

Introduction

Contemporary Australia has been shaped powerfully by legacies of colonialism. Disputes over national responsibility, guilt, denial and shame for Aboriginal dispossession have become especially notable in public life since the late 20th century. This has proven most striking in debates about the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families (a process which can be traced back to the philanthropic projects described in this work), and while questions of national responsibility for historical wrongs have taken on slightly different forms of late – with the federal government’s 2008 apology to the stolen generations, and ongoing debates over government ‘intervention’ into troubled Aboriginal communities – their continued relevance is clear. In this climate, tracing histories of dispossession, Indigenous rights and the mixed meanings of paternalism and state authority is a challenging and important task.

Ideas about rights, in particular, have become both notable and disputed in recent Australian political life. Questions of Indigenous people’s entitlements – as colonised peoples, as Australian citizens and as human beings – continue to provoke debate. Such controversies have emerged from efforts to situate Indigenous grievances in human rights frameworks, as well as in debates over whether ‘civil’ and ‘Aboriginal’ rights are compatible, and in attacks on a rights-based discourse by those who view it as irrelevant or dangerous. Related disputes are also occurring in a wider context, where the very concept of human rights has become both highly articulate (employed by activists and governments) and under attack from different quarters. My own belief in the importance of pursuing these issues has been influenced not only by my academic research, but also by a period of time spent working in the community sector. Here, tensions between rights and charity and questions about the supposed (in) gratitude of vulnerable people towards state and benevolent agencies continue to have strong relevance. This work was prompted partly, therefore, by a belief that more attention must be paid to the evolving and problematic nature of philanthropic support for Indigenous people’s entitlements, and its shifting connections to empire, charity, religion and the state.

Furthering my interest in this topic is the fact that, by the beginning of the 21st century, the historical plight of Indigenous Australians has become seen (often contentiously) as central to broader national identity. This belief is no doubt relevant to the desire which has emerged over the past couple of decades to trace histories of Australian humanitarianism, including that of certain 19th century missionaries and protectors of Aborigines. While I appreciate and support such a project, I would add nonetheless that it can be equally important to examine the complexities, paradoxes and deep cracks within these humanitarian movements; the fault lines in colonial philanthropy have, themselves, left rich and troubling

legacies. The place of philanthropy within empire is a subject that warrants particular consideration. Since the late decades of the 20th century, Australia's past and future ties to Great Britain have become controversial, and at the time of writing this, both the monarchy and the republican movement appear to have dwindled in popular relevance. These areas of debate gain greater depth and significance, however, when widened to encompass issues of Indigenous policy and subjecthood. 19th century philanthropic movements provide an important window into this, revealing a complex interplay of ideas, actions and identities at colonial, imperial and local levels.

Messages in bottles: exploring a philanthropic past

In 1840, Chief Protector of Aborigines George Augustus Robinson and his assistant James Dredge travelled through the northern districts of Port Phillip, making notes on the circumstances of the Indigenous people they met. In their diaries, amidst ethnographic observations and quarrels between the two men (both of them temperamental, discontented individuals), one unusual event stood out. When the protectors and their local host, Joseph Docker, reached the Murray River, they carved into a gum tree their initials, a cross and the word 'DIG', then wrote the following message on a slip of paper, which they pushed into a bottle and buried beneath the tree.

Reverend Joseph Docker

G.A. Robinson, Esq., C.P. of Aborigines

James Dredge, A.P. of do.

'AMICI HUMANI GENERIS'

Murray River, 2 miles below the Junction of the Ovens with the Murray. On this occasion the health of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria was drunk, and the Royal Initials inscribed on a Gum Tree.

April 30th, 1840

VIVAT REGINA!

'Tres (in) Uno'.

WO-RA-JE-RE

This message is intriguing, alive with multiple meanings. Carving imperial signs into a tree in 'unsettled' country was, of course, typical for explorers, imposing meanings on new lands and, in doing so, implying a previous emptiness to the countryside. Elsewhere in the district, these travellers had behaved similarly, giving the names Docker, Robinson and Dredge to several places they visited.

