

**Volume 10**

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**Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Prophet  
of Colonialism - III**

**Lead: It lost its first empire in North America with the American Revolution and there was trouble in other possessions. To bring order and imperial stability, Britain turned to the ideas Edward Gibbon Wakefield.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: His reputation and career destroyed by a conviction for kidnapping of a prospective bride, three years in London's Newgate Prison changed the life of Edward Gibbon Wakefield. He took on capital**

**punishment and his writings helped bring the end to the death penalty in England, but it was on colonialism that he made his greatest contribution.**

**Britain tended to treat its overseas possessions as dumping grounds for human wastrel. Prisoners, debtors, and social undesirables were “transported” to Australia, Canada, South Africa and West Indies. In prison, he met many of these men and what emerged from these encounters was the anonymously published *A Letter from Sydney*. Wakefield posed as a fictional character that had received a large grant of land in Australia. It was useless he said because he had no labor force**

**qualified to work it. The quest to bring prosperity and stability to Britain's colonial possessions consumed the rest of his life.**

**Wakefield asserted that colonial land given away just wasted it. It should be sold at a "sufficient" and reasonable price determined by local conditions. This would permit an appropriate balance between labor and capital investment and insure growth of the colonies. He has been rightly criticized as neglecting the rights and welfare of indigenous peoples such as the New Zealand Maori and Australian Aboriginal clans, but his intuitive grasp of the colonial reality anticipated the successful settlement of other colonies**

**later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He died in the New Zealand he helped create in 1862.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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