

Catholic virgins and Protestant single female missionaries

—The comparison of two types of Christian single females

KANG Zhiji

(Professor, Department of Politics, Hubei University, 430062 Wuhan, China)

Abstract: Two kinds of single females within the church, Catholic virgins and Protestant single female missionaries, share many similarities. They both work for the church and are actively involved in many aspects of social services and public welfares, such as medicine, education and all kinds of public welfares. In contrast to the Protestant single female missionaries, instead of going to church, Catholic virgins tend to stay at home or gather in small groups, while Protestant single female missionaries have more flexible choices in life. Additionally, their celibary status could change. This paper analyzes the roles of two female groups and their important contributions in Chinese society through their titles, lifestyle, work characteristics and many other aspects.

Key words: Catholic, virgins, Protestant single female missionaries, Comparison

Author: KANG Zhiji, Professor of Department of Politics, Hubei University, 430062 Wuhan, China.
Email: kajwh@hotmail.com

Catholic virgins are single Christian women who stay at home and do not attend church. Some of the Protestant female missionaries are single as well. Although both groups of Christian women share similar religious background, many differences exist in their perspective on chastity, life and work.

1. Summary

Catholic chastity system began in Roman era and was brought into China again at the end of the Ming dynasty. Many religious female chastity and took the responsibility of serving the church. Since European nun had not entered into China before the Opium War, Catholic virgins were actually playing the role of nuns. They worked for the church, involved in different types of public welfare, and made important contributions to the promotion and development of the church.

The way of Protestant single female missionaries entering China was very different from that of the Catholic virgins. Protestants, who separated from the Roman Catholic Church during the reformation in the 16th century religious reform, broke the tradition of celibacy in religious professions and established a church management system in the secular society that is based on equality and freedom. Therefore, many missionaries who came to China in the modern times brought along their families; and such practice set an example for their followers. As the missionary work progressed, women gradually started participating in the missions; and various female mission agencies started budding.

American Protestant societies were a vital force in the Chinese missionary work. Based on their understanding of the Chinese society, the Protestant missionaries found that female missionaries played an important role in the missionary work. "As early as 1890, women constituted 60 percent of missionary volunteers and proved to be a particularly persuasive voice in disseminating American influence in China."^①

① Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility, American Women Missionary in Turn-of-the-Century China*, (Yale University Press New Haven and London, 1984), 3

“Pure Women Awareness” appeared in the United State in the 19th century and included four aspects: piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. ②Piety is the most important virtue of women and is considered as the source of vitality. The pure image, submissiveness to the patriarchal leadership and care for domesticity are merely the manifestation of piety virtue. Indoctrinating Chinese women with “Pure Women Awareness” through practice among female Christians was unique to the work of American Episcopal Church female missionaries.

The Baptist church was very active among evangelism of different missionary sects in China. In 1894, “Four missionaries came to China. They were Miss Lottie W. Price, Miss Willie H. Kelly, Miss Julia K. Mackenzie and Mr. W. W. Lawton. Miss Lottie W. Price and Miss Willie H. Kelly worked at the Shanghai Chapel and spread the Gospel to visiting families. They also opened a girls school in 1897, known as ‘Lady’. Due to the dedication and hard work of the founders and their successors, the school became the Eliza Yutes Academy for Girls.” ③The female missionaries who worked at the girls’ schools played an important role in disseminating western culture and religion and social science.

Among its many religious activities and goals, establishing female missionary organization was a critical strategy of the Baptist church. “The first female missionary society was Shanghai Lao Bei Men Baptist Organization (上海北老门浸会), which consisted of five female followers in 1895. Soon thereafter, other churches followed suit, and the female missionary Organizations appeared across the central sermon district.” ④

Subsequently, some female missionary organizations appeared in Guangdong, Guangxi and Shandong as well. Baptist Single female missionary was the backbone of the female missionary Organization, and their high level of cultural knowledge and strong organizational ability won the support of many believers.

