

a 1723 edition by page number), and some errors (for example that a perpetual curate was a form of incumbent [p. 23]), this is a useful account of the history of a neglected office.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

MARK CHAPMAN

Supernatural and secular power in early modern England. Edited by Marcus Harmes and Victoria Bladen. Pp. xi + 237 incl. 1 fig. Farnham–Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015. £70. 978 1 4724 2940 7

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The editors' thin attempt in their introduction to assert the coherence of this volume resolves itself into a series of platitudes about the beliefs of 'early moderns' (or 'the inhabitants of early modernity'), and quickly takes refuge in a series of thumbnail sketches of the nine articles that follow. Of the nine authors only four seriously engage with 'the intersections between the differentiated yet interrelated realms of the supernatural ... and the secular' and, in general, the writers scarcely consider each other's arguments, let alone engage with the 'current dialogue' concerning the 'porous boundary between the secular and the supernatural in early modern England'. Three of the four essays that would merit inclusion in a book with a focus on pervasive intersection are rewarding and challenging (Parry, Kapitaniak and Devine), but even with these there are problems. Reginald Scot's venomous anti-Catholicism does not mean that he was a Calvinist, as Kapitaniak and the editors suggest; indeed, his opponents among the Kent radical Protestants insisted that he was not. Nor was he a JP. Neither Parry nor Devine, having located the origins of the 1563 Witchcraft Statute in the war against Catholic conspiracy, consider why, if this was the case, the legislation does not appear to have been subsequently employed for that purpose. Parry and Kapitaniak never resolve their disagreement on the roles played by Dr Dee and Scot in the factional politics of the Elizabethan court. The other five essays – four on literary works and one (most interesting) on sex with the devil – vary in quality. Some are poorly written, some seem to add little to current discussion – and may even be unaware of it; some make uncritical use of sources to sustain their conclusions. All of these criticisms are true of the weak essay by Marcus Harmes on 'The devil and the bishop'. While this piece is focused, through a study of dispossession, on the ostensible topic of the collection, the writing is tortured; much of the argument has already been published in Harmes's 2013 book; and errors abound – Hatton was Sir Christopher; not Sir Robert; Bancroft's preference for an absolute prohibition of Puritan forms of dispossession is certain, not probable; Alice Goodridge's fury was unleashed by a boy's inadvertent fart, but her victim was Thomas Darling, not Will Somers.

LADY MARGARET HALL,
OXFORD

CLIVE HOLMES