This was complicated, however, by the purpose of the protectors' journey: not to claim empty land but rather to monitor the culture and dispossession of the people still living there. Robinson's diaries, in particular, recorded numerous details of Indigenous residence: huts, ovens, spears and signs of hunting and firestick farming. Such observations, and the protectorate project they served, were by turns sympathetic and chauvinistic, as the Latin slogan – 'friends of mankind' – suggests. This message also yields other meanings. The ordering of the men's names hints at the fine distinctions of class and status which caused tensions in the protectorate and within missionary projects in general. Furthermore, the loyalty pledged to Queen Victoria, situated so precisely within the Australian landscape, and the inclusion of 'Wo-ra-je-re' (presumably Wiradjuri, a large Aboriginal nation whose country lay to the north), marked both the land and the protectorate with a significant combination of the imperial and the Indigenous. It is, moreover, hard for the historian to resist the image of the message in a bottle, the connections to Aborigines, Queen and country both immortalised and buried.¹

While a singular incident, this story points nonetheless to many central issues within Evangelical philanthropy, as it related to the governance of Indigenous Australia during the first half of the 19th century. The colonisation of Australia was a diverse process, but this era has been seen as particularly important, especially in the south-east. During this time, introduced diseases and species spread rapidly – often preceding British colonists themselves – and land was seized for urban development and pastoralism. In many of the districts examined in this work, the occupation of land increased exponentially within a decade or less, often accompanied by violence, alcohol and a rapidly growing population of settlers, sheep and cattle. The effects on Indigenous societies were devastating, with many suffering a rapid population decline. In central Victoria, for instance, many Aboriginal nations had shrunk numerically from hundreds of people, to mere tens, by the middle of the century.² This development of settler-colonies with an institutional penal heritage, where the original people were to be replaced by newcomers, differentiated settlements like those of Australia from other regions like Polynesia, where missionaries arrived early and were a major colonising force, and India, where trading interests were paramount and the British population remained comparatively small.

1 James Dredge, 30 April 1840, in James Dredge, Diaries, Notebook and Letterbooks, ?1817–1845 [hereafter JDD], MS11625, MSM534, State Library of Victoria (SLV); Clark 2001 vol 1: 248–256.

2 In the country around Bathurst in New South Wales for example (where the Wellington Valley mission would later be established), land occupied by colonists increased from 2520 acres with 33,733 sheep and cattle in 1821, to 91,636 acres and 113,973 stock animals in 1825. Later, in the Port Phillip settlement to the south, the settler population first arrived in the late 1830s, but by 1851 had increased to 77,345, with almost 7 million head of stock. Meanwhile, in South Australia, the land sold to colonists increased from 3711 acres to 170,841 between 1837–1839 alone, while the white population reached 17,366 in 1844 and 85,821 by 1855. See Barwick, 1998: 16; Brock 1995: 213; Goodall 1996: 30; Main 1986: 15.

However, this same era also saw the first attempts to introduce philanthropic governance and 'protection' of Indigenous Australians. Evangelical Protestants, whose influence in British social and political life had been growing since the late 18th century, had campaigned successfully for the abolition of slavery in the empire during previous decades, and between the 1820s and 1840s they turned their attentions to abuses of native peoples throughout the colonies. The missionaries they sent into the field were characterised by lower-middle class or artisan backgrounds, passionate religious faith and a strong belief in hard work, individualist aspirations and the value of the respectable bourgeois home. Their impact on early Aboriginal policy would be significant and mixed, and it is these 'civilising' projects which form the main theme of this book. *In Good Faith?* looks at missions and protectorate stations across the Australian colonies, focusing on the period from 1825 – when LE Threlkeld started work for the London Missionary Society at Lake Macquarie in New South Wales – to 1855, when John Smithies' Methodist mission in Western Australia finally closed. During this era, protectors and missionaries set up in Port Phillip (present-day Victoria), South Australia and Western Australia, and mission stations opened in rural New South Wales and Moreton Bay on the southern Queensland coast. The terrain ranged from urban institutions (notably in Adelaide and Perth) to the coastal fishing country and swamplands around Lake Macquarie; from the expansive grasslands and river country of the Wiradjuri people of inland New South Wales, to the former Aboriginal fishing villages around Moreton Bay, and the small tracts of rich bush and lakes fed by the Barwon River in western Victoria. Missions and protectorates opened at different times, but these points tended to be roughly in line with the early colonisation of the districts concerned.

