Religious Politics in Pacific Space:
Grounding Cantonese Protestant Theologies in Secular Civil Societies

by

Justin Kin-Hung Tse

B.A. (Hons.), The University of British Columbia at Vancouver, 2007
M.A., The University of British Columbia at Vancouver, 2009

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Abstract

This thesis argues that Cantonese Protestants often reinforce secularization processes by leveraging their ethnic Chineseness for secular political activism while downplaying their theological convictions and communities as private. The main theoretical intervention of this thesis is that ‘religion’ and the ‘secular’ are both *grounded theologies*, placing into space narratives about the supernatural that shape modern understandings of the place of religion in the public sphere. I show that these grounded theologies are contested among Cantonese Protestants. There are grounded ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ theologies of how congregational spaces should engage the ‘world’: ‘progressive’ refers to churches whose grounded theologies blur the lines between the private congregation and their activities in a secular public sphere, while ‘conservatives’ seek to police those boundaries. While mainline Protestants dominated the Cantonese Protestant landscape since the nineteenth century with ‘progressive’ grounded theologies, ‘conservative’ Cantonese evangelicals challenged their attachment to secular states and civil societies in the 1950s to the 1970s. In the 1990s and 2000s, Cantonese evangelical traditional family activists argued that their activism seldom directly included their churches as institutions and instead leveraged what they considered their more universal concerns as ethnic Chinese citizens to combat the irrationality of sexual and social liberalization in each of their civil societies. In turn, Cantonese evangelical faith-based organizations and congregations have been re-structured to engage more effectively in different ways with local secular governments in their civil societies, engendering contestations by those who consider these moves either politically ineffective or theologically problematic. These activities are also intensely local, for a closer examination
of Cantonese Protestant demonstrations in response to the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 as well as their participation in democratic politics reveals that their political practices focus on civil societies bound by their metropolitan areas, not their transnational Chinese networks. This thesis suggests that cultural geography can reconstitute fields such as religious studies, ethnic studies, and migration studies into disciplines that examine the ways that grounded theologies are used to contest religious placemaking and ethnic identity formation.
Preface

I certify that I performed all of the research and writing conducted in the thesis by myself. Housed in the Department of Geography, the research design is a qualitative one based on the hermeneutical foci of the new cultural geography and trends in social and political geography. Following the *modus operandi* of programs of research in social and cultural geography, the study is based on key informant interviews that targeted specific persons for communication in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Greater Vancouver Metropolitan District, and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, as well as focus groups in anonymized Cantonese Protestant congregations. While this research does not call for a representative sample, it is triangulated by extensive methods, including an audiovisual and print archive and the consultation of statistics available in government and academic sources. I certify that I myself performed the transcription and analysis of these materials. I also certify that none of this dissertation has been published elsewhere. This research has been cleared by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board, ethics certificate H11-00859 'Cantonese Christian Politics.'
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Glossary

Theology: narratives that attempt to make sense of the supernatural, that is, ‘any form of interpenetration between the things of Nature, on one hand, and the “supernatural” on the other, be this understood in terms of the one transcendent God, or of Gods or spirits, or magic forces, or whatever’ (Taylor, 2007: 16; see also de Lubac 1946/1991)

Grounded theologies: the performance of theologies in everyday lives (see Tse, 2013a). Because they inform placemaking and are contested, the use of this term falls broadly within the rubric of the new cultural geography, that is, a geographical school of thought that reads landscapes and social formations as always in political processes of construction and contestation (see Duncan, 1980, 1990)

Religion: the systematization of grounded theologies (see WC Smith, 1978; Asad, 1993)

Secular: particular grounded theologies used to demarcate the privacy of religion as opposed to the rationality of the public sphere (see Asad, 2003; Milbank, 2006; Taylor 2007)

Secularization: the process of grounding theologies that establish modes of secular demarcations in the modern world

Public sphere: democratic fora for conversation among citizens about how governance should work (see Habermas 1962/1989). This is opposed to the private sphere, that is, spheres of life considered irrelevant to public discourse.

Civil society: a society of citizens that was in tense collaboration with and resistance to the state (and also the market under neoliberal state regimes) (Douglass et al., 2007). This thesis locates ‘the public sphere’ in ‘civil society.’

Congregation: a gathering of religious adherents for worship (see RS Warner 1998). These spaces are considered to be private within a secular theological framework.

Progressive grounded theologies: grounded theologies that understand religious life as literally progressing from congregational spaces to civil society, blurring the lines of secular demarcation while reinforcing secularization theologically because it still posits that the work within the congregation is private and irrelevant to public engagements. These are broadly consonant with Casanova’s (1994) ‘public religions,’ that is, religions that deprivatize themselves temporarily to intervene in the public sphere for specific causes, but maintain that their spaces of worship are private.

Conservative grounded theologies: grounded theologies that seek to conserve the boundaries of the congregation vis-à-vis the public sphere and civil society. While seeking to locate secularization in the public sphere and to preserve religion in the private conversation, these theologies reinforce secular theologies precisely by preserving the spatial demarcations of a secular grounded theology (see, esp., Milbank, 2006).
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>6/4</td>
<td>4 June 1989, the Tiananmen Incident in Beijing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/1</td>
<td>1 July 2003, the first major demonstration against Article 23’s anti-sedition laws (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFC</td>
<td>Ambassadors for Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alliance</td>
<td>Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article 23</td>
<td>Legislation based on Basic Law’s Article 23 to pass anti-sedition laws in Hong Kong</td>
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<tr>
<td>APAPA</td>
<td>Asian Pacific American Political Action Group (California)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACBC</td>
<td>Bay Area Chinese Bible Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Breakthrough Youth Ministries (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASJAFVA</td>
<td>Canadian Alliance for Social Justice and Family Values Association (Vancouver)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Church of Christ in China (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCOWE</td>
<td>Chinese Coordination Centre for World Evangelization (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCIA</td>
<td>Chinese Christians in Action (San Francisco and Vancouver)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCM</td>
<td>Chinese Christian Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCM Canada</td>
<td>Chinese Christian Mission Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCM USA</td>
<td>Chinese Christian Mission, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCH</td>
<td>Chinese Christian Herald Crusades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCS</td>
<td>Chinese Christian Schools (San Leandro and Alameda, CA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCF</td>
<td>Chinese Christian Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCU</td>
<td>Chinese Christian Union (San Francisco)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Chief Executive (Hong Kong)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAR Fund</td>
<td>Christian Education, Development, Advocacy, and Relief Fund (Hong Kong)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>Chinese Family Alliance (San Francisco)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFHKS</td>
<td>Christians for Hong Kong Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFRS</td>
<td>Canadians for Reconciliation Society (Vancouver)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGST</td>
<td>China Graduate School of Theology (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHR</td>
<td>Civil Human Rights Front (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIBC</td>
<td>Chinese Independent Baptist Church (San Francisco and Oakland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPDM</td>
<td>Christian Patriotic Democratic Movement (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPPCC</td>
<td>Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (PRC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRRS</td>
<td>Cultural Regeneration Research Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRY Network</td>
<td>Church Revival Youth Network (Vancouver)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCF</td>
<td>Christian Social Concern Fellowship (Vancouver)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONFAB</td>
<td>National Conference of Chinese American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUHK</td>
<td>Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTS</td>
<td>Dallas Theological Seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVO</td>
<td>Domestic Violence Ordinance (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCCSP</td>
<td>Faith Communities Called to Solidarity with the Poor (Vancouver)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FES</td>
<td>Fellowship of Evangelical Students (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRC</td>
<td>Family Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCCI</td>
<td>Great Commission Center International</td>
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<tr>
<td>GO International</td>
<td>Global Outreach International (San Francisco)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HKCC</td>
<td>Hong Kong Christian Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>HKCI</td>
<td>Hong Kong Christian Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>HKCIC</td>
<td>Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>HKCNP</td>
<td>Hong Kong Church Network for the Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKCRM</td>
<td>Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKCU</td>
<td>Hong Kong Churches' Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKJP</td>
<td>Hong Kong Catholic Diocese's Justice and Peace Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>HKSCS</td>
<td>Hong Kong Sex-Culture Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKWCC</td>
<td>Hong Kong Women's Christian Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LegCo</td>
<td>Legislative Council (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSV</td>
<td>Living Stones Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament (Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>National Council of Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POPUS</td>
<td>Prince of Peace Enterprises, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People's Republic of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCEFC</td>
<td>Richmond Chinese Evangelical Free Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAR</td>
<td>Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARS</td>
<td>Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SODO</td>
<td>Sexual Orientation Discrimination Ordinance (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKH</td>
<td>Sheng Kung Hui, Anglican Church of Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STL</td>
<td>Society for Light and Truth (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUCCESS</td>
<td>United Chinese Community Enrichment Social Services Society (Vancouver)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFC</td>
<td>Traditional Family Coalition (San Francisco Bay Area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBC</td>
<td>The University of British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCEFC</td>
<td>Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Free Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCEMF</td>
<td>Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Ministerial Fellowship</td>
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<tr>
<td>WCC</td>
<td>World Council of Churches</td>
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Justin K.H. Tse
The Feast of St. Augustine, 2013
for Jenny

我依然愛你 就是唯一的道路
我依然珍惜 時時刻刻的幸福
你每個呼吸 每個動作 每個表情
到最後 一定會 依然愛你
到永遠 一定會 依然愛你

－王力宏，依然愛你 (2011)
Chapter 1: Introduction: Cantonese Protestants and secular public spheres

This thesis participates in the academic conversation that is revising the meaning of the word *secular*. It does so because the religion-secular dichotomy is insufficient when interpreting religious engagements with civil societies outside of their congregations, especially among Asian American and Asia-Pacific sites where research has often located religion within religious sites. Indeed, as I examined how Cantonese-speaking Protestants (hereafter, ‘Cantonese Protestants’) have grounded their theologies in the public spheres of the Pacific Rim, my findings pushed me away from conceptualizing Cantonese Protestants as a religious people resisting the secular and directed me toward joining the conversation that revises the meaning of secularization altogether.

Until recently, Cantonese Protestants in North American contexts have often been seen along with other migrant religious groups as primarily concerned with the private spheres of their families and congregations. So too, their counterparts in Hong Kong have generally been seen as wedded to the colonial establishment and are thus perceived as exclusively focused on the well-being of their private lives, not on the public operations of the colony under British rule and the Special Administrative Region under Chinese sovereignty. Accordingly, Cantonese Protestants have generally been viewed as a *religious* population, as opposed to a *secular* one. Together with other migrant religious groups in North America and their transnational counterparts, they have often been studied only within their religious congregations, that is, inside their own private worlds. *Religion*, in short, conventionally exists in a spatial binary that opposes it to the *secular*. What happens
in a religious congregation is not secular, one might deduce. The reverse is also assumed: what belongs in the secular public sphere is not religious.

The activities of Cantonese Protestants in the public sphere have challenged such sacred-profane dichotomies. Since the 2000s, Cantonese Protestants have become known in the secular press for their activities in the public sphere, especially around traditional family values politics. From 2004 to 2010, Cantonese Protestants engaged in public demonstrations against same-sex marriage in California. They opposed Mayor Gavin Newsom’s distribution of gender-neutral marriage licences in 2004 and supported Proposition 8 to limit marriage between one man and one woman in 2008. In Vancouver, political commentators noted a ‘shifting immigrant vote’ toward the Conservative Party (Skelton 2004) that culminated in the successful election of Cantonese evangelicals to Parliament, such as Alice Wong in 2008 and Wai Young in 2011. In Hong Kong, conservative evangelicals publicly challenged the Sexual Orientation Discrimination Ordinance in 2003, a contest that continues to the present day with debates around whether Chief Executive C.Y. Leung should conduct a public consultation on sexual orientation discrimination.

Surprised by the public activities of such a presumably private population, the press has often framed Cantonese Protestants as a migrant religious population that mixes the religious values formed within their congregations with secular democratic politics. These accounts often allege that it is congregations that are the shaping forces for these engagements with the public sphere. For example, Asian American scholar Gordon Chang offered New York Times journalist Gerry Shih a seemingly plausible sociological explanation for Chinese Christian support for Proposition 8: “These churches are homes, ready-made
networks for many of these immigrants to find a place. They provide solace and support, material and spiritual... There’s a strong sense of morality, of family cohesion, of personal conservatism that might resonate’ (Shih, 2010). So too, throughout the elections in Vancouver, Liberal Member of Parliament (MP) incumbent Raymond Chan charged the Conservative Party for soliciting churches and politicizing congregations, combining a tax-cutting political platform with socially conservative values that would appeal to middle-class Hongkonger evangelicals (Skelton, 2004; McDonald, 2010). In Hong Kong, megachurches such as Yan Fook Evangelical Free Church in Lai Chi Kok have been picketed because pastoral statements from the pulpit objecting to the incorporation of same-sex couples into a domestic violence ordinance were thought to sway an entire uncritical congregation toward homophobic stances. Congregations, it is thus alleged, are incubating spaces for the conservative ideas of traditional family structures, individual initiative, and uncritical market fundamentalism.

