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Asia Pacific: Perspectives is a peer-reviewed journal published at least once a year, usually in April/May. It welcomes submissions from all fields of the social sciences and the humanities with relevance to the Asia Pacific region.* In keeping with the Jesuit traditions of the University of San Francisco, *Asia Pacific: Perspectives* commits itself to the highest standards of learning and scholarship.

Our task is to inform public opinion by a broad hospitality to divergent views and ideas that promote cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and the dissemination of knowledge unreservedly. Papers adopting a comparative, interdisciplinary approach will be especially welcome. **Graduate students are strongly encouraged to submit their work for consideration.**

* 'Asia Pacific region' as used here includes East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Oceania, and the Russian Far East.

Church-State Relations in Post-1997 Hong Kong

by Chan, Sze-Chi, Ph.D.

Abstract

Throughout the British colonial era (1842-1997), church-state relations constituted an integral part of Western institutions in Hong Kong. After 1997, both Catholic and Protestant churches in Hong Kong have been faced with tremendous pressures to identify with the Beijing-supported Chee-hwa Tung administration. This article seeks to capture the dynamics of church-state relations in Hong Kong by comparing the role of Catholic and Evangelical Christian churches in the popular struggle against the implementation of Article 23 of the Basic Law in the summer of 2003 (Article 23 of the Basic Law was proposed to prohibit individuals and political organizations in Hong Kong from conducting subversive activities against the Chinese central government in Beijing.). Although the Beijing leaders and the Tung administration successfully co-opted a significant number of Evangelical church leaders, they failed to have the Catholic Church under control, which has constantly challenged the political Establishment in post-1997 Hong Kong. The challenges that the Catholic Church currently poses to the Beijing leaders and the Tung administration have to do with its alternative interpretations of political authority and state-society relations, its campaign for the poor in society, and its mobilization of ordinary Catholics in political struggles. □□

As the last British colony in East Asia, the handover of Hong Kong to Mainland China in 1997 signified the end of British colonialism in East Asia. Hong Kong has developed into an Asian city with a pronounced Western influence, perhaps more so than any other city on the Pacific Rim. Given its British colonial legacy, Hong Kong provides a unique lens through which to study Sino-Western cultural encounter in modern China. The political, economic, social and cultural changes in post-1997 Hong Kong raise the question of the extent to which people in Hong Kong, with their strong Western values and institutions, can respond to pressures from the new political masters in Beijing. Such response can be viewed as a cultural reaction of the people in Hong Kong towards their age-old Chinese cultural heritage.

Throughout the British colonial era (1842-1997), the church-state relations constituted an integral part of the Western institutions in Hong Kong. After 1997, both Catholic and Protestant churches in Hong Kong have been faced with tremendous pressures to identify with the Beijing-supported Chee-hwa Tung administration. This problem is best illustrated in a series of events, such as the controversy over a Christian celebration of the National Day of the People's Republic of China in 1996 and 1997, the founding of the Working Committee for the General Election of Hong Kong Protestants in electing some of the members for the first post-handover Legislative Council in 1998, and the controversy over the implementation of Article 23 of the Basic Law in 2003 (Article 23 of the Basic Law was proposed to prohibit individuals and political organizations in Hong Kong from conducting subversive activities against the Chinese central

government in Beijing.). As an observer and, more importantly, a participant in these events, this article presents a personal reflection on the Catholic and Protestant responses to political and social changes in post-1997 Hong Kong. In particular, it offers a critical analysis of the involvement of the Catholic and Evangelical Christian church leaders throughout the debate about the implementation of Article 23.

I. Christianity between Revelation and Culture

It is a proper point of departure to say a few words about my conceptual framework of Christian systematic theology with respect to the ongoing interactions between Christianity and culture. The historical dimension is very important in Christianity. Christians believe that God revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ, the son of Mary in first-century Palestine in the Roman Empire. From Jesus came a fast-growing religious movement called Christianity. A Christian theologian always evaluates the history of humankind in the light of this event. While the revelation of God shown in the life story of Jesus, known as the gospel, became part of human history, this revelation is believed by Christians worldwide to be above history, in that it transcends human existence and gives rise to an ongoing process of redemption lasting for millennia. In the Christian theological framework, this personal history of Jesus Christ is very unique and of tremendous significance for humankind.

