

The above instances are general statements that do not go beyond the obvious. What were the items of disputes? Any study of religious reformism that purports to go beyond the obvious should at least draw up a list of issues around which the disputes between the traditionalists and modernists have been centred. It should not merely mention them but it should describe the nature of the conflict (p. 66 mentioned some subjects of controversy). Such terms as 'metamorphosed traditional elite' can be misleading if we do not clarify the metamorphosis. Roff did not attempt to set up a typology of traditional and non-traditional elites preceded by a justification of the criteria of typology, and illustrating it with concrete human personalities comparable to what Max Weber did. Hence Roff's general remarks on the whole do not go beyond surface phenomena. Terms like 'traditional patterns of social and economic relationship', 'rapid and far reaching socioeconomic change' and 'retention . . . of the state structure', are too general to serve as analytic conclusions. At a deeper level of analysis they are meaningless as descriptive tools or as analytic conclusions.

If we were to judge the book from the social scientific point of view it is far from adequate. If we were to judge the book as an account of certain historical themes it is good and useful particularly bearing in mind that published works on such subjects are scarce. Compared to other publications on the Malays written by British authors, Roff's work has an unmistakably superior quality. The present Malay scholars are engaged in other fields of enquiry and it is not likely that any will embark upon Roff's theme in the near future.

Hence the book will remain as the latest source of information on the subject for some time to come.

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*The Commonwealth Experience.* By Nicholas Mansergh. Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1969. 471 pp. U.K. price: 70s.

ONE OF THE stock topics taught in Commonwealth university history departments for many years has been what Americans call British Empire-Commonwealth history. In New Zealand few topics perhaps have proved less popular with students. Nor are our students unique. In one major English university in 1968 not one student chose this paper.

One reason for this disinterest has been what Professor Mansergh rightly calls the 'constitutional straitjacket' into which Commonwealth history has been 'for so long forced to fit'. Another, only partly a consequence of the first, was for a long time the almost unrelieved tedium of the textbooks. The spirit of Kipling was expressed in grey prose. It often seemed that the subject had been invented by bores and kept going by stuffed shirts to provide drudgery for pass students.

Now, at last Professor Mansergh has written a book always intelligent and usually lively. In a sense it is the first true history of the Commonwealth and its origins, as opposed to Empire-Commonwealth histories, or surveys of modern Commonwealth Affairs. It bears little resemblance to textbooks in the former category, though it owes much to Professor W. K. Hancock's pioneering *Survey* and Professor Mansergh's own successor volumes.

This will undoubtedly become the standard authority for students of the declining Commonwealth. It is fluent and clear, rarely (as in some passages on Mackenzie King) falling below its own high prose standard. The scholarship is unobtrusive. It is often amusing and at times devastating, as when the author applies to the British government's failure to consult its Commonwealth partners before intervening in the Suez war in 1956, Greville's judgment on Sir Robert Peel's surprising conversion to Catholic emancipation: 'I do not see how he can be acquitted of insincerity save at the expense of his sagacity and foresight.' Professor Mansergh can also make use of the delicate allusion which seems to say more than he says. A few lines before he quotes Yeats on the 'Sixteen Dead Men' (actually fifteen), the martyrs of the Easter rebellion, he relates how the 'ideological conflict' developed (his tone is flat) in 'passionate intensity'. Does he mean, the reader wonders, Yeats's 'worst'? And hint of the 'rough beast'?

If one may choose from among so much that is good, the sections on World War I, the war cabinet, Munich and, in general, events from about 1900 to 1950 seem especially excellent. On more recent events, including those in Rhodesia, it is not yet possible to write a history. Professor Mansergh draws to his conclusion with an interpretative essay on 'the dawn of disenchantment' with the Commonwealth, and three short sketches of some 'Men of Commonwealth', Smuts, King and Nehru. He sees the Suez crisis and the signing of SEATO in 1954 as marking a dividing line between the climax of Commonwealth, with its close consultation, as during the Korean war, and today's disillusionment. There was a psychological link between these events and Britain's approach to the Common Market in 1962.

What is 'the Commonwealth'? Before 1947 it was not difficult to define 'the British Commonwealth of Nations', by reference to the Balfour Report. It was a voluntary association of autonomous states which owed allegiance to the British monarchy. They were all European-dominated. The majority of their combined population was of British descent. They practised imperial preference in varying degree. But since then? Most of its inhabitants are neither British nor European. They do not all owe allegiance to the Crown. Their economic policies are as diverse as their diplomatic alignments and their constitutions. The Commonwealth has been called a 'club' — of which Eire and the USA seem at times to have a visiting membership. It has been praised as a mini-UN and denounced by a Conservative as a 'gigantic farce'. Professor Mansergh quotes with approval Professor J. D. B. Miller's term, 'a concert of convenience' — its survival dependent not on sentiment but calculations of national advantage. What can be said dogmatically is that the Commonwealth is not a fiction: it exists. It exists in a habit of co-operation, far more by a multitude of non-governmental associations than by governments.

Historically the transition from Empire to Commonwealth has been a method whereby colonies could become independent peacefully and cushion the shock of this change of status by continuing afterwards to co-operate voluntarily with the ex-imperial state. There has been great change since 1947. The emphasis of Commonwealth relations has tended to move from economic or defence negotiations to race relations. But there has been continuity from the Canadian transition to that of Swaziland.