This thesis challenges the geographical claims that underwrite these assumptions about Cantonese Protestant congregations. While Lily Kong (2001) has called on geographers of religion to observe how religions operate in spaces ‘beyond the officially sacred,’ a more pertinent question to ask is: what becomes of religion in secular public spaces? My strategy will be to analyze the various ways in which Cantonese Protestants have engaged the public spheres of the Asia-Pacific region, specifically in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (hereafter, ‘Metro Vancouver’), the San Francisco Bay Area (hereafter, the ‘Bay Area’), and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (hereafter, ‘Hong Kong’). My analysis focuses on what they do concretely in these civil societies and examines how they understand what they are
doing spatially. The research question is thus: *what are the imaginations and practices that constitute the engagements of Cantonese Protestants with the civil societies of Metro Vancouver, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Hong Kong SAR?* The argument that I shall advance throughout this thesis is that *most Cantonese Protestant conceptions of the public sphere are in fact theologically secular, reinforcing the privacy of religion while leveraging their self-defined ethnicities to make their mark on public space.*

This argument troubles how words like *religion* and *secularity* are conventionally understood. The usual definitions of these terms have long appeared to be straightforward in the social sciences. Typically speaking, religion often signified what anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973: 90) terms

*(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.*

In contrast, the *secular* was usually assumed to be the replacement of such a system with one focused on an immanent sphere of action while excluding conceptions of the supernatural to various degrees (see Lilla, 2008). Together, they formed a *religion-secular binary* so that what was religious generally could not be conceptualized as secular, and what was secular should not be mixed with the religious. They were, if one wants to use geographical terms, located in different spaces.

However, recent conversations in religious studies and theology have troubled this binary notion of religion and the secular. Indeed, philosopher Charles Taylor (2007: 16) derisively calls these formulations ‘subtraction stories’ that assume that modern secularism has simply vacuumed religion out of modern consciousness. Because of the challenge presented by Cantonese Protestant engagements with the public sphere, this
thesis employs religion and the secular in unconventional, non-binary ways that require some working definitions from the outset (see the ‘Glossary’). Indeed, because of a growing consensus that religion and the secular are concepts that have been theologically derived, this thesis understands theologies as narratives that attempt to make sense of supernatural action in the world. In other words, theologies of all varieties become grounded when they inform how places are constructed, social relations are defined, economic processes are networked, political configurations are cemented, and built environments are erected. That geographical process is what this thesis terms grounded theologies.

Religion and the secular are subcategories of grounded theologies. By religion, I simply refer to the systematization of narratives about supernatural action in the world. By the secular, I mean the grounding of particular theological narratives that seek to bracket supernatural action to sites designated as sacred, that is, places that secular theologies deem are appropriate spaces to discuss and practice the supernatural. Ideologically, secular theological narratives have made it seem that secular geographies are sites where theology may be considered irrelevant, relativized, or inappropriate. However, there is little ideological consistency among secular theologies; instead, there are progressive and conservative variants that ‘religious’ practitioners often reinforce in their theological practices.

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1 By the supernatural, I am referring to what Jesuit theologian Henri de Lubac (1946/1991) terms le surnaturel, the in-between space between the purely immanent and the purely transcendent (see Milbank, 2005). Using this term in a slightly heterodox way, I am expanding this category to what Charles Taylor (2007: 16) calls ‘any form of interpenetration between the things of Nature, on one hand, and the “supernatural” on the other, be this understood in terms of the one transcendent God, or of Gods or spirits, or magic forces, or whatever.’ In Taylor’s conceptualization, these theologies need not be orthodox in any sort of dogmatic way; in fact, as theologian John Milbank (2006) argues, secular narratives are themselves theological because they purport to define what religion is and what relevance, if any, it has to the public sphere.
Mirroring the conventional usages of ‘religion’ and the ‘secular,’ the progressive-conservative binary must also be problematized and reworked. Conventionally, these terms have been conceptualized as temporal words. *Progressive* typically refers to the inexorable march of modern equality over against ancient prejudicial structures held together by religious institutionalization. *Conservative* usually denotes those who place oppositional obstacles to the progress of equality by appealing to medieval religious structures in a sort of backward, uncritical way.

However, this thesis rejects this temporal usage of *progressive* and *conservative* because Cantonese Protestants seldom use these terms this way. Instead, they often deploy them spatially, as my data will show. Following the lead of the empirical work, then, I shall use *progressive* to refer to theological practitioners who negotiate the religion-secular division by arguing that spaces designated for ‘religion’ should be opened up for advance into the secular civil society. In this way, while ‘religion’ has often been cordoned off in the modern world into religious spaces, theological practitioners from progressive sites spatially progress into secular geographies, bringing their theologies to bear on the conventionally ‘secular’ public sphere (see Casanova, 1994). By contrast, *conservatives* contend that religious spaces should be policed against secular transgression, often deploying arguments about religious freedom and privacy to conserve religious space for exclusively supernatural action. Neither of these approaches usually transcends the religion-secular binary; instead, both are products of a secularization process that has bent religious theologies to reify divisions between sacred and profane places. In this sense, the
grounded theologies that undergird ‘religions’ can in fact be secular when they reinforce the binaries wrought by the secularization thesis.2

These revisionist definitions in turn probe this thesis’s use of public sphere and civil society as spaces located outside of religious congregations, that is, the secular part of the religion-secular binary that is often misconstrued as non-theological. A revisionist understanding of the public sphere would see it as a space of grounded theologies, including but not limited to ‘secular’ ones. This effort at revision also requires some working definitions. By civil society, I refer to Douglass et al’s (2007) conceptualization of a society of citizens that was in tension historically with the state and currently with the market under neoliberal state regimes. While this social configuration has typically been conceptualized as a space of resistance to both state and market governance, I envision it more as a group of citizens who have a forum where both resistance and collaboration are items for discussion. That contested forum, one that lies outside of congregations but in which Cantonese Protestants participate, is what I will term the public sphere. Because these spaces are the sites in which this thesis explores the grounding of Cantonese Protestant theologies, I will conceptualize this public forum as theologically secular, that is, implicitly requiring religion to be cordoned off in the private sphere. Such a secular understanding of religion does not escape the rubric of grounded theologies; it remains a theology because it has a narrative that prescribes a place for the supernatural. In other words, while I trouble the religion-secular dichotomy, I do not contest the binary between the public and the private that my research subjects expressed precisely because the

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2 While this claim may be frustrating for some, I will conclude in chapter 8 that secularization can be transcended, if that is indeed one’s project. After all, there are theological options that fall neither into ‘progressive’ nor ‘conservative’ positions.
project of secularization as a theological process is precisely to create public and private spheres, demarcating that which concerns a public conceptualized as a civil society and that which should remain private.

This thesis focuses on a specific population that leverages their ethnic Chineseness to make inroads into secular civil societies: Protestants whose mother tongue is Cantonese. Cantonese notions of Chineseness are usually dependent on an understanding of democracy shaped by political subjectification in Hong Kong, for while not all who speak Cantonese come from Hong Kong, the dialect’s enshrinement as Hong Kong’s lingua franca facilitates the formation of trans-Pacific Cantonese communities. As a space separate from the PRC, Hong Kong has been fertile ground for imagining Chinese subjectivities that make democracy possible in the face of both historic colonial British rule and a (post)Maoist totalitarian regime.

My findings have yielded very few transnational connections between the North American sites and Hong Kong in the geography of these public engagements. By transnational, I refer to Basch et al.’s (1994) classic understanding of how migrants may enact social fields that position their lifeworlds simultaneously in both their places of origin and places of destination. Transnational migration researchers have long observed in turn that this means that political work done in the destination site may affect politics at home, and vice versa (see also Levitt 2001; Foner 2005). Certainly, historians such as Madeline Hsu (2004), Him Mark Lai (2008), and Lisa Rose Mar (2010) have noted that Chinese American and Chinese Canadian history is rife with transnational political work. So too, more contemporary scholars have often been interested in split family arrangements, cross-border work schemes, and transnational religious connections, including in the Hong
Kong-Vancouver context (see Olds 1996; Waters 2002, 2003, 2008; Mitchell 2004; Ley and Kobayashi 2005; Ley 2010; Tse 2011; Ley and Tse 2013). However, my caution is that leveraging ethnicity in civil society should not be taken as an indicator of transnationality. Instead, my interviews suggest that despite the existence of private transnational networks in familial arrangements, migration motivations, and even institutional connections, public democratic participation forces migrants to pay close attention to their local surroundings, suggesting a political discontinuity with Chinese North American history. Granted, it is true that transnational events like the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, the handover of Hong Kong to the PRC in 1997, and the recent protest against ‘national education’ in Hong Kong in 2012 have been galvanizing moments for transnational solidarities among Cantonese-speaking populations in the Pacific region (see MP Smith, 2001; Ang, 2001). However, the transnational social fields that these political events engendered often took place within migrants’ private lives. With regard to the public question that this thesis explores, the issues that spark democratic participation in civil society are local in the sense that transnational social fields are not. Becoming involved in the democratic debates surrounding the passage of same-sex marriage, the election of local candidates, and negotiations around urban planning require forms of settlement and local knowledge (Preston et al., 2006; Kobayashi and Preston, 2007). What I found, in other words, suggests that it is not transnational social fields, but rather knowledges acquired locally, that are deployed when Cantonese Protestants engage the public sphere.\(^3\)

\(^3\) I fully acknowledge Lisa Rose Mar’s (2010) cautionary tale that this argument may sound exactly like how Chinese Americans and Chinese Canadians subverted the Chicago School of Sociology’s ‘oriental question’ data about transnational movements by hiding transnational social fields from researchers. I am not denying the existence of transnational social fields between Hong Kong and North America. I am saying that those geographies are seldom leveraged for democratic participation in each local civil society in the ways that Basch et al. (1994), Levitt (2001), and Foner (2005) describe their research populations as doing, or even as
Because Cantonese Protestants frame their participation in civil society as ethnic Chinese contributions to the public sphere, let me reiterate this thesis’s central argument: *most Cantonese Protestant conceptions of the public sphere are in fact theologically secular because they reinforce the privacy of religion while leveraging their self-defined ethnicities to make their mark on public space.* Even as the press raises apocalyptic fears about a putative right-wing theocracy enabled by migrant voters, my thesis challenges this xenophobia by probing how religious spaces are actually theologically constituted. Probing the ways that Cantonese Protestants themselves articulate their engagements with the public sphere, this thesis demonstrates that in the process of engaging the public sphere, religion may be kept private while ethnicity is foregrounded as a public strategy, though it does not always invoke a transnational social field. In so doing, these practices inadvertently reinforce the secularization thesis by keeping congregations private and autonomous from outside governance; they are *secular* insofar as they cordon off religion in a particular geography while assuming that the rest of the world operates according to non-religious rationalities.

Following the terminology in studies of Protestantism (Wuthnow, 1988; Jeung 2005), the differing ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ Cantonese Protestant congregational ontologies can be described as the difference between ‘mainline’ and ‘evangelical’ Protestant theologies. Cantonese Protestant conservatives are often theologically ‘evangelical,’ for they conceptualize their congregations as spaces where the practices of worship and evangelism should be practiced. Dividing the congregation from civil society, we shall see that such spatial ontologies ironically amplify the appeal of conservative strategies of ethnicity in the public sphere, for ethnicity can be used to justify individual

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*Chinese Americans and Chinese Canadians historically supported Sun Yatsen’s revolutionary movements (Him and Hsu 2008).*
participation in secular politics apart from institutional support. These theologies and ethnic strategies are contested by progressives, who often labeled ‘mainline Protestant.’ Espousing a ‘progressive’ approach to congregations that blurs the line between the ‘church’ and the ‘world,’ these critics build solidarities both within denominations and in civil society to resist contemporary forms of racism. Again, let me emphasize that these are not categories that I am imposing onto the data. Instead, this spatial revision of ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ arises from the interviews and focus groups themselves.

While I attempt to keep theoretical framing and empirical work balanced throughout the thesis, the whole thesis can be divided in two parts. The first part (chapters 2 and 3) frames the thesis by outlining the theoretical approaches that this study takes. Chapter 2 defends my application of the secularization thesis to an Asia-Pacific and Asian North American population that is not often described in these terms. Expanding on grounded theologies, it first deals with the ‘new paradigm’ in the sociology of religion, demonstrating that its over-usage in studying Asian North American and Pacific religions has led to an overly triumphalist dismissal of secularization. It then underscores the reality that secularization is a shift in theological orientation, not an amorphous decline of religion. Finally, it introduces the notion of Pacific secularities, varieties of secularization experienced in the Pacific Rim as its nation-states and populations grapple with the colonizing legacies of orientalizing racism in both the Asia-Pacific and the Americas.