Along these shifting and turbulent frontiers, complex relationships and conversations developed between philanthropists and Indigenous people. During this time, missionaries and protectors often lacked strong material and official power, and Aboriginal people, while suffering depopulation, dispossession and social breakdown, were nonetheless comparatively mobile, maintained a certain physical and cultural autonomy, and often continued to live in their traditional country. The local dynamics that emerged from this made the early 19th century an interesting period, rather different to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when government bodies, protection boards and missionaries gained much greater power over people's working, cultural and family lives. While the first philanthropists were keen to exert (allegedly) benevolent control, their more compromised circumstances led to some intriguingly different outcomes.

Several historical works have considered early efforts to 'civilise' Aboriginal people through Christian philanthropy. These studies have included accounts of local conflict and resistance by scholars like Peter Read and Michael Christie,

and examinations of religious encounters between Indigenous people and missionaries, by Hilary Carey, Niel Gunson and Jean Woolmington. Also important are attempts by Henry Reynolds – and, from a more explicitly Christian perspective, John Harris – to trace a lineage of white humanitarianism in Australia.³ However, *In Good Faith?* approaches these projects from some new angles. My work has been guided by key themes of governance, subjecthood and rights, and the need to understand these ideas as developing through complex exchanges between imperial centres and mission outposts. While tracing philanthropists' efforts to support the wellbeing and entitlements of Indigenous people, I also emphasise the need to examine these agendas closely and to consider how they were shaped by charity, religious beliefs, personal relationships and commitments to empire. As such, I would also stress the need to re-evaluate the place of British imperialism in Australian history, especially in histories of Indigenous governance. While the historiography of Aboriginal Australia produced during the late 20th century tended to take a national or regional focus, questions of 'humanitarian' imperialism and Indigenous people's status as subjects of empire warrant further attention. This project has been facilitated by a wider research endeavour, headed by Ann Curthoys, into the relationship between Aboriginal policy making and the growth of self-government in colonial Australia, a connection previously neglected by many historians.

Making subjects: political and personal approaches

The uneven exchange of ideas between Britain and the colonies affected a range of issues, notably the initial establishment of missions and protectorates in Australian districts, as discussed in chapter one. Here, British philanthropic publications tended to discuss Australian prospects in apprehensive, even pessimistic terms. These depictions contrasted with – but also influenced and were influenced by – the mixed accounts of paternalism, anxiety and exchange emerging from the missionary and protectorate projects themselves. The idea that Indigenous Australians were unusually 'savage' and difficult to redeem, for instance, appeared in both local and metropolitan sources, but its meanings could differ significantly, from British missionary societies concerned about their funding and public displays of success, to local missionaries wishing to stress the special hardship and value of their work.

Much of my research focuses on the type of authority which philanthropists wished to create in the colonies. While their records focused explicitly on their efforts to 'civilise' Indigenous people, their implicit concerns revolved

³ For example, Carey 2000: 45–61; Carey and Roberts 2002: 821–869; Christie 1979; Gunson 1974; Harris 1990; Read 1988; Reynolds 1998; Woolmington 1986: 90–98, 1985: 283–293, 1983: 24–32, 1988: 77–92.

strongly around what it meant to be British, imperial and white, questions which assumed particular meanings in a colonial Australian context. This is highlighted in chapters two and three, which examine how the relationships between philanthropy, subjecthood and government were imagined in relation to Aboriginal affairs, and how national identity and race figured in this. Here, philanthropists' mixed imperial loyalties, their dependence on the state, and their wish to incorporate Indigenous Australians as British subjects sat uneasily beside their distress at the harm caused by dispossession, their mistrust of white colonists, and their disputes with Indigenous people over questions of authority.

