PREFACE

This book is a considerably revised and updated version of a book I first wrote for Methuen in 1986. It was initially intended as a book which would prove useful to undergraduates and their teachers as a companion to the debate about the English Reformation. At the time it was unusual in showing how authors who, on the face of it, had little interest in history, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, had ‘used’ the Reformation as part of their arsenal in contemporary debates. Many of these authors were not ‘historians’ at all in the sense that professional historians of today use the term. Although my original book brought the debate into the twentieth century it was never intended as a review of modern contributions to the debate, which have been made mainly by academic historians. I have now added two substantial new chapters, updated the rest and added considerably to the bibliography. The effect is a book in three parts – a first part that deals with the debate about the Reformation in the age before history was accepted as an academic discipline – at this time history was appropriated by both Catholic and Protestant polemicists to provide legitimacy for their causes; a second that sets the debate in a new context, that of the university study of history, and demonstrates that this new context has had its own profound impact upon the debate on the English Reformation, and a third that examines the ways in which popular literature and the media have treated the early Reformation and its leading figures. The book now treats not only what historians and others have concluded about the English Reformation but also, in small part, the philosophies of history to which modern historians subscribed.

I wish to thank the Arts Faculty of the Open University for financial help which enabled me to read widely in pamphlet and secondary literature. I cannot thank enough my former supervisor, now deceased, Patrick Collinson, for his kindness over the years and for arousing my interest in this present topic through his stimulating conversation. I wish also to express my gratitude to the late Geoffrey Dickens, who read the original book in typescript and lent me the benefit of his wisdom in discussion. My thanks go

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to Claire Cross, my first teacher in this area, who always offered considerable support. I am indebted also to Felicity Heal, who has been generous with her help. I acknowledge the support of several colleagues at the Open University, especially Ros Crone, Donna Loftus, Kathleen Daly, Rachel Gibbons, Anne Laurence, Gemma Allen and Ole Grell, who, in some cases, read drafts and, amongst other things, encouraged me to rethink many of the issues and gave me a teaching platform from which to try them out.

I am grateful to Roger Richardson, editor of the series, who first suggested that the time was ripe for a new edition of this book, and to Emma Brennan, who has been patient beyond belief. I thank Rachel Gibbons for her assistance in preparing the manuscript, and the scholars who do not wish to be mentioned by name who offered criticism.

Above all, I thank my family and close friends: my late father, whose library of musty Reformation works first acquainted me with the English Reformation; my mother and brother for their constant support; David Englander for his love, encouragement, advice and critical appreciation when he still lived, and since then for his inspiration; my son Andrew for practical help, and my sons Daniel and Matthew for their good humour and tolerance; and Janet Dawson, Yvonne Alton, Anthea Beaumont, Meg Kesten, Teresa Lawlor, Sian Lewis, Catherine Roe and Sheila Taylor for their unfailing friendship. I acknowledge with gratitude the several excellent teachers of history and Scripture that I studied under at the Orme Girls' School, Newcastle-under-Lyme: Barbara Lewis, Mrs Brocklehurst, Cordelia Goodway, Eunice Howell and Jean Forrester. Especially I recall with pleasure my first introduction to the work of G.R. Elton during tutorials with Jean Forrester. I have dedicated the book to my girlhood friend Anthea Beaumont, whose premature death has robbed the world of a fine human being and a great talent.

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October 2012