Chapter 3 opens with the methodological problem of what James Davison Hunter (1991) calls the ‘culture wars’ (see Douthat, 2011; BS Gregory, 2012). The culture wars are a methodological problem because studying them presents a temptation to be implicated on either side. This concern is heightened by the fact that I am myself a Protestant
Christian who is a Cantonese-speaking Chinese North American. This chapter thus argues that *transcending* the culture wars is a methodological imperative. The way to do this is to show that both conservatives and progressives in the culture wars employ secular strategies to achieve their ends to enshrine their values on immanent space. Taking this transcendent approach allows one to question the theologies that underwrite the agendas of both sides instead of having to choose one over the other.

In the second part of the thesis (chapters 4-7), I perform an extended analysis of how Cantonese Protestants articulate the geographical relationship between their church congregations and the secular civil societies that they engage. In chapter 4, I highlight the historical newness of ‘conservative’ evangelicals in each of the sites and explore how they have come to dominate Cantonese Protestant networks since the 1950s. While ‘progressive’ mainline Protestants once dominated Cantonese Protestant geographies before the 1970s, revival movements, student migrations, and the establishment of evangelical churches and organizations contested this dominance on ethnic and theological grounds. This contestation resulted in a difference of spatial imaginations. For mainline Protestants, engagement with civil society often brought the church congregation as an institution to dispute social injustices and distribute social services. On the other hand, evangelicals saw these interventions as compromising the theological purity of the church and sought a stricter separation between congregation and secular public spheres. As I explained earlier, both reinforced the secularizing theologies of viewing the church congregation as a religious space that needs to be translated into the language of ethnicity in the public sphere. The mainline Protestants often regarded their congregations as means to secular ends of liberation and social service. In their separation of the church and
the world, though, the evangelicals also unintentionally reinforced the notion that congregations were private spaces, problematizing their relevance to a secular public sphere.

In chapter 5, I propose that the iconic sexuality debates that have come to define Cantonese Protestant interventions in the Pacific Rim are more secular than previously imagined. While these politics have been labeled as homophobic both in the academic literature and in popular discourse, I suggest that labeling these politics as such precludes an exploration into why these discourses proliferate. They must instead be read through a Cantonese Protestant imagination of the public sphere as a rational civil society of private, enterprising individuals who should be able to discuss social matters with civility. This hermeneutic is a geographical one. Separating the church from the world, individual evangelicals engaged civil societies as Chinese citizens through grassroots protests in public spaces. Same-sex marriage was not the only cause for protest. Physical spaces that were perceived to threaten traditional families were also targets for demonstrations, such as sites of legalized prostitution, drug dispensaries, and casinos. This chapter is thus about how Cantonese Protestants, especially of the evangelical variety, contest public space through what they imagine to be ‘Chinese’ family values supported by ‘Christian’ moral norms.

In chapter 6, I move from contesting public space to the building of service-providing congregational and parachurch spaces. As those who espouse post-secular geographies allege, these services appear to be provided apolitically while empowering a celebratory mixture of religious persons in faith-based organizations (FBOs) (Beaumont and Baker, 2011; Cloke and Beaumont, 2013). However, in this chapter, I show that many
Cantonese Protestant FBOs and churches have in fact been restructured, facilitating their work of translating their theologies into language that facilitated their inadvertent reinforcement of secularization. Through Cantonese Protestant attempts to provide social services, this chapter explores the ways that their secularizing efforts are in turn contested by fellow Cantonese Protestants who might deem their grounded theologies either politically ineffective or theologically problematic. These contestations in turn suggest that the very notion of post-secularization must be braked, for the entry of restructured FBOs into a secular public sphere on secular terms can hardly be considered a theological sea-change in civil society.

In chapter 7, I consider how Cantonese Protestants engage local democratic politics. The grassroots political awakening in 1989 during the Tiananmen incident is often described as a transnational political moment tying the three metropolitan areas together. However, the workings of democracy are often based on local geographies. Again, democratic spaces are found outside of the congregation. Deploying a secular positionality that emphasizes being private citizens of Chinese ethnicity, Cantonese Protestants aim to be perceived as contributing to the public, secular good with their activities unattached to the space of the church. Instead, they highlight their ethnicity, leveraging their Chineseness as a shaping force on their intensely local contributions without simultaneously invoking transnationalism.

I conclude in chapter 8 with an assessment of how this spatial analysis challenges the prevailing wisdom in geographies of religion, ethnicity, and politics and how that challenge can contribute a peacemaking voice to the polarized civil societies of the Pacific region. This, I will suggest continually in what follows, can be done by investigating the
geographies of grounded theologies that shape the various ethnic and religious networks in contestation in each site. By mapping these theological and ethnic disputes, we will be able to discover the origins of the congregational ontologies that are under contestation. Only then can we move the conversation to a discussion of how a truly pacific politics can be developed, one in which secular academic reflection has a hand in theological reflection for the church.
Chapter 2: Grounded theologies in the Pacific Rim: placing Pacific secularities

2.1 Introduction: the difficulty of placing secularization

This chapter considers the notion that secularities in the Pacific region are theological orientations. As I have argued elsewhere (Tse, 2013a), religion and the secular are not polar opposites, although in popular discourse, the secular often refers to the vacating of religion from the public sphere. Charles Taylor (2007: 22) has called these narratives of secularization ‘subtraction stories’ in which modernity is explained by ‘human beings having lost, or sloughed off, or liberated themselves from certain earlier, continuing horizons, or illusions, or limitations of knowledge. Indeed, the secular is itself a modern religious orientation. After all, the word secular is derived from the Latin saeculum, a medieval Christian theological concept of time which originally referred to ‘the interval between fall and eschaton where coercive justice, private property and impaired natural reason must make shift to cope with the unredeemed effects of sinful humanity’ (Milbank, 2006: 9). In its modern usage, the secular simply refers to the concentration of certain theological formulations on a this-worldly frame of reference, such as when they seek to know the divine from a purely natural order, when they seek to use that natural knowledge as theological justification for immanent projects of social betterment, and when they posit that a ‘secular’ public sphere exists externally to a private religious one (Asad, 2003; Milbank, 2006; Taylor, 2007). In this framework, theological conceptions of the supernatural—what is conventionally labeled religion—are often imagined to be private, that is, irrelevant to the public concerns with making life better in a natural, observable secular domain. When theologies are relevant, they relate more to how the secular public
could be a more cohesive, better-functioning society with little reference to an irrelevant transcendent sphere.

From this genealogy, it is arguable that a secular framework still remains a theological one, for it attempts to say something about the supernatural, albeit on purely natural terms. In this sense, the notion that religion can be reduced to social functionality is itself a theology because it attempts to say something about what the supernatural is for and how it should be explored. Accordingly, in another piece, I contended that both 

*religion and the secular are grounded theologies,*

performative practices of place-making informed by understandings of the transcendent. They remain theologies because they involve some view of the transcendent, including some that take a negative view toward its very existence or relevance to spatial practices; they are grounded insofar as they inform immanent processes of cultural place-making, the negotiation of social identities, and the formations of political boundaries, including in geographies where theological analyses do not seem relevant.

Within this definition, *religion refers to particular grounded theological narratives about the supernatural,* while the *secular names specifically ‘the grounded theologies that focus on this-worldly concerns,* whether by attempting to create consensus among different positions through dialogue, by privatizing transcendent experiences as irrelevant to the immanent, or by imposing a political regime to eradicate ‘religion’ altogether’ (Tse, 2013a: 2). Indeed, even strictly materialist views are premised on particular conceptions of the supernatural that they are rejecting, suggesting that those who hold to strong forms of materialism in denial of the supernatural first have to do theology before they can reject it. Instead of being diametrically opposed to theology and religion, the *secular and the secularization process* are better described as the grounding of particular theologies. To locate Cantonese Protestants within the secularization thesis is, in other words, one way of
describing the theological imaginations that inform their practices.

However, making connections between Cantonese Protestants and secularization remains difficult because of the baggage of the word ‘secular.’ There are two key complications. First, it is often claimed that because secularization is a Western phenomenon with a Euro-American genealogy, it cannot be validly applied to non-Western contexts (Kong, 2010; Bubandt and van Beet, 2012). In other words, to attempt to read Cantonese Protestants as practising various forms of secular theologies allegedly imposes alien categories on their everyday lives. Second, despite the work done in religious studies clarifying the multiple meanings of the word secular, the misperception that it narrowly refers to the decline of religion persists even within the academy. Because of this misunderstanding, the discovery of religious, spiritual, or transcendent phenomena in contemporary spaces is often claimed to automatically disprove the secularization thesis. This misperception especially plagues the current work in sociology of religion, where it has been alleged that the growth of migrant religious congregational spaces pushes back on the notion of secularity.

In this chapter, I move in three parts to dismantle the notion that secularization is irrelevant to the Pacific Rim region. By the Pacific Rim, I refer to the region that is bound by the easternmost side of the Asian continent (typically known as the Asia-Pacific) and the west coast of the Americas. First, I examine the contradictory definitions of secularization in what has come to be known as the new paradigm in the sociology of religion, an

\footnote{I am fully cognizant of the economistic origins of the term Pacific Rim (see Dicken, 2011). As I shall show in the third section of this chapter, the usage of ‘Asian values’ in economic globalization has enormous import for conceptualizing Asia-Pacific secular theologies. While I am aware of Asian American critiques of the term \textit{e.g.} Omatsu, 1990), my use of ‘Pacific Rim’ is both pragmatic and intentionally highlights the shaping forces of a global economy on the subjectivities of Cantonese Protestants.
influential school of thought that claims that the secularization thesis has been disproven because of the vitality of American religion due to migration influxes. This includes migrants from within the Pacific Rim, especially the subjects of this thesis whose lives are circumscribed by the Pacific region, as they are migrants from the Asia-Pacific who settle on the west coast of the Americas. Contending that the ‘secular’ has been insufficiently theorized in the new paradigm as a simple absence of religion, I turn in the second part to an interdisciplinary exploration of the ‘secular’ as a set of grounded theologies. While these conversations have often focused on Euro-American phenomena, the third section demonstrates that they are relevant to a discussion of the Pacific Rim, due to the history of Euro-American colonization in the Asia-Pacific and the legacies of orientalizing racism in Asian North America. Because these modern imperialistic processes introduced secular concepts to these populations, scholars must not be ideologically blinded to what I will call Pacific secularities, secular grounded theologies in the Pacific Rim that use religion to grapple with the histories of colonialism. In short, my objective in this chapter is to demonstrate that the theological orientations of religious practice in the Pacific Rim can be understood through the rubrics of secular theologies.

2.2 The ‘new paradigm’ and the secularization thesis: revisiting congregational studies

This section reviews the ‘new paradigm’ in the sociology of religion because of its widely felt impact on Pacific Rim religions. First, I examine the implicit assumption that the new paradigm is primarily about how religious practitioners conceptualize their identities as intersecting subjectivities. These identities, as is often noted, are usually formed along
gendered, generational, and racialized lines. The alleged loci of formation are congregational spaces where religious practitioners gather. However, this agenda has only been a partial focus of the new paradigm. A more overarching claim advanced by its main proponents is that the secularization thesis in America has been disproven. Because American congregations are part of a new religious marketplace, they are said to compete for more attendees based on the relevance of their message and their participation in civic activities. This ‘new religious economics,’ as Finke and Stark (2000) call it, purportedly makes it difficult to argue that religion is no longer salient in public life. Departing from the new paradigm’s assessment of secularization, my contention is that the secularization thesis does not merely pertain to the presence of religion. Rather, it is a theological and philosophical way of thinking about religion. In this section, my purpose is to show that secularization, not identity formation, is the primary focus in the new paradigm in the sociology of religion. This in turn is a set-up for my broader argument that Asian North American and Asia-Pacific geographies of religion should be considered as part of a ‘secular age’ that is itself an unfolding theological process in contemporary societies (Taylor, 2007).

2.2.1 Sites of identity formation: congregational spaces as private voluntary associations

It is often assumed that social scientists studying migrant religious groups want to explore how migrant religious practitioners construct their identities. Many of these studies deal with the migration experience from the so-called Old World (both Europe and Asia) to the New World in North America. For example, Peggy Levitt (2007) captures this Old World-New World dynamic when she argues that migrants, whether from Ireland or
India, Latin America or East Asia, come to America to pursue the American Dream. This pursuit means that congregations are not insular parallel communities that feed religious extremism. While the most Christian nation has become the most religiously pluralistic country in the world (Eck, 2001, 2007), then, it does not follow that these religions engage in violent political conflict. In fact, R. Stephen Warner (1998: 8) asserts that because these migration trends were due to the United States having intervened in their countries during the Cold War, ‘many of these old chickens have come home to roost,’ and it would not be in their interest to feed religious extremism in America. Instead, by making America their home, these new migrants enshrine their new religious communities in America’s democratic landscape.