As a historical religion, Christianity develops in specific time and space from this revelation. Although it is customary to denote Christianity in the singular to refer to a religious movement, Christianity is in fact a combination of various religious movements. On an empirical level, it is difficult to identify the difference between Christianity in its European, American, Asian and African contexts today and the revelation (the gospel) in the first century. Nor is it easy to understand the ontological "distance" between Christianity and a particular culture. What I mean by "distance" here is certainly metaphorical, suggesting that Christianity cannot claim itself to be fully equivalent to the revelation (the gospel) because it has always been manifested in specific historical settings. Even if one can understand the exact meaning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, one has to deal with the Christianity that arises from this gospel in a specific context. Rather than seeing it as a set of doctrines that remained unchanged from the past to the present, Christianity should be understood as a big stream of religious cultures that developed from what Rodney Stark calls "the obscure, marginal Jesus movement" into the dominant religious force in the contemporary world (Stark, 1997).

The development of early Christianity in the Middle East helps illustrate this point. Jewish Christianity that played a central role in the rise of Christianity in Palestine until the fifth century was very different from the Hellenistic Christianity created by the Apostle Paul. When the Apostolic Council did not require the Christian converts to observe the Jewish Law or Torah, they created a religion free of ethnicity. This complete break from the Jewish Law was a key to the rapid expansion of Christianity among Hellenized Jews and Gentiles across the Roman Empire. In recent years, Andrew F.

Walls and Philip Jenkins have addressed the dynamics of Christian movements in Africa and Latin America (Walls, 2002; Jenkins, 2002). In China, there are indeed endless examples of native Christians integrating Christianity into the local society (Lee, 2003).

The appropriation of Christianity throughout human history has several theological implications for understanding the encounter between Christianity and Chinese culture, as well as the church-state relations in contemporary Hong Kong. The first implication is that whatever stream of Christianity is to be discussed, one should examine the ways in which the gospel interacted with a particular culture. Here, Christianity as a religion and the gospel are not identical. When the European and American missionaries preached their versions of the gospel to faith seekers, they inevitably introduced their versions of Christianity. The faith seekers would consider the Euro-American versions of the gospel and the missionaries as identical. In addition, they would reinterpret the gospel message according to their existing worldviews. This process of interaction would give rise to a gap between the new stream of Christianity and the gospel.

Equally important is the gap between Christianity and its manifestation in a cultural setting. This gap is not necessarily inversely proportional to the ontological distance between a particular stream of Christianity and the revelation. This gap arises when a particular ethnic community transforms Christianity into a native religion. In the course of history different streams of Christianity have become independent cultural entities. For example, Christianity gave rise to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. (Outside these three mainstreams are the minor independent subsidiaries of Syrian Christianity, Arabian Christianity, Armenian Christianity, Coptic or Egyptian Christianity, Ukrainian Christianity etc.) Protestant Christianity is particularly interesting, for it was divided into various denominations based on ethnic boundaries and the broad spectrum of religious interpretations, such as the liberals, fundamentalists, Evangelicals, Ecumenical Christians, etc. In Hong Kong, the Evangelicals, Ecumenical Christians, and Roman Catholics actively engaged in the most conspicuous Christian activities.

When one examines the subject of Chinese Christianity, one is faced with the interactions between Christianity and Chinese culture. What one has to consider are the manifestations of major streams of Christianity, which have already gained some substantial following among Chinese. It is also important to be aware of the diverse experiences of Chinese Catholics and Protestants. When the Catholic and Protestant missionaries arrived at Hong Kong, they introduced the Euro-American versions of Christianity, the Chinese Catholics and Protestants subscribed to these versions of the Christian message. Underlying this story of Sino-Western cultural encounter in Hong Kong was a complicated process of multiple interactions. In view of this problem, this paper takes a critical look at the interactions between the Christian gospel, the various Catholic and Protestant church cultures, and Chinese culture in contemporary Hong Kong. As key players in this process of interaction, Hong Kong Christians

are faced with the question of whether to adhere to the theological and politico-ethical positions of their church leaders. When they thought that the teachings of their churches were in conflict with the gospel, some of the conscientious Christians chose to distance themselves from the mainstream churches in order to side with the poor and the weak. To fully understand their personal struggles, it is necessary to explore the ways in which their churches in Hong Kong failed to speak out against all forms of political and social injustice.

