Chapter 1

Introduction: church polity and politics in the British Atlantic world, *c.* 1635–66

Elliot Vernon

The topic of church polity is one of the 'Cinderella' subjects of early modern religious history, late to the ball but entrancing none the less.[1] The chapters presented in this volume argue that the topic of church polity was a crucial factor in the politics of the British Atlantic world during the mid-seventeenth century. By 'church polity' is meant the manner in which the church is structured and governed. It is related to the term 'ecclesiology', which in this volume is used for more abstract theological reflections on the nature of the church.[2]

Religious non-observance was minimal in the early modern British Atlantic world, with the consequence that church polity was inescapably bound up with the political in its wide definition: the relationships of power between individuals, groups and nations. The structures of church governance, therefore, had the potential to impact substantially on the lives of the vast majority of people in the seventeenth-century British Atlantic world.[3] Church polity also had a strong effect on politics more narrowly defined as the institutions and ideas constitutive of the political community. Many of the debates on the subject from the 1630s to the 1660s were triggered by forceful conversations on how to prevent the church from being used as a naked political tool of kings and magistrates, or, conversely, to prevent the clergy from establishing a separate sphere of authority.[4] In addressing the relationship of church polity to political power, the belligerents in the mid-seventeenth-century British Atlantic world also sought to reaffirm the position that the church (or churches) should serve the community of faithful. Such concerns and ambitions revealed the many contradictions and paradoxes within the post-Reformation politics of religion.

In the environment of the British revolutions, these debates on church polity impacted on many of the crucial questions of the era. Key among these issues were: whether the Reformation had come to an end, or was further reformation necessary? What stress, if any, should be put on the credal notes

of oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity in the government of the church? What was the proper relationship between an individual Christian's liberty of conscience and that individual's obligation to the community of the faithful at large? Who could properly be considered a member of the church and who was empowered to teach and guard the faith 'once delivered unto the saints' (Jude 1:3)? How did these 'watchmen' (if indeed they were to be solely men) acquire legitimate authority? What were the proper means of exercising this power? In other words, to whom had the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19) been committed in the post-apostolic age? These questions of church power, in turn, begged enquiry into the proper boundaries and relationship between the civil state, the law and the church.[5]

These issues came to dwell at the heart of the crisis triggered by the policy and failure of Charles I's monarchies in the late 1630s. The research of historians and historical theologians over the past few decades has highlighted that church polity was at the centre of the call to 'reform the Reformation itself' (to use Edmund Calamy's peroration to the Long Parliament) and thus was critical to the religious history of the seventeenth century.

The debate on church polity, therefore, was fundamentally political. One need look no further than the (mis)use of labels such as 'presbyterian', 'independent' and 'episcopal' to describe English political factions in civil war and interregnum politics to see the importance of church polity to the wider political history of the period. It is these issues that the chapters in this volume seek to address.

A single collection of chapters can aspire only to touch the surface of the connection between church polity and politics in the British Atlantic world during the middle decades of the seventeenth century. The focus here is on protestantism and largely those whom the theologian and sociologist Ernst Troeltsch would have identified as holding to a 'church type' rather than a 'sect type' view of religion. For example, this collection does not have separate chapters on either separatist or baptist views of church polity. This is regrettable, but thankfully these groups have been well served by a number of full-length studies by Geoffrey Nuttall, Stephen Brachlow, Murray Tolmie, Stephen Wright and Mark Bell among others.[6] To some degree, of course, the concept of a 'separatist' ceased to be a meaningful category in the late 1640s and 1650s, with the increasing acceptance by the political authorities of voluntary gathered churches as a legitimate form of Christian worship. Furthermore, as Matthew Bingham has shown, the category of 'baptist' is something of an anachronism, with many of those we now call 'particular baptists' positioning themselves within the umbrella of 'the congregational way'. While congregations gathered around the principle of believer's baptism suffered persecution in mid-seventeenth-century New England and the censure of the Kirk in Scotland, the English governments of the period were increasingly willing to consider the matter of believer's baptism as a matter of conscience. In early 1648 a joint declaration of both Houses of

Parliament understood otherwise doctrinally orthodox Christians who held to 'a difference about a circumstance of time in the administration of an ordinance' as being within the fold of the faithful.[7] While this parliamentary concession to the principle of *adiaphora* was somewhat muffled by the May 1648 blasphemy ordinance, it became the norm under the governments of the interregnum.[8]