Warner conceptualizes migrant religions based on the work of two theorists: Alexis de Tocqueville and Will Herberg. De Tocqueville (2004) argued that civic participation in America is based on common life in voluntary associations, including in religious congregations. Herberg’s (1960) classic Protestant-Catholic-Jew suggested that migrants to America were more likely to shed their ethnic characteristics over their religious ones as they integrated into American civil society. Combining these two theories, Warner outlined a ‘new paradigm’ for the sociological study of religion in America. By new paradigm, Warner (1993/2005) meant that a model of religion in Europe in which church life once institutionally dominated all of everyday life was different from one developed in the New World of America. In the New World, religious congregations were institutions that mandated attendance, but gatherings that one chose to attend. Indeed, Herberg had suggested ‘that religion, as the most purely voluntary of American institutions, was the culturally favored way for people in the United States to be both indisputably American and
legitimately loyal to some pre- or supra-American identity’ (Warner 1993/2005: 6).

Herberg (1955/1960) himself puts it more starkly. Premising his account on Oscar Handlin’s statement (1951/2002) that ‘the immigrants were American history’ (Herberg 1955/1960: 6; see Handlin 1951/2002: 3), Herberg argues that the cultural marker of the ‘American Way of Life’ is that the generations after the migrants would find religious communities as sites for identity formation:

The newcomer is expected to change many things about him as he becomes American—nationality, language, culture. One thing, however, he is not expected to change—and that is his religion. And so it is religion that with the third generation has become the differentiating element and the context of self-identification and social location. (Herberg 1955/1960: 23).

As church historian Timothy Smith (1978: 1175) notes, the intensity of religious experience for migrants to America makes the migration process a ‘theologizing experience’: ‘an intense interest in the religious meaning of their break with the past lay behind the preoccupation of both clergy and lay emigrants with religious organizations; and this interest stemmed from formidable psychic challenges’ rooted in the loss of a childhood home (Smith 1978: 1174). The task in sociologies of religion, then, seems to be to investigate the role of religion in the formation of migrant subjectivities in America.

Sociologists of religion have thus focused on the role of immigrant congregations as voluntary associations in the development of new American identities. In a collection of congregational ethnographies undertaken via this new paradigm, Warner (1998: 8-9) argues for a focus on religious congregations, defined as ‘face to face religious assemblies’ often constructed along ethnic lines. Warner (1998: 9) contends that he and his research team used this unit of analysis because they showed ‘what new ethnic and immigrant groups were doing together religiously in the United States, and what manner of religious
institutions they were developing of, by, and for themselves.’ A study led by Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz (2000) justified these congregational approaches in Houston, for while their sample of thirteen immigrant congregations included Hindu and Buddhist temples where adherents do not congregate in Christian liturgical fashion, they too define congregations as ‘very broadly, groupings of people who gather together for religious purposes and who create an ongoing structure in which to worship, share a religious tradition, interact as a group, and attempt to raise their children with specific religious beliefs, customs, rituals, and values’ (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000: 21).

As Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000: 17-20) note, key themes that usually emerge from these congregations revolve around how generational, gendered, and class dynamics intersect with a new American context. Kelly Chong (1998) contends that a Korean congregation in Chicago associated being Christian with Korean patriarchal norms, practices that were contested by the second generation. On the same token, Ai Ra Kim (1996) and Jung Ha Kim (1997) detail how women in Korean Christian churches resist these hierarchies by learning to acknowledge their own contributions over against discourses of patriarchy that render them invisible. Churches are also perceived as sites of national integration: Fenggang Yang (1999) ascribes a high level of personal agency to PRC migrants as they selectively negotiated what it meant for them to be Chinese, American, and Christian at the same time. As Kenneth Guest (2003) notes, post-1980s Fuzhounese migrants to New York’s Chinatown introduced a class element into congregational studies when they collectively re-interpreted their economic circumstances in religious terms. Congregations are also known to construct their internal dynamics in relation to other religious communities, as a Korean Buddhist temple in Southern California framed its
gendered and generational relations vis-à-vis the practices of Korean evangelicals (Suh, 2004). As Russell Jeung (2005) shows in second-generation Asian American congregations in the San Francisco Bay Area, pan-ethnic concepts dealing with what it means to be Asian can also be engendered through congregational work. The construction of these dynamics is intensive, leading to Carolyn Chen’s (2008) thesis that Taiwanese Christian and Buddhist sites in Southern California intensified religious practice for Taiwanese migrants, as they used congregational life as a vehicle to become more fully American.

Canadian work on immigrant congregations has tended to emphasize the service orientations of these institutions while debating whether they contribute to the national Canadian multicultural discourse. Beattie and Ley (2003) examine the historic German churches of the 1950s-1970s in Vancouver, demonstrating that they once served as service hubs for new German migrants to the city. The trouble, they revealed, was that as the migrant generation passed and a new English-speaking one grew up, many congregations either underwent ‘cultural funerals’ because their services were no longer needed or re-adapted to form large multicultural congregations. Ley (2008) has also compared the German congregational experience with newer Chinese and Korean migrants to Vancouver, noting how the first-generation tended to practice ‘bonding social capital’ with immigrant services like a ‘walking yellow pages’ while ministry to younger generations often involved ‘bridging social capital’ with young people needing more emotional care than material service. Ley argues that these immigrant churches fill a service gap created by a neoliberal Canadian state. Yet as I have also argued, these services tend to only be available for intra-ethnic purposes, for practices that invoke language and ethnic background often tacitly reinforce these congregations as mono-ethnic social spaces (Tse, 2011). However,
reflecting more broadly, many have noted the proliferation of religious migrant spaces throughout Canada. Remarking on how Christianity in Canada suffered a ‘discourse of loss’ (Bramadat and Seljak, 2008; see also Bibby, 1988), Paul Bramadat and David Seljak also argue that new immigrant communities also bring new faiths and spiritual revitalization to old ones in the Canadian multicultural landscape (Bramadat and Seljak, 2009; Ley and Tse, 2013).

However, the voluntary associations that compose religious congregations exist primarily in the private sphere, for their activities do not usually receive state funding. Such privacy does not suggest that these immigrant congregations are insignificant. Instead, it indicates that there is an imagined geography of public and private boundaries at work in the making of immigrant congregations. Indeed, Nancy Ammerman (2005) points out that American religious congregations are unique because their resource bases lie not in public funding, but in the volunteers who fund and staff these voluntary associations.

Similarly, Ley (2008) implies that services have been passed on to immigrant congregations as private organizations filling a public service gap. Indeed, when Paul Bramadat and Matthias Koenig (2009) ask how the state should govern religious institutions in an age of international migration, they implicitly position religious institutions as private organizations and then debate how public governance applies to them. Yet the inevitable question that these observations generate is: because secularization is premised on the public-public divide, how do congregations in the new paradigm address the secularization thesis?
2.2.2 Re-visiting the New Paradigm: revising the secularization thesis in America

What I am suggesting is that a focus on new migrant subjectivities does not fully capture the research agenda of the new paradigm. Instead, the geography of private, voluntary religious associations matters because it tackles a larger question in the social science of religion: the validity of the secularization thesis in the face of overwhelming empirical evidence of still-existing religious phenomena. Because Warner draws from the seminal work of Will Herberg (1955/1960), a good place to begin answering this question is in Herberg’s work. Protestant-Catholic-Jew bills itself as a study of religious sociology in America. Its central question also concerned the secularization thesis. It asked: in light of religious revivals and higher rates of churchgoing in the 1950s, could it be said that the American religious landscape was undergoing a secularization process? In other words, if religion did not seem to be in decline, was the secularization thesis still valid?

Herberg (1955/60) answered this question through the assimilation thesis. While this seemed to give primacy to identity formation, the larger question he was trying to answer was why there was a religious revival in America in the 1950s at the same time that the secularization thesis was heavily propagated. Herberg concluded that two processes were at work. First, religion in 1950s America could be described as consistently salient even for second- and third-generation migrants who continued to describe themselves as Protestants, Catholics, or Jews. However, second, these religions were secularized through the American assimilation process. In short, while religion might be publicly seen as an

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5 I am profoundly indebted to Russell Jeung for alerting me to this theoretical possibility in comments that he made as a discussant on a paper that I gave at the American Academy of Religion in 2011 in San Francisco. While he locates his work within the new paradigm (see Jeung, 2005; Chen and Jeung, 2012), I am very grateful that he pointed out that what I was really saying about Cantonese Protestants was that they reinforced the secularization thesis, a claim that ironically challenges the heart of the new paradigm’s project precisely to contest the secularization thesis.
identity marker, Herberg (uncharitably) suggested that the theological content of religious belief was privately vacuous.

While drawing from Herberg’s work, Warner (2005) answers the secularization question differently from Herberg. Instead of arguing for the private secularization of religion, Warner contends that the secularization thesis has been altogether disproven by American models of religion. Hailing his own work and that of his peers as a ‘new paradigm’ in the sociology of religion, Warner argues that American religion was different from ‘old world’ models of religion where, as Peter Berger (1967) once put it, a ‘sacred canopy’ had institutionalized religion as a worldview. Warner bases this vision on de Tocqueville’s (1835/1840/2004) remarks in Democracy in America. De Tocqueville argued that the new American nation-state seemed in the early nineteenth century to be a hybrid between a religiously devout and wholly secular country because it emphasized more generally the participation of citizens in voluntary associations, including religious ones. For their part, religious spheres were part of the private sphere, outside of public affairs:

> In America, religion is a world apart in which the clergyman reigns but which he is careful never to leave. Within its confines he guides men’s minds. Beyond those limits, he leaves them to their own devices and abandons them to the independence and instability intrinsic to their nature and to the times. (de Tocqueville 2004: 508)

For de Tocqueville, participation in these private, voluntary spheres tempered the individualistic self-interest of Americans, providing balance between their public and private lives: ‘Americans, who mix so easily in political assemblies and tribunals, are careful, by contrast, to divide into very distinct small associations to savor the pleasures of private life apart from others’ (de Tocqueville 2004: 709). Religion in America is thus marked by what Warner (1993/2005) calls a ‘new voluntarism’ that stems from American religious history, not a European institutional worldview. Americans are not compelled by
an institutional system to be part of religious life; instead, they freely volunteer their time to be part of religious congregations—de Tocqueville’s voluntary associations—such that American religious life is ultimately democratic in nature (see Ammerman, 2005). The proof, as Warner posits, is that religious communities in America end up espousing *de facto* congregational life made up and governed by citizen-volunteers. The presence of these congregations allegedly disproves the secularization thesis.

However, the question remains: what precisely *is* secularization? Already in the foregoing discussion, two understandings of the ‘secular’ have been advanced. First, there is Herberg’s understanding of secularization as religion that has lost its internal meaning while keeping labels like Protestant, Catholic, and Jew as markers of identity. But second, Warner’s argument against the secularization thesis is that the very presence of religiously-based voluntary associations demonstrates that religion in America is not in decline. Warner’s reading of Herberg thus skews Herberg’s original take on secularization, for Warner suggests that the American religious landscape cannot be described as secularized because the proliferation of a new religious paradigm is an empirical subversion of the secularization thesis. Religion has not vacated public life, it is claimed. Instead, a new religious marketplace has emerged with consumers able to make free, rational choices about which religious congregations they want to join (Finke and Stark, 2000). These choices are often about the appeal of these congregations, it is further claimed. More conservative congregations with higher intensities of religious life often win out in this marketplace because of their ability to deliver more passionate and totalizing religious messages. Religion in a new religious marketplace is thus not a watering-down of religion; it leads to an intensification of religion.
Nevertheless, the real question that has not been answered by both Herberg and the new paradigm is: what precisely is religion and its supposed oppositional binary, secularization? As I shall show, the empirical phenomena described above have little to do with the secularization thesis, for secularity is something that happens within religious traditions that results in an altered focus on this-worldly phenomena. Secularization conceived with this alternate definition can result simultaneously in increased religious intensity and in the vacating of religion from the public sphere. Proceeding forward, then, the issue is not whether we can spot more of religion or the secular in the cultural landscapes we examine. It is rather an inquiry into the nature of religion vis-à-vis secularization.