Important works have been produced recently considering Indigenous peoples' legal and political status as imperial subjects (for example, in studies by Julie Evans), or tracing Aboriginal rights movements during later decades (notably in works by Bain Attwood and Ann Curthoys).⁴ However, the realm of subjecthood encompasses a wider range of issues that have still to be addressed. Chapters four and five of this book pay particular attention to the difficult relationship between philanthropy and Indigenous rights with regard to two key topics: land and rationing. These chapters address the strong statements philanthropists made about Indigenous dispossession and entitlements, including their recounting of Indigenous people's feelings on these subjects. At the same time, however, notions of absolute, universal 'rights' (even to the basic requirements of life) were not necessarily present. Evident instead was an interplay of ideas about paternalism, imperial obligations, and deserving poverty, as well as Indigenous people's own beliefs about entitlement, exchange and personal connections to philanthropists. This brings the lineage of white support for Aboriginal rights under closer scrutiny. In this respect, I have also endeavoured to move beyond the assumed tension between 'civil' and 'Aboriginal' rights that shapes a number of contemporary works, which have tended to focus on the problematic place of minority rights within supposedly equal democratic nation-states.⁵ While acknowledging that such debates are important, I would call for a greater historicising of changing ideas about what subjects and citizens are entitled to, and how this relates to government and charitable authorities. Issues of land and labour within early philanthropic sources also provide insights into alternative (largely unrealised) visions of Australian colonialism, where Indigenous access to land, the Crown's power to control how land was used, and the superiority of agriculture over pastoralism, were prioritised in ways which rarely eventuated in practice.

Understanding philanthropic efforts to 'make' Aboriginal subjects also requires moving inward, to examine their projects of physical and spiritual transformation, as addressed in chapters six and seven. The regimes of daily

4 For example, Attwood 2003; Curthoys, 2002; Evans 2004: 69–82; Evans 2002: 165–185; Evans 2003.

5 For example, Peterson and Sanders 1998: 1–4, 27–28. Attwood 2003 also addresses this theme.

mission life and their place within imperial politics have excited interest in recent years, due in large part to the works of Jean and John Comaroff on Tswana missions in southern Africa. The idea of 'civilisation' as a lived process – physical and spatial, concerned with intimate understandings of the self – has been explored in colonial settings by historians such as Jane Lydon, Anna Cole, Michael Harkin and Kathryn Rountree.⁶ My work is indebted to their approaches, whilst also revealing some compelling issues arising in early 19th century Australia. Attempts to recreate Indigenous Australians as Christian individuals – self-aware, introspective, demonstrating their 'civilisation' in outward, visual ways – involved some creative paradoxes. I wish to consider further the links between missionary beliefs in individualist self-improvement and the institutional conformity which they were also trying to create. Worth examining, too, are philanthropists' own contradictory roles. Clearly, they wished to establish themselves as authoritative observers and exemplars of Christian enlightenment and bourgeois individualism. However, this developed in necessary dialogue and tension with the need to make their lives and homes open to Indigenous people, and to understand their own spiritual journeys partly through their mission work. In this setting, ideas about public and private life and Christian faith emerge not as absolute ideals, but as shifting, contested and personal dynamics.

This work challenges the frequent assessment of the first protectors and missionaries as failures. It does so partly by drawing attention to the rich and complex nature of their relationships with Indigenous people, including several accounts of Christian baptisms which have received surprisingly little historical attention. However, I have also tried to interrogate ideas about 'failure' itself. This is relevant to the discussion of conversion, religious standards and 'good death' in chapter seven. It is also important to chapter eight's account of the closure of the first missions and protectorates. By the middle of the 19th century, all of the first protectorates and Protestant missions had closed. This usually happened against a backdrop of further Indigenous dispossession and scathing comments from settlers and politicians about philanthropists' shortcomings and Aboriginal people's supposed 'savagery'. Here, while acknowledging the real failure of philanthropists to stem the harms inflicted on Indigenous people, I have also considered humanitarian 'failure' as an idea, emerging from disputes over colonial authority and connected to the growing popular belief that Aboriginal destruction was necessary and inevitable. This last notion provoked mixed responses from philanthropists. It might seem a foregone conclusion that their Christianity and commitment to missionary work must have led them

6 Cole 2005: 153–171; Harkin 2005: 205–225; Lydon 2005: 211–234; Rountree 2000: 49–66.

to oppose such claims. However, it is also worth considering how these very factors could also limit humanitarian advocacy and their ability to imagine an Indigenous future.

