

Comptes rendus / Book Reviews

Ruth Compton Brouwer — *Modern Women Modernizing Men: The Changing Missions of Three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902–69*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002. Pp. iix, 198.

In *Modern Women Modernizing Men*, Ruth Compton Brouwer discusses women's work, professionalization, and modernization using the lives of Canadian female missionaries Choné Oliver, Florence Murray, and Margaret Wrong as case studies. While the book's title would suggest a broad study, in reality it is focused predominantly on the interwar and immediate postwar periods. Integrating an impressive amount of primary sources and interviews, *Modern Women Modernizing Men* provides an important addition to the historiography on missions and modern feminism.

Brouwer explores how, in a rapidly changing world, Protestant missionary women helped to modernize both the missions and the men involved with them. Brouwer effectively describes the breakdown of the paradigm of men's sphere versus women's sphere, in which women justified their public work in terms of service to women and children. In addition, Brouwer argues that the "changing Western and colonial contexts, and new personal and professional ambitions, coalesced in a modernizing project that allowed (indeed, bade) women like Oliver, Murray, and Wrong to enter work worlds where their colleagues and clients were mainly men" (p. 8). The interwar period opened up a new stage in Western feminism.

Brouwer suggests that in the first half of the twentieth century there emerged a need and desire to respond to a modernizing society. It was a time of increased secularization with changes to professional education in the Western world and numerous nationalist movements in the missionary settings. Hence, a new role and rationale were required for the continuation of missionary work. Simple proselytization would no longer work. In this modernization of the missions, women played an important role.

Using historian Nancy Cott's definition of modern feminism, by which women rejected careers focused only on advancing their own sex, Brouwer makes it clear that the women were "moving away from the women's work for women paradigm" (p. 19). Each of the women's careers is used in the book to illustrate this broad theme. Yet their lives intersected at different times with the slow process of change

undertaken by the international missions. In chapter 2 we learn that in the latter half of Choné Oliver's career the women's work for women paradigm declined. In contrast, the professional ethos was there from the beginning of the careers of both Florence Murray and Margaret Wrong. Murray's medical training, for example, took place in the co-educational Dalhousie University Faculty of Medicine as opposed to a women's medical college.

Oliver, Murray, and Wrong were all successful in modernizing aspects of the missions. They eschewed the separate spheres paradigm, showed a greater openness to "race" relations, and had important relationships with the formal lines of power. Involvement in the bureaucracy of the mission led Oliver to focus on establishing a co-educational medical school for Christian Indians. Murray, on the other hand, exemplified the modern "standards" over "sisterhood" ideal in teaching and practising medicine in interwar and postwar Korea. In Hamhung, Korea, Murray was dedicated to improvement in the practice of Western medicine, and in this realm she was undoubtedly successful. Between 1921 and 1942, the mission hospital increased its capacity from ten beds and two doctors (one Western, one Korean) to 100 beds and at least six Korean doctors. Wrong, as secretary of the International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa, worked to promote the development of literature by African men. Wrong was successful in securing financing for her tours of the sub-Saharan, in encouraging the development of literature in indigenous languages, in calling for regional publishers located in Africa, and in commenting on African women's roles that kept them away from higher education. Together, Oliver, Murray, and Wrong balanced careers that had them working primarily with and, in the case of Wrong, for men and within the shifting contexts in the mission and colonial politics.

Brouwer demonstrates the complexity in the decline of the popular dichotomies of spirituality versus social concern and women's sphere versus men's sphere. Murray, for example, expressed modern values in her insistence that standards take precedence over sisterhood. Yet she continued to adhere to the conventional idea that marriage ended a woman's working career. Further, all three women were aware of women's rights issues, yet still held onto traditional values or were pulled by professional issues into areas that seemed contrary.

The sensitive view to feminism is one of the book's merits. Brouwer highlights the importance of not judging their work with men or their involvement with colonialism in entirely negative terms. There may not have always been a viable "feminist" alternative. Brouwer shows how modern feminism was transformed by professionalization, but continued in the interwar period. One wonders, however, whether the relationship between feminism and the professions was as easy as presented. Historian Regina Morantz-Sanchez argued that the separate spheres paradigm was not entirely negative, especially since the alternative often led to women's exclusion.

Brouwer makes it clear that these are not biographies of the women, but case studies. This method both advances and complicates the book. These women are engaging yet elusive. For example, we learn in the concluding paragraphs in chapter 2 that, while Oliver's public life was dominated by working with men, her private life was largely a world of women. Oliver's personal and professional relationships with women like Dr. Hilda Lazarus, the first woman appointed to the Women's

Medical Service in colonial India, is unexplored. A discussion of that relationship could have helped to show the fallacy of the separate spheres paradigm. It was also puzzling that the details about Wrong's sudden death and that of her long-time companion Margaret Read are mentioned more than once but the significance is not explained.

Given the scope of the project, it is understandable that there are a few unresolved questions. For example, how does this subject fit into the study of post-colonialism? Although references are made to post-colonialist theorists Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, their work has not been readily engaged. In addition, given the continuing debates on gender, a clearer expression of how Brouwer is employing the term would be beneficial. This could also help to establish a stronger analytical relationship between gender and "race".

The greatest difficulty with the book is a lack of clear definition of the term "modernity" and its relationship to gender. The lack of definition raises the question: were the women really the modernizers? At times it seems that the modernization of missions was happening regardless of the women's roles. Brouwer tells us that in Korea, as influences from the West were invading, traditional gender roles were redefined and this affected Murray's view. Thus it would seem that Murray was pulled into the process of modernization without actually being responsible for it. The nuances of modernity are not readily apparent. This confusion arises because Brouwer never clearly defines or discusses how she sees modernity and how it relates to gender issues.

In conclusion, while the book would benefit from clearly defined terms and a more even balance between biographical information and analysis, Brouwer's work will benefit historians interested in gender, foreign missions, and professionalization. It is a well written and highly readable book.

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Callum G. Brown — *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800–2000*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. Pp. xi, 256.

This book epitomizes some of the achievements and limitations of postmodern historiography. With customary acknowledgement of Michel Foucault, Callum Brown deconstructs modernist axioms of the historiography of British secularization (p. 31), especially the proposition that secularization issued gradually from the philosophical effects of the Enlightenment and the social effects of industrialization (pp. 16–34, 176).

Brown evokes the perennial question of whether history develops in a revolutionary, cataclysmic way or in an evolutionary, cumulative manner. Some historians of industrialization, for example, emphasize its long-range origins; some its sudden appearance; and others combine the two approaches. Brown favours revolutionist historiography. His statistical interpretations contradict the judgements of Victorians and