The limitations of space in this volume did not allow a chapter on the internal organisation of antiformalist groups, particularly the quakers. A good starting point for modern scholarship in this regard can be found in the 2015 collection of essays *Early quakers and their theological thought* edited by Stephen Angell and Pink Dandelion.[9] Studies of major episcopalian theorists such as Herbert Thorndike, Jeremy Taylor and Henry Hammond, while discussed in this volume by Benjamin Guyer, are somewhat underrepresented in the historical literature, with J.W. Packer's 1969 monograph *The transformation of Anglicanism* remaining a key survey of this field.[10] Also missing from this volume are debates on polity within British and Irish catholicism during the period. This omission, together with that of Ireland, was due to not being able to find a scholar to write a chapter for this collection at the time of commissioning the chapters rather than an absence of material. Stefania Tutino's 2008 monograph *Thomas White and the Blackloists: between politics and theology during the English civil war* can be recommended as a starting point for catholic discussions on church polity and politics in the period.[11] Ireland is served by John McCafferty's study of the Laudian period, *The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland* and Toby Barnard's 1975 study *Cromwellian Ireland*, although Seymour's 1921 *Puritans in Ireland (1647–1661)* is still a valuable source.[12]

THE MEDIEVAL AND REFORMATION BACKGROUND TO THE MID-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY DEBATE ON CHURCH POLITY

Prior to the Reformation, the polity of the Western church had largely been episcopal in structure. Although there was wide variation throughout Europe, the great experiments in church polity would come with the Reformation and its call for a return to the purity of the earliest church foundation, howsoever that era was interpreted. Nevertheless, late medieval debates had impinged on questions of church polity and its relationship with politics. The thirteenth-century political philosopher Marsilius of Padua had been critical of the medieval papacy's claim to wield power over civil authorities. Formulating ideas that would be deployed in favour of the power of temporal rulers during the Swiss and Tudor Reformations, Marsilius had argued against the political dualism of the 'two swords' theory of church and state relations dating back to Pope Gelasius in the fifth century.[13] In a similar vein, the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century controversy between conciliarists and papalists arising out of

the great schism provided a body of ideas that not only challenged the authority of the pope but emphasised the power of councils in the governance of the church.[14] As Hunter Powell's study of the Westminster assembly debates has shown, conciliarist ideas would influence the 1640s debates on church polity. For example, the Lancashire delegate Charles Herle, whose activity before joining the Westminster assembly is explored in James Mawdesley's chapter, was deeply steeped in conciliarist thought.[15]

The reformers' reassessment of many aspects of the medieval church led to a new phase of questions and experiments concerning church polity. Martin Luther's attack on the pre-Reformation church's sacramental system had the knock-on effect of undermining the medieval church's claims to governmental power generally.[16] In the English Henrician Reformation, the common law heritage, blended with notions of Old Testament kingship, advanced the power of the imperial monarchy to order ecclesiastical affairs. Such a power of order was potentially limited only by the consent of the community in Parliament and not by 'the Church' conceived of as a separate realm of jurisdiction.[17] Others, potentially antithetical to this notion of the power of theocratic and imperial kings, looked to the community of the faithful as the legitimate source of church power. The sixteenth-century consistorial model of church polity, most commonly associated with Calvin's Geneva, and its spread to countries where protestantism was 'under the cross' of persecution, such as France or the Netherlands, established presbyterial forms of church government throughout Europe.[18] The experiments of Jan Łaski and Jean Morély in congregational independency and the anabaptist communities of the 'radical' reformation provided Reformation Europe with further experiments in church polity.[19]

Church polity was also at the heart of the Scottish Reformation. The early adoption (albeit with a relatively slow uptake) of kirk sessions in the parishes presented a significant departure from the traditional polity of the Scottish church. Beyond the parish, the mid to late sixteenth-century struggle between supporters of episcopacy and the presbyterianism of the *Second book of discipline* took aim not only at the institution of episcopacy but also at the connection between the church and royal and aristocratic power. In this struggle, James VI managed to outmanoeuvre his presbyterian opponents on numerous occasions, culminating in the ratification of the Five Articles of Perth in 1621. However, the struggles over the polity of the Scottish church in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century left a residual body of thought, together with a deep layer of resentment within Scottish political and religious culture. This would blossom throughout the British Atlantic world in the mid-seventeenth-century crisis.[20]