Sources, approaches and limitations

The main sources for this project have been those produced by philanthropists, both locally (mission diaries and correspondence, protectorate records, and publications arising from these) and at an international level (for example, publications by missionary societies, the Aborigines Protection Society, and the 1835–37 House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines). It is an ongoing challenge to examine the differences between these sources, in terms of focus, material and audience, and the dialogue occurring between them. Missionaries' personal journals, for example, were written with the encouragement of their societies, provided the material for annual reports and publications, and engaged in various ways with conventions of Evangelical writing. However, at the same time, their daily and individual nature allowed for greater discussion of emotional and spiritual experiences and Indigenous people's opinions. In this context, exploring Indigenous agency and viewpoints is both important and problematic. Linguistic and cultural differences, and the partial and sometimes propagandistic nature of philanthropic sources, limit our capacity to understand Aboriginal experiences through these records. It is partly as a result of this that Indigenous viewpoints are not the primary focus of this work. Nonetheless, philanthropists' concern for Aboriginal wellbeing, and their often conversational approach – vital to the evangelising process – mean that their records include some of the most illuminating material from this early colonial period; for all their shortcomings, they cannot be disregarded. Here, I note Gareth Griffiths' discussion of African missionary texts; he argues that colonised people's voices could not be completely suppressed, however problematic the source material, due in part to missionaries' own need to report religious encounters and establish authenticity. While their narratives worked to contain native voices, these voices were also (partially) inscribed, and can be read against the grain to some degree, their silences and gaps interrogated.⁷ Themes of discussion and exchange in philanthropic sources are, therefore, important to this work.

Colonial mission sources contrasted in many ways with British publications, which often took a more straightforward propagandist role, 'correcting' and editing missionary stories for public display, driven by the need to raise popular and political support. This could involve a general emphasis on Christian progress and imperial loyalty, and a downplaying of missionary obstacles and

⁷ Griffiths 2005: 155–156.

colonised peoples' views. However, as I will demonstrate, British sources also gave varying descriptions of different colonies, with Australian Indigenous issues receiving often minor or pessimistic treatment.⁸

Philanthropists' writings were characterised by self-awareness and interiority, but they were also marked by calls for action. As Isabel Hofmeyr has noted, missionary tracts were explicit in their aim of spurring their readers to moral activism, and this approach had a strong political relevance. Elizabeth Elbourne, too, has examined the importance of narrative in the work of the Select Committee on Aborigines (British settlements), as they tried to strengthen advocacy for colonised peoples by engaging the feelings and imagination of their readers.⁹ Furthermore, as Catherine Hall has noted with regard to Baptist missionaries in Jamaica, the task of speaking publicly about native policy and promoting the protection and 'civilising' of colonised peoples could be important to how middle-class Evangelical male activists saw their own authority and social position. This was implicit in their remarks about the 'pleasure' of speaking on behalf of the oppressed and the dispossessed. Here, I do not wish to label missionaries as sanctimonious liars, or to defend their integrity and legacy uncritically. Rather, I wish to further understanding of how their often difficult experiences in the colonies were shaped (in practice and in representation) by broader ideas about empire, identity and advocacy. As Hall puts it, 'Being a friend to the mission was one way of being in the world and mediating one's relation to others.'¹⁰

As the above topics suggest, a major focus of this project has been to understand philanthropists themselves and their place in empire and colony. As Isabel Hofmeyr and Helen Bethea Gardner have observed, missionary history has undergone broad changes since the mid-20th century. Scholars have moved from praising missionaries uncritically as agents of civilisation, to attacking them as imperialist oppressors, to portraying missions as local projects, involving considerable agency from native peoples, and/ or as transnational efforts, which shaped their 'home' societies as much as the colonised ones. Some historians like Peggy Brock have also begun to place particular emphasis on indigenous people's own roles as evangelists, with very different agendas and world views to their European clergymen.¹¹ I have attempted to place this study within a broader understanding of British imperialism, acknowledging the vital work done by historians such as Susan Thorne and Anna Johnston on missionary influences within the British world. Johnston, for instance, examines how Britons came to 'know' the world partly through missionary literary cultures,

