Introduction

*England’s Second Reformation* is an attempt to look at the religious history of the mid-seventeenth century in a way that frees it from some of the master narratives usually employed for that period – not least the account that presents the 1640s and 1650s as a uniquely destructive but also temporary intermission in the history of national institutions, in religion as much as in politics, and of interest chiefly because of the growth of radical tolerationism.

The intention here is to consider events in the context of the history of the Church of England and of its earlier Reformations. When historians of the Church of England contemplate the period of the Civil War and Interregnum, it is usually seen in simple terms as a struggle between those puritans working to abolish the pre-war church settlement and those religious conservatives seeking to preserve it. Given that the Church of England’s history is generally interpreted as the history of the consolidation of an established Elizabethan settlement, this tends to relegate the events of the 1640s and 1650s to the status of an aberration, a cautionary tale or even an irrelevance.

But to see these decades as a struggle between the abolition or preservation of a pre-existing church is misleading in a number of ways. As this book reveals, for many people and in much of the published discourse of these decades, ongoing debate was not simply about destruction or conservation, but more about how far and in what ways the existing church should be changed and reformed. ‘Abolition’ or ‘preservation’ were options located at the extreme ends of a spectrum of views, with most people’s opinions situated somewhere between them. People’s perspectives across the period could also be more complex than we might initially assume. The most high-church divines had their own, often dramatic reforming agendas, while some of the most radical puritan voices sought toleration outside the national church rather than necessarily pursuing the abolition of its institutions. The notion of ‘preserving’ the pre-war church is also
highly problematic. Historians have in recent years emphasized that there was no single clear Church of England orthodoxy in the pre-war period and have mostly ceased to use the term ‘Anglican’ altogether to describe conformists of this period. The disruptive impact of the ideas and policies promoted by Archbishop Laud and his followers in the 1630s – which were opposed not just by puritans but also by prominent members of the religious establishment – problematizes any notion that there was a consensual, settled reading of the established church, its formularies and doctrines.

The 1640s and 1650s cannot therefore be a period when pre-war orthodoxy was preserved in aspic by an embattled ‘Anglican’ royalist constituency because that ‘orthodoxy’ was itself amorphous and contested, so that any apparent ‘preservation’ was itself an act of interpretation. And increasingly, historians of the 1650s have grasped that episcopalians of this decade were not simple custodians of an unchanging ‘Anglican’ identity but were involved in an often highly contentious reimagining of what the established church and its formularies were and what they meant. Similarly, abolition of the existing church was not necessarily the shared aim of parliamentarians and puritans. Undoubtedly, there were those who from the outset were seeking the abolition of episcopacy, the Prayer Book and many of the structures of the established church (and indeed of the very notion of a national church), and in the event, these ecclesiastical institutions and formularies were indeed abolished. But, as this book will demonstrate, most parliamentarians were ready to envisage and explore a range of practical compromises between abolition and preservation. And even when religious institutions and forms were removed, the perpetrators often insisted on presenting their actions in terms of continuity with the pre-war church and with past Reformations. Indeed, the dominant discourse in the 1640s and beyond was not of abolition but of reformation – of improving, adapting and reforming what already existed.

Of course there was plenty of radical new thinking – about doctrine, the Church, scripture and religious toleration – albeit often pitched as a supposed return to fundamentals in the face of the unparalleled political and ecclesiastical developments. But radical new thinking was not just the preserve of so-called radicals. In trying to negotiate a religious settlement in the 1640s, in attempting to cope without a king and an established church in the 1650s, all religious groupings had to do some serious rethinking of first principles. This was a radical moment – a new Reformation – that was

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1 See more generally Milton, *Oxford History*. 
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experienced by the full spectrum of English people, including those committed to an established church with continuities with the pre-war past.

Contemporaries were not averse to describing the religious changes of the 1640s and 1650s as ‘this second Reformation’, and even Laudians and episcopalianists were prepared to use ‘reformation’ to describe their own activities. Subsequent historians and commentators, however, have (with some exceptions) tended to avoid the term. This arguably reflects a tendency to view the Tudor Reformation as much more settled and definitive than it was – so that this was the only Reformation, from which later events were a curious aberration. It may also reflect an assumption that the events of the 1640s and 1650s were very different to the earlier Reformations. After all, the mid-seventeenth century was a time of extremism, violence and the extensive destruction of churches and their furnishings rather than the presumably measured, stable reform of the Tudors. It was a time when religious policy seemed subservient to changing political events, when radical Protestant ideas inherited from the continent flourished and when the reformers themselves were an unrepresentative minority who consciously rejected the past, working against the wishes of the conservative majority of the population. But in recent decades, historians have of course made it clear that these were all features of the Tudor decades, so that the events of the 1640s and 1650s arguably look more like an English Reformation rather than less so. Besides, the tendency to depict the Tudor Reformation as a stable and measured process working towards a calm equipoise in itself originated as a polemical manoeuvre in the sixteenth century. The habit of seeing the 1640s and 1650s as a strange anomaly or hiatus, to perceive the Church of England continuing heroically underground and to view the 1660s as a triumphant ‘restoration’, is

