

Book Reviews and Notices

BRITISH SETTLERS IN NATAL, 1824—1857: A Biographical Register, Vol. 1, Abbott-Ayres

SHELAGH O'BYRNE SPENCER

(Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1981), R18 + G.S.T.

History is no longer simply a record of 'Great Lives' but is also, we are reminded by Shelagh Spencer's work, 'A Tale of Innumerable Biographies'. And 'innumerable' indeed do her subjects appear when we take note that this first volume of the series comprises the first 93 biographical entries under the letter A and that some 2 500 entries are to follow (1 250 having already been completed in draft by the indefatigable author). What historians of Natal and South Africa will have at the end is one of the most comprehensive reference works on an infant and maturing colonial community in all the literature of empire. Even more significant is the fact that this monumental undertaking on the British human investment in the early colony is at the same time being complemented by the editing of a vast compendium of source material on the Zulu role in our regional history — Colin Webb's and John Wright's *James Stuart Archive*. Lucky, and indeed grateful, will all future historians of Natal be to have to hand two such meticulously refined research tools for probing into both the black and white parts of an incipiently plural society.

In the course of the last two decades South African scholarship has been quite well supplied with biographical reference works — the D.S.A.B., Eric Rosenthal's *Dictionary*, various encyclopaedias and, not least, E. Morse Jones's *Roll of the British Settlers* are examples. But what distinguishes Mrs Spencer's work is the integrated network effect that she achieves, even over the relatively small sample of colonists covered in volume 1. Being by a single author working at an even, and very remarkable, depth in a multitude of primary sources — but where many biographical details overlap — the *British Settlers in Natal* exhibits a tight-knit consistency that places it in many respects in advance of other reference works of its kind. Indeed, the completed work should provide future opportunity for comprehensive 'cross-sectional' socio-political analyses of Natal history reminiscent of the type carried out by the Namier school in British history. In other words, Shelagh Spencer's work is at one level an atomization of a colonial society into its individual components; at another level it reveals the structuring of these units in a comprehensive, integrated whole.

The author and the University of Natal Publisher have arrived at a presentation format that is both pleasing and functional. The choice of A4 sized page makes the double-column entries easily readable and the hardback covers are well-suited to the heavy usage that the work can expect to get in home, school, university, and public libraries. Sensibly, too, the vast range of source material has been reduced to numbered categories in

the bibliography and these numbers only have then been used at the end of each biographical entry to indicate in the briefest and neatest way the primary and secondary underpinning of the article. The overall impression is therefore one of a clear, uncluttered page which conveys all the required information about the individual concerned, about his or her immediate descendants, and about where further detail may be researched. At the beginning of Volume 1 there is a useful explanatory preface on how the entries are organized and a brief introduction on the different immigrant groups of the period; at the centre there are photographs of some of the subjects; and at the end are listed the immigrant vessels, related surnames, an overall roll of the settlers over the period 1824—57, and the comprehensive range of sources used. Finally, a workmanlike index contributes markedly to the network effect of cross-referenced, cumulative information mentioned earlier.

With such well-known names as Allison, Archbell, Aitchison, etc. among its entries, this first volume gives abundant promise of what use historian and layman alike can expect to make of the completed work. Natal descendants with a genealogical interest may now learn about their progenitors 'warts and all', rejoice at their triumphs and sadly shake their heads at disasters made fortunately distant by time. But beyond the interest to individuals there lies the public value of the work: as the training of schoolchildren and university students becomes more focused upon regional history and more orientated to the 'activity' and 'discovery' research projects, so will this massive range of biographical material further prove its worth to educational institutions. In many a cultured home and home of culture in this province the *British Settlers in Natal* will be, itself, at home.

JOHN BENYON

FAILURE AND VINDICATION

The unedited journal of Bishop Allard, O.M.I. Indexed and fully annotated by HOWARD ST. GEORGE, Oblate of Mary Immaculate. (Unity Publications, Durban, 1981. 538 pages. No price given).