II. Catholic and Protestant Responses to Article 23

The Hong Kong Special Administration Region (HKSAR) Government published its proposals to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law in September 2002, and introduced a National Security (Legislative Provisions) Bill to the Legislative Council in February 2003. Article 23 of the Hong Kong Basic Law provides that the HKSAR Government "shall enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People's Government, or theft of state secrets, to prohibit foreign political organizations or bodies from conducting political activities in the Region, and to prohibit political organizations or bodies of the Region from establishing ties with foreign political organizations or bodies."¹ The proposals sparked intense debate among Christians in Hong Kong over the potential impact of the new national security provisions on human rights, especially the right to freedom of religion and freedom of expression and assembly. While the Catholic Church under the leadership of Bishop Joseph Ze-kiun Zen took a public stand against the legalization of Article 23, Evangelical Christian church leaders were far more concerned with the legalization of soccer gambling rather than this issue. On July 1, 2003, nearly one million protestors demonstrated against the Tung administration and called for freedom and democracy (Ching, 2003).² On July 9, 2003, the HKSAR Government bowed to public pressure and withdrew the legislation of Article 23 for further discussion in the Legislative Council, but it had the legalization of soccer gambling approved in the Council. Why did the leaders of the Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations in Hong Kong adopt totally different approaches to these public issues? Why did they not create a united front to put pressure on the HKSAR Government? What do their different agendas tell us about church-state relations in contemporary Hong Kong?

III. History of the Catholic Church and the Government in Hong Kong

That the Catholic Church opposed the legislation of Article 23 represents a clear departure from its close association with the colonial government before the handover. Under British colonial rule, the Catholic Church was closely linked to the political Establishment in Hong Kong. The Church's campaign against abortion, a major item on the Vatican's social agenda, did not attract much attention in the predominantly non-Christian Chinese society and caused

embarrassment to the colonial government. The most scandalous event faced by the Church was the Jubilee School Incident (1978) when the Catholic Church suppressed a group of teachers and students at the Precious Blood Golden Jubilee Secondary School through the appointment of a new and stringent headmistress, because of their criticism of the former headmistress for misusing school funds. The Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, under the leadership of John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung, the Bishop of Hong Kong, and the Department of Education of the British colonial government, shut down the school in May 1978. Outraged by the closure, the teachers and students organized a sit-in outside the Headquarter of the Catholic Diocese. During the month-long sit-in, Bishop Wu and the officials at the Department of Education never came to talk to the protestors, but strong public support for the protestors clearly embarrassed the Catholic Church and the colonial government. The Golden Jubilee Secondary School Incident was finally resolved with the colonial government calling for an independent inquiry headed by the then vice-chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, who considered the closure of the school to be a mistake and urged the government to help the affected teachers and students (Huang, 1978).³ That Bishop Wu ignored the Golden Jubilee Secondary School protestors caused mistrust between the Church and the public. The whole fiasco also showed that the Catholic Church remained a close ally of the colonial government throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Bishop Wu's conservatism was comparable to the present Hong Kong Chief Executive Chee-hwa Tung's insensitivity towards the Anti-Article 23 demonstrators on July 1, 2003.

Although Bishop Wu was consecrated as a Cardinal on June 28, 1988, he seldom showed up in public to comment on social and political issues. Nor was he involved in any form of political consultation with the Communist leaders in Beijing on the eve of Hong Kong's handover. He did not sit in the Basic Law Consultation and Drafting Committees as Archbishop Peter Kwong Kong-kit of the Anglican Church in Hong Kong had done, although this probably had to do with the Catholic Church's official position of not allowing priests to serve in any government and legislative bodies.

An interesting paradox of Cardinal Wu's leadership was that he never suppressed progressive elements within the Catholic Church, such as the Catholic Youth Council, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission as well as individual foreign and Chinese priests campaigning for the poor and the weak. The tolerance of political and social activism had more to do with the catholic spirit of the Church rather than with Cardinal Wu's open-mindedness. However, there was a strong sense of traditional Chinese cultural intolerance and aversion to political participation within the Catholic Church. It is against this background that several Chinese priests are worthy of attention, the most prominent of these being Father Louis Ha, a well-known social and political activist in Hong Kong. In the spring of 1989, he publicly supported the pro-democracy student movement in Beijing and was one of the key founders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China. After the Communist crackdown on June 4, 1989, he was increasingly

marginalized within the Catholic Diocese. It was only until Bishop Joseph Ze-kien Zen took over the church leadership in early 2003 that Louis Ha came out to play a more active role in the Anti-Article 23 campaign (Leung and Chan, 2003, 81–82). Another Catholic social and political activist is Father Luke Tsui, who publicly supported the Tiananmen Pro-democracy Movement in the spring of 1989 but later declared his support for the Beijing leadership in the years leading to the handover of Hong Kong.