The church settlement of England's Elizabeth I, combining an episcopalian structure, a traditional liturgy, Reformed confessional theology and magisterial supremacy would become a cherished institution for many Christians throughout the British Atlantic world. To others, the worship

and polity of the Church of England continued to remain 'but half-reformed' and unfit for the evangelical mission of protestantism. The failure of the Elizabethan church to reform its polity in line with the European Reformed churches would become the substance of disputes and debates within the Church of England. The consequence of the failure of presbyterian attempts to grow 'presbytery within episcopacy' in the 1580s led to the emergence of separatist ideas in the 1590s.[21] An alternative model that developed was the attempt to square the circle of a national church, the royal supremacy and congregational independence. This model, advocated by William Bradshaw, would develop through the experiments of Henry Jacob into a distinctive congregationalist position in the seventeenth century.[22] At the same time, figures such as Thomas Bilson were asserting the apostolic foundations of episcopacy against the scriptural arguments of presbyterians.[23]

The possibility of the 'congregational way' acting as a 'national' ecclesiastical establishment was realised in the Massachusetts Bay colony of the 1630s.[24] As Michael Winship's study of 'godly republicanism' in the Massachusetts Bay colony has shown, the New England connection between church polity and politics would have a profound impact on both sides of the Atlantic during the British Revolution.[25] Francis Bremer in Chapter 8 below demonstrates how New England congregationalism was beset with tensions and struggles between the respective role and power of the laity and the clergy. This propelled some New England ministers to yearn towards more presbyterial forms of polity. Of course, New England was not the only example of colonial religion. The Virginia colony retained its adherence to the episcopal Church of England, albeit without its own bishop, and Roger Williams's Rhode Island existed to promote liberty of conscience against the Massachusetts Bay model.[26]

A century of debate, thought and struggle over the polity of the church, therefore, presented one of the sources of rebellion to the policies of Charles I and the Laudian church. Historians have long stressed the tensions caused by Laudian 'anti-Calvinist' soteriology or the imposition of liturgical conformity. It is also necessary to recognise that the Laudian emphasis on the divine right of episcopacy caused many moderate puritans, such as the formerly conformist Richard Baxter, to search their consciences and rethink the formerly settled issue of church polity.[27] Among those rethinking the issue of church government were the politically well-connected godly ministers who wrote under the name 'Smectymnuus', a collective pseudonym based on the initials of the five authors.[28] The Smectymnuuans would declare in early 1641 that in the past 'many conscientious men' had accommodated themselves to the Church of England's episcopalian structure on the grounds of 'order and decency' and not belief in its divine institution. However, episcopacy under Laud, as announced in the canons of 1640, had become 'an idoll', with the consequence that, 'like the brazen serpent' of 2 Kings 18:4, it was now 'to be ground to powder'.[29] Yet, if the Laudian vaunting of divine-right episcopacy

acted to radicalise those who had formerly little quarrel with the polity of the Church of England, the threat caused by this radicalisation acted to provide a banner around which a 'royal and episcopal party' could form to fight the civil war.[30]

One important intellectual context that informed the mid-seventeenth-century battles on church polity was the emergence of new scholarship on the nature of the polity of the early church.[31] The Reformation quest to discern the original pattern for Christianity entailed a detailed textual interpretation of the Bible and, increasingly, a fresh historical analysis of the practices of the early church. Although the term 'apostolic fathers' for the corpus of non-canonical Christian writings of the first and second centuries would not be used until the later part of the seventeenth century, it was the polemical battles over church polity during the middle of the century that saw the emergence of this body of scholarship.[32] The term 'apostolic fathers', while usually traced to the collection published in Latin in 1672 by the French clergyman Jean Baptiste Cotelier (1629–86), made its first English appearance in William Wake's (1657–1737) *The genuine epistles of the apostolical fathers*, published in 1693.[33] The purpose of Wake's edition, as Steven Taylor notes, was designed to show – against the arguments of dissenters and nonconformists dating back to the civil wars – that the Church of England 'in all respects comes the nearest up to the primitive pattern of any Christian Church at this Day in the World'.[34] The first major development in this scholarship was the rediscovery of 'The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians' (usually called '1 Clement') in the *Codex Alexandrinus* gifted by Patriarch Cyril Loukaris to Charles I in 1627. 1 Clement would be printed in Greek with a Latin translation by Patrick Young, the royal librarian, in 1633 and published in English by William Burton in 1647.[35] The second major advance in mid-seventeenth-century early patristic scholarship was Archbishop James Ussher's textual recovery of the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch, scholarship later confirmed by Issac Voss.[36] The rediscovery of 1 Clement and the Ignatian epistles also led to renewed attention being given to other early second-century works, including the *Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians*, the *Apologies* of Justin Martyr and the works of Hermas, a Christian author of second-century Rome.[37]