CATHOLICS IN NATAL II, 1886—1925

by J.B. BRAIN. (Archdiocese of Durban, 1982.

ISBN 0 620 06018 2 373 pages. R12,00)

Taken together, these two works encompass the years 1858 to 1925, nearly three-quarters of a century of Roman Catholic missionary endeavour in the vicariate of Natal. Established in 1846, the vicariate embraced an area far greater than the existing province of Natal, for it included the two Boer republics, Griqualand West, the Transkei, Basutoland and Swaziland as well as Zululand. Forty years later, in 1886, this huge vicariate was subdivided, with the Transvaal and the Orange Free State together with Griqualand West and Basutoland falling away. In 1921 further modifications brought separate prefectures for Zululand and Swaziland, and the creation of the independent vicariate of Mariannhill which included the Transkei and southern Natal. Thus by the third decade of this century the erstwhile enormous vicariate had achieved the proportions from which there developed the present Catholic archdiocese of Durban.

The original vicariate had been assigned by the Vatican to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.), a religious order of priests and brothers founded by Charles Eugène de Mazenod in 1816 for the conversion of the heathen. The order initially had a strong French orientation, though it rapidly attracted men from outside France into its ranks, and French-speaking clergy dominated the work of Catholic evangelization in Natal from the outset until well past the turn of the century. Language difficulties, in fact, were to prove something of a hindrance to the missionising process. To co-ordinate and direct missionary activity in the vast area, a Vicar Apostolic was appointed and given episcopal status to underline the importance of his work and the dignity of his position. The challenges facing him were quite awesome: to search out and minister to existing white Catholics scattered throughout the area and to initiate a widespread evangelization of the black peoples. Far-flung visitations would have to be made, mission-stations, churches and schools built, religious orthodoxy supervised, the spiritual and material welfare of the clergy under his care fostered; all this in a strongly Protestant or heathen environment and on a financial shoestring. In addition he was subject to two external bodies whose decisions had for him the force of law — the O.M.I. generalship in France (moved to Rome in 1905) and the Propaganda College, the missionary headquarters of the Church, in Rome. Sterling personal qualities of determination and resilience, robustness in body and mind, coupled with administrative flair and organizational expertise were some of the qualities required of the Vicar Apostolic of Natal in the second half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century.

Longevity the first three men to fill this post certainly possessed, for their combined periods in office stretched over nearly a century. Jean François Allard arrived in Natal in March 1852 and held office until 1874. His successor was Charles Constant Jolivet, Vicar Apostolic until his death in 1903. He was succeeded in turn by Henri DeLalle whose period in office stretched from 1904 to 1946. The vicarial careers of these men form the basic subject-matter of the two works under consideration.

Father St. George's study of the journal of Bishop Allard opens with the journal itself, which covers a central period of Allard's apostolate, from January 1856 to December 1868. It is not a daily journal, there being gaps of up to three months between entries, and the length of individual entries varies considerably. It is written in longhand, mainly in English, though there are scattered entries in his home language, French. The journal is faithfully reproduced, including deletions, corrections, additions and marginal comments, in typescript by the editor. The supplementary notes, which take up 287 pages, then follow. There are three indexes, the first to the journal itself, the second to the annotations or supplementary notes. This latter is further subdivided into general matters and more specific reference groupings. The third index is particular to missionary activity among the Basotho. A full bibliography of primary and secondary source materials completes the book. Illustrations include photographs, mainly of clergy who feature in the journal, facsimile reproductions of the original journal, and a scattering of maps.

This work is meritorious in every sense of the word and represents a significant addition to the corpus of South African historical endeavour. It is

clearly a labour of love, from the painstaking transcription of the journal itself (which was written in faltering English, untidily, in a hand at times barely decipherable), to the exhaustive supplementary notes. These notes are the product of intensive research into sources both published and unpublished. They are a mine of historical and ethnological information, notably those drawn from the archives of the Archbishop of Maseru and from the General House of the Oblates in Rome. The unusual indexal arrangement is justified by the voluminous nature of the annotations, and allows for easy reference.