The Vatican's appointment of Father Joseph Zen as the Bishop of the Catholic Church has marked the beginning of a new era of church-state relations in Hong Kong. Bishop Zen has been highly critical of the HKSAR Government over a number of public policies, the most controversial of these being the HKSAR Government's refusal to grant the right of abode to thousands of people from Mainland China. On January 29, 1999, the Court of Final Appeal, the highest court in Hong Kong, ruled that all Chinese citizens who are children of Hong Kong permanent residents born outside of Hong Kong have the right of abode in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), irrespective of whether their parents had already become permanent residents at the time of their birth. At the request of the HKSAR Government, however, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, overturned on June 26, 1999 the court ruling of January 29, and said that those who were born before one of their parents had become a permanent resident of Hong Kong did not have the right of abode in the HKSAR. The Hong Kong Government's action to overturn the ruling of the Court of Final Appeal by appealing to Beijing for help completely violated the high degree of self-autonomy accorded to Hong Kong under the "One Country, Two Systems" model. The new ruling denied the right of abode in Hong Kong to thousands of people from Mainland China, and over 4,700 mainland-born children, each with at least one parent a Hong Kong permanent resident, faced deportation to China in early 2002. Those seeking the right of abode in Hong Kong launched a series of protests and hunger strikes to defend their right to live with their families. While Evangelical church leaders showed no sympathy and mercy for these children and their families, the Catholic Church strongly supported the protestors in defending their right of abode in Hong Kong. The Catholic Church's position was based purely on humanitarian grounds.

Closely related to this issue was the dispute over the right of these children to public education. While waiting for the local court's ruling on their right-of-abode appeals, mainland-born children in Hong Kong applied for admission to local public schools. The HKSAR Government called them "children-without-identity" and forbade them from enrolling in any school on the grounds that they did not have the right of abode in Hong Kong. Outraged by the Government's decision, Bishop Zen, once again acting on humanitarian grounds, urged all Catholic schools to admit these children. This act of civil disobedience won him and the Catholic Church much applause from the public. The doors of Protestant schools, in stark contrast, remained firmly closed to these children at that time.

Obviously, Bishop Zen was different from Cardinal Wu in dealing with secular authority. Cardinal Wu was politically conservative and pro-Establishment by virtue of the fact that the Catholic Church did very well under the British colonial system. Before 1997, the Catholic Church had everything to gain from letting the status quo remain as it was and much to lose by rocking the boat. After 1997, new political realities probably forced the Church to redefine its relations with the state. In the new political climate, Bishop Zen has proven himself the right person for the job. His personal conviction, his charismatic style of leadership, and his genuine concern for social justice have energized the Catholic Church. In a recent Cable TV interview in the spring of 2003, Bishop Zen admitted that he had been influenced by Latin American liberation theology in his earlier days. This remark throws light on his concern for the poor and the weak, and his strong belief in the power of the Christian gospel in the struggle against unjust systems.

Although he may embrace certain elements of liberation theology, Bishop Zen was a very Confucian person with a strong belief in social harmony and non-violence. His reluctance to take part in the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Tiananmen Pro-democracy Movement on June 4, 2003 and the demonstration of July 1, 2003 against Article 23 illustrates this point. His concerns for stability and harmony, however, have not stopped him from campaigning for the poor through social action and standing up for what he believes to be right.

While Bishop Zen and some progressive clergymen have been actively involved in many public issues in recent years, there is little sign of political and social activism among the Catholic rank and file. The only exception was the Catholic Federation of College Students. One explanation of the considerable gap between Catholic Church leaders and ordinary church members is that the Church in Hong Kong has not yet become a progressive political and social force. Ordinary church members appeared to have supported Bishop Zen out of their respect for and obedience to the Catholic Church leadership. This hierarchical relationship between Bishop Zen and his church supporters bears witness to the impact of traditional Chinese culture, which requires that junior family and community members obey senior ones (Lee, 2003, 29, 83).