This scholarship acted to feed the mid-seventeenth-century debate on church polity. In 1641 Joseph Hall, the bishop of Exeter, had mocked the authors of Smectymnuus for their lack of knowledge of the primitive church fathers, particularly the newly discovered 1 Clement.[38] On closer reading, however, 1 Clement, with its description of the churches of Rome and Corinth being governed by a multiplicity of presbyter-bishops and the absence of a monarchical bishop, provided grist to the mill for presbyterian arguments.[39] On the other hand, Ussher's scholarship on Ignatius of Antioch provided a boon to episcopalian polemicists such as Henry Hammond, Herbert Thorndyke and Jeremy Taylor.[40] Nevertheless, it was argued by Hammond's opponents that the form of episcopacy described by Ignatius or alluded to

by his contemporary, Polycarp of Smyrna, bore little resemblance to the episcopacy of the pre-civil-war Church of England. For example, Richard Baxter would use Ignatius to reconceptualise 'episcopacy' in his appeal to Christian unity by identifying the modern equivalent of Ignatius's bishop with the beneficed minister of a single parish church.[41] These polemical battles demonstrated to contemporaries that even these early Christian witnesses failed to speak with a unanimous voice on the issue of church polity, requiring recourse to interpretative hermeneutics such as the rule of 'just and necessary consequence' used by the Westminster divines to settle its model of church polity. The consequence, as Clement's translator William Burton candidly put it, was that while the 'earnest plea' of all sides was 'antiquity', how antiquity 'should be understood was resolved on aforehand' by the belligerents' personal predilection for differing forms of church polity.[42]

The centuries-long debate and struggle over the nature and place of the polity of the Church in the political realm discussed in this section came to a head in the political crisis that engulfed the polities of the British Atlantic in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. The calamities that befell Charles I's monarchies revealed differences and contradictions in intellectual positions that formerly appeared consensual or, at least, containable. It is to this period of crisis that the chapters of this volume are addressed.

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS IN THIS VOLUME

Benjamin Guyer begins the collection by taking a *longue durée* approach to episcopal polity in the British churches. The liturgy and canon law, together with a stress of the apostolicity of the three-office model of bishop, priest and deacon, functioned to create a stable ecclesial identity for advocates of the British episcopal churches, particularly the Church of England. This ecclesiological identity sustained advocates of the traditional order through the darker times of the mid-century crisis when episcopacy was abolished and worship using the Book of Common Prayer proscribed. As Guyer notes, Archbishop Cranmer's insistence that the three-office order was of apostolic warrant put the case for episcopacy higher than had been made by many Catholic theologians in the medieval period. Cranmer's high view of episcopacy would be reiterated by a century of Church of England apologists. This was particularly so in the writings of those, such as Jeremy Taylor or Henry Hammond, who can lay claim to providing an ecclesiological basis for the genuinely 'Anglican' Church of England of the Restoration period.

Although modern scholarship of the Westminster assembly, led by Chad Van Dixhoorn, has rightly stressed that its work was predominantly doctrinal, the assembly will always be remembered for 'the grand debate' between presbyterian and congregational forms of polity. Van Dixhoorn's chapter visits the presbyterian side of the Westminster assembly's debate on polity, a debate that has come to define presbyterian polity throughout the world.

Van Dixhoorn surveys the areas of diversity and unity among the proponents for presbyterianism in the assembly. Rather than seeing the assembly's presbyterian majority holding starkly different views on the polity of the church, Van Dixhoorn sees differences of emphasis and approach. In particular, he contrasts those who were keen to stress the rights of particular congregations, notably George Gillespie, with those who approached the polity of the church from a more abstract ecclesiological position, a view exemplified by Lazarus Seaman, the civil war master of Peterhouse, Cambridge. Somewhere in the middle were those whom Van Dixhoorn aptly classes 'big tent presbyterians', such as Stephen Marshall or Edmund Calamy, who were concerned to find practical compromises in order to further the projected reformation of the church in England.

