

Book

***Discovering Hong Kong's Religious Transition(1981-2017): Evangelical
Contextual Theology and Church-State Relationship***
(Hong Kong: Thydom, 2018)

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An Introduction by Author

In my knowledge this book is the first of its kind in Chinese related to a theological discipline of contextual in general and political in particular, and my suggestion of “**biblical exegesis in historical verification**”(last page of the book) might serve as an innovative-theological methodology, because it is an inter-discipline of **Hermeneutics** and **Historical Theology** to explore the biblical truth, integrating the biblical sayings with 2000 years of historical (church) events in the Post-Biblical World as “double” verification (Scriptural with historical “proof-text”).

This book is originally extended from **my PhD dissertation as the following English briefing**. The book adds the all new Part Four (第四部分：政教關係在俗世處境下需要聖經回歸·頁 235-385) which is the result of my sabbatical study of “Church-State Relationship” in the Bible with an in-depth study of the Old Testament and of all the major “political passages” in the New Testament, comprising the book’s chapter 9-12 (see the Chinese Contents) with 150 pages of my total
~ 400 pages writing.

Dissertation

***A Contextual-Social Study of Hong Kong Evangelical Theology (1982-1997)
towards "Theology of 1997":
With a Critical Reflection from Its Roots in
Holiness - Revival Movement***

香港福音派「九七神學」的「本色—處境—社關」整合研究（1982年至1997年）----
結合香港福音派的「聖潔奮興運動」根源加深研思

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Abstract 1

A Contextual-Social Study of Hong Kong Evangelical Theology (1982-1997) towards “Theology of 1997”: With a Critical Reflection from Its Roots in Holiness - Revival Movement

This research is the first of its kind which is a comprehensive exploration of Hong Kong Evangelicals (HKEs) in doing the “Theology of 1997” during the foundational period of 1982 to 1997.

Although HKEs had long been emphasizing Biblical faith but neglecting the contextualization of Biblical faith, they were accidently given a chance to do theological breakthrough while facing the crisis emerging from 1997. This historical period has been a valuable lesson worthy of a holistic study.

The methodology of this research is exegetical, social and historical. Since the essential terms of HKEs, contextualization and “Theology of 1997” have been frequently used by Chinese Christians but with problematic understanding. They will be carefully studied in here by all means, such as: Evangelicalism in general and Holiness-Revivalism in particular about the origin of HKEs, contextualization as well as indigenization in both western and local theological discussions, social-political and religious issues related to 1997 of Hong Kong and their theological implication. All these contextual findings are integrated into critical reflections and with some proposed solutions.

The above findings are of significance to HKEs and to global Chinese churches as well. First, HKEs should be historically defined as the second phrase denominations (compared with Mainline churches as the first phrase) and its majority are from the American Holiness - Revival Movement. This movement was originally a social holiness movement through evangelism, social service and social action to the poor and to the oppressed. As HKEs and global Chinese churches have been mostly middle class today, they are capable enough to revive this tradition in praxis which has been neglected. Secondly, 1997 issues can facilitate the doing of HKEs’ political theology in the uniqueness of Hong Kong context, without the “must” to follow those political theologies of the West. An evangelical dimension about “Theology of 1997” in this study is essential, especially for the post-1997 Christian witnesses in Hong Kong and China.

Abstract 2 (*extended*)

A Contextual-Social Study of Hong Kong Evangelical Theology (1982-1997) towards “Theology of 1997”: With a Critical Reflection from Its Roots in Holiness - Revival Movement

Introduction

During the 1970s and 1980s, Hong Kong’s evangelicals (HKEs) had grown to maturity, and HKEs’ ministries had expanded from simplistic evangelism to complex social responsibility. As 1997 neared, politics complicated the situation of returning to China. A “Theology of 1997” began emerging during this complex period. HKEs were uneasy with such challenges and many even lost their theological identities. A holistic study of this pivotal situation is urgent and it will help us understand ongoing witnesses in Hong Kong after 1997.

These three groups of research questions will serve as the background for parts one, two, and three of my thesis (please see the Table of Contents in below).