Without a long tradition of political and social activism within the Catholic Church in the Chinese-speaking world, the appointment of Bishop Zen makes one speculate whether his antagonism towards the HKSAR Government has to do with a shift of Vatican policy towards China. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Bishop Zen kept a low profile in the Hong Kong Catholic Church, and spent much time teaching at government-run Catholic seminaries in China. He was known to have greatly influenced the new generations of Catholic priests in China.⁴ Probably because of his popularity among Catholic leaders in China, the Vatican deliberately chose Bishop Zen for its fight against the Communist government in Beijing and its protégés in Hong Kong – an act akin, perhaps to how Pope John Paul II stood up to the Polish Communist state during the 1980s. What then seems to be the

case here is the combination within the Catholic Church of anti-Communist sentiment and a highly centralized system which made it possible for Bishop Zen to mobilize church members in the most recent Anti-Article 23 campaign.

IV. History of Protestant Churches and the Government in Hong Kong

Although some mainstream Evangelical church leaders expressed their concern over the legislation of Article 23, they were far less active than their Catholic counterparts in defending the rights threatened by this Article. Instead, they expressed far more interest in the prosecution of an anti-gambling campaign. To explain their sense of political apathy and their obsession with moral issues, let us look at the ways in which external and internal forces have shaped the development of the Evangelical churches in Hong Kong.

The 1970s saw a resurgence of political and social activism among university students in Hong Kong. The entry of the People's Republic of China into the United Nations and the Sino-Japanese dispute over the sovereignty of Diaoyutai (Senkaku) Island in the South China Sea sparked the largest Overseas Chinese student movement in North America and Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, the student movement that spread across all the universities and private colleges was initially pro-Communist, and had tremendous impact on complacent, middle-class Protestant churches. Some Maoist student activists followed the model of the Red Guards in mainland China and criticized their Christian classmates' political apathy and complacent lifestyle. To criticize their lack of involvement in politics, some Maoist students invented the Cantonese slogan of the "Four-zi-isms" to ridicule all those college students who sought after houses, cars, wives and children. Under the pressure of those advocating the Four-zi-isms, many Catholic and Protestant university students reflected on the social dimension of their Christian faith.

Unfortunately, Evangelical students did not have a strong progressive organization to support them the way Catholic students had had the Catholic Federation of College Students. The Hong Kong Student Christian Movement was too feeble and liberal in its theological stand to show any concern for them. As a result, it took these students nearly a decade to establish themselves within different Evangelical student bodies. The irony was that the Evangelical students' conversion to progressive social and political activism came only after the decline of the pro-Communist student movement.⁵

From 1983 to 1985, I was sent as a student counselor to all the local university campuses by the Hong Kong Fellowship of Evangelical Students, an Evangelical para-church organization specializing in the pastoral care of university and college students. Something I noticed was that throughout the 1980s, the focus of Evangelical student activism was on "social concern," a new agenda deemed as equally respectable as evangelization. The dominant view was that social concern and evangelization were complimentary and far more effective in the propagating of Christianity.

The significance of the growth of social awareness among Evangelical students lies in the fact that after graduation,

many of them became church leaders, theologians, scholars and professionals, and continued to shape the social agenda of the Protestant churches. Some of them even played an active role in grassroots movements and founded semi-political organizations like the Christians for Hong Kong Society and the Christian Sentinels for Hong Kong.

The emergence of "social concern" as a new component on the evangelistic agenda, however, posed a challenge to mainstream Evangelical churches in Hong Kong throughout the 1980s. In particular, the publication of *Olive Magazine* by the Christian Association of Hong Kong University attracted much attention among local church leaders, students at seminaries and workers of numerous para-church organizations. Most articles published in *Olive Magazine* were highly critical of political apathy and the lack of concern for social justice among the Evangelical churches, especially when Hong Kong was faced with intense political pressures from Beijing and London after the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984.

