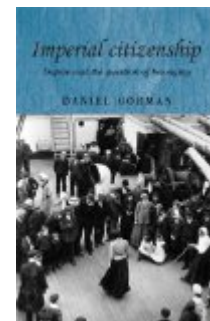


**Daniel Gorman.** *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006. xi + 243 pp. \$85.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7190-7529-2.



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**Commissioned by** Mark Hampton (Lingnan University)

Daniel Gorman's *Imperial Citizenship*, published in Manchester University Press's Studies in Imperialism series, is an examination of the "imperial mind" in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Gorman's primary concern is with the idea of citizenship, a concept he uses quite broadly in the book. While "citizenship" includes issues pertaining to the legal status of individuals living under the protection of the British Crown and intra-imperial migration and naturalization, Gorman also discusses "citizenship" as an issue beyond one's legal status, as something more akin to culture and values. In part, *Imperial Citizenship* is about attempts to forge a common imperial identity for the peoples of the British Empire.

Gorman approaches the topic of imperial citizenship through a series of intellectual biographies, devoting a chapter each to Lionel Curtis, John Buchan, Arnold White, Richard Jebb, and Thomas Sedgwick. This is a highly diverse group. Curtis and Buchan were theorists of empire who wrote for highly educated and engaged audiences. White was a journalist and critic for the popular

press. Jebb, like Curtis and Buchan, wrote for the educated elite, but had a more practical bent to his mind. More so than Curtis and Buchan, he tried to fashion his vision for the empire into policy. Sedgwick was neither an intellectual nor a journalist, but rather an advocate for migration from Britain to the colonies.

For Gorman, this group reflects the broad range of opinion on empire within conservative circles. Gorman, while emphasizing this diversity of thought, categorizes these imperialists in one of two ways: "centralizing social imperialists," who wanted to tighten the bonds of empire while keeping Britain in a position of predominance; and "associationists," who recognized the importance of white colonial nationalism and the autonomy of the Dominions. The former included Curtis, White, and Sedgwick. White regarded the empire as little more than "Greater Britain," the expansion of English authority and English culture overseas. Obsessed with national efficiency and the naval rivalry with Germany, White considered the empire as a means by which to prop up

British power. Like White, Sedgwick saw the empire as a way to solve social problems at home by encouraging young men and boys with limited economic prospects to migrate to New Zealand and Canada. Sedgwick hoped that the migration of Britons to the colonies would tighten the bonds of empire, but his primary concern was always the needs of the metropole. Of the three, Curtis was the most nuanced and progressive thinker, but ultimately he was a centralizer who came to advocate the evolution of the empire into a federal super-state that would include Britain, the white settlement colonies, and eventually, after an indefinite period of political tutelage, the dependent empire.

In contrast, Buchan and Jebb promoted what Gorman refers to as “associationist” or “cosmopolitan” forms of imperial citizenship. For Buchan, imperial citizenship was primarily an “attitude,” a form of British identity, albeit one that allowed for local and regional loyalties as well. This broader imperial identity was to be built on a “shared morality” or “character” (p. 94). Citizenship, as conceived by Buchan, consisted not of equality or individual rights, but the recognition and proper performance of one’s duty. Jebb, more than any of the other writers under consideration in this volume, recognized the importance of colonial nationalism as it emerged in the white settler colonies. Rather than the imperial federation envisioned by Curtis, Jebb advocated for what he called a “Britannic alliance.” Imperial unity would be maintained by regular imperial conferences, tariff reform, and a commitment to common defense; beyond this, the white settler colonies would be free to pursue their own interests.

In the end, the idea of imperial citizenship, from the most parochial to the most cosmopolitan, proved to be unattractive. Race was certainly a factor in this as none of the imperialists in Gorman’s study could imagine an empire where non-European subjects enjoyed the same rights and

freedom of movement as whites. Gorman also argues that “the idea ... failed because it was expressed, at least by its more progressive proponents, in democratic terms” (p. 211). This allowed the Dominions to pursue their own ends, often in ways that undermined common imperial citizenship. Gorman concludes that the failure of imperial citizenship actually prolonged the life of the British Empire as it enabled the Dominions to develop into independent nations while helping to maintain the belief that imperial unity was a worthwhile goal. The imperial sentiment that bound Britain and the settler colonies together in the period following the First World War proved to be quite resilient.

*Imperial Citizenship* is a dense and thoroughly researched book that merits the attention of scholars interested in the intellectual and cultural impact of empire in Britain. Although imperial citizenship, as a practical policy goal, lost its significance by the 1920s, certain aspects of the imperial vision articulated by Curtis, Buchan, and Jebb endured much longer. These include Curtis’s conviction that the empire was a key to maintaining world peace, Buchan’s view of the empire as place for service, and Jebb’s belief in empire as a carrier of democracy. The book also contributes to the growing body of work on the emergence of the “British world” in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All five of Gorman’s subjects, when thinking and writing about “empire,” meant, primarily, the white settler colonies. Gorman’s book also addresses the broader question of conservative thought in the late nineteenth century. *Imperial Citizenship* is an argument against the orthodox view that the Conservative Party lacked intellectual heft or sophistication. Imperialism itself was an arena of thought where turn-of-the-century conservatism made important contributions.

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