

Historians and the Church of England: religion and historical scholarship, 1870-1920

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Abstrak

This work illuminates for the first time the relationship between the Church of England and the writing of history in the late-Victorian and Edwardian era. It contends that the Church of England and Anglican theology had a decisive impact on the development of historical scholarship in this period. Since this was the time when history was first entrenched in school and university curricula, the resulting ideas had a remarkable circulation and endurance. The nature of these ideas is explored through thematic chapters on the leading historiographical topics of the time: the nation, the constitution, the Reformation, and socio-economic history. A further chapter brings to life the ideas of progress, time, and divine providence which underpinned Anglican historians' understanding of the past. Throughout the work, the significance of the Oxford Movement, not just for Anglican theology, but for intellectual life in general, is brought to the fore. The work further argues that the Church of England remained a learned church, concerned not just with narrowly religious functions but also scholarly and cultural ones (not least the production of historical scholarship) into the early twentieth century: intellectual secularization was a slower and more fragmented process than accounts focused on the natural sciences have led us to believe. All this may be seen in the work of the pre-eminent historians of the time, from E. A. Freeman and William Stubbs to J. R. Seeley and R. H. Tawney, as well as in the writings of a host of lesser-known figures.