Coinciding with the growth of social and political activism within the Evangelical church circle was the political maturation of Hong Kong before its handover to China in 1997. The majority of Evangelical student graduates, along with the rather progressive Ecumenical Protestant church leaders, participated in the local democratic movement that emerged in the years before 1997. Of these activists, the most notable one was James To Kun-sun, an active member of the Democratic Party of Hong Kong and a directly elected member of the Legislative Council. Three Evangelical churchmen are also worthy of attention. They are Rev. Chu Yiu-ming, Rev. Lo Lung-kwong, and Rev. Fung Chi-wood. Rev. Chu, a Baptist minister and Rev. Lo, a Methodist minister, used to pastor their respective congregations in the working-class district of Chai Wan on Hong Kong Island. Both of them have been active in campaigning for the poor in Hong Kong. As a student, Rev. Fung used to be a member of the Christian Association of Hong Kong University. In the 1980s, he played a leading role in the grassroots campaign against the construction of a nuclear power station along the border of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. He later joined the Democratic Party of Hong Kong and was directly elected into the Legislative Council in 1991.

As the case of another prominent figure, Rev. Kwok Nai-wang, shows, however, social activism could come at a price. A former pastor of a congregation of the Chinese Church of Christ, in the early 1980s, Rev. Kwok was the General Secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council and publicly supported the local democratic movement. His commitment to political and social change did not attract much support from the mainstream Protestant church leaders. Archbishop Peter Kwong of the Anglican Church, for example, took a pro-China line and became a member of the Basic Law Consultative Committee and Drafting Committees. Because the mainstream Evangelical church leaders sought to appease Beijing by not supporting the local democratic movement, Rev. Kwok became marginalized within the Hong Kong Christian Council and was eventually ousted from the post of General Secretary in the late 1980s. Fortunately for the cause

of democracy in Hong Kong, Rev. Kwok's supporters decided to sponsor him to found the Hong Kong Christian Institute, a prominent non-governmental organization campaigning for human rights and freedom in Hong Kong and one of the key organizers of the giant demonstration against Article 23 on July 1, 2003 (Leung and Chan, 2003, 93–105).

The most severe challenge to the Evangelical churches in Hong Kong, however, was the pro-democracy movement in Beijing in the spring of 1989. As with the majority of the Hong Kong population, the Evangelical churches were very sympathetic towards the students and civilians in Beijing. Evangelical church leaders went so far as to found the Hong Kong Christian Alliance In Support of the Democratic Movement in China and elected Dr. Philemon Choi Yuen-wan, the director of the Breakthrough Organization, the largest Evangelical para-church organization in Hong Kong, as its Chair. That the Evangelical churches created an organization to campaign for the democratic transformation of China won much public applause for local Christians.

Nonetheless, their commitment to social and political changes in Hong Kong and China was short-lived. Because the Evangelical churches failed to articulate a new theological vision that overcame their denominational differences and vested interests, everything began to fall apart after the military suppression of the pro-democracy movement on June 4, 1989. The collapse of the Christian Sentinels for Hong Kong was a good example. Once very vocal in articulating democratic demands to the Chinese and the British governments, this organization fell apart and the majority of its core members took a low profile in political activities.

Another event revealing deep divisions within the Evangelicals took place in early 1996, when forty-seven notable church leaders suddenly issued a call for a Christian celebration of the National Day of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1996. These church leaders were from the conservative and progressive wings of the Protestant churches.⁶ Celebrating the National Day of the People's Republic of China has been seen as a gesture of political loyalty to the Beijing leadership. The majority of the Hong Kong population has not yet forgotten the suppression of civilians in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, and many of them have refused to celebrate the National Day of the People's Republic until the Beijing leaders admit their mistake in the Tiananmen Incident. The call for a Christian celebration of the National Day came as a great shock to ordinary Evangelical Christians and the public. Those church leaders in favor of the celebration failed to provide convincing theological justifications for their action and were severely criticized by ordinary Christians and the public.

The single notable churchman taking a brave stand against the pro-celebration camp was Rev. Chu Yiu-ming. It was truly an upsetting experience for him to denounce many of his former friends. Another well-respected Christian journalist, Mau Chi-wang publicly criticized the ugly tactics of the pro-celebration camp.⁷ However, the pro-celebration camp ignored criticisms from ordinary Christians and the public, and went ahead with their celebration of the National Day on October 1, 1996, even holding another one in October

1997 (Chan, 2000; Leung and Chan, 2003, 125–31).