The journal tells us little of its author, except for his strict adherence to his religion. It tends towards a somewhat superficial description of day-to-day events with facts, figures and activities stated rather baldly. In other words, it is not a diary and it takes the supplementary notes to breathe life and emotion into its pages. Given the vast extent of his mandate and the exacting personal demands it made (as discussed above), Allard was not up to the task. Intensively religious, he emerges as introspective, uncertain in his personal relationships with his clergy and somewhat lacking in organizational judgement. Disappointed by the early defection of such priests as Father Logegaray, he became overcritical of those who proved enduring. His failure to serve the concrete needs of the small white Catholic group was compounded by his lack of success with his missions to the blacks of Natal. Letters from the Oblate-General in France show impatience and concern at the slow progress, particularly among the blacks (for example, the letter from de Mazenod quoted on p. 270). His virtual abandonment of the rest of his vicariate for Lesotho, which the editor sees as justifiable in the long-term (hence the 'Vindication' contained in the title), could be interpreted as the action of a man who found himself incapable of meeting the heavy demands laid on him. The circumstances surrounding his resignation in 1874 at the age of 67, tend to confirm this view.

The inclusion of an editorial preface to the work would have been most useful and informative to the reader. What motivated the editor to take on this task? Were there major difficulties of transcription? — judging by the facsimiles, there must have been. Why was Allard chosen as vicar in the first place? Perhaps Father St. George would consider such an inclusion in future editions.

Catholics in Natal II. while maintaining the same general subject-matter, is quite different in treatment and approach. It is a continuation of Dr Brain's earlier work *Catholic Beginnings in Natal*, and originally took the form of a doctoral thesis. This is manifest in the conventional academic arrangement of the book, with preface, introduction, text and conclusion with footnotes, appendices, bibliography and index. Here too is a valuable addition to the historical corpus and, owing to the area and nature of the vicariate at this time, here too is a work with ramifications far wider than the boundaries of contemporary Natal and an appeal far broader than to the historian alone.

The study opens with the 1886 division of the Natal vicariate (*vide supra*) and focuses firstly on Bishop Jolivet's efforts to maintain and extend the work of the Catholic Church within its boundaries. Dr Brain concludes that he enjoyed a high degree of success, particularly in the cities and towns of Natal 'proper'. Crucial here was his introduction of orders of nuns, notably

the Holy Family sisters and the Augustinians, to staff schools and hospitals which served both Catholic and Protestant, helping considerably to make the Catholic Church acceptable to the Protestant white majority. The Coloured and Indian populations were not neglected, though the pace of O.M.I. missionary activity among the blacks continued to be slow, even faltering. The stunningly successful native apostolate of the Trappist Order at Mariannhill helped to compensate for this. Jolivet, the writer concludes, did possess the necessary attributes for a successful vicar apostolic in that he was outgoing, forceful and flexible. By his death he had built some 90 churches and chapels, 82 schools, 14 convents and hospitals. The clergy of the vicariate had swelled to some 300 priests and brothers, and 900 nuns. He left his successor with a mountain of debt, however, and DeLalle's task was made far harder through circumstances beyond his control — anticlerical legislation in France, which affected the fortunes of the O.M.I.s grievously; the political and economic aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War; the coming of the Great War in 1914. Furthermore, Dr Brain suggests, DeLalle, though a holy man, lacked the administrative and personal capabilities of Jolivet. The further subdivision of the vicariate in 1921, while greeted with misgiving by DeLalle and his O.M.I. personnel, was essentially realistic. Later attempts by the bishop to raise money in North America were successful. By 1925, half way through his term of office, the future of the much-reduced vicariate was promising.

Dr Brain's handling of her subject-matter, through careful division of chapters and accurate footnoting, is disciplined and scholarly. She leans heavily on statistics, but these are on the whole judiciously presented and enlightening. The copious bibliography, clearly arranged, indicates the breadth and depth of her researches.