2.3 Geographies of grounded theologies: public religions and the nova effect

The foregoing critique of secularization in the new paradigm suggests the need for a more sustained discussion of the ‘secular.’ To do so, a working definition is in order. Instead of taking a singular view of what the secularization thesis is, José Casanova (1994) disaggregates it into three strands (see also Wilford, 2010; Tse, 2013a). First, he argues that in early modern Europe, there was a social differentiation of spheres, a separation of religion from the state, the market, and the home. This fragmentation led to the rise of a second strand: religion was privatized as personal piety irrelevant to public affairs. In time, privatization led to the postulation of a third strand: that religious practice would decline altogether. With these three strands in mind, Casanova explored how some religions in the 1960s and 1970s deprivatized themselves to intervene into the public sphere by contesting political regimes, building grassroots solidarities, and proposing social and economic
policies. Though Asad (2003) argues that these interventions disprove the secularization thesis, Casanova suggests that religious practitioners continue to imagine their religious practices and social interventions as part of different spheres. The church’s liturgy, in other words, tends not to be the site where religious social action happens; instead, it is in spaces outside of the church, such as in base communities and rallies for public solidarity where public religions make their mark (Cavanaugh, 1998, 2002; Milbank, 2006). Deprivatization may not disavow the secularization thesis; in some ways, it might reinforce it.

This section builds on the previous one by revealing the complexities around the secularization thesis and religious studies. In particular, it imports Casanova’s views into geographies of religion, a field that, like the sociology of religion, has sometimes naively disavowed the secularization thesis without exploring its nuances. Following Justin Wilford’s (2010, 2012) attempts to rethink the ‘secular’ in cultural geography, I attempt to find a middle ground in which the secularization thesis is neither denied nor given the last word. Instead, it is ultimately acknowledged to be a theological process. As I shall show, secularization can be viewed as a phenomenon in which, as Taylor (2007) argues, new religious subjectivities proliferate because new senses of the self and conceptions of personal fullness have emerged in the modern world. Taylor calls this proliferation the ‘nova effect.’ My central contention here is that when public religions transgress the public-private boundaries set for them, they often retain subscription to the conditions of belief set by the ‘nova effect,’ so that their theological practices can still be described as secular. In this framework, the ‘secular’ and the ‘religious’ are not polar opposites in a binary; instead, the ‘secular’ describes the particular operations of a kind of grounded
theology that features the privatization of religion and the mélange of mixing and matching individual spiritual pathways.

2.3.1 Redefining the secular as theological: toward the nova effect

The last two decades have witnessed an internal critique of secularity and the secularization thesis in religious studies. First, philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) issued a challenge to the emotivism of contemporary moral philosophy by suggesting that modern moral claims have become unanchored from traditions of virtue. This ignorance of tradition has resulted in a fragmentation of moral reasoning in both academic philosophy and public discourse such that it is no longer clear what is good and what is not. Second, theologian John Milbank (1989/2006) contested the claim of secular social theory to scientific objectivity by showing that they were theologies and anti-theologies in disguise, forming secular societies as alternative ‘churches’ to the Christian church. These two critical veins of philosophical and theological critique re-thought the secular as a theological process, denying that it held a distant, neutral, and objective gaze toward confessional traditions.

Within academic theology, this new school of thought has come to be known as ‘radical orthodoxy.’ This theological vein argues for a deconstruction of secular thought via a Christian theology emphasizing the radically different ontology of the Christian Church. Drawing on literary philosopher René Girard’s (1979, 1987/2003; 2001) portrayal of violence in primal societies, Milbank (2006) argues that what we know as ‘the secular’ is in fact a heterodox and anti-theological ‘ontology of violence’ that privileges conflict and contestation as the modus operandi of everyday life (see also Alison, 1996, 1998, 2001,
Catherine Pickstock (1998) contends that this ontology is nihilistic at heart, for it promotes the sciences of power as the only relevant forms of knowledge. In other words, secular knowledge is ultimately not about the development of virtues, the exploration of the cosmos, or the examination of conscience, but about how power can be wielded and executed. Promoting this way of knowing is the modern secular state, organizing its power via modern political science and negotiating its governance of the market through modern political economy. As Milbank argues, the secular logics that underpin the state’s authority to protect private property as well as the rationalities that exalt the market as a place of free exchange both exhibit, *inter alia*, ontologies of violence, that is, a mode of existence premised on personal interaction as competitive warfare instead of, say, harmonious communion and complementary collegiality. Located in both the state and the market, the term ‘secular politics’ came to describe contestations among private individuals whose central interests revolved around the protection of their individual sovereignty over their private property. In short, modern secular knowledge is not about differentiating sacred spaces from profane ones; it is about how individuals and communities can maximize their governance over private property vis-à-vis the state’s public authority.

As William Cavanaugh (1998, 2002, 2009, 2011) argues, the state derives this power by invoking myths of religious violence. Cavanaugh contends that the narrative that the modern state saved Europe from endless religious conflict at the dawn of modernity was in fact a myth. As he shows, despite the narrative of a Protestant-vs.-Catholic Hundred Years’ War plaguing nascent modern Europe, Protestants killed Protestants and Catholics killed Catholics, for the real wars fought in early modern Europe were between agents of the state and those who did not want to be colonized by the modern nation-state. The
state’s claim to public secular neutrality, then, is an ideology that consolidates its power so that it will not have competition for governance from religious authorities. In short, theologians associated with trends in radical orthodoxy hold a broad consensus that secularization was in fact a theological process that created a secular state differentiated from the Catholic Church. In turn, modern secular states have historically and sometimes contemporaneously used violence and torture to legitimate their sovereignty over their citizens, inculcating subjectivities disciplined by the state and not by intermediary forms of governance like families, churches, and guilds.

These radically orthodox theologies have had significant influence outside the theological academy, particularly among social scientists interested in theorizing secular selfhoods. As Asad (2003) notes, radical orthodoxy enables anthropologists to conduct an ‘anthropology of the secular.’ Eschewing a ‘fieldwork only’ methodological orthodoxy, Asad argues that secularism should be examined as an embedded concept in modern societies, beginning with the scale of the body:

An anthropology of secularism should thus start with a curiosity about the doctrine and practice of secularism regardless of where they have originated, and it would ask: How do attitudes to the human body (to pain, physical damage, decay, and death, to physical integrity, bodily growth, and sexual enjoyment) differ in various forms of life? What structures of the senses—hearing, seeing, touching—do these attitudes depend on? In what ways does the law define and regulate practices and doctrines on the grounds that they are “truly human”? What discursive spaces does this work of definition and regulation open up for grammars of “the secular” and “the religious”? How do all these sensibilities, attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors come together to support or undermine the doctrine of secularism? (Asad, 2003: 17)

Asad’s conceptual reworking of anthropology puts human bodies in relation to the legal apparatus of the state. His case study focuses on pain and the modern body, arguing that while pain was once conceptualized in medieval Europe as a means through which the body was sanctified, it is now eschewed as an inhibitor of civic productivity. For Asad, this
new understanding of pain can only have been achieved by the modern secular state creating new bodily subjectivities for its citizens, separating the citizen whose goal is to be productive in the state’s political economy and the person whose private life matters little to the state. Sex and religion are thus relegated to the private sphere, while productivity and civic participation are public contributions. Secularity, Asad suggests, is about the formation of public, civic, secular selfhoods that do not need to correspond to private experiences.

Charles Taylor (2007) thus argues that ‘a secular age’ is not so much characterized by the vacating of religion from the public sphere, but by a new private interiority that seeks individual fullness through spiritual quests. In Sources of the Self, Taylor (1992) contends that there have been fundamental moral shifts in modernity that have shifted typical approaches to three moral ‘Goods’: a sense of respect and obligation to others, the understanding of a full life, and human dignity. The shift, Taylor proposes, lies in the modern contention that humans have a fundamental right to autonomy. This means that individuals should avoid pain because it inhibits their independent action, while their ordinary lives are affirmed insofar as they should have freedom to live privately. While Sources of the Self dealt with the making of modern identities, A Secular Age (2007) understands these shifts as theological. Bridging theology and religious studies, Taylor reveals that this modern seeking after ‘fullness’ could only be understood by a transformation of religion vis-à-vis the self. Echoing developments in theology, anthropology, and political theory, Taylor also demonstrates that the formation of the secular state was important to this transformation because it required that the state’s citizens behave with civility.
Eschewing the notion that the state’s civic discipline of its citizens was non-religious, Taylor argues that the modern secular age owes its origins to previous religious reformations. In these prior revivals, spiritual elites had tried to bring the masses toward higher devotional intensity in their religious practice. The processes of discipline were similar, for the effects of both were the interiorization of the disciplined self, as these processes focused on the inculcation of interior mental processes. While the religious reforms had focused on disciplines of piety, the discipline of the secular state was to instill citizens with the practices of civility. In time, citizens who have been made civil can directly contribute to the secular, this-worldly concerns of a democratic, direct-access state. In time, Taylor argues, these selves became buffered by an ‘immanent frame,’ a view of the world that rendered the transcendent irrelevant to the quotidian operations of civil society.

Yet for Taylor, the immanent frame did not constitute a removal of religion from the public sphere. Instead, it was a transformation of the orientation of religion from an institutional enchanted worldview to a new subjectivity focusing on the interior self. Taylor calls this theological re-orientation the ‘nova effect,’ the proliferation of new religious subjectivities. These new religious forms, Taylor contends, have been marked by individual quests for spiritual fullness. These journeys are secular because the fullness that is sought, even if it is found in transcendent sources, has the most immediate bearing on the individual’s this-worldly, everyday life.

This radical reformulation of the secularization thesis has given rise to the idea that perhaps secular geographies are not as non-religious as previously thought. The secularization thesis is a phenomenon in which spaces have been constructed based on a
public-private division in modern subjectivities. Given this new conceptualization of secularization, Howe (2009) contends that there are multiple understandings of what a secular geography can mean, for the secularization thesis is a descriptive hermeneutic through which to analyze the nature of religious landscapes, not a prescriptive call for the end of religious practice. Indeed, revisiting the Americanist themes from earlier in this chapter, one could argue that the American idea, founded in large part by a separation of church and state, is inherently a secularized account of religion, despite Warner’s (2005) protest that the secularization thesis does not apply to American religious life. Borrowing from Baptist dissenter Roger Williams’s (1644/2009: 121) impassioned plea to reverse the ‘gap in the hedge or wall of Separation between the Garden of the Church and the Wilderness of the world’ which has ‘made his Garden a Wilderness, as at this day,’ Thomas Jefferson (1802/1984: 510) interpreted the First Amendment to the Bill of Rights as ‘building a wall of separation between church and state’ because ‘religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God.’ Therefore, Wilford (2010) argues that geographers must pay more careful attention to how secular differentiation between the public sphere and private lives has shaped social and cultural geographies. Moreover, contra Herberg’s suggestion that the private secularization of religion signifies a watered-down theology held together only by associational labels, secularization is better understood as a theological orientation within religion that emphasizes the development of individual interiority and the application of spirituality to this-worldly concerns. This sort of religion can, in other words, be as devout and pious as more sacramental forms of religion.

6 I realize that this assertion about the modesty of this revised secularization thesis is hard to believe, given the militancy of the ‘new atheism’ of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris. My caveat, though, is that none of the above is considered part of the religious studies academy and are more appropriately described as popular writers on religion.
2.3.2 Geographies of religion: revisiting a secular tradition

This radical redefinition of secularization calls for a re-reading of geographies of religion altogether. While geographers studying religion have long been interested in how religious phenomena affect cultural landscapes, their interests in fact revolve around the secular effects of theological spaces. As Chris Park (1994) demonstrates, map-makers since the Protestant Reformation have been interested in the spread of Christianity *vis-à-vis* other religions. However, Taylor (2007) demonstrates that while these maps appeared to be religious, their impulse to reform and convert the masses, facilitated by modern mapping, was a precursor to secularization, for it was an impulse to exert power over immanent space. Moreover, because the Reformers and the Counter-Reformers allied themselves with nascent modern states, this ‘rage for order’ was facilitated by the state and became, as Foucault (1999) puts it, a tactic to inculcate modern governmentality.

Since the Enlightenment, these conversionary instincts in geographies of religion were tempered by interest in the rise of religious pluralism, an understanding of world geography in which religious blocs were seen in secular competition to each other (see Kong, 1990; Masuzawa, 2005). Indeed, what were known as ‘religions’ looked remarkably similar to secular forms of Protestantism. For example, when Kant (1793/1960) reinterpreted religion and moral subjectivities through the autonomous agency of free individuals in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, his emphasis on the primacy of cognition implied that what he was really talking about was a form of Protestantism, a grounded theology that highlighted interior faith over external practice. Cognition in turn was spatialized into an implicit geography of religion, one that emphasized the
Enlightenment spread of reason that replaced the Protestant Christian conversionary impulse. As individuals became free to exercise this new secular reason in moral judgments, modern Europeans developed a new geography of religion as a basis by which to rationally judge other moral systems elsewhere in the world.

As these secularizing trends progressed, the orientation of theology shifted from using cosmic realities to interpret immanent phenomena to exactly the opposite. Known as natural theology, this new theological hermeneutic stressed that insights about the divine could be deduced from the geographical environment. Extending their interests beyond the diffusion of Protestantism through missionaries and Enlightenment reason, geographers in turn became interested in their own form of natural theology, examining how theological beliefs impacted the natural environment, such as in farming patterns (Deffontaines, 1948; Eliade, 1951; Sopher, 1967; Kong, 1990; Livingstone, 1992; Park, 1994).