This incident greatly undermined the integrity of many Evangelical church leaders in Hong Kong, but did not stop ambitious church leaders from patronizing Beijing and the Tung administration after the handover of Hong Kong in 1997. In the spring of 1998, the HKSAR Government allocated to the Protestant churches seven out of the 800 available seats of a Special Electoral Committee, the purpose of which was to indirectly elect eight members to the first post-handover Legislative Council. The Special Electoral Committee, however, was clearly an undemocratic mechanism created by Beijing to stock the Legislative Council with their protégés, and drew severe criticisms from the public and abroad. The Catholic Church was also highly critical of this undemocratic mechanism and refused to fill the six seats allocated to it by the HKSAR Government. The executive committee of the Hong Kong Christian Council, in contrast, exploited this opportunity to cajole the Protestant churches into cooperating with the HKSAR Government, and called for a “general election” within the Protestant community to fill the seven seats. Under the support of the Hong Kong Christian Council, the “Working Committee for the General Election of Hong Kong Protestants” was founded with Rev. Lo Lung-kwong, the senior Methodist church leader mentioned earlier, as chairperson. Undoubtedly, the participation of the Protestant churches would not only enhance the political status of Rev. Lo, but also bestow on the Special Electoral Committee a semblance of legitimacy (Chan, 1998).⁸ The majority of the Protestant population, suspicious of Rev. Lo’s motives, refused to endorse his proposal based on their adherence to the doctrine of the total separation of church and state. Despite the lack of support, Rev. Lo went ahead to hold a “general election” in which only a small number of local churches came out to elect seven “Protestant representatives” to the Special Electoral Committee.

As can be seen, then, in less than two years after Hong Kong’s handover to China, a significant number of Evangelical church leaders had become fervent supporters of the Beijing leaders and the Tung administration that took office after 1997.⁹ These church leaders are highly pragmatic and inconsistent, seeking to become part of the new political Establishment in post-1997 Hong Kong. They have also shown an alarming willingness to disregard the commitment of traditional Protestant Christians to the total separation of church and state and the Christian call to fight for the poor and the weak, as seen in the fact that none of them supported those whose right of abode in Hong Kong had been denied by the HKSAR Government, in sharp contrast to the Catholic Church.

Since then, however, some Evangelical scholars and churchmen have expressed dissatisfaction with their leaders and in 1997, founded a new organization called the Society for Truth and Light to revise the agenda of social concern within Protestant circles. In the highly moralistic society of Hong Kong, the Society for Truth and Light mainly commented on social and moral issues and avoided direct political confrontation with the HKSAR Government. To date, they have only engaged in anti-prostitution, anti-gay/lesbian,

and anti-gambling campaigns. In so doing, they have wittingly or unwittingly acted in tune with the political agenda of the Government, as C. H. Tung and his officials view the promotion of morality as conducive to nurturing a submissive political culture in Hong Kong. Unsurprisingly, then, when a million of people demonstrated against the legislation of Article 23 and called for democracy and freedom, the Society for Truth and Light, as an organization, did not join in. Instead, they continued to campaign against the legalization of soccer gambling and distracted Evangelical Christians from participating in the Anti-Article 23 campaign. When they learnt that the soccer gambling bill had been passed, many of them simply sobbed.

V. Conclusion

Why did Protestant church leaders and theologians kowtow to Beijing and the Tung administration, whereas the leadership of the Catholic Church had chosen to be critical of the political Establishment in post-1997 Hong Kong? The 1980s and early 1990s saw a genuine expression of the Christian concern for social justice among the Evangelical Christians. In the name of social concern, many church leaders and activists sought to defy the inert middle-class culture that had characterized the Protestant churches. There was a widespread concern for the poor and the weak in Evangelical circles. It was therefore sad and ironic that these church leaders decided to withdraw from any form of political and social activism in the late 1990s. The change of attitude among the church leaders not only betrayed the Christian call to fight for the poor and the weak, but also disregarded the commitment of certain Christians to the total separation of church and state. These “kowtow Christians” who appeased the HKSAR Government by disregarding more pressing political issues betrayed adherence to a deeper underlying Chinese traditional culture of self-protection.¹⁰

On the contrary, the Catholic Church under the leadership of Bishop Zen has become the conscience of society. His concern for the poor and the weak, his reluctance to patronize Beijing and the HKSAR Government, and his wholehearted support for freedom and democracy in the Anti-Article 23 campaign have completely changed the pro-Establishment image of the Church. The Catholic Church leaders, especially Bishop Zen, are more willing than their Protestant counterparts to serve and identify with the voiceless majority of the Hong Kong population. It is this unique feature that makes the Catholic Church truly “the salt of the earth and the light of the world” in post-1997 Hong Kong.