Part 1

- What is the Theology of 1997 and how does it relate to evangelicalism?
- What causes such theology?
- How is it significant as a kind of Asian contextual theology?

Part 2

- How did HKEs accept the contextualization of 1997 Theology?
- How did HKEs practice this theology as “doing theology”?
- What are some theological criticisms to HKEs in these two areas?

Part 3

- What theological traditions do HKEs have?
- What lessons can be drawn from these traditions to improve social witnesses?

The goal of this thesis is to deepen HKEs’ commitment to social responsibility and to help HKEs find the evangelical way to actualize God’s kingdom by clarifying the Theology of 1997 in the transitional context.

A summary of Conclusion-Chapter 8

Integrative Study towards Hong Kong's Evangelicals and "1997 Theology"

1. Hong Kong Evangelicals' Heritage and Challenges (8.1 as book's order)

- 1.1. HKEs have inherited the tradition along with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) from North America. This thesis traces the roots of HKEs by studying all evangelical denominations in Hong Kong. The finding is that HKEs have multiple theological heritages. The overarching framework is Fundamentalism and Pietism, which is compatible with an individualistic faith reinforced by the Chinese way of self-holiness actualization. Mainstream HKEs are from the Holiness Denominations but have a noteworthy imbalance. That is, even though Mennonites, Wesleyans, and Nazarenes have been major components of the NAE, there are few such churches in Hong Kong. (8.1.1)
- 1.2. Moreover, HKEs have been neglecting parts of their original faith, specifically non-privatization and social care. This thesis proves that Wesley and Finny demonstrated social concern in the early stages of the Holiness Movement by caring the poor and abolishing slavery. This part of history should not be ignored in our heritage. (8.1.2)
- 1.3. The American Holiness Movement began with middle-class Christians who deeply loved the poor and later established their own churches for the poor. HKEs usually are not sensitive to denominational history and the majority do not know our uniqueness from the West. (8.1.3)
- 1.4. The 1974 Lausanne Covenant and its LOP 21 paper influenced HKEs by advocating partnerships with social service and social action. We HKEs have been learning to commit to such partnerships. Chinese missiology has learned good lessons integrating social services with evangelism as one way of contextualization. (8.1.4)

2. Theology of 1997 as an Asian Contextual Theology (8.2)

2.1. National Context: China as One Country Allowing Two Systems (8.2.1)

- 2.1.1 The May 4th Movement of 1919 prepared the anti-Christianity movement in the 1920s. Faith became politicized and was attacked by communism, which blended imperialism with western Christianity. Some missionaries did not establish relationship with upper-class Chinese, although they succeeded in sharing the Gospel to lower classes. After 1949, patriotic church movement controlled the churches in communist China. This background previews the barriers and difficulties of doing contextual theology in Hong Kong's "one country two systems" environment. The 1982 China Constitutions and subsequent documents continue tightening church activities in China and Hong Kong. (8.2.1.1)
- 2.1.2 The Communist version of "the separation of church and state"—as displayed in "United Front" policy from the United Front Work Department—is a one-way separation, not a two-way separation in line with Western tradition. The two most important documents (#19 and #6) show the Communist government's "positive attitude" towards religious construction. In return, the government demands churches to contribute to the state. Chairman Jiang Zemin's adaptation theory in 1990s also demanded religious dogmas, religious doctrines and religious morality compatible with socialism. All of these policies complicate Chinese contextual theology as well as Hong Kong's. (8.2.1.2 & 8.2.1.3)
- 2.1.3 Articles 148, 141, and 23 in the Basic Law of Hong Kong differentiate Mainland and Hong Kong churches on three principles: non-subordination, non-interference and mutual respect. These are the political guidelines for Christian fellowship under the two systems and the Mainland government also dominates the interpretation of these principles, not Hong Kong. (8.2.1.4)

2.2. Local Context: Hong Kong as One System in the Two-Systems Policy (8.2.2)

- 2.2.1 China's official church leader, Bishop Ding, frequently criticized Hong Kong churches before 1997 by making political demands in four areas: "not against communist party and socialism, not engaged in illegal activities and in overseas anti-China forces." (8.2.2.1)
- 2.2.2 Mook-kuk Yeung and Lung-Kwong Lo were the two most outspoken local church leaders concerning the Theology of 1997. Yeung's groundbreaking theology suggested social, moral, and judicial reconciliation. Lo suggested a similar approach in social harmony and Christian solidarity. (8.2.2.2).