Lutheran missionaries in China also made striking achievements by leveraging the strengths of the female missionaries. Henan Zhengyang (正阳) Lutheran Church is a great example. “Lutheran Church entered Zhengyang, since Qing Guangxu dynasty, year twenty eight---Republic of China, year three, there were female missionaries: Lanying Sang (桑兰英), Cengxin Ye (叶更信), Meitai Guo (郭梅泰), the number of believers was increasing every day---”. ⑤

Protestant missionary organizations that entered China in the modern period also made important contributions in encouraging female participation in the church and missionary activities. There were female preachers, deaconesses and female clerks. Most of the volunteers in the church were female, and they took upon themselves most of the work in the church, such as preaching, visiting, teaching, cleaning, etc. Nevertheless, women’s status in the church service was still lower than men. ⑥

Before the War of resistance Against Japan, Anglican Church ordained the first Chinese female

② See 林美成 Lin Meimei 主编,《妇女与宗教:跨文化领域的视野》*Fund yu zongjiao: Kua wenhua lingyu de shiyue* [Women and religions: interdisciplinary scopes, methods and approaches], (台北Taipei: 财团法人弘道社 2003), 40.

③ Lila Watson ed., *Brief Historical Sketches of Baptist Missions in China 1836-1936*, (Hong Kong: Baptist Press, 1936), 67.

④ Ibid., 74.

⑤ 魏松声 Wei Songsheng 等编纂,《中国方志丛书·华北地方·第一二二二号,《河南省正阳县志》(一), *Zhongguo Fangzhicongshu - Huabei difang - di yibaiershiwan hao, Henan sheng Zhengyang xianzhi, yi* [Chinese local chronicles series of north area, No. 123, Zhengyang local records of Henan province, part 1; it was edited by Wei Songsheng in the Republic period and was printed in 1936], (台湾 Taiwan: 成文出版社 Chengwen chubanshe, 1968), 320-321.

⑥ See 林德培 Lin Depei, 姜永安 Mei Yung-an 主编,《中国教会中妇女的情况》*Zhongguo jiaohui zhong furen de jingkuang* [The Situation of Women in Chinese Church], (世界信义宗联合会出版 Shijie xinyizonglianhui chubanshe [Lutheran World Federation Press], 1997), 83.

pastor Li Tin' ai (李天爰). Since female priests were rare until 1949, a large number of female missionaries played an important role in missionary work. They "should not get married, because they should be totally dedicated".^⑦ Although female preachers had lower wages than their male counterparts, could not be ordained, and was not allowed to be in charge of the sacrament, the performance of the female missionaries showed the characteristics of independence. They gained the respect, love and esteem from many believers because of their self - esteem, self - respect, independence and self - reliance.

2. Various names and titles of virgins and female missionaries

Catholic virgins had various titles, such as "zhennü (chaste women), xiaozhen (small chaste [women]), tongzhen tongshen or tongzhenshen (virgins)",^⑧ also known as "zhujiadi, guniang, gutaitai, auntie, etc.".^⑨ Similarly, the Chinese society also had some corresponding titles for the female Christian missionaries. Comparing to the Catholic virgins, the Protestant single female missionaries had simpler titles. The most common one was "guniang" (姑娘) or "miss".

For example, towards the end of the Qing dynasty, in Shangyuan town 上元 (Jiangning district 江宁): "A large American hospital was built in Houjiaqiao in the city. A new female practitioner, Miss Heng, helped with the diagnosis and treatment of women diseases."^⑩ "In the Ganheyan American Christ Church lived clergy Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson from the Methodist Episcopal Church with two children and teacher Miss Sha."^⑪ In Jinhua town, "American clergy women, Miss Lai and Miss Rong, lived on the west side. They bought land, built house and set up classes by themselves."^⑫ Chinese archives records is quite a few about female missionaries, this need not.

In the curly stage of missions, most of single female missionaries in China were westerners. Generally those who were called Miss were unmarried. For example, there was a female missionary Miss Jin, who was in charge of a school in Wu town Jiangsu province (江苏吴县). The school had

⑦ *Ibid.*, 83

⑧ Eugenio Menegon; "Child Bodies, Blessed Bodies; The Contest Between Christian Virginity and Confucian Chastity". *Men, Women, and Gender in Early and Late Imperial China*, 6.2., (Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands, 2004), 229.

⑨ See: R. C. Tiedemann, "Controlling the Virgins: female propagators of the faith and the Catholic hierarchy in china", *Women's History Review*, Vol. 17, N. 4, September 2008, 502.