ENDNOTES

1. “Article 23 of the Basic Law,” Centre for Comparative and Public Law at the Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong. Available at http://www.hku.hk/ccpl/research_projects_issues/article23/
2. The widely reported number of 500,000 demonstrators on July 1, 2003 was an underestimation. The organizers of the Anti-Article 23 campaign did not include large numbers of people who joined the protest along the route of demonstration. See Frank Ching, “Hong Kong and the Limits of People Power.” *Current History* 102, no.665 (September 2003): 256–58.

3. For primary sources, see *Baoxuehui Jinxi zhongxue diaocha weiyuanhui zuihou baogaoshu* [The Hong Kong Commission of Enquiry into the Precious Blood Golden Jubilee Secondary School], Huang, and Jinxi shijian: *Cong chuangxiao dao fengxiao* [The Golden Jubilee Incident: From the Founding of the School to its Closure]. This incident was discussed in a special issue of *Xueyuan* [Undergrad], a newspaper published by the Hong Kong University Students' Union. See also *Xueyun chungiu* [The History of Student Movement], pp.144–156.
4. "Interview with Bishop Zen," *Duzhe Wenzhai* [Reader's Digest] (Hong Kong Edition) 78, no.5 (January 2004): 36–43.
5. While a student at the University of Hong Kong from 1977 to 1980 and an active member of the Christian Association of the Hong Kong University Student Union, an Evangelical student body, I noted that the change of political climate in Beijing following the collapse of the Gang of Four marked the end of a romantic Maoism among the leftist students in Hong Kong.
6. These leaders included Sit Poon-ki (卅ΩΥ∞Ú), chairman of the Hong Kong Christian Council, Rev. Ng Shan-ho, leader of the Pentecostal Holy Church, Drs. Chow Wing-kin and Carver Yu Tat-sum, principal and vice-principal of the China Graduate School of Theology, Dr. Philemon Choi Yuen-wan, head of the Hong Kong Christian Alliance for the Support of Democratic Movement in China, Rev. Lo Lung-kwong, former Methodist pastor and current head of the Theology Division of Chung Chi College at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Rev. Kwok Nai-wang, Director of the Hong Kong Christian Institute, Raymond Fung Wai-man, the recently retired secretary of the Mission Division of the World Council of Churches, and Yung Wai-yip, chairman of the Hong Kong Federation of Evangelical Students. What was most shocking was that Dr. Choi Yuen-wan and Rev. Lo Lung-kwong were the initiators of the event, and they had the tacit support of Li Kam-hung, chief editor of *The Christian Times*, the well-established Evangelical church weekly newspaper in Hong Kong. Rev. Lau Siu-hong, head of the Hong Kong Baptist Council, remained indecisive and planned to support this event, but he was reminded of the Baptist tradition of adhering to the total separation of church and state and decided to stay out of it. Rev. Siu Sau-wah, chief pastor of the North Point Alliance Church, the largest Evangelical church in Hong Kong, withdrew from joining the pro-celebration group.
7. On one occasion, I attended a private meeting in mid-August 1996 held by Prof. Shum Suen-yan, the former head of the Chung Chi College together with Mau Chi-wang and Tang Siu-ming, a specialist of the underground church movement in Mainland China, in which we questioned Rev. Lo Lung-kwong about his sudden turnaround to placate China. However, Rev. Lo did not give us a convincing answer.
8. I was very critical of Rev. Lo Lung-kwong's attempt to organize a "general election" within the Protestant circle. "Mushi suowei heshi? [What should the clergy do?], Chan, p.9.
9. Dr. Choi Yuen-wan, for example, became a staunch supporter of the Tung administration and was appointed by C. H. Tung to chair the Youth Affair Committee of the Government.

10. The term "kowitz Christians" is a common phrase to refer to those church leaders who identify with the political Establishment in Hong Kong and the Communist government in Beijing during the post-1997 era.

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