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have a particular interest in the subject matter. Scholars and students will appreciate the encyclopedic nature of the documentation, as well as the extensive bibliography.

MARIE JENKINS SCHWARTZ
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California Crucible: The Forging of Modern American Liberalism by Jonathan Bell. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. 352 pp. \$47.50.

Jonathan Bell's book tells the story of how the Golden State became the heart of the modern Democratic Party's liberal wing. Bell's narrative stretches from the end of World War II until 1980, tracing out the grassroots and party movements that constructed a distinctly leftist coalition of labor, gays, racial minorities, and middle-to-upper-class liberals.

Bell contrasts his history with the tale of conservative ascendancy during the same period. Far from a bastion of leftist politics, as other studies claim, California in the 1940s was the home of progressive Republicans such as Governor (and later Chief Justice) Earl Warren. The GOP during this time was consistently buoyed to electoral victory despite a 2-1 registration disadvantage through moderate policies and an apolitical election system. Partly because of these factors, the New Deal democratic coalition never truly coalesced in California. Bell argues that this circumstance allowed a new coalition to form, one linking civil and economic rights for ever-broadening sectors of the population. Working through groups such as the California Democratic Council and politicians such as the Burton brothers and Pat Brown, liberals turned crushing defeats in 1952 into decisive victories in 1958. They were aided in this effort by a Republican Party moving increasingly toward anti-government, pro-business positions that alienated labor and racial minorities.

These victories resulted in massive expansions of government services for welfare programs and protections against private-market discrimination. It was in response to this new—not longstanding—liberal Democratic triumph that a vibrant conservatism arose in areas like Orange County. The responsive rise of the right began a new era of ideologically partisan politics, one that Bell claims foreshadowed the contemporary national scene.

But by the mid-60s, this liberal coalition suffered electoral defeats due to the insurgent right and its own intraparty fighting. However, Bell argues that shifting electoral fortunes did not roll back the fundamental gains previously achieved. Governor Ronald Reagan's attacks on government services proved more rhetorical than real. Even the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, severely capping local taxes, only complicated instead of reversing the liberal program.

Though his narrative effectively ends around 1980, Bell concludes that “by the 21st Century California was the national lynchpin of Democratic votes and of Democratic policy concerns in areas of individual rights and economic justice” (p. 279). The minority liberal movement of the 1940s had emerged as the dominant force in California and Democratic politics in the new century.

Bell’s book is a story of triumph triumphantly told. Current Democratic hegemony over the nation’s most populous state is a massive fact. Bell tells the story of how this came to be in an engaging manner, balancing the varying factors of ideology and institution building in the construction of the modern liberal coalition.

The California described in *California Crucible* is at times a microcosm and an anomaly, historical and foreshadowing. It exemplifies the coalition comprising today’s Democratic Party. At the same time, California’s lack of a New Deal heritage precipitated leftward movement farther and quicker than Democrats as a whole.

Bell’s unstated point appears to be a foreshadowing beyond our own times. Just as liberals put together a diverse coalition in an increasingly diverse California, so demographics portend similar movement nationally. Yet Bell sees our own era of fiscal tightening as problematic for nationwide imitation. Though he does not say so, even California’s own economic state threatens to undo past accomplishments. But if it is possible, Bell’s book describes an ideological and coalitional blueprint.

ADAM CARRINGTON
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Eminent Victorians on American Democracy: The View from Albion by Frank Prochaska. New York, Oxford University Press, 2012. 192 pp. \$45.00.

Frank Prochaska’s elegant and engaging book explores American democracy through the eyes of the most-prominent British political thinkers of the Victorian Age. He focuses on four men—John Stuart Mill, Walter Bagehot, Henry Maine, and James Bryce—and compares their assessments of the U.S. Constitution and the political life it engendered. The book is well-written and thoroughly researched; it is accessible to a broad, educated audience; and it contributes valuably to the study of the American Constitution and its reception and influence abroad.

The four thinkers Prochaska considers cover a broad range of the Victorian political spectrum—from radical to conservative, from enthusiastic democrat to staunch aristocrat. Still, their interest in American politics revolved around a cluster of common themes: They saw, in America, a portent of things to come in Europe, and they reflected on the leveling mediocrity of democratic life, the