Indeed, as cultural geographers also became interested in the diffusion of religions over the cultural landscape, their interests revolved around how theologies translated into secular effects. Moving beyond agricultural societies, cultural geographers also examined how theologies affected regional population geographies and the formation of urban sites. Wilbur Zelinsky (1961) argued that mapping denominational affiliation through membership directories from various religious denominations in the 1950s could produce a map of how religious affiliation was diffused across the cultural landscape in the United States. Concentrations of high denominational affiliation suggested that the cultures in those ‘culture-regions’ were generally determined by the values held by those dominating denominations in those areas. As Wheatley (1974) also showed through his study of pre-
imperial Chinese cities as religious centres, religion served functional explanatory purposes. Chinese cities, Wheatley argued, were religious first, leading them to function later on as economic hubs. This constant analytical focus on the secular effects of theological places was a legacy from natural theology. Geographers thus meditated on the cultural effects of religion on the landscape, whether it was to create regional cultures, construct urban centres, or affect rural environments.

However, as these developments progressed, geographies of religion also suffered a crisis because of confusion over how a secular discipline should study grounded theologies. Partially responsible for this was an internal debate among geographers studying religion over whether their task counted as religionwissenschaft (religious science), as part of the interdisciplinary enterprise of religious studies. That geographers debated whether the study of religion implicated one in theological activity was at once prescient and amnesiac, anticipating arguments that religion and the secular were not polar opposites while forgetting that geographies of religion since the Reformation have always been theologically driven. Seeking to distance geography from theology, Erich Isaac (1965) proclaimed a strict division between religious geography as geographies that were explicitly confessional and geographies of religion as spatial studies that described the impact of religion on the environment. The result was that, as David Livingstone (1997: 373) baldly states, ‘the field of the geography of religion has remained in considerable disarray’ (see also Sinha, 1995; Raivo, 1997). While humanistic geographers such as David Ley (1974) and Yi-fu Tuan (1974, 1977) used religion in their phenomenological approaches to human spatial constructions, their approaches were also contested by Marxist geographers with strict materialist explanations of the immorality of unjust social
geographies wrought by the development of unequal economic structures (see Harvey 1973/2009). Meanwhile, although earlier developments in a new cultural geography focused on how religion was key to place contestation and symbols of power in the urban landscape (Duncan, 1990; Cresswell, 1994), the majority of work in new cultural geography seldom mentioned religion (Stump, 2008; see Barnes and Duncan, 1992; Ley and Duncan, 1993; Jackson, 1994; Crang, 1998; Anderson and Gale, 1999). In other words, this era of crisis in geographies of religion revolved around secularizing trends in the discipline as a whole, seeking a form of subtraction, purification, and privatization of religion from academic human geography.

It was not until Lily Kong’s (2001) second decadal review of geographies of religion that the field began to be rehabilitated as a way to map the fault lines between religious spaces and the secular world. Replying to charges of incoherence and with considerable consternation at the short shrift that religion had been given in social and cultural geography, Kong (2001: 212) argued against how, ‘in the same breath that race, class and gender are invariably invoked and studied as ways by which societies are fractured, religion is forgotten or conflated with race.’ Noting that the secularization of geography led to the neglect of religion, she contended that both the politics and poetics of religion deserved a separate geographical category of analysis. The politics of religion referred to how boundaries were often drawn between secular society and religious communities and within religious communities as heterogeneous sites, divisions that could not be attributed to the fault lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality alone. By contrast, the poetics of religion attempted a phenomenological view, interpreting how religious practitioners understood the transcendent to be grounded in particular sacred sites. The next step, Kong
(2001: 226) argued, was to examine religion 'beyond the “officially sacred”' of religious communities. This agenda entailed inquiry into how the poetics of religion sometimes transgressed its political boundaries into everyday lives at various scales.

To examine religion beyond the officially sacred was to demonstrate that religion was not merely confined to religious space and (contra geographers with strictly materialist orientations) was not departing with the forces of secularization. By herself alone, Kong has contributed to several emerging fields in geographies of religion, including religion in residential zoning (Kong, 2002), the politics of faith schools vis-à-vis national educational curricula (Kong, 2005a), and the possibilities of audio-visual technology to reconstitute the transmission of religion (Kong, 2006). Faith schools are a prime example of religion beyond the officially sacred, for while they might seem like hermetically sealed sites teaching private theologically-driven curricula, they have to interact with secular national curriculum and public portrayals (Dwyer, 1999b; Valins, 2003; Dwyer and Parutis 2012). Proctor (2006b) also identifies religion beyond the officially sacred in the de facto religious practices of environmentalists in the Pacific Northwest, whose ecological practices also reflect theological commitments. Religion has thus not departed the public sphere; instead, geographers have asserted that religious practices have not declined. For them, this is a challenge to uncritical secularization theses that have thought faith to be long dead (Proctor, 2006a; Buttimer, 2006; Yorgason and della Dora, 2009).

With the advent of religious nationalism, apocalyptic proclamations, and hawkish geopolitical posturing as the twenty-first century opened, religion and critical geopolitics are also arriving at an unexpected rapprochement. As Agnew (2006) has noted, the resurgence of religious activity in geopolitics has been noted since the 1980s. These
developments ring with an increasingly apocalyptic tenor, unsettling secular public spheres with the language of eschatological judgment. In the 1980s, these developments included the rise of the Moral Majority in the United States and the Salman Rushdie affair in which the Iranian ayatollah issued a fatwa condemning the author to death because his novel, *The Satanic Verses*, ridiculed the Prophet Muhammad. Events of what Juergensmeyer (1993, 2001, 2008) has termed ‘religious nationalism,’ the attempt by some religious practitioners to replace secular ideologies with religious ones in the narration of the nation-state, in the 1990s eventually culminated with al Qaeda’s attacks on the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 and were followed by the Iraq War in 2003, al-Qaeda attacks on public transportation in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, the Paris banlieue riots in 2006, and various political crises in the Middle East (now including the Arab Spring).

In the wake of these correlations between religion and political violence, two strands of critical geographical research have emerged that tackle the relationship between secularity and religion. One takes a secular positionality to critique the theological apocalypticism in the eschatological preaching of the Christian Right. Drawing the most ire has been a seminal fictional rendition of the end times, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins’s *Left Behind* series. Critical political geographers argue that these portrayals of the End Times often disproportionately favour the state of Israel over against Palestinian claims to state legitimacy (Sturm, 2008, 2010; Dittmer, 2008; Dittmer and Spears, 2009; Dittmer and Sturm, 2010). These portrayals are thus geopolitical in the sense that they inform evangelical readers’ views of political geography and nation-state borders, which in turn
informs their electoral practices in relation to American foreign policy and their imaginations of global missionary work.

Another strand of research, promoted by Nick Megoran (2010), is to demonstrate from within theological communities that not all theologies lead to the same geopolitical result. As Megoran shows, some evangelicals in London have traced the route of the First Crusade, apologizing to all wronged Jewish and Muslim parties on the way. This journey culminated in a liturgical apology for the sacking of Jerusalem in the city itself. For Megoran, a truly critical geopolitics regarding evangelical political geographies is to go beyond faulting evangelicals for resonating with what William Connolly (2008) has termed the ‘evangelical-capitalist resonance machine’ that undergirds American imperialistic geopolitics. Megoran instead argues that the problem can only be solved when evangelicals apologize for their historical wrongs and lay claim to a new theology centered on humility and repentance.

That theologies are again intervening into the public sphere has led to a debate over the viability of secularization theory and the possibility of post-secular theories in geography. Indeed, as Kong (2010: 10) has pointed out, the contemporary mixing of religion with politics makes a case for secularization difficult, at least on its face. Following the events of 11 September 2001, critical theorist Jürgen Habermas (2001/2003) prescribed that religious and secular citizens in the public sphere should participate in ‘complementary learning processes’ (Habermas, 2006: 18). First, he prescribed three learning issues for religious citizens: 1) religious citizens must understand that the world that they inhabit is pluralistic, not only occupied by their own religion, 2) religious citizens must understand that secular knowledge is independent of the regulation of sacred
knowledge, and 3) religious citizens must understand that secular reasoning functions better in the public arena because the reasoning is based on egalitarian individualism and modern universalism (Habermas 2006: 14; see also Habermas 2005). However, second, Habermas eschews the portrayal of ‘religious traditions and religious communities [as] to a certain extent archaic relics of pre-modern societies that continue to exist in the present.’ Instead, secular citizens must learn to translate religious reasons into morally viable logic in a secular public sphere (Habermas, 2006: 15-16). Interestingly, these were points with which Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, broadly agreed, as he suggested that both reason and religion could become pathological if uncontrolled by the other (Habermas and Ratzinger, 2004: 77-78). Indeed, the prospects that Habermas’s attempt to include ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ citizens could be called ‘post-secular’ became very real during this conversation, for far from deconstructing Habermas’s dichotomous usages of these terms (as Taylor does in a separate dialogue; see Habermas and Taylor, 2011), the pope-to-be affirmed them.

Geographers have attempted to spatialize this Habermas-Ratzinger discussion by exploring how faith-based organizations (FBOs) in contemporary cities foster a post-secular ethos. Justin Beaumont (2008a, 2008b, 2008c) refers to documents such as the report by the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission titled Faith in the City (1985), a document that advocated that the Church of England take a stand against the injustices of a neoliberal, market-driven society. For Beaumont, this statement amounts to an insertion of religion into secular urban planning policy. Beaumont thus suggests that geographers can look to faith-based organizations as further examples of these religious interventions into civic life, for they fill a service gap in neoliberal cities. In these sites, he contends, faith-
based organizations in secular Europe pull together a diverse array of religious actors—sometimes even persons who have no religious affiliations—for common causes of social justice, charity work, and the fostering of new forms of social capital (see Cloke 2002, 2011; Cloke et al. 2005; Beaumont and Baker 2011). Beaumont follows Habermas's (2005, 2006) contention that in post-secular Europe, religious and secular practitioners must learn from each other to create peaceful, post-secular forms of co-existence where neither polices the other’s independent sphere of religious or secular activity. He thus argues that faith-based organizations are post-secular, for while these services used to be delivered by the welfare state, they have now been channeled to faith-based organizations, de-secularizing state services while opening up new public spaces of religious and secular integration.

These post-secular approaches have been in turn criticized for paying uncritical attention to what ‘religion’ and ‘the secular’ are. Kong (2010: 9) calls Beaumont's approach ‘seductive’ because it reinforces the notion that secularization has already happened, overgeneralizing a European experience to the rest of the world. Moreover, as Kong (2010: 16) herself notes, there has not been sufficient attention to ‘what is and is not religion’ among geographers. The lack of definitions, she claims, has led not only to a continued short supply of theoretical rigour in the subfield (as demonstrated by the post-secular debates). The key problem is that theologians and religious studies scholars have yet to take geographers of religion seriously. Her claim is admittedly somewhat overstated. As she herself also cites, texts such as Kim Knott’s (2005) *The Location of Religion* and Thomas Tweed’s (2006) *Crossing and Dwelling* have significantly been influenced by human geography. Tweed’s (2006) account focuses on how human beings imagine and make places, a phenomenological approach that recalls themes in humanistic and cultural
geographies. So too, Knott (2005) analyzes how unequal power relations frame religion in quotidian spaces derived from larger political and economic processes. Her approach indicates that insights in human geography about how political, economic, and cultural geographies are mutually implicated have in turn influenced trends in religious studies. Moreover, the publication of a two-volume series on spatial constructions in biblical studies seeks to transcend the conventional focus on history in biblical studies to understanding the spatialities described and prescribed in Judeo-Christian Scriptural texts (Camp and Berquist 2008a, 2008b). The volumes take seriously the politics and poetics of religion described by Kong as well as the Lefebvrian frameworks prescribed by Knott so as to pay attention to how the biblical authors imagine and construct space in the midst of political processes happening in their historical moment. In short, Kong’s claim that geographers have not yet influenced other theological and religious studies disciplines may be overstated.

