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Don S. Browning. *Marriage and Modernization: How Globalization Threatens Marriage and What to Do about It*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. Pp. 258. \$30.00 (Paper).

[1] Don Browning's *Marriage and Modernization* is, first, a comprehensive examination of how globalization impacts modern marriage and, second, a call for interdisciplinary, international, and interreligious dialogue that addresses the challenges of contemporary marriage. Browning's primary argument is that it is absolutely necessary for Christianity and other religions to maintain a key role in effectual interdisciplinary dialogue about marriage and to construct a normative approach to marriage.

[2] Browning maintains that modernization, "the spread throughout the world of technical rationality and its efficiency-oriented and cost-benefit logics and patterns," and globalization, "the process by which information, images, symbols, and styles of life zigzag back and forth across the world," are a threat to the institution of marriage. These processes, he argues, are having disruptive consequences on families in all corners of the earth, and, therefore, the "worldwide revival and reconstruction of marriage" must involve a "complex cultural work" that is religious, political, legal, economic, and psychological. This work does not, however, "pit modernization *against* marriage but will be about having both modernization *and* marriage." Browning notes early on the litany of modern trends (smaller families, women working in the wage economy, more equality between spouses, more education, less control of extended family over the conjugal couple, more divorce, premarital childbirth, and cohabitation, ...) which have been endlessly researched and oft lamented in both the academic and popular press. The bulk of this book, however, does not discuss particulars per se but elaborates upon the assertion that religion is an essential dimension of the new cultural work necessary for the reconstruction of marriage and family. It excavates the philosophies, theologies and cultural meanings that undergird marriage and family and discusses particular issues as a means of illustration and rationale for the practical dialogue he calls for. The main elements that would go into the world practical-theological dialogue as envisioned by Browning are: research and reflection, reformation of marriage traditions, development of a public theology to undergird the public institution of marriage, discussion of work and family issues by state and religious institutions, and marriage education.

[3] Browning describes his perception of the conflict between the "grand coalition of conservative political and religious forces," which emerged during the Reagan presidency and contends that family and marriage be based upon the nineteenth-century model, and progressive political and religious voices and liberal social scientists, inspired in part by the civil rights movement, who proclaim a new theory of family equality that accepts all forms of family. In response to the conflict, he prescribes a discourse ethics, drawn from a range of ethical ideas such as New Testament neighbor-love, the equal-regard ethics of Outka and Janssens, and feminist perspectives of theologians Gudorf and Andolsen, that would implement the notion of "equal regard marriage." To be effective across cultural and social settings, implementation of this proposal would integrate religiocultural symbols.

[4] Browning calls "the growing alienation of males from families, from the children they have fathered, and from the women who have given birth to their offspring" the "male problematic." Christian ethics and symbols have, he argues by way of Aquinas and Luther, worked to integrate fathers into the institution of marriage, enhanced male responsibility, and moderated male domination. Modernization, on the other hand, encourages the worldwide trend for males to drift away from families, and, therefore, the conditions that brought about family formation must be reestablished through the multidimensional task involving economic, political, psychological, and religiocultural perspectives. In a chapter on "Nature and Creation" he rejects, however, Aquinas' Aristotelian biological psychology and unsatisfactory view of women and embraces evolutionary psychology, which is the "least deterministic" in its philosophical assumptions and the "most open to understanding how cultural patterns influence our evolved biological tendencies." He continues by exploring the archaeology of marriage in Judaism, Islam, and Stoic philosophy and claims that "Marriage is a distinctively human affair" that is not just for procreation. "In marriage there must be above all perfect companionship and mutual love." Christian and other religious symbols relevant to marriage make sense, he concludes, because they build upon and transform naturalistic insights into features of male and female sexuality.

[5] Browning's discussion of a practical theology of families includes a variety of perspectives, such as liberal theologies of family, contractualism, relationality, and Roman Catholic personalism. He asserts that Christian values, such as its emphasis on the sacrality of the person, its positive attitude toward both nature and creation, and its high valuation of children and family, leads Christian cultures to celebrate the equal-regard family. He adds, however, that family is a finite, not an ultimate value and that a practical theology of family must develop a "powerful worldwide religiocultural vision that advocates a new critical familism." Invoking Gadamer and Ricoeur, he states this vision would come about through dialogue and analogy. The resultant practical-theological ethics is then described more fully and more specifically in the context of engagement with feminism, family, and global trends and in light of various other philosophical and theological perspectives.

[6] The final two chapters elaborate a world strategy for coping with the ambiguous impact of modernization and globalization. The focus is primarily on educational strategies and the emerging world marriage movement, which currently exhibits a cooperative mood among and an alliance between the sectors of government, market, civil society, and other institutions. Marriage education programs and their theoretical foundations vary, but "they are more alike than different." The challenge, Browning suggests, is for marriage education

to see itself within a larger context and as an important element within a larger cultural work, to which there are many contributors. He is confident that religions, particularly Christianity, have important contributions to make to the revival and reformation of marriage. This will entail fresh interpretations of the great religious symbols of marriage and new interfaith conversation to find analogies that might form a consensus among the world's cultures.

[7] Throughout this book, Browning conducts a scholarly and balanced dialogue with numerous other voices, thereby demonstrating the very analogical and practical dialogue he intends to generate. Browning's critics will agree that modernism and globalization, economic development and education, are the impetus for social change, especially the recontextualization of the institutions of marriage and family, but they will be slower to judge social changes that have and are occurring as problematic. Most will agree though, as Browning implies, that it is the plight of some children in the United States and other countries that deserves immediate attention.

[8] The theme of the book is developed by carefully elaborating on and critiquing the thoughts of many others. This style will be enormously appreciated by fellow academics but could be perplexing to those who are not willing to digest and examine the complexities of both historical and contemporary philosophy, theory, and theology. Although this book will be challenging for readers unfamiliar with current discourse, philosophical, theological, and social-scientific, about marriage and family, Browning's coherent presentation and dynamic movement from one chapter to the next will assist the uninitiated reader.

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