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There is no better focus for inter-cultural contacts of all kinds than overseas Christian missions. Given the very nature of their proselytising ambitions, they were established in the midst of indigenous communities, often on or beyond the frontiers of colonial societies. In such locations, missionaries set about learning the local language both for the purposes of preaching and communication, but also in order to translate the Bible, that central ambition of each newly located mission. But their inter-culturalism went much further than this. Missionaries invariably regarded the transmission of their own cultural norms, what they regarded as elements of 'civilisation', as central to their purposes. These behavioural standards might include, in their eyes, such forms as domestic architecture, the structure of the family (including, of course, monogamy), clothing, aspects of western education and medicine, hygienic practices and 'modesty' in behaviour and demeanour (often represented in anxieties about indigenous music and dance, discussion of sexual and other basic practices, and respect for the Christian god, his representatives and converts). But it was generally impossible for missionaries to be entirely unaffected by the people among whom they had settled. Such people were not passive recipients of the message of the mission. Through their own agency, they also created reciprocal influences upon the white inhabitants of the mission, including various forms of resistance, even producing syncretic religious compromises. Moreover, the missionaries were inevitably sucked into local politics and, indeed, frontier warfare, sometimes conflicts between whites and 'natives' such that their position became a highly dangerous one.

If all this is well known, it is also the case the missions were sites of inter-generational and gendered contact as well as inter-racial. After some initial hesitancy, missionary societies began to realise that the western-style family might itself act as an instrument of conversion, by precept and example, and also through the activities of the various members of a missionary's family. Missionary wives became unofficial and unpaid missionaries themselves with carefully delineated gendered roles – and this was also true of children as they grew up. On the indigenous side, missionaries attempted to create routes into local societies both through the elders and through the children. Above all, women seemed to constitute, through their power over the upbringing of children, an important field for both forms of education (often domestic and practical) and conversion. All such activity provoked extensive debates within the councils of parent missionary societies, as well as among practical missionaries on the ground. But the debates that have been least recognised have been those connected with the family policy to be adopted towards the proselytisers themselves. Should missionaries be married before they entered the field? What should be the arrangements for the education and training

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of the resultant children? Could missions become, in a sense, almost self-sustaining through the eventual employment of those children once they had reached adulthood? Was it indeed possible that such children were themselves more valuable as a result of their rearing within the missionary environment? To what extent had they received a dual socialisation, Christian and western, local and indigenous?

But of course inter-cultural contacts presented threats as well as opportunities. Missionaries could well be led astray, not least by 'sexual opportunity' in a setting of complex and sometimes unequal power relations (in both directions). Their wives and daughters might be seen as highly vulnerable. Above all missionary children, inhabiting as they did a 'grey area' between the two cultures, constituted the very embodiment of just such threats and opportunities. As they grew up, their contacts with indigenous people were often more frequent and 'easier' than those of their parents. They learned the language and in some cases adapted to environmental and social conditions more readily, partly because they had often known no other home. And, of course, all of this was mediated by relations between husbands and wives, between children and parents, and among siblings of both sexes. All sorts of questions were raised. What should be the roles of husbands or of wives in such settings, far from their home societies? How should they behave as fathers and as mothers? How far should they set about building cultural bridges with those whom they were setting out to convert? To what extent should their children be the instruments in such bridge-building? How could they train those children up for the maintenance of the 'civilised' norms they professed, educate them in the learning of their own societies, as well as maintain their adherence to the Christian principles central to their existence as missionaries? Was all of this best achieved at home, in schools in the colonial setting, or by transmission of those children back to the home society, even if only temporarily? And what distinctions should be made between boys and girls?

These are the questions that have not been addressed before. Emily Manktelow does so in this volume by concentrating on the London Missionary Society and on the first half of the nineteenth century when many of these issues were in a state of flux, when policies were being initially formulated. Her book should act as a model for further studies in respect of other societies and further 'spiritual frontiers' (as she calls them). We need to know, for example, the extent to which there were different responses and different results across the continents, or whether policies changed and developed in the course of the nineteenth century. To what extent did the imposition of more formal aspects of imperial rule produce significant changes? Were there any differences among the various Christian denominations or the ethnic origins of the missionaries (in the British case, Scottish or Irish, English or Welsh)? Moreover, as we enter the twentieth century, at a time of very different technologies and transport arrangements, were these relationships and arrangements transformed again? To what extent did the establishment of missionary dynasties, as Manktelow identifies them, ensure that succeeding generations passed through these transformations in conditions? And most

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importantly of all, how did these gendered and generational familial relationships affect the actual conduct of the missions themselves? There is a rich vein of enquiry here and Manktelow has done missionary scholarship a considerable service by opening it up in such an illuminating fashion.

John M. MacKenzie