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If the Irish Ran the World: Montserrat, 1630-1730

Donald Harman Akenson

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Montserrat, although part of England's empire, was settled largely by the Irish and provides an opportunity to view the interaction of Irish emigrants with English imperialism in a situation where the Irish were not a small minority among white settlers. Within this context Akenson explores whether Irish imperialism on Montserrat differed from English imperialism in other colonies. Akenson reveals that the Irish proved to be as effective and as unfeeling colonists as the English and the Scottish, despite the long history of oppression in Ireland. He debunks the myth of the "nice" slave holder and the view that indentured labour prevailed in the West Indies in the seventeenth century. He also shows that the long-held habit of ignoring ethnic strife within the white ruling classes in the West Indies is misconceived. If the Irish Ran the World provides interesting insights into whether ethnicity was central to the making of the colonial world and the usefulness of studies of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English imperialism in the Americas. It will be the basis of the Joanne Goodman Lectures at the University of Western Ontario in 1997.

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