Van Dixhoorn's chapter contains an excursus on George Gillespie, one of the most important theorists of presbyterian polity, whose brief career set its polemical sights against episcopacy and 'Erastianism', as well as the more sectarian aspects of congregationalism. Arguing that Gillespie remained largely coherent in his view of presbyterian polity from his earliest anti-Laudian works to his later tracts, Van Dixhoorn examines Gillespie's intellectual methods and sources. The exploration of Gillespie's position in light of the assembly debates leads Van Dixhoorn to conclude that deeper reflections on ecclesiology were consciously placed on the back seat by the Westminster assembly's presbyterians. Rather, and to the chagrin of their congregationalist brethren, the presbyterians sought to meet their parliamentary brief by providing a workable settlement for the polity of the British churches.

If the Westminster assembly's presbyterians avoided a too deep reflection on ecclesiology in order to establish a presbyterian polity in practice, Scott Spurlock argues that Scottish presbyterians were nevertheless motivated by deeply ecclesiological reflections. Spurlock explores the implications of John Knox and other Scottish reformers' adoption and amplification of Calvin's understanding that a nation entered into covenant with God through the act of national reformation. For the Scottish presbyterians of the mid-seventeenth century, the National Covenant was a renewal of the promise between God and the Scottish people made in the earlier covenants of the Reformation era. The vehicle for this renewal was the presbyterian national church as re-established by the Covenanter revolution.

The covenantal basis of Scottish presbyterian thought, Spurlock argues, provided the underlying structure of the Scots' arguments for polity in the Westminster assembly. It also put them at variance with English and American congregationalists, who reserved the covenant idea for particular, gathered churches. The Scottish understanding of the role of the National Covenant in making an elect nation was also rejected by many English presbyterians, who were cautious of the ecclesiological link between a National Covenant and a national church. Spurlock concludes his chapter exploring how Covenanter ecclesiology was affected by the Cromwellian conquest of

Scotland and the Restoration. These cataclysms led to a variety of responses from Covenanters, but the general trend was a retreat from corporate notions of the covenant making an elect nation towards personal covenanting. This, in turn, contributed to the intense personal piety of eighteenth-century Scottish and, by extension, American presbyterianism.

Francis Bremer's chapter reconsidering the New England way explores a period of crisis in New England's ecclesiological reflections on the nature of the church and its polity. Bremer demonstrates that many of the questions discussed during the Westminster assembly debates, particularly the location of power in the church and the proper relationship of individual congregations to the larger community, were questions of high importance in the New England setting. Bremer surveys how the connection between church covenant and church membership in New England caused problems in the second generation of the New England settlement as many of the children of the original settlers did not seek to become church members and thus 'unchurched' themselves. This led to the development of the 'half-way covenant', whereby baptised adults who were not church members could still present their own children for baptism. The half-way covenant reeked of presbyterianism to many purists of the New England way. This apparent slow creep of allegedly presbyterian principles into New England was also perceived in the growing discouragement of lay participation in the governance of the church by the New England clergy. This development was both home-grown, especially after the 'antinomian controversy' and the trial of Anne Hutchinson during the mid- to late 1630s, and looked across the Atlantic to the chaos caused by the sects in 1640s England. The ultimate result of these struggles, Bremer argues, was a decline in the congregationalist principles of the New England churches towards more clerically centred positions on ecclesiology and church polity.

Richard Baxter's rather idiosyncratic views on church polity are treated by Tim Cooper, who provocatively asks whether Baxter was a congregationalist. Drawing on Bruce Lincoln's interdisciplinary work in the study of religious identity, Cooper asks this question as a means of prising open the issues of group identity and community among the various 'denominational' positions in the mid-seventeenth century. Cooper's argument is that identities based on allegiance to a particular church polity were more fluid than has been often recognised. For Baxter, this fluidity and a focus on church practice, not deeper ecclesiological theory, presented an opportunity for establishing concord. Cooper argues that Baxter's technique in peacemaking was to show that the boundaries that had ossified around identity labels relating to church polity could be broken down by focusing on the commonalities of 'mere Christianity'. As Cooper notes, Baxter's peacemaking ultimately had limited practical success, his efforts being frustrated by the religious politics of the last years of the 1650s and the tribulations of the 1660s. Nevertheless, Baxter-as-peacemaker reminds us that the early civil war era focus on church

polity had the effect of revealing deep fault lines within the Christianity of the British Atlantic world.