To the end of sharpening their interventions into theology and religious studies, geographers who study religion have begun to take seriously the redefinition of secularization. Following David Livingstone’s (1997: 373) earlier call for geographers to welcome ‘the possibility of scrutinizing the spatial components of religious discourses and ideas in ways akin to the recent “spatializing” of the history and sociology of science,’ geographers are beginning to analyze the ‘theological and metaphysical underpinnings of belief’ (Kong 2010: 16). Geographical studies of evangelical megachurches are a case in point. They argue that while megachurches seem to be signs of religious renewal, they utilize secular methods to achieve their theological ends. John Connell (2005) explores Hillsong Church in a Sydney suburb, an Assemblies of God Pentecostal megachurch whose
integration of popular cultural styles of music has led to the global popularity of its worship music. He argues that Hillsong ‘provides a more personal sense of community in largely anonymous suburbia, to the extent that the outer suburbs have been perceived as a “bible belt,”’ having replaced Australian civic institutions as voluntary associations while encouraging its members to advance socially to fulfill their consumeristic desires. So too, Justin Wilford (2010, 2012) conceptualizes religion as ‘sacred archipelagoes’ in a ‘sea of secularity.’ Wilford’s (2012) case study is of Saddleback Church in Southern California, a 50,000-strong church with its popular pastor, Rick Warren, author of the best-selling Christian self-help manifesto *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Noting that the majority of megachurches like Saddleback are located on the post-suburban fringes of suburban residential life, Wilford premises his study by saying that the cultural geography of such sites are intensely fragmented among various social lifeworlds, including home, family, work, and church. Yet instead of confronting this fragmentation, Saddleback has strategically positioned itself as a decentralized, diffuse church made up of small groups where members learn to reframe the fragmentation among the different social geographies in their own lives. For Wilford, this re-narration of secular differentiation among Saddleback members is evidence that secularization has infused the way that church life is conducted at Saddleback. Indeed, these tropes replicate Casanova’s (1994) argument about secular differentiation: the fragmentation of the modern world began when temporal authority shifted away from the medieval Catholic Church to the state in the modern world, shattering individual social geographies into many individual private associations.

These geographical studies prompt geographers to ask what secularization precisely is. Indeed, Nicolas Howe (2009) asks geographers to pay attention to various
types of secularity, noting that not all secularities are iconoclastic in relation to religion. One of Howe’s (2008) case studies is the American court case in which the removal of the Ten Commandments from the judicial landscape was debated. Howe argues that contesting the place of the sacred in public architecture is a form of legal performance in which interpreters, both for and against the Decalogue’s display, deploy their own understandings of the sacred-secular divide. Those supporting the display of the Ten Commandments argue that the state has no right to police what citizens choose to display in public areas; those against it contend that the display of religious iconography in a government building is to imply state sanction for a particular religion. For Howe, this is evidence suggesting that both sides are deploying arguments only possible because of the secularization process, for both posit a division between the state and religion, only at different boundary points. Moreover, there are different kinds of secularity in the American religio-legal landscape. Instead of being merely iconoclastic, secularities in American public life might privatize religion, such as in the landmark religious freedom case in which the Supreme Court decided that the state had no business in regulating the private religious proselytization practiced by the Jehovah’s Witnesses (see Cantwell v. Connecticut, 310 U.S. 296 [1940]). It can also profane religion, such as when religious practices are publicly lampooned without being removed from the public sphere (Howe, 2009). As Olson et al. (2013) also understand the politics of religion, geographies of religion are beginning to take notice of trends in religious studies and theology that understand that multiple secularities exist in the modern world. These secularities in turn are theological, meaning that the grounded theologies of what are conventionally labeled
‘religion’ engage with ‘secular public spheres’ that are themselves theologically constituted as well.

### 2.3.3 Deprivatizing religion: progressive and conservative variants

This theological re-constitution of the public sphere suggests that what are known as ‘public religions’ neither refute the secularization thesis nor simply allow secular theologies to go unchallenged. The secularization thesis remains valid as long as one conceives of modern anthropology as split between the public and the private. After all, it is only with this division that religion can transgress private boundaries to intervene in the public sphere. However, religio-theological challenges to the public sphere are not all the same. As the review of critical geopolitics hinted, geographers have become concerned about public religions because they seem to have the potential to undermine contemporary state regimes with regressive, traditionalist politics. While on the one hand this replicates what Cavanaugh (2009) has called an ideological myth of religious violence, it also suggests that there are progressive and conservative variants of public religions, both of which ground secular theologies in the public landscape.

Casanova (1994) argues that religions become deprivatized because they see their interventions in the public sphere as enacting forms of social justice. This argument affirms the secularization thesis, for Casanova notes that contemporary religions must often *re-enter* the public sphere after a long process of privatization. He bases this claim on events in the 1960s and 1970s in Spain, Poland, Brazil, and the United States. In each of these cases, forms of Christianity had first been privatized by coercive regimes exerting state sovereignty over their citizenry. However, in the last fifty years, some religious
groups have de-privatized themselves temporarily to protest the state’s coercion of civil society. In other words, these religions transgressed into the public sphere for progressive causes, resisting totalitarian regimes and arguing for more just economic systems that have a preferential option for the poor.

When critical scholars decry conservatism, apocalypticism, and neoliberal co-optations of religion, they may be describing a phenomenon similar to Casanova’s progressive public religions. After all, conservative theologies also view themselves through the lens of liberation and see themselves in continuity with traditions of public religions that have a social justice orientation. Richard John Neuhaus (1984) reminds readers that the growing religious right was not an attempt to take over the public sphere, \textit{per se}; it was a protest against making the public sphere naked of religion because religious practitioners felt like a completely secular civil society would infringe on their religious liberty. Contending against the vacating of faith from the public sphere and the denigration of traditional moral norms around sexuality and reproduction, Neuhaus argues that the religious right was seen internally as a liberation movement from constraining secularity. Likewise, Juergensmeyer’s (1993, 2001, 2007) extensive interviews with religious terrorists, a sample that ranged from violent anti-abortion protesters to Islamists protesting the moral decay of the West, reveals that there is a ‘new cold war’ that pits religious nationalism against secular capitalism. Echoing Neuhaus, Juergensmeyer argues that these clashes often happen because religious nationalists perceive secular ideologies undergirding the modern nation-state to have failed. For example, these activists posit that socialism has been unsuccessful because of its totalitarian aspirations while liberal democracy is nihilistic because of its consumption excesses and moral vacuousness.
Violence against these secular societies is a form of forcible liberation from moral decay with an end goal of establishing a new basis for the nation-state via religious ideologies. What is important about these activities, then, is that even though Agnew (2006) notes that they have become increasingly apocalyptic and are perceived to be less liberating and more reactionary, these religious movements’ intervention into the public sphere are often perceived internally as movements of liberation and social justice, defending the freedom to constitute their own private spheres of religion, family, and traditional sexuality without the encroachment of a secular public sphere. In other words, while the specific agendas may be different, the motivations are similar.

Geographies of grounded theologies in a secular age are thus the proper framework in which to understand the engagements of religious practitioners with the public sphere, reinterpreting secularization in both its progressive and conservative variants as theological processes. Indeed, appeals to understand the inner liberation logics of socially and politically conservative public religions are calls to interpret the contestation of religious phenomena in the purportedly secular public sphere through the often divergent ‘socio-theological paradigms’ of religious practitioners (Mahmood 2005; Juergensmeyer 2010). As Ley and Tse (2013) suggest, to articulate even religions practised by socio-economically wealthier persons through the language of poverty and the stranger is to begin to read a grounded theology from within its community. To argue that public religions are secularized phenomena is thus not to impose a foreign ideological grid onto religious communities. Quite the opposite: it may be the most apt theological interpretation from within these theological traditions themselves.
2.4 Pacific secularities: post-colonial grounded theologies

I want to locate the foregoing discussion of the constitution of religion and its attendant imagined geographies in the Pacific Rim’s transnational migration geographies. This section suggests that the denial of secularization in non-European contexts ironically reinforces the orientalist binary of ‘the West versus the rest.’ It thus resists the claim that the experience of secularization in Europe has been ‘overgeneralized’ to the rest of the world (Kong 2010: 10). It does so by unintentionally forgetting that European experiences were imported to the rest of the world via Euro-American imperialist colonization since the nineteenth century. I am not replicating the Comaroffs’ (1991, 1997) argument that, in their South African cases, the consciousness of African Christians was colonized and that their supposed agency in practicing their religion are replications of a colonial past. Instead, pace Said’s (1976/2003) deconstruction of orientalist scholarship regarding the Middle East, I am saying that simplistic denials of secularization in the Pacific Rim are fraught with the same orientalist logics as those that posit a strict divide between East and West.

In this section, I contend that religions in the Pacific Rim should be conceptualized within the rubric of Pacific secularities. By Pacific secularities, I mean strategic deployments of religion to contest colonial legacies in the Pacific Rim. In this sense, geographies of religion in the non-West are always public to some degree, for they are always conscious of structures outside of their communities. Practices of religion in these geographies often take on secular modalities, for both post-colonial states and citizens assess them for their usefulness in legitimizing state regimes or in providing citizens with tools to resist colonizing forms of subjectification. While this may be true of Euro-
American experiences as well, the stakes are heightened by the *post-colonial* situation of the Pacific Rim, by which I refer to nation-states that have been formed after colonialism and thus attempt to pursue strategies of modernization and citizen subjectification to catch up with materialist Western modernities. Religious practice is often caught in this arena of Asian modernities, resulting in secularization in the sense that grounded theologies are being bent to the secular concerns of state and civil society. In what follows, then, I will first provide a general discussion of post-colonial religions, particularly Islam and Christianity, after which we will have a more specific conversation about religion in the Pacific Rim.

### 2.4.1 Speaking back: the public implications of post-colonial religions

Post-colonial geographers of religion have typically gravitated to the relationship between Muslims and the West, particularly in a post-September 11, 2001 context. The relationship of Islam to the West arguably rests at the heart of post-colonial theory’s critique of the orientalist binary between East and West. Edward Said’s (1976/2003) *Orientalism* sought to problematize the entire intellectual genealogy of orientalist knowledge, especially in terms of Euro-American knowledge about Muslims. For Said, orientalist knowledge privileged an occidental gaze on the orient, framing it as immutably static. This tradition was political, feeding occidentalist dreams of rehabilitating the great Muslim civilizations that had fallen into disarray. Said suggests that the key flaw in orientalist knowledge was it relied more on an intellectual tradition than on actual empirical research. After all, scholars who actually might have gone to the ‘orient’ might have painted a more dynamic picture of the region, if not problematizing the designation of
half of the world as a static cultural bloc. In other words, Said’s (1976/2003) *Orientalism* is in fact a call for empirical research with methods that deconstruct the notion that the area from the Middle East to the Far East falls under a single, unitary category.

Building on Said, anthropologists of religion carefully demonstrate that Islamic practice has public implications, especially in resisting orientalizing colonization. While careful not to ‘Protestantize’ Islam, these cases are instructive as a model for how some religious practitioners deal with secularization and colonization. Building from an earlier argument that ‘religion’ is a fundamentally western concept (Asad 1993; see also WC Smith 1978), Asad (2003) argues that an anthropology of the secular demonstrates that attempts to modernize Muslim-majority nation-states through secularist regimes have in fact transformed Muslim practice. Saba Mahmood (2005) records ethnographic examples of resistance to these forms of secular state modernization in the women’s mosque movement in Cairo in the 1990s. While instruction in piety is not explicitly political and anti-state, these women challenge what they perceive as the secularization of Islam into meaningless ritual practices. By contrast, Lara Deeb (2006) notes that Lebanese Shi’i Muslims in Beirut primarily associated with the Hizbullah party were ‘enchanted moderns’ because they saw their own practice of piety as practices of spiritual progress. While Mahmood argues that her subjects in Cairo are contesting secular-liberal norms in Egypt, Deeb (2006: 8) contends that her subjects practise ‘authenticated Islam’ through which they felt modern and progressive, for authentication was a move forward from Islamic tradition so that communities of piety were progressing into a more correct version of Islam.

Islam can be seen as a public religion, for Muslim subjects can speak back to colonizing orientalist gazes. In the spirit of Said’s humanism, these studies use empirical
tactics to highlight the agency of Muslims to shape their own subjectivities by intersecting a variety of social factors. These new intersectionalities confound Islamophobic tendencies in the West, another form of colonizing prejudice in Western civil societies. In the United Kingdom, for example, social geographers have studied how social segregation falls along racialized and religious lines. Indeed, Peach (2002: 255) contends that while religion seems to be the new frontier in social geography, ‘interest in the subject seems to be instrumental rather than religious,’ for religion is used as a proxy for ethnicity to talk about the supposed parallel lives of Muslim migrants in the Western mainstream. In order to adequately discuss the social segregation of Muslims in the United Kingdom, Peach (2006a, 2006b) argues for a disaggregation of ethnicity from religion, showing that Muslims are segregated and experience social factors of multiple deprivation along ethnic lines. These forms of segregation have also led to protests against mosque building, owing to what Dunn (2004) calls a ‘discourse of absence’ in an Australian context that plays on Muslims being non-native to areas where mosques are proposed (see also Naylor and Ryan, 2002). Moreover, in the wake of the 2005 al-Qaeda attacks on London’s transport system, Phillips’s (2006) study of Bradford, where the alleged perpetrators worked on their bomb materials, demonstrated that for the most part, Muslim parents were not interested in having ‘parallel lives’ from the rest of the UK’s society. Instead, their concerns for education and the safety of their children were remarkably similar to the mainstream. Similarly, Nagel and Staeheli’s (2011) extensive analysis of British and American Arab activists demonstrates that while they were stereotyped as bringing Muslim faith into the public sphere, the activities of these Muslims in the public sphere are often self-interpreted
as bringing secular, ethnic Arab identities into politics and generally espouse a variety of motivations.

