

Charity and Evangelisation: The Melbourne City Mission 1854-1914.

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Description

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Abstract

It has become so commonly held as almost to be axiomatic among recent Australian historians, that the act of evangelising and giving charity to people, is essentially an act of control and discipline by powerful people in a society over those who have little power.

This thesis, in making a detailed examination of the Melbourne City Mission from 1854 to 1914, along with a smaller study of the Elizabeth Fry Retreat in the late 1880s, offers a substantial challenge to any over-simple application of this concept. In addition, it provides a new assessment of the roles of women of all classes, as they are revealed in acts of charitable evangelism.

The introduction establishes the state of historiography in Australia and to a lesser extent, overseas, in the field of evangelical and charity history. Chapters 1 and 2 make a general survey of the rise of evangelical charity in Great Britain and in Melbourne in the nineteenth century, and provide a detailed introduction to the City Mission movement, and the Melbourne City Mission in particular.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 offer a close investigation of the personnel involved in MCM work in Melbourne: the men and women who founded and administered the Mission, its missionaries, and its clients.

Chapters 6 and 7 look at the MCM at work. Chapter 6 follows its history in the suburb of Collingwood as a succession of missionaries worked there, while Chapter 7 concentrates on the career of one missionary, William Hall in Prahran.

Chapter 8 and 9 look particularly at prostitution and the lot of women who served gaol sentences. Chapter 8 describes and assesses the efforts of City Missionaries to help prostitutes in the 1870s. Chapter 9 looks at charitable responses in the 1880s, to women coming out of gaol, in the work of Sarah Swinborn and her institution, The Elizabeth Fry Retreat, and of a public charity, the Victorian Discharged Prisoners Aid Society.

The conclusion offers revision of current ideas in many key aspects of charity history.

Keywords

charities; history; Melbourne City Mission; Melbourne (Vic.); social conditions; Victoria

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