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5 Edmund Calamy, Gods Free Mercy to England (1642), p. 7; John Arrowsmith, Englands Eben-ezer (1641), p. 12; MPWA, iii, 89, 93; John Cotton, The grounds and ends of the baptism of the children of the faithfull (1646), sig. b1r. The term was also used at other times to refer to the Elizabethan Reformation (Cornelius Burges, The first sermon ... November 17 1640 (1641), p. 66), to Scotland (Robert Baillie, Satan the leader in chief (1643), sig. A4r), and much later even to the Laudians (P. Nockles, A Disputed Legacy: Anglican Historiographies of the Reformation, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 83 (2001), p. 129). Cf. also Philip Nye, Beames of former light (1660), pp. 158, 162, 196; Daniel Cawdrey, Independencie (1643), p. 82.
8 For helpful recent surveys of these points, see, for example, the articles by MacCulloch, Foster, Shagan, Quantin, Marshall and Sheils in Milton, Oxford History.
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itself a tendentious interpretation serving the agenda of one particular group of *engagés*. In other words, these contested presuppositions about the nature and course of the Church of England and English Protestantism, as well as notions of what and when the ‘English Reformation’ was, are themselves integral to the events of the 1640s and 1650s.

The following book will suggest that the 1640s and 1650s are supremely relevant to any history of the Church of England, not because it was abolished and was preserved as a heroic, persecuted underground movement, but rather because the Church of England was itself being reformed, rethought and explored in new and dramatic ways by an extraordinary range of different religious groups. This was the climax of the Church of England’s early history, rather than a strange lacuna in it. It was a period that witnessed not a battle between the Church of England and its puritan opponents; it was a battle for the Church of England and for her identity between different religious groups. This was a process which long pre-dated the Civil War, but had become especially acute in the 1630s with the rise of Laudianism and the sustained reinterpretation of the Church of England and her formularies that accompanied it. This reinterpretation itself generated a process of scrutiny and rethinking of the Church of England’s identity in the anti-Laudian writings of the 1630s and the attempts to de-Laudianize the Church in the early 1640s, even before civil war made more radical reformation both possible and politically necessary. And if the history of the ‘Second Reformation’ should arguably therefore begin with the ‘reformation’ attempted by the Laudians in the 1630s, it also makes sense to extend it to the so-called Restoration settlement too. The idea of a ‘Second Reformation’ thus facilitates a more capacious and interconnected chronology than is usually attempted in studies of this period.

In using the term ‘Second Reformation’, my intention is simply to denote a second sustained wave of attempted reforms (often mutually exclusive) of the English institutional church from the 1630s to the 1660s and to encourage us to situate them (as most contemporaries did) alongside the first series of institutional Reformations under the Tudors. That being said, the term ‘Second Reformation’ has in the past also been used more specifically by historians of early modern European religion to describe the Reformed (in contrast to the Lutheran) Reformation on the continent.6 While it is true that the intensified Reformed doctrinal

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orthodoxy and moral discipline that were among the reforms contemplated or implemented in 1640s and 1650s England have some obvious parallels with those pursued in the ‘second Reformation’ on the continent (which perhaps makes the potential ambiguity in my use of the term not entirely unapt), it must be stressed that my own use of the phrase is not intended to engage with this continental scholarship, but is meant in looser fashion to refer only to the chronology of religious change in England.7

No more than ‘Tudor Reformation’ is the term ‘second Reformation’ intended to imply a unitary process. There was a multiplicity of parallel and conflicting responses to the opportunities for reform. Nevertheless, to treat these different programmes as part of a broader sustained phenomenon means that we can compare and contrast them and gain a sense of how different reforming initiatives were partly shaped by the response to contemporaneous developments and alternative reform programmes. I hope to demonstrate that discussing the Laudian reforms and the reform attempts of the early 1640s alongside the upheavals and attempted peace treaties of the 1640s and 1650s and the different projected settlements of 1660–62 can help to illuminate all of them.

Contemporaries of course could mean very different things by the word ‘reformation’. Not only did they disagree about what needed to be reformed and how this should be carried out, but ‘reformation’ had ambiguous meanings. While it was and still is applied to a specific historic corpus of ecclesiastical, doctrinal and institutional reforms and the events surrounding them, contemporaries also applied the term widely to any form of improvement of anything, secular or religious. It was especially applied to the improvement of the self in the sense of a personal spiritual and moral renewal and the process of conversion (and of course a key justification for ecclesiastical reformation was that it would promote such?

