This book is a collection of essays written and rewritten over a period in excess of forty years by H.M. Historiographer in Scotland. The title is rather all-encompassing, but the contents are somewhat more focussed. Dealing predominantly with the institutional history of the kirk, the first four essays attend to pre-Reformation matters, the ensuing twelve are concerned especially with sixteenth and seventeenth century issues, while the concluding piece is a wide-ranging consideration of "church and community". On first glance one may be surprised not at what has been included, but at what has been omitted. For example, Donaldson's essays on two Reformation bishops, Bothwell and Gordon, are not to be found, though the Preface does indicate that local studies may be drawn together in a subsequent volume. Still, one wonders at the omission of "The Scottish Episcopate at the Reformation" (EHR, 1x), even if much of its material was absorbed by The Scottish Reformation (1960).

It is a matter of great convenience to find some older essays now brought together in one attractive volume. However, the reader should be advised that if there are essays here of considerable vintage, there are four which are basically new, or such thorough-going revisions as to be practically fresh. Others have been revised to lesser extent, thus this volume is to be welcomed as not only a convenient republication but also as a new contribution to an area of Scottish history so well served by its author.

In three essays on the medieval episcopate it emerges that David I (1124–1153) did not, as convention has it, create most of the Scottish sees. It seems likely that at least nine preceded his accession, though some were in an advanced state of decay. Early bishops were appointed by king, clergy, and people, but lay influence was diminished by the establishment of cathedral chapters in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In reaction to royal assertiveness the popes attempted to reserve episcopal appointments to their own hands. Conflict also ensued in the matter of patronage sede vacante, which James II secured in 1450.

Donaldson has long paid attention to the English factor in the Scottish experience. In a study of Scottish church edifices (with illustrations) he traces southern influence in the eighth and eleventh centuries. The Reformation did much to draw the two neighbours together, although the dissolution of an international ecclesiastical order implied a kind of rupture between the newly emergent national churches at least in matters of a disciplinary nature. Though there were factional troubles within the two churches, Anglo-Scottish ties were cemented by personal and epistolary contacts between their respective episcopal and presbyterian parties. Aberdeen's general conservatism may be correlated with its relative distance from English influences, while the encroachment of English Independency in the wake of Cromwell's successes contributed much to the awakening of schismatic tendencies in Scotland.

Donaldson's interpretation of Scotland's early reformed kirk polity has embroiled him in a sometimes vigorous controversy. In an updated essay on the "Sources for Scottish Church History 1560–1600" he responds to those who have regarded him as an innovator (=upstart) in his presentation of the Reformation, pointing to a century-long pedigree. He might well have gone back to 1613 to demonstrate the lineage of an "episcopalian" under-
standing of the Reformation, that the reform of the 1560s maintained an episcopal office enshrined in the superintendencies which were by no means erected on a temporary basis. In this contentious area Donaldson allows his impatience with detractors to show, and indeed, the weight of scholarly opinion is on his side, though the many nuances of fragmentary sources may permit some diversity in assessments of the place of the sometimes harried quintet of superintendents. But whatever the similarities with other Protestant polities, it should be made clear that the whole Scottish settlement, including the superintendency, was very much made in Scotland.

Debates over the Reformation polity — was it episcopal or presbyterian? — are a fixture on the Scottish historiographical landscape, although recent general works on the Reformation all but ignore, or are ignorant of, the problem. The Reformation in Historical Thought by A.G. Dickens and John Tonkin (1985) comes no closer than a fleeting reference to “the many publications of Gordon Donaldson” (p. 295), while Lewis Spitz (The Protestant Reformation, 1985) would have done better to refrain from any recognition of the Scottish Reformation when he states that John Knox “embarked on reorganizing the country with a Calvinist presbyterian polity” (p. 280). But for historians of Scotland, surely enough ink has been spilled on the theme. The persistence of this debate is bold witness to the often sectarian nature of Scottish historiography, and now, after nearly 400 years of frequently predictable opinion, it is time to move on. Happily, Donaldson’s many investigations have not only elucidated old problems but have also opened new avenues for research.

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