

## BOOK REVIEWS

G.R. Evans, *Crown, Mitre and People in the Nineteenth Century: The Church of England, Establishment and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 350. ISBN 9781316515976  
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Good interdisciplinary work is difficult to come by. G. R. Evans's *Crown, Mitre and People in the Nineteenth Century* is a fine piece of interdisciplinary scholarship that is conversant in theology, politics, law and history. It is a solid collection of research on the relationship between the Church of England, the State and Parliament during the nineteenth century.

Evans begins the text with a short preface noting that 'a leading concern of the late sixteenth century was to make it clear that the reformed Church of England was no longer under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome, but that a secular monarch could not be given spiritual as well as temporal jurisdiction' and further that 'defining the exact boundary of the State's control of the Church became the work of centuries' (p. viii). Her book explores these tensions.

Other than significant introductory and concluding sections, the book is divided into five chapters. Though the first section is titled an 'introduction', Evans jumps right into her research in a ranging discussion on the interrelationship between Church and State. Here she looks at nineteenth-century sources on the route to ordination, Bishop Phillpotts's rule in the Diocese of Exeter, and seating capacity in local churches.

Chapter one charts the fuzzy boundaries between the Church and State in nineteenth-century England. Here Evans gives some of the deeper history of this relationship, going back to the sixteenth century, before writing about the roles of bishops in Parliament and the function of Canterbury's convocation.

The second chapter describes the complex and arcane proceedings of ecclesiastical court, illustrated with examples from *David Copperfield* (based on Dickens's first-hand observations) as well as cases from the Court of Delegates. She draws from records of the House of Commons debates.

The third chapter, and perhaps the most interesting, studies various instances of clergy being tried in court. One highlight of this section is play-by-play discussion of the Gorham judgement (pp. 156–68). This is often referenced in discussions of nineteenth-century theology and history, but time is seldom given to the legal proceedings of the case. The discussion of the legal furore over *Essays and Reviews* (pp. 143–49) also serves as an important supplement to the seemingly endless discussion of the infamous text in other literature.

The fourth chapter flips the script and studies various instances of laity being brought to court. For example, Evans writes of the ways ‘non-Anglicans were no longer ready to accept that only a marriage in a parish church by a Church of England clergyman was lawful’ before detailing some of the reforms that resulted from the reaction to these sentiments (p. 207).

Finally, the fifth chapter looks primarily at the Church of England’s relationship to other groups including Methodists and Friends, and especially with respect to legislation.

The conclusion is the most accessible part of the book, and this is where Evans brings to the fore elements of the continuity between nineteenth-century challenges and questions today such as the ordination of women and clergy discipline, for example.

The book is effectively a collection of disparate essays and does not amount to more than the sum of its parts. This is not meant as a criticism, instead as a description. Evans does first-rate historical work, deftly explaining the legal and theological mechanics of the nineteenth-century Church of England. But because she covers so much ground in such detail, very little seems to hold the book together other than the broad subject of nineteenth-century law and religion in England. Evans could have been far more direct in what she was doing in the introduction of the book. The saving grace is the detailed index at the end of the book. Given the fragmentary nature of some of the text and the vast ground that Evans covers, this will be helpful as a reference point for readers.

The work is clear and the sources are well documented; the time spent with primary source material is impressive and daunting. The resulting book is not lively reading, however. Further, because the subject matter is at the intersection of history, law, politics and theology, it is difficult to narrow down who this book is really for. Will it have enough of each to capture the attention of scholars from each discipline? This seems unlikely. Historians will probably be those who are more drawn to this work, and specifically those who are interested in nineteenth-century religion. This, along with the steep price of the volume, means its readership will likely be slim.

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