Joel Halcomb's study of the association movement in the 1650s also draws on issues of concord and accommodation among those ministers holding to differing models of church polity. The Association movement has often been seen by historians as an example of the success (at least in theory) of Richard Baxter's ecumenical efforts. Halcomb challenges this view, arguing that the ministerial associations were more disparate in nature than has often been argued. While some associations did indeed follow the Baxterian model of the Worcestershire association, others were self-consciously presbyterian classes, and a number of associations were not influenced by Baxter's ideas. The majority of the associations relied, with varying degrees of latitude, on the Westminster assembly's confessional documents to provide the doctrinal centre that was missing from the Cromwellian 'Church'.

An important feature of Halcomb's chapter is his discussion of the regional associations in terms of the central and metropolitan politics of religion. Despite clear hopes that the associations might rebuild the national church from the localities into the centre, the associations were little noticed by the parliaments of the Cromwellian Protectorate. Nor did Baxter's ideas fare well among those, largely metropolitan, godly ministers closest to the political pulse of the Cromwellian regime, whether leaning towards congregationalist or presbyterian positions. Halcomb, therefore, invites us to see the associations from angles that are not often explored in the hope of linking what is often miscast as a regionalist stop-gap for the local clergy in a time of crisis to the wider politics of religion in the period.

The importance of the political sphere to church polity is stressed in a number of chapters to this collection. The chapters of James Mawdesley and Stephen Roberts both look at the connections between church polity and local politics. In particular, these chapters explore the relationship between the patronage networks of local peers, gentry and ministers and the effect these networks had on determining local choices in terms of church polity. Roberts's topic is mid-seventeenth-century Wales, mainly known for its royalism or adherence to baptist and sectarian religious traditions. Roberts's chapter bucks this trend and explores the fate of presbyterianism, advanced at Westminster and in Wales through the political influence of Sir Robert Harley, his family, friends and circle of clerical protégés. Roberts considers the civil war attempts to bring presbyterian polity to Wales, ultimately concluding that it was the political revolution in Westminster at the end of the 1640s and the consequent eclipse of Harley influence that was the undoing of this venture.

Heading in a more northerly, but equally western direction, to the 'Mersey Basin' area of Cheshire and Lancashire in England, James Mawdesley's chapter focuses on the clerical affinity connected to the Stanley earls of Derby in the late 1630s and early 1640s. Mawdesley asks why congregationalist

polity was largely unsuccessful in laying down roots in the region at this time. This question is pertinent because Richard Mather, the founder of one of New England's most prolific clerical dynasties, and an important congregationalist theorist in his own right, had come from Lowton in the parish of Winwick in Lancashire. Mawdesley argues that aristocratic patronage and leading ministerial protégés, particularly Charles Herle, the future prolocutor of the Westminster assembly (and rector of Winwick), were important in configuring the region towards presbyterianism. Roberts's and Mawdesley's findings are in line with other studies of aristocratic and gentry patronage and local choices on matters of polity.[43]

The confrontation between church polity and politics is the topic of Elliot Vernon's chapter, which explores the dispute between the Westminster assembly's presbyterians and the collection of common lawyers, constitutionalists and Hebraists dubbed 'Erastians' in the mid-1640s. Vernon argues that the root of this intra-Parliamentarian argument originated in the attempt to restrict Charles I's ability to use the church as an instrument of state power by taking the whip hand of ecclesiastical supremacy away from the King. This led to the struggle between competing conceptions of a godly church and commonwealth found deep within Reformation thought. The first, the Calvinist two-kingdoms theory advocated by the presbyterian ministers at the Westminster assembly, sought a national church that, while established by the state, was independent in its own sphere of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Opponents of this position, whom the Scottish Covenanter clergy dubbed 'Erastians' after the sixteenth-century Zwinglian polemicist Thomas Erastus, advanced a single-sphere model of church–state relations that saw state and church as coextensive under the supremacy of the civil magistrate. Vernon explores how the English presbyterians ultimately compromised their position by allowing the magistrate a supervisory role in the church without conceding the broader outlines of the Calvinist two-kingdoms theology. He concludes by disagreeing with those who argue that the magisterial congregationalism of the Cromwellian period was essentially Erastian in nature. In this, he looks at the variation of the two-kingdoms perspective found in the work of the congregationalist leader Philip Nye and at Oliver Cromwell's allowance of ecclesiastical independence for not only gathered churches but also associations settled according to a presbyterian model.

