would be convicted—and hanged—as a sodomite. These were, of course, the titillating horrors of a reformation gone wrong, and Bramhall cited the evidence he reported to his masters with evident care. Within one year of arriving in Ireland, he was appointed bishop of Derry, and, with the support of Wentworth and Laud, had embarked upon an ambitious and relentless campaign to position the reconstructed Church of Ireland as a model of the “Laudian” reform that, he and his patrons hoped, would reshape the national churches of the three Stuart kingdoms. Within Ireland, the experiment succeeded to a remarkable degree, but depended upon the machinations of power developed in this complex of relationships. Eight years later, the project’s dénouement was manifest. All three men were arraigned on charges of treason: Wentworth and Laud were executed; Bramhall was quietly released, though never acquitted, and fled into European exile.

The Reconstruction of the Church of Ireland, which is based on McAfferty’s University of Cambridge PhD thesis, moves chronologically and thematically through the relevant events of the 1630s and early 1640s. An insightful introductory chapter explores the character of the Irish reformation, arguing that “Ireland got an English reformation” which “faltered and failed for the very reasons that the English state-sponsored reformation ... succeeded.” McAfferty’s review of the literature on the failure of the reformation in Ireland does not significantly advance our understanding of the events of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but it does forcefully summarize the terms of its debate: “Henry VIII attempted by strategy, by policy and by law to turn all of the inhabitants of Ireland into his obedient subjects *and* into Englishmen and Englishwomen *and* lead them into schism with Rome *all at once*.” Similarly, McAfferty argues, Elizabeth’s *via media* “worked out to be a blend” in the Church of England, but “curdled” in the Church of Ireland. The programme of reconstruction advanced by Bramhall and his colleagues was therefore an attempt to make right what earlier generations had made wrong.

Successive chapters in the book trace the legal bases of the new administration, its insistent clericalism and new confessional basis, and its innovative and combative financial underpinnings. McAfferty’s reading of these events begins with the new opportunities afforded by the Ulster plantations—an ironic genesis as, his book argues, the experience of Ulster so often frustrated and, in the aftermath of rebellion, finally overwhelmed the Laudian reconstruction of the Irish Church. But the

plantation project provided the attempt at reconstruction with a substantial part of its financial base. As McAfferty notes, “there were no dearth of plans for Ireland; there was, instead, a dearth of successful application of them.” Nevertheless, Bramhall’s carefully cultivated impression of dynamism might seem to be an exceptional case: his investigations into the financial mismanagement that had overwhelmed the Irish Church in the one hundred years since the beginnings of its reformation resulted in a series of improvements, the returns of which ranged from 40 to 1,200 per cent. *The Reconstruction of the Church of Ireland* advances with a strong focus on the legal background to the Laudian reform, but clearly demonstrates its conclusion that “in a space of less than two years Thomas Wentworth had put all of the resources of the state at the service of the state church for the first time in the history of that institution,” and Bramhall was the man at its helm.

The Reconstruction of the Church of Ireland similarly plots the advance of theological change. McAfferty argues that the Irish Church had no real concern for subscription before 1634, when Convocation was pressured into adopting the Thirty-nine Articles alongside its earlier confession of faith (1615). The intervention was calculated, if its effects proved messy: dissenting voices were pushed out into the open in a defining moment for the emergence of party in the Irish Church. McAfferty’s reading of the events of the Convocation is cautious and deliberate, and provides the clearest evidence of the event’s momentum of religious change—and is perhaps one of the most important of this book’s many contributions. But the decisions of Convocation illustrated the extent of the influence of the new regime, and the power of bishops presiding over a committed clerical coterie with “overlapping circles of birth, education, marriage and patrons.” These supporters of Laudian reform succeeded in introducing sacramental confession as part of a new Irish clericalism, and set the context for the battle for Ussher’s posthumous reputation. A brief conclusion provides an interpretive overview of this range of often detailed readings of sources.

And yet, this book provides less of a rounded account of the period than might be expected. For all that the subtitle hints at the centrality of Bishop Bramhall, he himself appears less than fully fleshed out in the development of its narrative. Towards the book’s conclusion, the description of his life in the period after the early 1640s—including his famous debates with Thomas Hobbes in the 1650s, his post-Restoration leadership of the Irish Church, and his afterlife as an Anglican “father” in the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology and in the writing of T. S. Eliot—is markedly spare. It is Bramhall’s experience that unifies the book, and yet at times he appears less than central to its narrative. Similarly, *The Reconstruction of the Church*

of *Ireland* ends with the undermining of Laudian reform—a teleological nicety that neatly rounds off its narrative. But readers are provided with much greater detail on the elaboration of that reconstruction than on its eventual overturning.

These are minor blemishes in this unrivalled account of the complexities, opportunities, and frustrations of the advancing of Laudian reform in Ireland. *The Reconstruction of the Church of Ireland* represents a significant step forward in our understanding of the events leading up to the British crises of the mid-seventeenth century.

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James Simpson

Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation Opponents

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The story of the struggle to introduce the vernacular Bible to England from 1525 to 1547 is often depicted as heroic, and as foundational for the liberal tradition. The popularity of such a perspective, however, has not prevented James Simpson, the Douglas P. and Katherine B. Loker Professor of English at Harvard University, from reminding liberals of the dark violence that was very much part of the early modern Bible-reading culture. Admittedly a liberal himself, Simpson is fully aware of the anachronistic dangers that come with applying a twentieth-century term such as “fundamentalism” to a study of the early modern period. Regardless, Simpson maintains that the dominance of reading practices stemming from Protestant modernity is particularly relevant to our current world. These hermeneutics produced various kinds of textual violence that previous scholarship has largely overlooked.

Simpson seeks to correct what he perceives to be the neglect of the role of early modern reading by recent revisionists such as John Scarisbrick, Christopher Haigh, and Eamon Duffy. He argues that there were multiple ways in which the Biblical text unleashed different forms of violence. The main content of the book is drawn together and contextualized in light of the polemical debates over the nature of Biblical interpretation and authority between William Tyndale and Thomas More. Simpson challenges the more convenient interpretations of the Tyndale-More confrontation in terms of simple opposition between evangelical and Catholic. Highly critical of the “strident nationalism and unexamined imperialism” in David Daniell’s interpretation of Tyndale, he suggests that evangelical reading practices