

its development rather than a record which charts its history, Sell's contribution is a considerable one. He shines a spotlight on significant contributors in various periods in the history of the dissenting tradition in a way which underlines the important contribution this wing of the Church Catholic has made to the development of ministerial education.

*Jane Denniston,*  
Church of Scotland and University of Glasgow



**Laurence A. B. Whitley, *A Great Grievance: Ecclesiastical Lay Patronage in Scotland Until 1750* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2013), pp . xxiv+334, ISBN 978-1610979900. £31.00**

Laurence Whitley's book provides a long-needed historical study of lay patronage in the Church of Scotland. Beginning with the medieval legal structures and the Scottish crown's hoarding of patronage rights, Whitley skilfully depicts the legacy of lay control over ecclesiastical appointments. In particular, he demonstrates how the role of the heritor mapped onto the feudal social structures, something that continued to pervade in Scotland until patronage was finally abolished once and for all in 1874. While patronage served as a crucial point of contention leading to the Disruption in 1843, Whitley's purpose in the book is to demonstrate the fact that the issue had persisted as a point of contention since before the Reformation. In particular, this book focuses primarily on the role patronage played in the ecclesiastical politics of the eighteenth century, foreshadowing the part it would play in the nineteenth.

The first third of the book focuses on the origins of the practice and the transference of rights from abolished ecclesiastical establishments at the Reformation to temporal lordships. Despite resistance to the practice in the Book of Discipline (1560), the settlement of a Protestant state church upheld rights of the 'Just and auncient Patrones' (p. 13). While the Second Book of Discipline (1578) sought to replace the practice with a congregational election, what occurred instead were presentations by the heritor for congregational approval, or, from 1610,

heritors presented their choice for vacant charges for approval by the bishops. Despite protests, by men such as Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston and others, the practice of heritors taking the lead role in filling charges continued until the Radical Party of the Covenanters abolished it for the first time by Act of Parliament in 1649. The policy lasted until the Restoration, though the Interregnum represented a new set of challenges over whether the local congregation or the Presbytery (or even burgh council) ought to have final say in admitting ministers. This section of the book offers a brief and concise overview of the period, although on some points perhaps a bit too brief; a fact that may result from the author's primary interest in setting the stage for the importance of patronage in the eighteenth century. In this respect, the first third serves as an introduction and overview for what follows. After introducing the manner in which the Restoration restored the authority of the patrons and the collation of ministers by bishops, the rest of the book focuses on the significance of the flawed abolition of patronage in the 1690 legislation that re-established a Presbyterian state church.

Whitley eruditely explains the shortcomings of the Restoration settlement as a system in which the heritor and elders together nominated a minister for a congregation to approve or disapprove. In a case where the congregation rejected the candidate, their reasons were collated and sent to the Presbytery which adjudicated on the matter. Serious contention swirled around this settlement, with some churchmen affirming the model removed the autocratic rights of the heritor and others contending the new model simply 'transferred' patronage rights to heritors and elders jointly (p. 98). The result was a complicated and complex ecclesiastical landscape in which ambiguities and grounds for dissension caused numerous local squabbles and marginalised the landed elite, something heightened by an attempted scheme to financially compensate patrons for their loss of rights. These ambiguities were exploited in the establishment of toleration and the reintroduction of patronage in 1712. Moreover, as Whitley rightly notes, the Act set the stage for the dominant role of the Presbytery in ministerial appointments, which led to the assertions of the Associate Presbytery and the later Presbytery of Relief. The vast bulk of the book is focused on these nuanced issues and individual

cases, which has been a serious lacuna in Scottish church history. As such, Whitley has addressed a very longstanding gap, which is to be greatly lauded.

The reviewer does, however, have two critiques of the book. The first is largely cosmetic, but will affect a student or scholar's engagement with the text. Although the contents page is very detailed in listing the foreword, preface, acknowledgments, abbreviations, introduction, each of the fifteen chapters, conclusion, eight appendices, bibliography and index, no titles are given. This is extended to the chapter headings at the top of pages throughout the book. As such, the table of contents merely provides a numerical list which does not help lead the reader to particular sections. The second critique is the lack of discussion over the scramble for securing patronage rights in the 1630s and 1640s. To some extent this highly important period, particularly for the formation of the Covenanter tradition, is given a less detailed assessment than Whitley's thorough discussion of the eighteenth century. While he notes Alexander Henderson's approbation of patronage in 1641, the book does little to contextualise the nearly 100 Acts of Parliament dealing with patronage between 1638 and 1649 (see *Records of the Parliament of Scotland to 1707*, <http://www.rps.ac.uk>). This was an important period, for while patronage was abolished in 1649, clearly there was not a consensus among Covenanters that this was the way forward.

Overall, however, this is an exceptionally rich study of a key issue in Scottish church history. The fundamental tension between a centralised and authoritarian state church, the power and rights of the local congregation, and the rights and privileges of heritable patronage played a crucial role in both ecclesiastical and political politics from before the Restoration down to the nineteenth century. Rarely was the issue of patronage to be found at any great distance from the key issues concerning the church. Whitley's well-researched and erudite study will no doubt serve generations of students studying the history of the Church of Scotland and is a highly laudable contribution to the field.

*Scott Spurlock,*  
University of Glasgow