8 For more in this area, see for example Gardner 2006: 16–18; Griffiths 2005: 153; Johnston 2003: 32, 34, 80–83.

9 Elbourne 2002: 284; Elbourne 2003; Hofmeyr 2005: 21–26, 34.

10 Hall 2002: 294. Also, Hall 1992: 212–213.

11 Brock 2005: 132–152; Gardner 2006: 13; Hofmeyr 2005: 19–20.

while Thorne considers how missionary work shaped class and religion in British life. She asserts 'Missionaries were considerably more successful in securing imperialism's hegemony in Britain than in their foreign fields of operation.'¹² My own focus, however, returns more to the so-called colonial periphery; while viewing imperial history as crucial, I continue to be most intrigued by its ramifications for Australia. As Johnston notes, missionaries remain intriguing figures here – both humanitarian and authoritarian – and studying their work helps disrupt any simple view of empire, as well as reminding us of a tradition of debate over the morality of colonialism.¹³

Several other explanatory points are needed here. Of the institutions that operated during this period, two are not studied in great detail. One is the Parramatta native institution and the associated Black Town settlement, which ran on and off in Sydney from 1814–1829, supported by Governor Macquarie and various Anglican and Methodist preachers. This institution targeted children, including some removed forcibly from foreign districts in punitive raids, and has been identified by several historians as representing the nucleus of policies of separating Indigenous families and institutionalising the children, which in the late 20th century would become identified under the heading of the 'stolen generations'. While accepting the significance of this institution, I have not found it necessary to examine it at length. This is partly because several historians have done so in detail already, notably J Brook and JL Kohen, Peter Read and Jane Lydon.¹⁴ Furthermore, its character differed in several notable ways from the institutions of the 1830s and 1840s: its very small pupil numbers, its focus on students who were far from their own country and unable to travel and negotiate their living habits, its partial focus on Maori children, and its avowedly 'experimental' nature, in contrast to the more generalised Indigenous governance that many later institutions hoped to initiate. Similarly, the exile of Indigenous people from the Tasmanian mainland to institutions at Wybalenna (Flinders Island) in 1833 and Oyster Cove in 1847, following their notorious experiences of violence with colonists and the military, is relevant to this study, but again, I have not made it a major focus. The absence of a strong missionary or religious influence there, and the more prison-like setting, where the people were prevented from returning to their traditional country, led again to different dynamics. Moreover, in-depth studies of this institutional life, notably by Lyndall Ryan and Anna Haebich, reduce the need for extensive reiteration.¹⁵ Nonetheless, these early efforts at Aboriginal 'civilisation', although quickly labelled failures by some observers, would cast long shadows over subsequent projects.

12 Thorne 1999: 10. See also, Johnston 2003.

13 Johnston 2003: 104–105.

14 Brook and Kohen 1991; Lydon 2005: 201–224; Read 2006: 32–47.

15 Haebich 2000: 75–130; Ryan 1981.

As stated, I have chosen to focus on Protestant efforts, due to their strong and conflicted connections to empire, government and ideas about British civilisation. Some Catholic missionaries did operate in the Australian colonies during this time: the Passionist priests at Stradbroke Island between 1843–1846, the Sisters of Mercy in Perth from 1846, and the Benedictines at New Norcia in inland Western Australia from 1846. Given that their work rarely overlapped with that of their Protestant counterparts, and given their comparatively weak connections to the state (and sometimes to Indigenous people) during this era, I have omitted them from my study. Their stories have been discussed, however, by several historians, including John T McMahon, George Russo, Geraldine Byrne and Anne McLay.¹⁶

Finally, a couple of observations are needed about the use of language in this work. When referring to native peoples, I have tried to name their regional identities, but due to the sometimes vague source material, or the need to make some broader statements, this is not always possible. Otherwise, I have tended to use the term ‘Indigenous’ more than ‘Aboriginal’. This is due to a certain unease with the notion of ‘Aboriginal history’ as a single, unified narrative, especially for this early colonial period when traditional identities remained strong and little sense of a generalised Aboriginal affinity was apparent. Nonetheless, this work does engage with Aboriginal history as a genre, and I recognise that these issues are controversial ones, subject to continued debate.