In doctrinal and institutional reform, there was also an implicit (and sometimes explicit) distinction made between ‘reformatio in pristinum’ (looking backwards and restoring a pure original by freeing it from later corruption) and ‘reformatio in melius’ (moving forwards and changing something in the light of the present rather than building on the past). This was a distinction that was constantly blurred in practice, but it was the very ambiguity of the term ‘reformation’ that gave it its impact and value in this period as a polemical and rhetorical device.

While there is an acknowledged ambiguity in this book’s main title, the subtitle – ‘the battle for the Church of England’ – should provide a clearer guide to the scope and argument of the book. My principal focus is on the struggle between different groups who claimed to speak for the pre-war national church and who maintained that their attempts to reform it were faithful to the principles behind the Church of England’s earlier Reformations and essentially represented the final consummation of them. Two religious groups therefore receive only relatively limited attention. The first is Roman Catholics. There is undoubtedly an urgent need for sustained research on the position and activities of Catholics during this period, beyond the intriguing role played by the Blackloists. But as my book is principally concerned with those claiming to speak for the national Protestant church, Catholics do not feature, although I do discuss those occasions when they sought to manipulate the divisions over the Church of England to encourage conversions to Rome. Similarly, while anti-Catholicism has been an important area of interest in my other work it plays a less prominent role here, partly because my impression is that it ceased to play as significant a role in demarcating divisions among Protestants in these decades.

The second group that receives relatively less attention here than they are usually given in books covering this period are the sectarians. Given their increasing political prominence, activism and ideological innovations over these years, these groups often tend to be near to the centre stage in religious accounts of the mid-seventeenth century (which is perhaps a reason in itself why Anglican historians have tended to discount this period). But as this book is setting out to study discourses that were

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concerned with the modification, revival or refining of aspects of the pre-war national church, those individuals who self-consciously fought against ‘the Church of England’, and indeed against the very notion of a national church, are not as pertinent to the history of ‘the battle for the Church of England’ that is examined here. They still have an important place in explaining the history of this period, and even within this book’s thematic focus they are sometimes significant for the reactions that they provoked, and also because a surprising number of them did still (partly for polemical reasons) show a readiness to appeal to the past history of the Church and to deploy the testimony of older conformist authors. Moreover, there is sometimes a case for placing apparently ‘radical’ reforms in a longer-term and more mainstream context (as is partly attempted in Chapter 9). Overall, though, if sectarian groups receive relatively less attention in this book, this is not to deny the later significance of their views in a range of areas, not least in the history of religious toleration. Moreover, the future study of religious sectarians might conceivably benefit from a more carefully articulated study of the destabilized ‘mainstream’ opinions with which they were in conflict, but out of which they often emerged and from which they sometimes borrowed ideas and materials.

This book is not attempting to provide a comprehensive account of the religious politics of the 1640s and 1650s. Not only would this be a herculean labour that would require several volumes to accomplish, but there is also no shortage of very detailed and impressive scholarly accounts of the local and national religious politics of the period that already exist, as well as exhaustive volumes on specific religious groups.10 Instead, my focus is on the specific ways that the reform of the national Church of England was proposed, discussed and attempted, and how these reforms compared and contrasted (and were compared and contrasted) with previous reform efforts. While the details of religious change have often been mapped out, there has often been less attention paid to how precisely the different protagonists situated themselves, their ideas, programmes and activities with relation to the past history of the reformed Church of England.

Exploring what people thought was happening, how they made sense of events in terms of earlier history and how they situated themselves and their reforms historically lies at the heart of this book’s agenda.

If this focus on less familiar historical territory means that some customary figures from the political history of the period are less prominent than usual, it also means that Scotland and Ireland appear only intermittently when actions there or the activities of their commissioners in England can throw light on or helped to shape these English discussions. Ireland and Scotland should of course play a much more prominent role in any broader attempt to explain the forces at work in driving and sustaining religious and political conflict in the seventeenth-century British archipelago, but that is not what is being attempted here.

Foreign Protestant churches also appear less often in this book than I would have preferred. In my other work, I have stressed the importance of the neglected interactions of English and foreign Protestants and the significance of English perceptions and representations of continental Protestantism in articulating and defending their own positions on a range of theological and ecclesiastical issues. In this book, I do note at a number of points how episcopalian, Presbyterians and Congregationalists alike invoked, manipulated or disputed the testimony and example of foreign Reformed churches to defend their own positions. But European Protestant perceptions of and interactions with English events in this period constitute a field of study in their own right, and I have made the decision to save the details of my research in this area for a separate volume which will hopefully appear in the near future.

