opportunities to women, the introduction of monogamy diminished female autonomy. The net result is ambiguous, challenging attempts to isolate Christianity as a positive or negative force.

As Bowie observes in her introductory essay, this volume is not about point-scoring or missionary-bashing, but rather contextualization; indeed, the strength of this collection lies in its attention to locality. Adrian Hastings presents a more general overview of the African context, suggesting that Christianity ultimately—though not unequivocally—had a liberating impact on African women. Drawing on material from different missionary eras and different parts of Africa, Hastings argues that although the planting of Christianity altered existing sources of female status and security (such that women often resisted the content of mission life and Christian marriage), it has on the whole ‘liberated and elevated’ women. However, while Christianity has benefitted many African women, such broad valuation (positive or negative) begs important questions.

It is this question of female empowerment that most clearly illuminates disciplinary differences between contributors, highlighting the need to problematize and complexify western concepts of autonomy, agency and subjectivity. Indeed, the fact that no superior paradigm nor comprehensive picture emerges in this volume attests to the number of concerns at issue. The contributors demonstrate the utility of combined historical and anthropological methods, thereby calling into question universalizing and essentializing models of social and religious change.

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MILLER, Jon, The Social Control of Religious Zeal: A Study in Organizational Contradictions, New Brunswick, NJ., Rutgers University Press, 1994, xvi, 238 pp., US$ 48.00, 0 8135 2060 6

Books on Christian missions are of many different kinds: biographies of individual missionaries, surveys of particular mission fields, attacks on mission enterprise as an aspect of colonialism, praise of mission enterprise as bringing salvation to the ‘benighted heathen’. These are written from many viewpoints and their writers come from many disciplines. There are few accounts
of the actual workings of missions and mission stations other than official histories by the missions themselves. This sensitive and fine-grained case history of the Evangelical Mission Society of Basel, Switzerland from 1828-1918 both in Europe and in southern Ghana, West Africa (then the Gold Coast) is exceptional in many ways. It is a clearly written, carefully researched and meticulously crafted book by a Weberian sociologist concerned to analyze the often subtle organizational contradictions which beset the Mission from its foundation and to understand how it managed to survive for nearly two centuries despite its travails.

The author is theoretically explicit throughout, brilliantly interweaving Weber’s notions to help in understanding the internal organization of the Basel Mission, the way Pietist beliefs were translated into the organizational framework, and the intended and unintended consequences of the decisions shaped by this structure. He subtly locates the study in the broader sociological literature as well.

Certain themes are explicit. One is the shared Pietist beliefs but the internal social and educational differences among the Mission personnel: on the one hand the mission founders, mostly members of Basel’s social and economic elite plus a few Wurttemberg theologians, who controlled and guided this then-new enterprise of expansion of European civilization; and on the other hand the ordinary missionaries, of a lower social status, mostly from Wurttemberg farming or artisan classes, who were considered most amenable to hierarchical discipline and best equipped to establish replicas of small-scale European ‘economies’ in less favoured parts of the world. The positions of both are clearly demonstrated with demographic and biographic data, as is the consolidation of the position of the elite and the intergenerational upward social mobility of the missionaries. To undergo the rigorous mission training enabled them (and their children) to move up the social ladder, not to its highest rungs but well above their origins. Their wives were usually found for them by the Governing Committee, and most had higher social origins than those of their husbands, a sign of the latters’ success in rising in status. Miller then analyzes matters of discipline and the authority, concentrated in the hands of the elite, to explain how emotional zeal or religious commitment was channelled into disciplined action. He argues that the Basel Mission’s structure itself was an expression of the Pietist message