The 1650s represented the period when the leading 'magisterial' congregationalist ministers of the 1640s had the ear of the various interregnum governments for establishing their platform for the proper relationship between church and state. Hunter Powell's chapter explores the development of this congregationalist platform in the 1650s, arguing that congregationalists such as John Owen, Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye looked to the colonial American model developed in the Massachusetts Bay colony by John Cotton. The goal of the English congregationalists, the divines closest to Oliver Cromwell, Powell argues, was to guide interregnum England between

the Scylla and Charybdis of preserving both Reformed confessional ortho-
doxy and liberty of conscience. Analysing the various written confessions of
the congregationalist divines, culminating in the 1658 'Savoy declaration', as
well as using sermon literature, Powell sees interregnum England as moving
towards a confessional settlement that obtained these two goals. Yet, he
concludes, this journey was cut short by the death of Oliver Cromwell, the
leader whose policies were most aligned with the congregationalists' vision
of further reformation.

The coda to these chapters is provided by Sara Ward Clavier, who analyses
the contribution of episcopal autobiography to the redefinition of the Church
of England in the Restoration era. Taking a wide definition of autobiographi-
cal writing, Sarah Ward Clavier addresses the narratives of sufferings of the
Restoration bishops, many of whom experienced harassment, dejection and
loss during the interregnum period. While accepting Ian Green's argument
that this suffering was no greater than other episcopalian clerics during the
period, Ward Clavier argues that this common suffering was put to good
effect by the Restoration episcopate, who used their personal experiences to
embody that suffered by many clergy within the restored Church of England.
This allowed Restoration bishops to set themselves as representatives of
the suffering church, embodying polity through autobiography. This drew
on tropes drawn from the narratives of the suffering of early martyrs and
bishops. Ward Clavier argues, therefore, that bishops' autobiography empha-
sised 'Anglican' polity, both through affirming the apostolic succession of
bishops as guardians of the church and the providential survival of the true
church through times of darkness.

These chapters show that the topic of church polity and politics in the
seventeenth-century British Atlantic world remains a dynamic issue in a
much-studied field. This volume addresses some of the many questions that
the subject calls forth. It is hoped that the chapters found here will go some
way to inspire scholars to continue to unpick the aporias of church polity and
politics in this period.

NOTES

1   I owe this pertinent description to John Coffey.
2   According to the *Oxford English dictionary*, 'ecclesiology' originated in the nine-
teenth century and pertained to the construction and layout of churches. As in
this volume, modern usage affords the term a more theoretical status.
3   This is explored in the forthcoming edited collection by Michael Davies, Anne
Dunan-Page and Joel Halcomb, *Church life: pastors, congregations, and the experi-
ence of dissent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
4   For this struggle in the later seventeenth century, see J. A. I. Champion, *The pillars
of priestcraft shaken: the Church of England and its enemies, 1660–1730* (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1992).

5 Useful essays on the intellectual history of many of these issues, with a focus on the Elizabethan theologian Richard Hooker, can be found in W. J. Torrance Kirby (ed.), *A companion to Richard Hooker* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), particularly the chapters by W. H. Harrison, C. C. Simuț, D. Kernan, A. S. McGrade and D. Eppeley.

6 G. F. Nuttall, *Visible saints: the congregational way 1640–1660* (2nd edition, Weston Rhyn: Quinta Press, 2001); M. Tolmie, *The triumph of the saints: the separate churches of London, 1616–1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); S. Brachlow, *The communion of the saints: radical puritan and separatist ecclesiology, 1570–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); S. Wright, *The early English baptists, 1603–1649* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2006); M. R. Bell, *Apocalypse how? Baptist movements during the English revolution* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000).

7 M. C. Bingham, *Orthodox radicals: Baptist identity in the English revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); *A declaration of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament concerning the papers of the Scots commissioners* (1648), pp. 50–1.

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24 Whilst this book uses the later seventeenth-century denominational term 'congregationalist', it recognises that in the period of study contemporaries favourable to this form of church polity in the mid-seventeenth century used phrases such as 'in a congregational-way' to describe their church polity. The first person to coin this term appears to have been William Kiffin in the 'Epistle to the reader' attached to the anonymous sermon *A glimpse of Sions glory* (1641).