She is particularly to be congratulated on her intelligent use of primary archival material. The two maps included provide useful supplements to the text and the appendices contain a wealth of information as to the vicariate and the clergy who served in it. Her treatment of bishops Jolivet and DeLalle is scrupulously impartial and her chapters on Mariannhill, with its successes and its problems, fascinating — and particularly apt in this, the year of the monastery's centenary. She sets out her basic theme in pp. xii and xiii of the Introduction, and sticks closely to these parameters in the main text.

However, the work does lack analytical depth in certain key areas, most notably on the appointment of DeLalle as Jolivet's successor. Dr Brain describes DeLalle as 'young, sensitive and inexperienced' (Introduction, p. xi) and 'a quiet and retiring academic' (p. 169). He seems more in the mould of Allard than Jolivet. Why was he chosen for this most difficult and demanding task, over others with more evangelizing and organizational experience? What qualities particularly recommended him to his superiors? Then again, the reasons for the decision to subdivide the vicariate in 1921, a decision crucial for the future direction of the Catholic Church in South Africa, are not examined in any depth.

These two works clearly manifest the complexity of the historian's task. Each has great merit. In broad treatment of themes and in meticulousness of research, each transcends the boundaries of purely religious history and recreates for the reader a vivid picture of pioneering days.

MICHAEL SPENCER

J.W. COLENZO: BRINGING FORTH LIGHT: Five Tracts on Bishop Colenso's Zulu Mission,

edited by RUTH EDGECOMBE

(University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, and Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban, 1982; xlv + 252 pp., illus., map, index.)

Bishop Colenso is best known for the theological controversies in which he was involved in the 1860s, and for his role as the champion and defender of the black people of Natal and Zululand against British oppression in the 1870s and 1880s. Here we see him in a different role: that of missionary to the Zulus and the Zulu-speaking Africans of the Colony of Natal in the 1850s and early 1860s.

The principal item in this collection is *First Steps of the Zulu Mission* (1860), Colenso's account of his visit to Zululand in 1859, when he obtained permission from the Zulu king to start a mission and obtained a grant of land. This is supplemented by *Church Missions*, a pamphlet published in 1854, following his preliminary visitation of the diocese of Natal, in which he appeals for contributions to enable him to carry out his proposed missionary work; *The Good Tidings of Great Joy*, a sermon preached in Norwich cathedral in 1854, on the occasion of the ordination of Henry Callaway, who was to join his mission in Natal; three accounts of his visit to Zululand in 1859, originally written in Zulu by three Natal African converts who accompanied him; and *On Missions to the Zulus in Natal and Zululand*, a lecture given in 1865 in London, in which he combated the increasingly prevalent 'Social Darwinist' view that Africans were incapable of civilization and doomed to extinction and that missionary endeavour was therefore a waste of time.

The interest of this volume extends beyond the field of mission history; it also casts light on Colenso's later political activities. Very striking is Colenso's belief, in this period, in the beneficent nature of the British Empire, a belief which was to receive rude shocks in the last decade of his life, but of which he was never entirely able to free himself. Englishmen, he believed, had a special duty, greater than that of other nations, to spread the word of God. "For who can doubt, that, if our country has been suffered, and strengthened, in the Providence of God, to girdle the earth with her might, if her merchant-flag is floating in every harbour, and her standard of victory waving in triumph on many a shore — it is in order that God's Name may be glorified, and the Gospel of His Son proclaimed, by our means . . ." But if the Empire was a means of spreading Christianity, Christianity was a means of strengthening the Empire. Blacks outnumbered whites in Natal by 100 000 to 6 000. Colenso lamented that nothing had been done to raise the former "out of their degraded state of barbarous heathenism to the dignity of civilized and Christian men." In these circumstances, was there any wonder, he asked, that they should prefer "their own wild liberty to the yoke which their English rulers would fasten upon them?"