⑩ 台湾中央研究院近代史研究所编并出版 *Taiwan zhongyuan yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo bian bing chubian* [Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica in Taiwan compiled and pressed], 《教务档案档》第六辑(二) *Jiawu jianwen dang di liu ji er* [Archives of Church affairs and Anti-christian case, The 6th volume, part 2], (台湾 Taiwan: 光绪二十二年 - 光绪二十五年 *Guangxu er shi er nian - guangxu er shi wu nian* [Guangxu year 22 to Guangxu year 25], 1981), 855.

⑪ 台湾中央研究院近代史研究所编并出版 *Taiwan zhongyuan yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo bian bing chubian* [Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica in Taiwan compiled and pressed], 《教务档案档》第六辑(二) *Jiawu jianwen dang di liu ji er* [Archives of Church affairs and Anti-christian case, The 6th volume, part 2], (台湾 Taiwan: 光绪二十二年 - 光绪二十五年 *Guangxu er shi er nian - guangxu er shi wu nian* [Guangxu year 22 to Guangxu year 25], 1981), 785.

⑫ 台湾中央研究院近代史研究所编并出版 *Taiwan zhongyuan yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo bian bing chubian* [Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica in Taiwan compiled and pressed], 《教务档案档》第五辑(二) *Jiawu jianwen dang di wu ji er* [Archives of Church affairs and Anti-christian case, The 5th volume, part 2], (台湾 Taiwan: 光绪二十二年 - 光绪二十一年 *Guangxu er shi er nian - guangxu er shi yi nian* [Guangxu year 22 to Guangxu year 21], 1981), 1813.

its door facing north and four Chinese – style rooms. ⑭

The Methodist church female missionaries were very active in Guangdong. Running girls school was the main emphasis of their work. “In 1863, Miss Broxholme arrived in Canton...Three years later, June Radcliffe joined the faculty.” ⑮ These missionary ladies made important contributions to modern women education in China.

Annie Skau Bernitsen (Chinese name: 司务道) was a missionary of the China Inland Mission. She stayed single in her whole life for missionary work. She used to preach in the northwest China. The local children friendly referred to her as “Aunt Priest” or “Auntie Priest”. ⑯

Female missionaries in northern Taiwan were called “young girls” (姑娘仔). The requirement to obtain this qualification was that they “were single or unmarried, had a strong and mature faith in Christ, were healthy, educated, mature and balanced emotionally, and had large tolerance to other cultures and religions. Among them, the ‘educated’ referred to those who preferably had bachelor degrees, ‘had a teaching license’, or at least had completed the classes in ‘Missionary and Deaconess Training School’. But in fact only one third of the girls met the above requirements.” ⑰

In general, single female Protestant missionaries from Europe and America could be called “girl” or “Miss”; but those single missionaries who were in China were mainly called “girl” (Most of single female Protestant missionaries from China’s local could be called “Gu niang”. One important work of the European and American female missionaries in China was training single women who were dedicated to the missionary career, which was similar to the training of virgins by Catholic female missionaries from Europe and America. As a result of the training program, a large number of female missionary agencies appeared all over the country, a majority of which were agencies for young Chinese female Christians.

3. Life style

As soon as Catholic virgins decided to live a chaste life, they must take a vow of celibacy. Protestant female missionaries could stay single but could also exit their single life as long as they find an appropriate life partner. For example, American Episcopal Church female missionary Aizhen Tang (汤爱珍) married missionary Aili Tang in 1861. As an American Episcopal Church

⑭ 台湾中央研究院近代史研究所编并出版 *Taiwan zhongyuan yanjijuyuan jindai shi yanjiusuo bian bing chubian* [Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica in Taiwan compiled and pressed], 《教务档案档》第六辑(二) *Jiawu jianwen dang di liu ji er* [Archives of Church affairs and Anti-christian case, The 6th volume, part 2], (台湾 Taiwan: 光绪二十二年 – 光绪二十五年 *Guangxu er shi er nian – guangxu er shi wu nian* [Guangxu year 22. to Guangxu year 25], 1981), 881.

⑮ See John Rose, “Being an Account of the First Hundred Years of the Methodist Church in South China (1851 – 1951)”, in Yeung Lam, eds., *A Church born to suffer* (The Methodist Church, Hong Kong, 1984), 46.