When referring to missionaries, protectors, and writers and advocates who raised Indigenous issues, I have tried where possible to name them according to their specific roles. However, the question of how to group them together – and to what extent we should – is problematic. There was considerable overlap between the voices raised in concern for Indigenous people. Missionaries, for example, were alive to the problems of material poverty, while state-funded protectors preached the Gospel, and British philanthropic bodies like the Aborigines Protection Society were interested in both evangelising and practical ‘civilisation’. Zoë Laidlaw has drawn attention to a distinction between missionary organisations and the Aborigines Protection Society, which, while religiously motivated, was more open to civilisation-first approaches.¹⁷ I have tried to be sensitive to the various agendas and personalities involved, while also seeing them as part of a wider movement in favour of relatively humane and Christian colonisation. Terminology is difficult here. While the term ‘humanitarian’ has a range of meanings in different imperial settings, Ann Curthoys has noted that its use in histories of Australian colonialism became popular largely through the scholarship of Henry Reynolds. Reynolds’ work used the word as a valuable umbrella term, encompassing activists both religious and secular,

¹⁶ See, for example, Byrne 1981; McMahon 1943; McLay 1992; Russo 1980.

¹⁷ Laidlaw 2007: 133–161.

spanning two centuries, thus drawing the reader's attention to a long lineage of European concern for Indigenous dignity and humanity. Some scholars like Claire McLisky, though, are cautious of the term 'humanitarian' for precisely this reason, warning that it may work to obscure historical specificities, and pointing out that 19th century activists themselves did not necessarily identify with this word.¹⁸

Alternative terms, however, can also prove awkward. 'Evangelical', while important theologically, does not seem to me quite sufficient to encompass the colonising, protective and advocacy roles these men took on. The more popular 19th century word 'philanthropy' is perhaps the most appropriate, although it too has limitations. Used more commonly by historians of poor relief in Victorian Britain (although linked to missionary movements by historians like Johnston and Thorne), 'philanthropy' carried a range of meanings – used variously as a boast, an insult, a reference to religious proselytising, or to campaigns for social and legal reform. As a movement, philanthropy was linked to a decline in older systems of local aristocratic paternalism towards the needy, as well as the rise of the bourgeoisie and the non-conformist churches, and the growing British wish to regulate and discipline the poor. While philanthropy was intertwined with Evangelicalism, some historians like Robert H Bremner have associated it with a rather more secular benevolence that focused on abolishing slavery and on systemic reform of prisons, hospitals and other institutions for the vulnerable.¹⁹ Complicating the issue further in this case is philanthropy's traditional emphasis on voluntarism. While this powered the efforts of some advocates for Aboriginal rights, it may have had a more tenuous meaning for professional missionaries and protectors, who took this work on partly for wages and social advancement. Ultimately, I have still tended to use the term 'philanthropy', feeling that despite its shortcomings it has considerable benefits. It forces us to keep in mind issues of benevolence, gratitude and control, relationships between giver and receiver, and the awkward but vital connections between religion and political change, which resonated for these colonial projects. Given this study's comparatively narrow focus, it also seemed appropriate to use a term more evocative of the 19th century. Nonetheless, questions of language, and the wider issue of how to categorise white settlers who attempted to speak for Indigenous people, remain contentious.

18 Ann Curthoys, 'The Humanitarians versus Colonial Self-Government: the Australian Colonies in the mid nineteenth century', conference paper delivered at *Race, Nation, History: A Conference in Honour of Henry Reynolds*, 29–30 August 2008, National Library of Australia, Canberra; McLisky 2005: 57–58.

19 Bremner 1994: xii, 121. See also Roberts 2002: 1–11, 143–153, 229–246.