Colenso's account of his visit to Zululand contains much of interest for the history of the Zulu kingdom in the reign of Mpande. Cetshwayo defeated Mpande's intended successor, Mbulazi, in 1856; it was not, however, until 1861 that Mpande recognized Cetshwayo as his heir. It was during this politically tense interval that Colenso visited the country. His impression

after visiting Cetshwayo was that Mpande retained much more power than was commonly supposed in Natal. Having visited Mpande, however, he concluded that he was “practically *powerless*, surrounded by indunas, who humour him by letting it be supposed that his consent is necessary, when they please to do so, but stand in his way whenever they choose.” As in England in the 17th and 18th centuries, succession disputes in Zululand allowed power to slip from the monarchy to an oligarchy of territorial magnates. Cetshwayo, on his succession, attempted to restore the power of the monarchy, but with only partial success.

Ruth Edgecombe has provided a very useful introduction, in which she draws attention to the principal points of interest and importance in these publications. She has also provided numerous annotations; sometimes, one may think, rather too numerous. The notes are not at the foot of the page, but at the end of each item, and having tracked down the relevant note, it is difficult to suppress a momentary spasm of irritation upon finding that it reads “I have not been able to trace any information about Mr. Olsen”, or “It has not proved possible to identify Mr. M.” Readers of a book such as this might reasonably be expected to know who Sir Harry Smith was; on the other hand, one would value further information concerning the order to Natal tribes to march to his aid during the 8th frontier war, but this is not forthcoming. These, however, are minor criticisms. Dr. Edgecombe has provided much useful and necessary background information, and the volume is a very valuable addition to the Killie Campbell Africana Library Reprint series.

R.L. COPE

VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN NATAL

JENNIFER and ALISTAIR VERBEEK

(Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1982)

A collection of photographs, especially significant historic photographs, is difficult to review because the closer one looks at them the more they reveal or suggest. This collection provides “glimpses of the activities and events in the daily lives of ordinary people”. Although it was compiled essentially for entertainment, perusal of the photographs and the additional notes is quite rewarding.

Reading the notes indicates that the authors carried out a considerable amount of checking with regard to the accuracy of captions. Caption accuracy is especially important in the case of Pietermaritzburg, for example, where the Town Hall fire of 1898 destroyed much of the municipal records. Historic photographs and descriptions thus often become a prime source for historical reconstructions. Historic photographs, unlike their captions or history books, never lie. A good example is the photograph on page 16, which is entitled “Greytown, Natal”. The vegetation — or rather lack of it — the topography, the position of the church, the Karroo type houses, the small plots rather than one acre erven, and furthermore the fact that for many years Greytown, as is typical of a dorp layout, did not have houses built along its cross streets, all strongly suggest that the photograph in question, despite the caption, is *not* of Greytown. This may seem like

much ado about a caption, but this particular caption has, I submit, led to erroneous descriptions of Greytown by both architects and historians.

The authors' aim was not to produce a pictorial history of the Colony of Natal, and yet they have, albeit from a particular viewpoint. The collection is clearly a product of colonial nostalgia: colonial buildings feature prominently whereas mosques and temples are conspicuously absent. The 'Victorian and Edwardian' in the title therefore refers not only to a time period but to a particular, i.e. British, perception of Natal during that period. It is to be hoped that supplementary volumes compiled by authors of different persuasions will follow, thereby setting the stage for a definitive pictorial history of Natal.

On the photographic score this collection is exemplary, but one is disappointed that the limited text is not typographically errorless, e.g. pages xii, xiii and xv each contain nonsensical sentences as a result of the omission of several words. Notwithstanding, the authors are to be commended for completing a sizeable undertaking, and for including many less well-known but very valuable prints.

ROBERT F. HASWELL

TRADITIONAL HINDU TEMPLES IN SOUTH AFRICA

PAUL MIKULA, BRIAN KEARNEY and RODNEY HARBER
(Durban, Hindu Temple Publications, 1982, 112 pp.)