⑯ Annie Skau Bernitsen, *Trails of Glad Tiding in Shan Xi—An Autobiography of Sister Annie Skau Bernitsen*, (Beijing Gospel missions of Hongkong Beiling Hospital, the 9th edition, 2004), 62, 159. Sister Annie Skau Bernitsen was born in Norway in 1911, May, 29th. She started to learn nursing after graduation from middle school. She was trained at England London island mission during October of 1937 to June of 1938. She came to China to preach in 1938 mainly in the area at the southern part of Shanxi province, including Shuangcun, Shuangyang (山阳), Luonan (洛南), Shuangnan (商南) and Luojiazhai (龙沟寨).

⑰ 恩郑御 Zheng Yangyu, 《信仰的启蒙文化? 英国和加拿大长老会在台宣教初期工作之探讨》 *Xinyang de qimeng wenhua? Yingguo he Jiaoda zhanglaohui zhinai shuangjiao chuqi gongzuo zhi tantao* | Enlightening culture of faith? The discussion of English and Canadian Presbyterians’ preaching work of initial stage at Taiwan |, 王成勉 Wang Chengmian 主编: 《扎根扎好——基督宗教在华教育的检讨》 *Jiagou zhajiao——Jidujiaozhuo zhuhan jiaoyu de jiantao* [Setting the Roots Right – Christian Education in China and Taiwan], (台湾 Taiwan, 台湾黎明文化事业股份有限公司 Taiwan黎明文化事业股份有限公司) [Taiwan黎明 cultural undertakings limited liability company, 2007], 368.

female missionary, she represented and symbolized the transformation in identity from a single teacher to a missionary's wife.

Consequently, there emerged two types of the Protestant female missionaries: "wife of the teacher type", the wife of missionaries who came to China or "single type", the unmarried young women. The single women who decided to dedicate their life to missionary work were usually influenced by their family background. Single female missionary from China Inland Mission, Annie Skau Berntsen (Wudao Si), was an excellent representative of them.

Performing the missionary works, the "wife of the teacher" type and the "single type" often cooperated. For example, "In Shangyuan town (上元县), there was a big American Jesus Church, where lived the wife of the missionary Di from the American missionary and 'girl' Yao who was in charge of the girls school."^⑧

In Guangxu Year 19 of the Qing Dynasty, a large American Christian Church in Shangyuan was home to missionaries from American Presbyterian Church, Mr. and Mrs. Man Li, Mr and Mrs. Wende Dong (董文德夫妇), Mr. and Mrs. Zichun He (贺子椿夫妇), the wife of missionary Li, girl Mei (关姑娘) and girl Ren (任姑娘). All of them were doing the missionary work. There was a school in the church with more than 20 boys and taught by Chinese teachers.^⑨ This was the mission branch in Shangyuan town. Single female missionaries and missionary families often worked together, which increased the flexibility of the missionary activities.

The Baptist Church is one of those churches that have a significant amount of single female missionaries. Therefore, single female missionary Miss Lila Watson (Chinese name: Leli Wu 吴立乐)'s book *100 years history of Baptist missionary in China (1836 - 1936)* gave the female missionaries their much-deserved social status. The book recorded many stories of the female missionaries, and many of these recorded the cooperation between the single female missionaries and the wives of missionaries. For example, Miss Lulu Whilden was the daughter of a Cantonese missionary. After completing her education in the U. S., she came back to Guangzhou and began preaching, teaching and visiting families in 1872. She founded MuGuang Blind Hospital, which treated the blind people, especially women. After 42 years of loyal and diligent work, she returned to the U. S. due to health reasons and passed away in South Carolina. After she left Guangzhou, the wife of missionary Haobi Ji (Mrs. Janie I. Graves) continued running the hospital.^⑩

The secular meaning of the Reformation was that celibacy was no longer considered as a sacred way of life. Therefore, devout followers no longer desired for celibacy. Basically, celibacy of the Protestant female missionaries was never due to the constraints of religion. They were free to choose to stay single or get married. For example, Miss Yimei Rong (Miss Emma Young, 容懿美) from Baptist Church came to China in 1883, founded Peidao Girls' School (培道女校), and went back to her home country to get married. Miss Bo (Miss Carrie Bostick) took over her job and served as

⑧ 台湾中央研究院近代史研究所编并出版 *Taiwan zhongguang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo bian bing chuban* [Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica in Taiwan compiled and pressed], 《教务教案档》第七辑(二) *Jiaowu jiaowan dang di qi ji er* [Archives of Church affairs and Anti-christian case, The 7th volume, part 2], (台湾 Taiwan: 光绪二十六年 - 宣统二年 *Guangxu er shi er nian - xuan tong san nian* | Guangxu year 22 to Xuantong year 3 |, 1981), 625.