One of the reasons why modern British Empire-Commonwealth history has not always been an exciting subject is not only the nature of the Commonwealth itself, but because its evolution has seemed amorphous or

diffuse. Courses and textbooks have tended to offer sketchy and superficial treatment of events in a dozen countries, tied together by British colonial policy on a constitutional framework. Since World War II university teachers have broken away from this tradition, sometimes by using 'theories of imperialism' to replace the old constitutional emphasis. Otherwise they have abandoned the Commonwealth in favour of 'area studies'. A small group of Australians and New Zealanders at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London fifteen years ago used to call it the Afro-Asian Institute. Canadian or Australian or New Zealand national history had become independent subjects, with rapidly growing literatures.

Only now, when the subject seems in decline with its subject, has an adequate history of the Commonwealth been written. How does Professor Mansergh grapple with the principal problem of a diffuse subject — what is relevant? The constitutional evolution cannot be left out. He presents it in an interesting way. He stresses the contribution of events in Canada, South Africa, India and Ireland, as well as in Great Britain. Little is said of the twenty other states which have become members of the Commonwealth since World War II. Collectively they transformed it, yet individually they contributed little to its evolution.

The only quarrel that an antipodean might have with this is that the emphasis on Ireland, the author's special interest, seems exaggerated. The Irish Free State was a member only from 1921 to 1948. It was the first country not 'a colony of settlement' to become a member. Unlike all the others, it did so unwillingly. Dominion status was forced on the Irish for the convenience of the British. Irish leaders wanted what Indians got after another war. But it influenced the evolution of the Commonwealth significantly only during the decisive years 1921-31, and then only in the trail of the Canadians and South Africans. If Eire's position has been anomalous since, it has been as a British neighbour not as an ex-Commonwealth State. The 'friendliness' (Peter Fraser's word) shown by Australia and New Zealand has been towards an ancestral homeland, not towards an ex-Commonwealth state.

Professor Mansergh treats the Irish as an 'historical nation'; the English, Scots and Welsh are 'British'. But when antipodeans say that most of their ancestors are 'British', they include the Irish. (When the author says that the Australasian settlements were 97% 'British' he, for once, forgets to distinguish the Irish.) I suspect that an antipodean thinks of Ireland as part of 'Great Britain and Ireland' or 'the British Isles', rather than as part of the Empire and Commonwealth. Certainly no one but an Irishman would be likely to give as much space to Irish history in a Commonwealth history as Professor Mansergh does.

Australia and New Zealand, though 'a fundamental element and the strongest cohesive force in the limited European Commonwealth' that existed between 1917 and 1947, are seen as 'exceptional'. They were exceptional because they were British! Professor Mansergh tries hard to think how they contributed to the evolution of the Commonwealth. He stresses Australian federation and New Zealand radical legislation of the 'nineties, though neither had much to do with specifically Commonwealth evolution. Australian and New Zealand policies over, for instance, appeasement, are described. But, paradoxically, the two states 'at the very heart', were also 'apart from the main stream'. They had no British-French or British-Boer national struggle; nor, the author thinks, anything much to 'offer by way

of experience' to vexing post-War World II racial problems elsewhere (though is this true?). Certainly the antipodes produced none like Smuts to qualify as a 'man of the Commonwealth' except, perhaps, Deakin.

This is just. Yet, in a sense, it is history which gives little scope to the losers. Relatively little is said of the imperial federation movement and its successors. Commonwealth history viewed through antipodean eyes would make rather more of the events discussed in Professor La Nauze's *Alfred Deakin and The Colonial and Imperial Conferences* by John Kendle (who shows that the origin of J. G. Ward's proposals in 1911 were scarcely, as Professor Mansergh thinks, 'somewhat obscure'). Deakin, Reeves, Seddon, Ward, Hughes, Menzies: their Commonwealth history, and the events in their countries which produced their policies, would look a little different.

An antipodean demur, however, does not diminish the author's achievement. To conclude, a few minor errors might be noticed. The map shows Burma in the Commonwealth in 1968. The Liberals did not introduce compulsory primary schooling in New Zealand — that came fifteen years earlier. G. E. should be G. S. Graham. Kiakoura is Kaikoura. W. P. Reeves did not, I think, join the Fabian Society.

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*The Great Church in Captivity.* By Steven Runciman. Cambridge University Press, 1968. x, 455 pp. U.K. price: 55s.

RUNCIMAN, to my way of thinking, does not have to write much more before he becomes for Byzantinologists what Stubbs or Maitland or Macaulay once were for mediaevalists. Though with a palpable difference. This is certainly history with the breadth and sweep, even certainty, of the old masters, but what gentleness, generosity and, above all, modesty distinguish it! The standards of scholarly accuracy and objectivity are never once likely to dismay even the most arduous and scrupulous backroom-delver, though he might have serious reservations concerning religion itself as a legitimate field of empirical inquiry. Not Runciman, however: 'The historian must attempt to add to his objective study the qualities of intuitive sympathy and imaginative perception without which he cannot hope to comprehend the fears and aspirations and convictions that have moved past generations. Those qualities are, maybe, gifts of the spirit, gifts which can be experienced and felt but not explained in human terms.'

So inspired, Runciman sets forth the history of the Great Church, as the Greeks called their Orthodox Patriarchate, during the dark years of its 'captivity' from the fall of Constantinople to the establishment of the modern Greek Kingdom. It is a neglected, indeed practically virgin field, if for understandable reasons. Modern Greek historians have naturally evinced a much more lively concern with the period of modern nationhood since, for them, the four centuries of Turkish domination contain much that is melancholy for a Greek to recall. Other historians of post-classical Hellenism, still somewhat of a rarity, have been loathe to venture beyond Byzantium if only because in its civilisation they found at least some affinity and continuity with the familiar ancient world. Now, Runciman joins the mere handful of non-Greek historians who have delved into the Greek 'Dark Ages' which stretched from 1453 to 1821.