

JOHN BRIGGS and IAN SELLERS, eds. — *Victorian Nonconformity*. London: Edward Arnold, 1973.

Despite the unflattering descriptions which have been frequently attached to it, Victorian Nonconformity was one of the most formative influence on nineteenth century English society. As champion of "those movements and sentiments which may be considered most characteristically Victorian," it is an important element in the understanding of Victorian society and the full assessment of its impact has yet to be determined. Although that assessment is not its purpose, this book helps to bring to our attention something of the flavour and complexity of a group which is all too frequently misunderstood within very narrow categories. Through a thematic selection of texts the editors attempt—at times very successfully—to represent to the modern student the commitments of a previous age in the words, laced with controversy and emotion, of protagonists themselves.

The illustrative selections themselves were interesting and worthwhile and provide a marvellous collection of texts not otherwise available to the student. One would have appreciated something of the popular sentiments and public statements of members of the established church on various aspects of dissent but this is beyond the scope of the editors in this volume.

The very concise introductions were at times disappointing, either by promising more than the texts illustrated or by not offering enough by way of contextual explanation or introduction. A little more understanding of the type of student likely to use this book would have provided more in terms of a general introduction which would simply and clearly explain Nonconformity and the main highlights of its history from the seventeenth century as well as what it consisted of in the nineteenth century—their percentage of the population; their main objectives, etc. Such a short general introduction would outweigh, both in understanding and enjoyment, the space which it would require. The selections themselves also should have been given contextual introductions. The usefulness of the book would have been greatly increased by the addition of an index, as would have its convenience by a complete list of biographical notes rather than the random collection which are included (only two out of 10 selections in Chapter One are given a biographical note).

Though not a substitute for a good modern general history, *Victorian Nonconformity* offers an introduction and, through the variety of interesting material which it presents, an encouragement to further studies in the area. To students of history, who sometimes tend to accept an oversimplified version of the past and a neat set of categories, it offers a safeguard through its wide variety of contemporary witnesses which speak through its pages. It would be a mistake to treat Victorian Nonconformity as though it was a uniform phenomenon and at the conclusion of this book there is little likelihood of this happening. Students of English social history will find in its pages a testimony to the importance of Nonconformity as an element in the understanding of Victorian society.

Gerard O'DEA,  
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DAURIL ALDEN, ed. — *Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973.

This volume, published in 1973, presents the fruits of a conference planned in 1967 and held at the Newberry Library in 1969. The first Luso-Brazilian Colloquium held in 1950 enabled many scholars to foregather for the first time to discuss their interests, and it is lamentable that no such meeting has been held since 1966. The colloquia were broad in