If some rightly important themes in the political history of the period are less prominent in this study, I hope that new light is shone on themes, ideas, writings and individuals which have been relatively or completely neglected in previous accounts of these decades. The study of changes made to the Church of England and attempted reforms is necessarily in part a history of proposals and negotiations, of attempts to persuade and manipulate. I have therefore attempted to treat reform programmes and concessions, peace treaties and proposals, as a subject in their own right, rather than merely as ancillary to an ever-escalating conflict. To offer more attention to this neglected angle is not to deny the conflict and destruction, but to provide an extra dimension and context into which the period’s violent language and polarizing rhetoric needs to be placed.

To keep the project within manageable bounds, I have also only touched briefly on some themes and individuals that are treated more extensively in the important and ongoing work of a number of current
scholars, including David Como, Chad van Dixhoorn, Elliot Vernon, Hunter Powell and Joel Halcomb.

A Note on Terminology

I have found it necessary to devise several new terms to describe some of the phenomena discussed in this book, but these are attempts to meet practical requirements of explanation and interpretation rather than reflecting a desire for superficial novelty, and I hope they will be read in that light. In some cases, the terms being employed here reflect changes in my own earlier usage. I have also deliberately avoided some familiar terms when they seemed to be misleading, carrying connotations which are unwarranted or simply wrong.

‘The abortive reformation’ refers to the range of proposals for reform that did not involve the abolition of episcopacy or of the Prayer Book which were debated by puritans and conformists alike in the period 1640–42. The ‘Westminster Reformation’ refers to the body of reforms and formularies officially approved in ordinances by the Westminster Parliament in the period 1643–48, most of which had originated in the Westminster Assembly, but does not refer to the other models being advocated by religious activists, or the initial proposals made by the Assembly.

The term ‘Anglicanism’ has been avoided as both anachronistic and misleading. It assumes an essentialist reading of the identity of the Church of England which prejudices the outcome of the competing claims to orthodoxy which lie at the heart of this book’s analysis. I have also resisted the term ‘Restoration settlement’. Not only does this carry obvious dangers of hindsight and apparent inevitability, but it also implies that there was an agreed body of Church of England institutions and formularies to be ‘restored’ and implicitly treats the previous twenty years as a discrete aberration (or as a period when the ‘real’ Church of England was patiently awaiting revival). It also disguises some of the divisions on the episcopalian side and arguably underplays the agenda of the more high-church protagonists. I have preferred the terms ‘Caroline settlement’ and ‘Caroline Reformation’, as these have the advantage of seeing what emerged as only

I am very conscious that nothing dates a text more mercilessly than the use of terminology that was not subsequently adopted by one’s fellow-historians. Nevertheless, if my colleagues can devise better terms to describe the phenomena which I have sought to identify here I will be more than happy to follow their leads.
the most recent idiosyncratic contribution to a series of partial, contingent readings of the Church of England stretching back to Henry VIII.

I have tried to resist using the term ‘Laudian’ after 1640 because the religious situation from which ‘Laudianism’ emerged had ceased to exist and it was not clear what a ‘Laudian’ position might logically be in the transformed politics of the 1640s and 1650s. Those who had previously been committed Laudians now moved in a number of different directions, and for much of this period, episcopalian roylists went to some lengths to avoid referring directly to earlier Laudian reforms. Wherever earlier allegiance to Laudian reforms provides an important context for later behaviour, I will sometimes describe individuals as ‘ex-Laudian’ or ‘erstwhile Laudian’. I have suggested ‘neo-Laudian’ as a term for those divines in the 1660s who consciously identified with the earlier Laudian reforms while formulating their own response to the different political and ecclesiastical context of the later period.

I have continued to use the terms ‘Calvinist conformist/episcopalian’ and ‘Erastian’. Both have recently prompted justified criticisms – that the former presupposes the dominance of Calvin’s writings (hence the recent preference for the alternative ‘Reformed conformist’) and that the latter implies an adherence to the specific doctrinal position of Thomas Erastus. In both cases, I thought the reader’s convenience would be best served if I were to follow the common usage, which presupposes a broader and non-specific meaning (of adherence to Reformed doctrines of grace, on the one hand, and secular control of ecclesiastical affairs, on the other). Unlike ‘Anglican’, neither term is subject to overt current ideological contestation, and I do not think that the terminological imprecision does any harm to the analysis. I have also followed common usage in employing the terms ‘Congregationalist’ and ‘Independent’ interchangeably – to restrict myself to only one of them could have implied an interpretative agenda that is not intended.

It is difficult to find an appropriate term to refer to the Cromwellian ecclesiastical establishment of the 1650s. Its most prominent architects were Independents who rejected the notion of a national church (which would seem to question the appropriateness of the term ‘Cromwellian church’), yet in practice they were parasitic on remnants of the national church, and substantial numbers of Presbyterians and some episcopaliains