

Emily J. Manktelow, *Missionary Families: Race, gender and generation on the spiritual frontier* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2013). xxxviii+252 pages. ISBN: 9780719087585, RRP £70.00.

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‘Our sons Charles and Richard who have gone astray, have ceased to live with us... their conduct since has given us extreme pain.’ So wrote South Seas missionary Charles Barff to his employers at the London Missionary Society in 1845, and so opens Emily J. Manktelow’s chapter on missionary children in her 2013 monograph, *Missionary Families* (162). This case study is one of several which form the basis of a new approach to mission history, whereby Manktelow unpacks the relationship between the intimate and the institutional through the lens of the family. In this way, Christian overseas mission in the nineteenth century emerges as a sphere where the ‘personal *became* the professional’, with tangible impact on the metropole (2). Scandals of racial intermarriage prompted LMS recruitment of missionary wives from home, for example, while reports of disorderly children like Charles Barff’s led to new questions about parental authority in interviews for prospective missionaries. Manktelow’s work is thus an important addition to John Mackenzie’s ‘Studies in Imperialism’ series, demonstrating the myriad effects of imperialism on British as much as colonial society. Indeed, she is explicit: ‘The seemingly intimate and personal (marriage, parenthood, family) [abroad] utterly shaped and transformed the very nature of nineteenth century mission itself’ (211).

Manktelow’s decision to use the ‘family’ as a conceptual framework for missionary and imperial history is an important and timely one. Previous writing on missionaries has generally tended to focus upon individual hagiography, while more recent social and cultural histories have been concerned with the public spaces where empire was expressed and contested. By reframing analysis in terms of the personal activities and concerns of domestic units, Manktelow opens up a new conduit through which to examine the influences and debates at play in missionary history. Tracing their impact on mission organisations at home also helpfully avoids a dichotomy between

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‘institutional’ and ‘social’ histories of mission, which have so often been considered separately.

Manktelow’s study focuses specifically on the London Missionary Society (LMS) in the nineteenth century, and is explicitly limited to the activities of a handful of families working in its Pacific and Southern African mission fields. This relatively narrow remit may be the result of using a shorter PhD thesis as the basis for a book-length piece. By focusing on a few well-known missionaries – such as the Livingstones and the Moffats – Manktelow demonstrates clearly the potential of her innovative ‘family’ approach to yield fresh insight on well-worn subjects. Despite this, the scope remains somewhat disappointing for a monograph, not least given that the records for other missionary societies such as the Presbyterian Church of England Foreign Missions Committee are readily available for much of this period, and yet are not included in this work.² The LMS’s *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* is also a surprising omission from a work that does so well in placing missionary children within the broader context of LMS debates about families and mission.

In spite of this modest scope, Manktelow produces an array of insightful and convincing arguments about the influence of missionary families and their experiences on metropolitan theory and practice. A section on missionary wives astutely demonstrates how early negative instances of racial intermarriage encouraged the LMS to promote the role of the British missionary wife, while a chapter on marriage itself shows how women’s home-making in the field precipitated a ‘whole new mission theology based on domesticity and example’ (89). Wives ran sewing schools, cared for sick husbands and, in the case of Mary Moffat, rearranged their kitchens to reflect English styles – all efforts to display ‘proper’ femininity to local women (81). Missionaries’ insistent vocalization of their concerns about children-rearing abroad meanwhile forced the ‘consolidation of missionary families within LMS policy’ (99), including active efforts by the LMS to establish regional schools for missionary children.

Perhaps the most incisive and original chapter in *Missionary Families* deals with the behaviour of children themselves, shedding new light on how parental concern for their offspring’s moral prosperity ‘ultimately increased racialization in missionary discourse’ through fears of racial contamination and contact (81). Missionary children meanwhile expressed their agency by supporting mission activities or engaging in culturally transgressive forms of rebellion. We learn, for example, that in 1829 Samuel Crook and Charles

² These are available at the School of Oriental and African Studies, along with materials relating to missionary societies which operated in the twentieth century, such as the Methodist Missionary Society.

Wilson (Jr) were sent home from their segregated South Seas Academy after engaging in 'native circumcision' rites, while similar scandal abounded when a local man was 'discovered under the bed' of the Rev. David Darling's daughter (167). More than a mere colourful anecdote, this is an important contribution to our understanding of a group often silent in official sources, and deserves close attention.

In short, *Missionary Families* is a convincing reorientation of mission and imperial studies to consider missionary families as key agents in evolving metropolitan theory and practice. Manktelow is right, then, that 'the family can no longer be legitimately ignored in mission history' (6) and her work should be read as a call to arms for historians. There is ample room for scholars to apply this approach in other geographic and institutional contexts, and it is hoped that they will be inspired to demonstrate more widely what Manktelow has shown convincingly in one instance: that 'the family was completely formative in the practice and evolution of mission' (16).

Tanya Stabler Miller, *The Beguines of Medieval Paris: Gender, Patronage, and Spiritual Authority* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 304 pages.
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The medieval beguines were religious communities of women who occupied a space somewhere between the lay and the monastic. As women who chose to pursue religious lives in the world, whilst also often being targets of male scorn, the beguines have become a testing ground in recent years for historians seeking to explore issues of medieval women's agency.¹ Yet the beguines of Paris have gone almost unexamined.² Tanya Stabler Miller therefore makes a

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¹ Juliette Dor et al (eds.), *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liège and their Impact* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Letha Böhringer et al (eds.), *Labels and Libels: Naming Beguines in Northern Medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

² Previous work on Parisian beguines explored the royal beguinage solely as a royal institution, and revealed little about the women. Léon Le Grand, "Les béguines de Paris," *Mémoires de la société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Île de France* 20 (1893), pp. 295-357.