⑨ 台湾中央研究院近代史研究所编并出版 *Taiwan zhongguang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo bian bing chuban* [Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica in Taiwan compiled and pressed], 《教务教案档》第五辑(二) *Jiaowu jiaowan dang di wu ji er* [Archives of Church affairs and Anti-christian case, The 5th volume, part 2], (台湾 Taiwan: 光绪十一年 - 光绪二十一年 *Guangxu shi yi nian - guang xu er shi yi nian* | Guangxu year 13 to Guangxu year 21 |, 1981), 844.

⑩ See Lila Watson's *Brief Historical Sketches of Baptist Missions in China 1836 - 1936*, (Hong Kong: Baptist Press, 1936), 15 -

the principal of the school. ②

The life of single female missionaries was very flexible. They often worked with missionary couples. If they met the right partner, they would also start a family. If so, the “girl” title would no longer be used. In the English expression, a single female missionary was called Miss and then Mrs. after being married. This kind of transformation of title was frequently recorded in Protestant literature (This transformation had been mostly recorded in Protestant literature and Chinese documents (such as Archives of Church affairs and Anti-Christian case), here do not add repeat explains.)

Why did some of the single female missionaries finally choose the married life? The secret was that their standard partner of life was the male missionary. Hence, most wives of the missionaries in the 19th century had ambitions of missionary work overseas before they found their loved ones among their missionary partners. “The time sequence of working first and marrying later proves that they all have dreams of their careers.” ③ Therefore, many single female turned to wives of missionaries and helped their husbands’ work.

On the contrary, the Catholic virgins were different. Once they took the vow of celibacy, they were in covenant with God and would live according to the rules of virgins. Thus virgins needed to wear costumes and certain hairstyle and accessories in order to identify themselves. There was no dress code for Protestant female missionaries. Their status could be changed from single to married. They might step into the marriage hall one day and exit the single life. In general, the higher the degree of secularization, the less meaningful of the dress code in identification. Vice versa, the more strict and systematic the religion is, the more stringent the dress code is.

4. Service and dedication

Developing missionary work among women in China was a common feature of all Protestant missionary society. “American missionaries who came to China in the early times found the importance of female’s work in their career. While the single females started joining missionary work only after civil war, the work of the Chinese females had a continuous plan. The separation of different sex in China prohibited half of the population from missionary work.” ④

Training Chinese female followers was the goal of European and American missionaries. For example, “Miss Willie H. Kelly of the Baptist church offered women Bible reading class in Shanghai Laobaimen Baptist Church and trained a number of female preachers.” ⑤ They also founded a Bible study school where the most of the members were women from poor family. Under the leadership of female preachers, “Christian female members visited the sick and elders, taught classes in day school and catechist school, organized Bible reading classes, set up the altar, joined choirs, etc.” ⑥ The methods and style of work were the same as the European and American sisters training Chinese virgins.

② See Lila Watson eds., *Brief Historical Sketches of Baptist Missions in China 1836-1936*, (Hong Kong: Baptist Press, 1936), 16.

③ Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Thought and Practice*. (Macan University, 1997), 19-21. See 梁家麟 Liang Jialin, 《华人传道与复兴布道家》Huaren chuandao yu fuxing budayia | Evangelists And Revivalists Of Modern China |, (香港 Hong Kong: 益恒出版社 Xuandao chubanshe | Alliance Bible Seminary |, 1999), 引言 yinyan | Preface |.

④ Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility, American Women Missionary in Turn of the Century China*, (Yale University Press New Haven and London, 1984), 11.

⑤ Lila Watson eds., *Brief Historical Sketches of Baptist Missions in China 1836-1936*, (Hong Kong: Baptist Press, 1936), 75.

⑥ Jessie G. Lutz, *Women and Gender China*, (Lough University, 2010), 20.

