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Wai-ching Angela Wong and Patricia P. K. Chiu, eds. *Christian Women in Chinese Society: The Anglican Story*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018. 292 pp., hardback, US\$60.00, ISBN 9789888455928.

This book is drawn from the fruits of an international conference with the same title, “Christian Women in Chinese Society: The Anglican Story,” which was held at the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, on June 26–27, 2015. Its Chinese volume, edited by Chen Ruiwen and Zhou Shuyan, was also published in 2018 but did not cover the same collection.¹ As a member of the organizing committee and a presenter of this academic conference, I am so fascinated to receive this newly published volume. As an insider of the conference as well as a scholar specializing in women and missions in Chinese Christianities, I share some research directions of the book, which has reflected the present research trends. Influenced by the emerging studies of World Christianities as well as of women in missions in general, the studies of women and missions in Chinese Christianities have made significant progress. Avoiding making a general claim of the work of both women missionaries and native women in China like Jane Hunter, Gael Graham, and Kwok Pui-lan did, current studies have turned more specifically to individuals, mission boards, and regional studies.² This volume has its contributions in outlining some context-specific historical studies of the Anglican-Episcopal evangelistic activities for women in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China, covering the topics of education for girls, ministries by bible-women, debates of the religious orders of women, individual biographies, and social services.

¹ Chen Ruiwen 陳睿文 and Zhou Shuyan 周舒燕, *Shengggonghui xushi: Jidujiao funü yu huaren shehui* 聖公會敘事——基督教婦女與華人社會 (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2018).

² See Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Gael Graham, *Gender, Culture, and Christianity: American Protestant Mission Schools in China, 1880–1930* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); and Kwok Pui-lan, *Chinese Women and Christianity, 1860–1927* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar Press, 1992).

Among these topics, the witness and controversy of the ordination of women in China/Hong Kong are most striking to its potential audience. The expedient ordination (1944) of Florence Tim-oi Li in South China during the Second World War period and that of the first two women priests in Hong Kong, Jane Hsien-yun Hwang and Joyce Bennett, let South China and Hong Kong play a pioneering role in envisioning women's getting equality and full participation in the World Anglican communion.³ By reconstructing Li's ordination and ministry, Philip Wickeri pinpoints that Li wrote about women's exclusion from the ordination in her correspondence to her best friend and the pioneer deaconess Lucy Vincent. At that time, Li was facing strong objection to her ordination from Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui (CHSKH, a.k.a., The Holy Catholic Church of China or the Anglican Church of China) House of Bishops.⁴ Wai-ching Angela Wong traces back the "Chinese factors" in Hong Kong which altogether made women's ordination possible, such as pragmatism, lack of priests, bicultural dynamic, and the reformist spirit of two British bishops, R. O. Hall and Gibert Baker. Additionally, Peter Cunich examines the reluctance of the CHSKH to ordain deaconesses after the Lambeth's opening up the religious order for women in 1920. Only open-minded bishops of Fujian and Guangxi-Hunan, John Hind and John Holden respectively, first started to ordain deaconesses in their dioceses. Indeed, the CHSKH, in general, was not well prepared to admit women's leadership and hiddenly shared the traditional male-dominated culture of both the Chinese and the Church.

In addition to the chapters on religious order, in this book review, I mainly reflect on the historiography that the authors have drawn in this anthology, and see how this shares with other current scholarship on women and missions in Chinese Christianities. Firstly, this collection only shows some fragmentary histories of Anglican women in Chinese Christianities, but not a comprehensive one. Though its subtitle says, "The Anglican Story," it does not aim at presenting a comprehensive story, but only "partial stories." Owing to the inadequacy of available materials on women missionaries and Chinese women, it is difficult to portray the overall picture of Anglican missions to women in China, which covers the six mission boards (arrived during 1835–1907), the

³ Kwok Pui-lan, "The Study of Chinese Women and the Anglican Church in Cross-Cultural Perspective," in *Christian Women in Chinese Society*, 28–30; Wai-ching Angela Wong, "A Distinctive Chinese Contribution: The Ordination of the First Five Women Priests in Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui," in *Christian Women in Chinese Society*, 149.