- 2.2.3 HKEs made a tremendous contribution in 1984 by issuing “Our Beliefs in Social and Political Changes” with Carver Yu’s commentary. This booklet applied many Western theological standards but offered little contextualization for social-political participation towards 1997. (8.2.2.3)
- 2.2.4 During the transitional period, HKEs shared important reflections in six papers. They are from Hong Kong’s Church Renewal Movement, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and the Evangelical Free Church. Unfortunately, these papers still lack contextualization and miss the Holiness-Revival tradition. (8.2.2.4)

3. Integration and solution (8.3)

The 1997 situation highlights three points: a unique 50-year “one country, two systems,” Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong, and a high degree of autonomy from the Mainland. To safeguard these points, people are required to be highly loyal and patriotic. They must also raise the alarm for any overseas political penetration, especially because Christianity in China has had a poor record. Therefore, Hong Kong churches must first redefine “separation of church and state” to comply with the communist regime but without compromising the truth. Second, the Theology of 1997 must address sophisticated political changes in a political sensitive but non-political way.

The following is a suggested solution:

- 3.1 HKEs are not pro-regime. Not being pro-regime is not equal to insufficient patriotism, which is required by the regime. HKEs must prove that “loving Jesus is a good way of loving one’s country,” while keeping enough distance from the government to dodge the united front policy, which threatens religious freedom.(8.3.1)
- 3.2 HKEs are not anti-regime. Not being anti-regime is just a matter of priority because “obedience to authorities” is understood as God being the ultimate authority. Because of this, disobedience is a “must” in situations against God’s will. Thus, HKEs cannot ignore the political theology tied to issues of 1997, no matter how complicated or strange. (8.3.2)
- 3.3 HKEs are not involving in political revolution. Throughout China’s modern history, revolution has been ineffective compared to the West. Also, churches

already have a reputation for being anti-government and being enemies of the state because Christians overthrew the Qing dynasty. On the other hand, Jesus' saying "my kingdom is not of this world" is worth HKEs' re-thinking in social responsibility. (8.3.3)

- 3.4 Based on the above three points, HKEs have to be "outside the world and inside the world" and "in heaven and on earth". They must learn to cope with political penetration from the outside and demands for patriotism from the inside. Moreover, HKEs must learn to express and to witness their "otherness" in terms of "the power of forever powerless." (8.3.4)
- 3.5 HKEs insist Holiness as the different people at least in the spheres of power, status, fame and money. Those represent the church have to play a social role as "no political benefit for themselves or any others". Churchmen have to reject any advantage from these four things which are usually the tools of "united front" policy. Thus, separation of church and state can be guaranteed in early stage by rejecting this political way of temptations. (8.3.5)
- 3.6 HKEs need to rethink the Western theology of church and state relationship which has been from union to separation along 1600 years. Chinese tradition has been in "regime controlling every religion" which has been a different relationship without reference from the West. Therefore, "institutional churches cannot" and "Christian citizens can" are two possible agendas/models in future political participation and our context is demanding us to re-establish a political "Doing Theology". (8.3.6)
- 3.7 HKEs bring about revival by means of caring for the poor and the oppressed. Historically, revivals were not initiative in the middle class. We must involve ourselves in the lower class like Jesus' doing theology. Church should be simple—follow Jesus just by faith, not by riches. (8.3.7)
- 3.8 HKEs wholeheartedly prepare themselves for social crises or religious persecutions in the communist regime. Church history as well as Chinese church history is filled with lessons where suffering brought about church growth and spiritual success. Our context is our cross and we must learn to face such unexpected transformation. (8.3.8)