# Affecting Empathy: Empathy and the Family in the Colonial Missionary World

During the course of the nineteenth century the global missionary movement dispatched thousands of Christian missionaries around the world. Their mission was to convert and to ‘civilise’ – to transform global and colonial subjects into Christian citizens in both legible (the outward performance of Christianity) and illegible (the inner spiritual work of faith) ways. What they did not anticipate was the ‘un-civilisation’ or ‘de-civilisation’ of their own children and families through foreign contact. The ‘deviance’ of missionary children was a constant problem for missionary parents, and one that caused significant heartbreak and anxiety. Missionaries felt that they had failed to inculcate the ‘right social affiliations’ (Stoler) into their children, and as such increasingly turned to educational institutions in situ and back ‘home’ in Britain to undertake that work of socialisation. Increased policing of affectivity involved the inculcation of *empathy rather than affinity*, and this is what this paper will explore.

At the same, however, this paper seeks to move beyond this understanding of ‘right social affiliations’ towards an interaction with the idea of affectivity and in particular affective economies (Ahmed). Missionary children were only one part of an affective economy of juvenile Christianity – one that was created and defined through missionary associations and institutions. While missionary children were literally schooled into what was deemed correct affectivity, Christian children in Britain were jostled into their own Christian subjectivities through missionary publications that mobilised sentimentality to promote empathy with action: affectivity. This paper will thus explore the ways in which Christian children both at home and abroad were socialised into Christian identities and subjectivities that promoted sympathy through distance, and empathy through hierarchy. A colonial Christian subjectivity that both reacted to and reinforced wider British colonial objectives.