The work of James Kirk, Senior Lecturer at Glasgow University, on the Scottish church in (mainly) the period of the Reformation consists of twelve separate essays which together provide a good insight into the various patterns of a movement that, in spite of elements of continuity, led to fundamental changes in the life of church and nation. The tone for the work as a whole is set in the ‘Introduction’. As a historian, the author is fully aware of the importance of the political factors which contributed to the Scottish Reformation, but they are not unduly emphasized: ‘At best, politics only help to explain the timing of the Reformation, and its successful outcome, not its raison d’être, which has to be found elsewhere’ (p. XIV). From this, we may expect an approach which tries to come to grips with the theological and ecclesiological aspects; and indeed the author, while paying full attention to the variety of political, and partly also social and geographical factors never loses sight of what may be seen as the proprium of the study of church history. His work is too deeply steeped in the best traditions of Scottish ecclesiastical historiography to be considered ‘revisionist’, but it is not uncritical: on some important points he corrects the views of his teacher, the well-known Scottish historian Gordon Donaldson (1913–1993), as expressed in a number of Donaldson’s works, among which in regard of the subject of Reformation history his The Scottish Reformation (1960) stands out as a classic. It should be added, however, that in his ‘Acknowledgments’ Dr. Kirk declares: ‘A particular debt, greater perhaps than is apparent in the following pages, is owed to the teaching and writing of Professor Gordon Donaldson’ (p. VII).

Though there is a great variety in the subjects dealt with in this work — they range from the ‘Privy Kirks’ in the early phase of the Scottish Reformation to the Jacobean church in the Highlands —, some central themes recur in a number of chapters. One of these is that of the place and function of the ‘bishop’ (intentionally I use quotation-marks) or the superintendent in the Scottish church of the Reformation and post-Reformation period. To Donaldson, who himself was a convinced Episcopalian, the image of a reformed Church of Scotland with an episcopal or quasi-episcopal system was perhaps more acceptable than it was to historians who looked at the sixteenth-century Scottish church from a presbyterian viewpoint, though this does not imply that on either side there was bias or prejudice. The facts of the complex relationship between episcopal and presbyterian elements are open to more than one interpretation. Especially in the ecclesiastical scheme of 1572 Donaldson recognizes a tendency towards conformity with the Church of England, though an important difference remained: the Scottish church received an episcopate without any ‘doctrine of parity’ but also without the apostolic succession. This led him to see a parallel between the ecclesiastical polity of Scotland in the Reformation period and that of some of the Lutheran

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churches (Scotland, Church and Nation, 2nd ed. 1972, p. 58; cf. The Scottish Reformation, pp. 102-127, 149-182). But especially in his chapter 'The Superintendent: Myth and Reality' Kirk takes a different view. To him, the difference between the English bishop and the Scottish superintendent is fundamental, as in Scotland 'the kirk's government from the start ultimately resided in courts and councils'; the superintendent, advocated by John Knox, was decidedly constitutional, corporate and pastoral, not monarchical, regal or narrowly jurisdictional (pp. 210, 342).

I think Dr. Kirk is right in accentuating more strongly than Professor Donaldson did the difference between the English bishop and the Scottish superintendent, and that in this his criticism of Donaldson's views is justified. Yet I wonder whether at least the functional parallels between the English bishop and the superintendent in the Church of Scotland are not greater than Dr. Kirk would allow. Certainly, neither the Scottish nor the continental superintendents were bishops in the medieval sense, but their office had a semi-episcopal flavour; in line with this, during part of the seventeenth century many Scottish Presbyterians felt justified in accepting a moderate form of episcopacy. And on the continent, even in some Calvinistic circles there existed an unresolved tension between the acceptance of some form of superintendency on the one hand and the idea of the parity of ministers on the other side. As late as the seventeenth century such a strict Calvinist as the Dutch theologian Frederic Spanheim the younger appealed to the figure of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century continental superintendent, when he urged the English Presbyterians to reunite with the Church of England and thus to put themselves under episcopal jurisdiction.

In his passages on the relation between church and state (in particular in the chapter on 'Minister and Magistrate') Dr. Kirk deals with a subject which until well into the nineteenth century played a large part in Scottish history. On this point, too, he deviates from Donaldson's views. While according to Donaldson the Scottish reformers initially aimed at introducing the concept of a single authority over ecclesiastical and secular affairs because they saw church and nation as coterminous, the church as coextensive with the whole of the population (a parallel to the English model), in Kirk's view the reformers acknowledged that God had diffused his power by vesting authority in different agencies. The doctrine of the two kingdoms, which was so deeply rooted in the thought of Calvin, was not only embraced by Andrew Melville but essentially also by John Knox. Here, again, I think the arguments advanced by Dr. Kirk are strong, though also in this case there remain some questions. On the continent, the Reformed tradition was marked by a compromise between the early Genevan and the Zürich model. In regard of sixteenth-century developments this should make us wary of drawing too sharp a line of division between the two spheres, the ecclesiastical and the secular. At least a number of difficulties in the field of church-state relations, not only in Scotland but also elsewhere, can be explained by the fact that pragmatic considerations often proved stronger than a theoretical construction which was undermined by inherent uncertainties.

Other aspects of this rich study can only be mentioned in passing. The chapter on the 'Privy Kirks' (clandestine meetings for Bible study and worship) throws new light on the pre-1560 period. Chapters such as 'Clement Little's Edinburgh' and 'the King's Bishop' (Spottiswoode) contain fine personal portraits. Two chapters are devoted to the church in the Highlands. Of course the author recognizes that initially church life in the Highlands was at a low ebb. In 1626 the synod of Moray stated that the region of Badenoch