⁴ Philip L. Wickeri, "The Ordination and Ministry of Li Tim Oi: A Historical Perspective on a Singular Event," in *Christian Women in Chinese Society*, 117–18.

united constitution of the CHSKH in 1912, and Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui nowadays.⁵ For example, the title of Duan Qi's chapter hints that the reports of the first three conferences of the CHSKH's Women's Missionary Service League are missing.⁶ Thus the summary of its ministry is only limited to the 1930s and the 1940s. Besides, the tendency of presenting some selective personal biographies in this volume and of conducting studies of women and missions, in general, shows our limitation in examining the whole picture. To break from the invisibility of women in the church, we can only construct selective personal biographies, like the Wolfe sisters in Fuzhou, Zhan Aimei, and Kuo Siu-may (Guo Xiumei, 1914–1995),⁷ wife of the prominent Three-Self Church leader—Bishop K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun, 1915–2012). Interestingly, materials of individual stories are not drawn from the church archives only. In this volume, at least three authors of the anthology, Judith Liu, Frances Slater, and Jennifer Lin, got significant resources from their senior relatives. Precious family records are significant sources for supplying additional information in order to restore the visibility of women in the church.

Lastly, I raise a historiographical critique on the so-called openness to women in China and particularly in Canton from an oft-quoted text by Bishop Hall.⁸ The chapters by Kwok, Wickeri, and Wong have all cited this passage:

I do not think that we need to be surprised that the ordination of women to the ministry of our China should come first in China; nor surprised

⁵ According to Philip L. Wickeri, the Anglican-Episcopal mission boards to China included the American Protestant Episcopal Church (arrived in 1835), the Church Missionary Society (came to China in the 1840s), the Church of England's Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (arrived in 1863), the Church of England Zenana Mission Society (began work in 1884), the Dublin University Mission (arrived in 1887) and the Church of England in Canada (arrived in 1907). Philip L. Wickeri, "Introduction," in *Christian Encounters with Chinese Culture: Essays on Anglican and Episcopal History in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 4–7, 9.

⁶ Duan Qi, "A Study of the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui Women's Missionary Service League in the 1930s and 1940s: Drawn from Reports of the Fourth to Seventh WMSL Conferences," in *Christian Women in Chinese Society*, 225.

⁷ Frances Slater, "The Wolfe Sisters of Foochow, China: Born to Evangelize," in *Christian Women in Chinese Society*, 157–81; Jennifer R. Lin, "Zhan Aimei (1874–1943): An Ordinary Woman in Extraordinary Times," in *Christian Women in Chinese Society*, 183–200; Chen Ruiwen, "The Social Contributions of a Chinese Anglican Woman Intellectual: The Life and Work of Kuo Siu-may," in *Christian Women in Chinese Society*, 201–22.

⁸ See also Wu Qing 吳青, *He Minghua yu Zhongguo guanxi zhi yanjiu* 何明華與中國關係之研究 [Study of Bishop R. O. Hall and his Relationship with China] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2017), 103.

that it should be a Cantonese bishop,⁹ caring for the spiritual needs of the Cantonese people, who took the first step ... In many ways, Christianity has brought new freedom and opportunity for women in China, but Chinese civilization has always given a higher place to women both in culture and social life than any other civilization apart from Christianity. Then in China, the Cantonese people has a unique position—combining energy and ability. Little wonder then that God should have used China's old culture and Cantonese progressiveness to prepare a woman to be called by Christ to his Ministry.¹⁰

In this oft-quoted text, what message did/does it deliver? On the one hand, what relevancy did this rhetoric persuasion in 1946 function for Hall when the ordination of Florence Li was criticized and challenged? On the other hand, what function and implication does it have as it is cited by three different authors in the same volume today? As a former advisee, I surely believe that all these three senior scholars uphold a critical scholarship. Both Wickeri and Wong are aware of the controversy over women's status in China including Canton.¹¹ However, for a worldwide circulation, it is dangerous to let our transnational audience get a wrong impression of Bishop Hall's address. Indeed, it is hard to corroborate Hall's true intention in historical reality. Perhaps, this text further delivers a message of two heroes—the Chinese Bishop Mok Shau-tsang and the British Bishop R. O. Hall—who contributed to the ordination of women, or a message of a naïve British bishop seeing all positive things in China. Or, this oft-quoted text only reflects the scarcity of sources in restoring the complicated context of the controversial ordination of Florence Li.

Wai-yin Christina WONG 黃慧賢

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

⁹ The "Cantonese bishop" mentioned here is Mok Shau-tsang 莫壽增 (1866–1943), who allowed Florence Li for the first time to celebrate the Eucharist.

¹⁰ Bishop Hall delivered this address to the Diocesan Synod in 1946 in order to justify the ordination of Li in 1944. Bishop Hall's Address to the Diocesan Synod, May 1946, Bishop's House Archive, cited in Kwok, "The Study of Chinese Women," 30; Wickeri, "The Ordination and Ministry of Li Tim Oi," 112–13; and Wong, "A Distinctive Chinese Contributions," 133–34.

¹¹ Wickeri, "The Ordination and Ministry of Li Tim Oi," 113; Wong, "A Distinctive Chinese Contributions," 134–35.