This is a valuable book on traditional Hindu temples in South Africa. The authors, all of them practising architects, concentrate on temples built along the Natal coast between the Tugela to the north and the Umzinto to the south in the 19th and predominantly-early 20th centuries. There are references, too, to traditional temples in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, East London, Newcastle, Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg.

The authors provide brief theoretical backgrounds to Hinduism and temple-building in India. The leading South African temple-builders, all men of humble origins, had never studied the *Mansara* or the *Silpa Sastra*, the ancient Indian manuals on temple-building. And yet their works, sometimes influenced by Muslim and Victorian architecture, show traits of the two major styles of all Indian temples, namely, the *Nagara* in the north and east of India, and the *Dravidian* in the south. The South African temple-builders knew enough from memory, or from information otherwise available in their adopted country, about temples in India. Short biographical sketches on the leading six temple-builders are provided, and they should inspire students of art and architecture to do further research on these extraordinary men.

As architects, the authors excel in the physical descriptions that they provide. They describe the details with great care, sympathy, and understanding. There are descriptions of over 70 traditional temples: the wood-and-iron structure in 1870 (the earliest temple?) was the forerunner, to the now famous Isipingo Rail *Mariamman Temple* (p. 50); the *Narainsamy Vishnu Temple* is the best example of a "typical South Indian village" temple (p. 32); and the *Durban Hindu Temple* in Somtseu Road is described as "the

most imposing of all *Hindi* temples" with traces of Victorian civic and Islamic Mogul architecture (p. 59). The catalogue section contains in somewhat crowded arrangement meticulous diagrams of traditional temples of South Africa.

These descriptions are amply supported by illustrations. Black-and-white photographs and magnificent colour-plates add a strong visual dimension. In several cases, interesting vignettes surrounding the foundation of the temples are given, reminding us of the human element that is ever-present in concrete structures. Take, for example, the story related on p. 46:

"A young Hindu diving casually into the Umbilo River nearby, brought up a spear which resembled the *Vel* of Shree *Shiva Subrahmanya*. With such a divine omen, it was soon decided that this would be the most suitable site for the erection of the community's first temple".

Throughout the book, the authors stress two aspects: one, the community spirit that went into temple-building among recent immigrants who wished to recreate familiar landmarks in new environments; two, the great need "to conserve the splendours of the heritage . . ." brought by the newcomers. The authors show a genuine appreciation for the architectural value of traditional Hindu temples in South Africa. They lament the forces that have caused the demise of the temples, among others, the "political shuffling around of people" under the Group Areas Act, expropriations of public works, and disinterest among owners.

If this book was intended to be a guide for the interested student of traditional Hindu temples, it suffers rather badly from an awkward layout. Photographs are not always conveniently close to the description in the text; the innumerable cross-references make it necessary to flip back and forth from the text, to the colour-plates, and finally to the diagrams in the catalogue section. The reader will find this extremely cumbersome. By the time he gets back to the text, his train of thought will have been seriously interrupted. The authors should have considered a convenient format. As it stands, the layout of the book detracts from its usefulness as an easy reference guide.

In some instances the cross-references are incorrect, inaccurate, or non-existent. On page 15, we are told that the Pietermaritzburg *Mariamman Temple* is to be found on page 86 when it is on page 84. The dates of the *Ganesa Temple* are given as 1898 on page 15 and 1899 on page 46. There are several more such errors that could have been eliminated in proof-reading.

The organisation of the book makes for some repetition. A temple is discussed in chapter 2 under "Master Builders". The description is repeated when the individual temple is fully discussed. Finally, the salient aspects of the temple are repeated in chapter 9 in the catalogue. A certain amount of repetition is unavoidable and even necessary, but rigorous editing would have reduced this to a minimum.

There are photographs and drawings without captions. Even when captions are supplied, many of them stand aloof and unintegrated to the text.

These criticisms in a book of this kind are serious. They detract from what is otherwise an extremely good and useful book.

SURENDRA BHANA