25 M. Winship, *Godly republicanism: puritans, pilgrims and a city on a hill* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

26 See also the recent work by Polly Ha on Bermuda: 'Religious toleration and ecclesiastical independence in revolutionary Britain, Bermuda and the Bahamas', *CH*, 84:4 (2015), 807–27, and 'Godly globalisation: Calvinism in Bermuda', *JEH*, 66:3 (2015), 543–61.

27 Baxter, *RB*, I, pp. 15–17; for an in-depth study on this era, see C. W. A. Prior, *A confusion of tongues: Britain's wars of reformation, 1625–1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

28 Smectymnuus was an acronym for Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen and William Spurstowe.

29 Smectymnuus, *An answer to a booke entitled an humble remonstrance* (1641), pp. 85–6.

30 J. Maltby, *Prayer book and people in Elizabethan and early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

31 For protestant patristic scholarship in this period in general see J.-L. Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian antiquity: the construction of a confessional identity in the 17th century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); I. Backus, 'Reformed orthodoxy and patristic tradition', in H. J. Selderhuis (ed.), *A companion to Reformed orthodoxy* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 91–117.

32 The Restoration piqued a public interest for translations of the early Christian writings. An English translation of Hermas by John Pringle was published in 1661 as *The three books of Hermas* (1661). English translations of the letters of Poycarp, Ignatius and Barnabus taken from the scholarship of Ussher and Issac Voss would be published by Thomas Elborowe in 1668 as *The famous epistles of Saint Polycarp and Saint Ignatius*. A carefully researched lives of the 'primitive fathers' would be published by William Cave in his *Apostolici* (1677). In common with Wake's edition, and much Anglican publishing on the primitive fathers, this work poured scorn on nonconformist interpretations of the early Church documents.

33 H. J. de Jonge, 'On the origin of the term "apostolic fathers"', *Journal of Theological Studies*, new series, 29:2 (1978), 503–5; B. D. Ehrman, 'Introduction', in B. D. Ehrman (ed.), *The apostolic fathers: volume 1* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 8.

34 William Wake, *The genuine epistles of the apostolical fathers* (1693), Stephen Taylor, 'Wake, William', *ODNB*, citing Wake, *The genuine epistles*, p. vi.

35 Patricivs Ivnivs (i.e. Patrick Young), *KLHMENTOS ... Clementis ad Corinthios epistola prior* (Oxford, 1633), William Burton, *Clement, the blessed labourer of Pauls in the gospel, his first epistle to the Corinthians* (1647).

36 Ehrman, *The apostolic fathers*, pp. 210–11; H. de Quehen, 'Politics and scholarship in the Ignatian controversy', *The Seventeenth Century*, 13:1 (1988), 69–84; A. Ford, *James Ussher: theology, politics and politics in early-modern Ireland and England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 235–41.

37 Latin translations of the letters of Polycarp and Ignatius would be published by James Ussher in 1644: *In Polycarpianam epistolarvm Ignatianarvm* (Oxford, 1644).

38 For a succinct discussion of Hall, Smectymnuus and John Milton's attitude to, and use of, patristic scholarship in the debate on church polity this see T. Roebuck, 'Milton and the confessionalization of antiquarianism', in E. Jones (ed.), *Young Milton: the emerging author, 1620–1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 56–62.

39 Constant Jessop, *The angel of the Church of Ephesus no bishop of Ephesus* (1644).

40 See J. W. Packer, *The transformation of Anglicanism, 1643–1660* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969); S. Mortimer, 'Kingship and the "apostolic

church", 1620–1650', *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 13:2 (2011), 226–56.

41 See for example John Owen, *The doctrine of the saints perseverance explained and confirmed*, 'Preface to the reader', in John Owen, *The works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Gould, 23 vols (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1965), XI, pp. 19–74; London Provincial Assembly, *Jus divinum ministerii evangelici* (1654), 'The second part', pp. 99–149; Richard Baxter, *Five disputations of church-government and worship* (1659), pp. 2–108.

42 Burton, *Clement, the blessed labourer*, 'preface' sigs Br–v.

43 See, for example, B. Donegan, 'The clerical patronage of Robert Rich, second earl of Warwick, 1619–1642', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 120:5 (1976), 388–419; A. Hughes, *Politics, society and civil war in Warwickshire 1620–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 72–80.