

Australian Journal of Politics and History

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Transcontinental and Transnational Links in Social Movements and Environmental Policies in the Twentieth Century

GUEST EDITORS: ASTRID MIGNON KIRCHHOF AND CHRIS MCCONVILLE

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— as more and more Europeans arrived, in fear demanding protection; and Aboriginal groups failed to agree among themselves on a united response to this foreign challenge.

Connors, with compassion and understanding, and without making a condemnatory judgement, gives justice to this warrior Queenslander. Where is the public statue in Post Office Square alongside that other great Queensland warrior, Major-General Sir Thomas William Glasgow?

W. ROSS JOHNSTON

History, The University of Queensland

Anglican Clergy in Australia 1788-1850: Building a British World. By Michael Gladwin (London: Boydell and Brewer and Royal Historical Society, 2015), pp.xiv + 268. One map. £50.00 (cloth).

This is a book written in a traditional style and with traditional diligence. It is well organized, and packed with the sort of detail that shows how thoroughly the author has been prepared to follow up every relevant question that occurs to him. The method is partly prosopographical and statistical, but it has more than enough of the personal touch to make it engaging to anyone interested in the subject.

Hard work and careful thought make it possible to raise and at least partly answer fundamentally new questions. This book very deliberately comes at the subject of the colonial Church of England from the point of view of its clergy. The focus for all previous scholars has been on questions of policy, on “institutions and bishops”, as Gladwin says. This book goes to the parish level, the personalities and careers of the men who staffed the Church.

Gladwin’s originality also lies in the way he confronts head on the secular nationalist approach to Australian history, which has made caricatures of Anglican clergy, as men of faith and as agents of British power. He rides a new wave of Australian historiography, which considers the question of empire in a far more nuanced way than hitherto, and by folding in questions of religious faith he very powerfully pushes that wave forward.

By building up detail, and by painstaking analysis, Gladwin shows how fine-grained and how nuanced the authority of the Church was on the ground, both for and against the secular power. He also shows the impact of numbers. Much changed from the mid-1830s, largely because the recruitment of clergy gave local Anglicanism a new critical mass, just as it was beginning to lose its exclusive authority as the only Church of the State.

A central concern is the way in which the clergy ceased to be preoccupied with the convict system and began to concentrate on the business of administering the Word of God in a free society. There were obvious continuities. Habits of penal government were hard to shake, but also there were continuing problems of clerical livelihood. However devoted, clergy and their families had to live. Gladwin is particularly good at weighing up the priorities shaping each career, and in showing the impact of hard reality on youthful devotion.

History-writing in Australia has long featured a deep strain of bigotry, a belief that religious commitment involves a kind of false consciousness, a vacancy of mind not worth inquiring into. It has been a straightforward case of: “I do not understand it and so it is not worth understanding”. We are now edging towards a more open-minded, energetic acceptance of the importance of faith in human affairs, past and present. So we open up new vistas on the Australian past, and new arguments about subjectivity, emotion, community and family relations.

The remarkable thing about Anglicanism in particular has been the way in which it dealt with issues of place. Having evolved as a religion of nation and parish, giving particularity to each, Anglicanism not only imposed Britishness in Australia, as the sub-title of this book suggests. Its clergy also laboured with ideas of belonging to antipodean soil, and of creating place-bound communities in strange circumstances. These were real efforts of imagination and this book is an enormous step forward in showing how they made that attempt.

ALAN ATKINSON

St Paul’s College, University of Sydney

Nature’s Gifts: The Australian Lectures of Henry George on the Ownership of Land and Other Natural Resources. By John Pullen (Sydney: Federation Press, 2014), pp.240. AU\$34.95 (pb).

Pullen’s day-by-day chronicle and thoughtful appraisal of Henry George’s fourteen-week Australian tour in 1890 provides much-needed further insight into a formative period in Australian political history. In his 1879 classic, *Progress and Poverty*, George argued: “The ownership of land is the great fundamental fact which ultimately determines the social, the political and consequently the intellectual and moral condition of a people”. While George’s messianic crusade in support of shared equity in land via a tax on its incremental value may have been misplaced, his writings were highly influential over several decades.

Pullen argues that George’s visit was unparalleled in Australian history. It occupies 120 pages of the 200-page text, covering a succession of public welcomes, testimonials and presentations given by premiers, parliamentarians, mayors, clergymen and other dignitaries, together with the (not quite unanimous) enthusiastic responses of receptive audiences.

The triumphalism of George’s Australian tour can be attributed to a fortuitous conjunction of time and place. While Georgist-style doctrines on the centrality of land taxes have been an ongoing theme, also advocated by Adam Smith and J. S. Mill and recognised by contemporary economists such as Stigler and Friedman as the “least bad tax”, the historical evidence shows that George’s revolutionary doctrine briefly gained exceptional prominence in an era of unprecedented intellectual and doctrinal contention on politico-social systems, with emergent doctrines such as communism, socialism and syndicalism contending against mercantilism, protectionism and free-market capitalism. George’s ideology can be crudely described as egalitarian “capitalism”, based on private property, free trade and limited welfarism, with its distinctive proposition being public revenue to be primarily derived from taxing the entire unearned incremental value of land, given that this increment was derived from external sources.

As still-evolving settler societies, the Australian colonies were receptive to reformist doctrines, notably those involving the award of land titles and the rights, duties and revenues attached to these titles. Closer settlement programmes were a type of social engineering. It is not surprising that land settlement was a major preoccupation of a generation of historians and historical geographers. Yet few mentioned George’s tour. This lacuna may perhaps be excused given that, notwithstanding its remarkable initial impact, George’s ideas have had scarcely any discernible influence on Australian polity. Surprisingly, and possibly in ignorance of the distinctive attributes of Australia’s innovative lease tenures and their unique role as policy instruments, George did not favour leases.