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S. J. D. Green, Peregrine Horden, eds. *All Souls under the Ancien Régime: Politics, Learning, and the Arts, c. 1600-1850.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. vii + 400 pp. $175.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-927635-6.

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Saving the Soul of All Souls College from the Ancien Régime

Founded in 1438 by Archbishop Henry Chichele to train future clergy in service of the church and state, All Souls College, over the succeeding centuries, evolved to become the most unusual one in the Oxford college system. Firstly, the college does not take undergraduates (with only a few minor exceptions in its history). Secondly, the college primarily serves as an academic research institute for advanced scholars in the humanities and social and theoretical sciences. Today, All Souls holds a reputation as a prestigious center of learning, a melting pot of eminent scholars, and a wealthy college with a fine library and even finer wine cellar. It is also the home of the "hardest exams in the world," which, until recently, included the famous "one-word" exam. It is difficult to imagine that in the mid-nineteenth century, All Souls was considered a byword for institutional neglect, academic complacency, and cronyism–in other words, a place whose fellows possessed neither "great literary nor scientific abilities" (p. 2). Indeed, the college's first historian, Montagu Burrows, likened the period of stagnation at All Souls to that of prerevolutionary France. In dubbing this period "the Ancien Régime," Burrows along with his successor, Grant Robinson, created a historiographical tradition that has led others astray in understanding not only how All Souls meandered intellectually for two centuries but also who exactly was able to save it. The edited volume under review here, meanwhile, repudiates this view and gives readers interested in university history and colleges tremendous insight into how communities, academic life, and admissions functioned in the premodern university.

Reevaluating the notion of an ancien régime and examining the most interesting aspects of its development, broadly speaking, are the goals of *All Souls under the Ancien Régime*. The book is a compilation of various Chichele lectures delivered at All Souls over the last decade on wide-ranging topics concerning the college, from the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 to the Royal Commission to reform universities in 1850. The target audience of the book is clearly those interested in All Souls College and Oxford more generally, but historians of other universities will also profit from the various topics discussed in it, since the authors make useful points of comparison for educational institutions in continental Europe and North America. Still, S. J. D. Green, in his introductory essay, professes that the "book advances no thesis beyond the assertion that the history of All Souls … is poorly appreciated if confined to the presumption of decline" (p. 19). Aside from its chronological arrangement and loose division into unifying themes, the volume is more a compilation of independent investigations and musings rather than a consistent and coherent narrative history of the college (for that, one must wait for Green's eventual monograph on the history of the college). Consequently, the work possesses the scholarly strengths and drawbacks commonly found in the genre of edited anthologies. Yet the diverse topics presented within the essays offer intriguing, unique, and varied insights into All Souls.

Green and Peregrine Horden's volume has much to celebrate and to commend. Facilitated by the freedom of the lectures, the volume shines in bringing out a wide range of topics and approaches related to All Souls that would not normally be present in traditional narrative or institutional histories of universities and colleges. Take R. H. Helmholz's contribution on Sir Daniel Dun and Patrick Neill's on William Blackstone. Though independent of each other, both essays can be paired together as insightful micro-histories of two individuals, one quite obscure, the other quite famous, who profoundly influenced the development of English law as fellows of All Souls and afterward. Similarly, Robert Franklin's piece on Sir Richard Stewart reveals how active All Souls's fellows could be in the heated and often violent political

and religious controversies surrounding the last days of Charles I. Law and politics, however, do not reign solely supreme in this book. Art and architecture are touched on in essays by Roger White and Horden, respectively, on Sir Christopher Wren's and Anton Raphael Mengs's ties with All Souls.

Perhaps the most impressive and enlightening essay of the collection is John Davis's "Founder's Kin." Davis focuses on those who were entitled to fellowships at All Souls on the basis of their kinship with Chichele. Through extensive archival research and statistical analysis, Davis questions whether this legacy system, in and of itself, was a major component of the college's decline, as critics have often pointed out. Instead, he suggests that understanding the changing fortunes of the social class to which these kinsmen belonged and the social strategy behind acquiring a fellowship at All Souls will yield better historical insight into the college's ancien régime. Equally, the essays of Green offer the reader an excellent, though at times dense, overview of the narrative and institutional history of All Souls and serve the anthology well in framing the other essays chronologically and historiographically. They certainly give readers a taste of his forthcoming history of the college. In particular, his "Fremantle Affair" (1857-64) offers an exciting reevaluation of the intra-college dispute among All Souls's fellows that turned into a nationwide legal affair and public debate on the nature of universities, their uses to the state, and the extent to which subsequent reforms at Oxford could be attributed to the Victorian reformers who took credit for them.

On the whole, the volume demonstrates ably how important and vital it is to use the educational setting of All Souls as a hinge to understand the college's influence on society, state, and nation. It also allows readers to see in turn how developments in society itself–in politics, science, religion, and the arts–affected the shape and form of an educational institution. This collection prompts readers to reconceptualize the nature of decline and reform in educational institutions historically. Green and his fellow contributors remind readers to be wary of accepting received wisdom on any university without interrogating the terms, sources, and ideas under discussion, lest we lose our historian's soul to that bottomless pit of perdition called anachronism.

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