Under the leadership of female missionaries, it was very common for the Christians to participate in charity works. In Mei Town (梅县), Guangdong Province, "Baptist female organization donated a large amount of money to relieve the local residents as well residents from other towns suffering from natural disasters and famine."^⑤ Catholic sisters and virgins often had the same responsibilities in the charity works.

Coming from the two major sects of Christianity, Catholic single women (nuns, virgins) and Christian female missionaries shared many similarities in working ethics and methods. The main audience of their work was women, and the goal is to gradually change the social status of the Chinese women. "The church used a single - dimension image of the female figures in the Bible as the example and asked the female members in the church to follow the example, hence making them 'obedient, humble, loyal and cooperative.'"^⑥ The difference is that Protestant single female missionary's residence was often attached to the church with schools and clinics (or hospitals). They used school and hospital as a medium to conduct missionary work individually. Therefore, "an important influence that female missionaries brought onto their Chinese followers was a clear image of professional women."^⑦ Protestant female missionaries paid more attention to building community school in addition to Bible school. In contrast, virgins provided the children with theological training which often lacked social and universal applicability. In addition, the Catholic single females were further divided into two groups, nuns and virgins, who had clear division in labor, responsibilities and roles.

For female missionaries, "religious devotion is one way for women to get rid of the shackles of family and social bondage."^⑧ Therefore, their work in the secular society is very versatile, such as advocating emancipation of women, fighting against foot-binding and infanticide, etc. Compared with Protestant female missionaries, the virgins often lived in relatively small spaces; consequently, the focus of their work was almost always in the church. After forming religious groups, virgins started trans-regional missions and social services. (Such as Hien-tan-hoci in Shanghai diocese, established by French Society of Jesus. The original name is *Présentandines*. The Chinese meanings: "xian" means "offering", "tang" means "altar", "hui" means "congregation").

Chinese Catholic virgins began to appear at the end of Ming dynasty, but their belief and lifestyle were difficult for the traditional Chinese society to accept. After the prohibition of religion in the middle of Qing dynasty, this group was transformed into an influential group. Each diocese established and managed local Sisters in modern China, with the major human resources being the virgins who stayed at home. When Christian Protestant female missionaries entered China, the environment was relative open. The project of educating local female missionary led to a new force of female missionary team. The female missionary society and women's aid society found near the end of the Qing dynasty proved that the Christian Protestant growth was already rapid and influential, and one of the most important contributing forces was the female missionary, especially those single female missionary.

Through their hard work, two groups of female women with very similar faiths have left their mark on the history of China. However, due to the differences that existing in church structures and theological doctrines, there are many differences between these two types of religious single women's

⑤ Lila Watson eds; *Brief Historical Sketches of Baptist Missions in China 1836-1936*, (Hong Kong: Baptist, 1936), 51-52.

⑥ Angela, Wong, *Gender consciousness and biblical interpretation*, (Hong Kong, Hong Kong Christian Institute, 2000), 150.

⑦ See: 梁家麟 Liang Jialin, 《华人传道与奋兴宗道家》*Harvest evangelists and revivalists of Modern China*, (香港 Hong Kong: 青洲出版社 Kwongshun chubanshe [Alliance Bible Seminary], 1999), 104.

⑧ *Ibid.*, 109.

s and the roles each played in the Chinese society. Unfortunately, the Catholic virgins and Protestant single female missionary almost never cooperated during their times. Had they been able to participate in friendly cooperation in social services and other activities, each would definitely be able to complement one another and perhaps the history of Chinese Christianity would be richer.

中文题目:

天主教贞女与基督新教单身女传道:两种基督宗教独身女性的比较

康志杰

湖北大学政治系教授,430062 武汉,中国

电子信箱:kzjwh@hotmail.com

提要: 在基督宗教中,有两类独身女性十分相近,她们是天主教贞女和新教单身女传道。两者的共同特点是为教会工作,并积极参与社会的医疗、教育以及各类公益事业;不同的是:天主教贞女在家守贞(或结为小的团体),不进入修会;新教女传道士的人生选择则较有弹性,独身的身份可以转变。本文通过称谓、生活模式、工作特点等多个侧面,分析两个女性团体在中国社会所扮演的角色以及做出的重要贡献。

关键词: 天主教、贞女、新教单身女传道、比较