In other words, the everyday lives and intersecting subjectivities of Muslims in the West have the power to destabilize Eurocentric colonizing readings of Islam. The agenda of feminist geographers, as Nagel (2005: 16) articulates it, is to ‘de-stabilize the image of the Muslim woman’ as the oppressed, veiled female in backward cultures. Dwyer (1999b) thus argues in her study of young British Muslim women in schools that they displayed an ‘alternative femininity,’ asserting that dress as forms of identity were unstable signifiers. Indeed, even while the young Muslim women Dwyer studied personally experienced ‘contradictions of community’ in terms of fashioning their identities between their Muslim homes and British society (Dwyer 1999a), they exercised agency to interpret in multiple ways meanings attached to ‘British dress’ and ‘Asian dress’ for themselves and for their peers (Dwyer 1999b). Similarly, Hopkins (2004, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2010) explored the intersectional identities of young Muslim men in Scotland. Hopkins argues that the intersections among age, religion, gender, and race mean that his interview subjects inhabit multiple social geographies simultaneously, making it difficult to pin down a stereotype for how they might perform their religious masculinities in everyday life (see Aitchison et al., 2007; Hopkins, 2011).

Islamic practitioners have also asserted their agency in the face of ostensibly modernizing secularist regimes in the Middle East. Anna Secor’s (2002) work draws on feminist theory to present an alternate reading of the spatialities of women’s participation in Islamist Party politics at the neighbourhood level in Turkey. For Secor, female counterpublics in Istanbul, with their political participation in voting, everyday networks,
and even bodily practices of veiling (Secor, 2002), are ways in which Muslim women exert their political agency in the face of the state's attempt to construct subjectivities for them (Secor, 2004). Likewise, Banu Gökariksel (2009, 2012) asserts that the wearing of the headscarf is an individualistic political assertion, not merely Islamist, to establish counter-subjectivities in public places in Turkey. Indeed, she contends that the paths toward veiling for many of her interview subjects were individual quests toward a stronger Muslim subjectivity. Together, Gökariksel and Secor (2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2012) have also explored the intersection of the fashion industry with the religious signifier of the veil in Turkey in the phenomenon of tesettür, veiling-fashion. They contend that while it is morally ambivalent to mix a symbol of piety like veiling with consumption practices enshrined in an industry like fashion, tesettür wearers in fact negotiate between the two such that veiling-fashion has become a normative part of Islamic practice in Turkey. The women who wear tesettür are thus moral agents themselves, self-regulating their temptations toward becoming ostentatious wearers of fashion while reconciling the commodities of veiling-fashion with practices of piety.

Paralleling this interest in Islam are newer anthropological efforts to uncover Christian agency from colonized populations. These anthropologies of Christianity make clear that the proselytized in post-colonial situations have in fact transformed their agency according to modern Protestant narratives. For anthropologists conducting these studies, the usage of language is key to this restructuring of religious agency. As Susan Harding (2001) notes in her study of Jerry Falwell, it is the language that Falwell uses to interpret Scripture through which born-again evangelicals come to understand themselves as Bible-believing Christians living out a religious script. So too, Webb Keane (2007: 16-21)
discusses the ‘semiotic ideology’ of Dutch Calvinism in relation to materiality, arguing that a Calvinist understanding of material objects, in contrast to Roman Catholic ritual speech revolving around Eucharistic transubstantiation, renders them as mere objects that, unlike humans, have no agency of their own. In an ethnography of Sumbanese Calvinists in Indonesia, Keane contends that narratives of conversion attempt clean breaks with historical ancestral and animistic practices that are taken to ‘fetishize’ and idolize objects. Post-conversion, then, Sumbanese Calvinists understand themselves to have relativized the importance of materiality. For Keane, this is evidence of Sumbanese Calvinists exercising modern Protestant forms of agency as they seek to purify their own interior motives around objects so as to be sincere in their Calvinistic beliefs and to gain liberating autonomy from social and material relations that they perceived to have held them in bondage prior to conversion. Ethnography focusing on Christian semiotic ideologies against wider backdrops of colonialism, disease, and social pluralization reveals the agency of Christians to infuse their everyday lives with religious meaning, despite long-held assumptions that they have been operating with colonized forms of consciousness (see Engelke, 2007, 2013; Smilde, 2007; Guadaloupe, 2008; Tomlinson, 2009; O’Neill, 2010; Klaits, 2010; Hann and Goltz 2010; Andersson et al., 2010; Werbner, 2011; Klassen, 2011; Mosse, 2012).\(^7\)

Geographical analyses of post-colonial global Christian movements add a layer of intersecting social geographies on top of semiotic ideologies. The fractures over sexuality in the Anglican Communion are a case in point. Sadgrove et al. (2011) deconstruct the

\(^7\) This list is a record of the impressive list of books in a series entitled *Anthropology of Christianity* published by the University of California Press and edited by Joel Robbins. While the list encompasses a variety of geographical locales, I am trying to make the point that we must observe that there is general agreement that post-colonial Christians have agency in the formation of their own semiotic ideology.
Global Anglican Future Conference’s (GAFCON) attempts to manufacture a Global South monolithic orthodoxy by showing that various parties in that group actually hold a variety of cultural stereotypes, theological motivations, and positions on the ordination of women priests and the consecration of female bishops even while they participate together in the post-colonial, traditional sexuality movement. Moreover, in their explorations of Anglican groups in South Africa, America, and the UK, Vanderbeck et al. (2010) demonstrate that the ‘meaning of communion,’ while widely shared across Anglicans, does not mean the same thing for everyone everywhere. At the same time, liberal, pro-gay movements in the Anglican Communion are also a conflagration of many different actors, some highlighting the visibility of alternate sexualities in the Anglican Communion while others prefer more private modes of theological reflection in small-scale friendships. It is moreover unclear what relation these liberal religious groups actually have with secular sexual liberation movements (Vanderbeck et al., 2009; Valentine et al., 2010).

In other words, the semiotic ideologies differ based on configurations of intersectionality. Olson and Silvey (2006) view the importations of Christianity into Latin American public spheres as part of the geography of development. Olson (2006, 2008) demonstrates in her Peruvian case studies that Catholic and Pentecostal theologies are received differently in development work because of the historical legacy of Catholicism and the perception that Pentecostals are more trust-worthy because of their American connections and ‘health-and-wealth’ theology (see also Garrard-Burnett, 1998; O’Neill, 2009). In Olson’s cases, religion intersects with development geographies, which means that the religious actors who are seen to bring about more productive development will win the local people’s favour. In these cases, the contestation happens from below, at a
grounded level, demonstrating again the agency of the religious practitioners themselves in the face of colonial and post-colonial structures.

In short, post-colonial geographies of religion have focused largely on the agency of religious subjects to assert their individual subjectivities in space. These approaches are largely informed by turns in the anthropology of religion toward the modern agency of religious practitioners in articulating their own selfhoods. They demonstrate that individuals have the ability to live religion in the face of structures that may or may not be congenial to their free expression (see also Primiano, 1993; Orsi, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2010; Ammerman, 1993, 2005, 2007; McGuire, 2008). More importantly, as these actions take place usually in spaces that were colonized due to orientalist impulses, religious agency tends to take the form of anti-orientalist resistance. The question is, then: has religion itself been transformed? We will explore that question by turning our gaze to the Pacific region.

2.4.2 Religion and ‘Asian modernities’: the iron cage of ‘Asian values’ in the Asia-Pacific

Academic knowledge about the Asia-Pacific has more often focused on its political economy and the growth of its civil societies than on its religious geographies. As the European colonies were decolonized after the events of the Second World War and became nascent post-colonial nation-states, scholars interested in the political, economic, and social geographies of the newly post-colonial Asia-Pacific in the 1960s and 1970s usually focused on the governance paradigms of political elites, who attempted to construct urban-centric welfare states in freshly decolonized countries with varying degrees of success (McGee, 1967; Castells et al., 1991). Since the 1980s, many of these regimes have been
restructured according to neoliberal ideologies emphasizing market development, state
favours to transnational capitalist regimes, and a defined place in the global economy’s new
division of labour (Bishop et al., 2003; Daniels et al., 2005). Students of these restructured
neoliberal nation-states have remarked on their achievement of modernization while
maintaining various ideologies of ‘Asian values,’ celebratory and essentialist conceptions of
patriarchal familial structures, authoritarian state governance, and non-contractual
business relations often said to be borrowed from Confucian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist
traditions (Ong 1999). Following sociologist Max Weber’s analysis of bureaucratic
development and the ‘iron cage’ of secular capitalism (Weber 1905/2003), modernities and
modernization in this Asia-Pacific context refers to the successful development of
systematic, organizational strategies of capital accumulation enacted by individuals in their
private spheres and encouraged by a neoliberal state. The capitalistic successes of Asia-
Pacific nation-states are said to reply decisively to Weber’s negative characterization of
non-European and non-Protestant economies for which he predicted failure in their
aspirations to modernity (see Tu, 1996). However, with the successes of Asia-Pacific
neoliberal restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s, ‘Asian values’ themselves have become
the new bars of a Weberian iron cage in the Asia-Pacific, replacing the secular capitalism
derived from Protestant asceticism with one that invokes essentialist conceptions of ‘Asian’
cultural forms (Daniels et al., 2005; Douglass et al., 2007). Stemming from Nonini and
Ong’s (1997) conceptualization of Chinese transnationalism as an ‘alternative modernity’
fusing Chinese familial ideologies with wealth accumulation, the term Asian modernities
describes this ironic subversion and reinforcement of Weberian sociology, that is, the
extent to which neoliberalization and modern capitalization in the Asia-Pacific is accompanied by a discourse of ‘Asian values’ that invokes religion in a secular register.

Indeed, this iron cage of Asian modernities is the context in which Asia-Pacific geographies of religion are found. As a progenitor of the term Asian modernities, Aihwa Ong’s (1987) first theoretical contribution arose from her empirical work on a supernatural phenomenon: spirit-possession and exorcism among factory workers in Malaysia. She argued that because modernizing Asia-Pacific ideologies became a Weberian iron cage for female Malaysian workers, they were using spirit-possession to break out of that secular cage, expressing their political agency against an exploitative global economic system. While Ong’s explanation of this paranormal situation was a materialist one, evangelical theologian Simon Chan (2007) argues that exorcism features as a distinctly ‘Asian’ flavour of spirituality that emphasizes spiritual liberation. While the two assessments seem to be at odds, they are both addressing different angles of secularization. After all, the ‘secular’ does not mean the absence of religion, but the orientation of theology to produce knowledge useful for exerting power on immanent space. Ong’s factory workers thus contested secular power through supernatural phenomena such that spirituality and material realities were two sides of the same anti-secular contestation. In other words, it matters little whether one agrees on the supernatural dimension of these occurrences, for while the transcendent dimensions of these happenings cannot be denied, the experience of spirituality in the neoliberal Asia-Pacific is inextricably tied, inter alia, with material political and economic circumstances. McGee (2008: 278) argues that such phenomena call for the examination of religion as part of the deep ‘underground knowledges’ of Asia-Pacific urban spaces, for these sites are constructed and contested
according to imaginative narratives of what it means to be ‘Asian.’ It is in this sense that Asia-Pacific religions can be conceptualized as Pacific secularities, for religious impulses are often locked into the discourse of ‘Asian values,’ ideologies of ‘Asian culture’ that on the one hand function as an economic iron cage delineating the ways in which Asia-Pacific political economies run and on the other hand are co-opted by certain Asia-Pacific political leaders attempting to govern their populations.

However, as we saw in the discussion of public religions, both progressive and conservative actors can use these grounded theologies. Some, like Ong’s factory workers, might look to religion as a means of liberation from the iron cage of Asian capitalist modernities. Others, such as neoliberal state actors or pro-market religious practitioners, might favour a religion that locks the cage’s bars more tightly, so to speak. A deep exploration of religion in the post-colonial Asia-Pacific thus reveals that faith, spirituality, and the supernatural are often used by a diverse range of actors in civil society, both in grassroots resistance movements to neoliberal restructuring from below as well as from above by the state to legitimize its power.

When actors in Asia-Pacific civil societies use religion as a liberating force against the powers of the state and the market, this can be conceptualized as the use of religion from below to contest the modern Asian iron cage. Responding to both the older and restructured post-colonial governance paradigms in the Asia-Pacific, Douglass et al. (2006) argue that civil societies in the Asia-Pacific were first constructed to resist the elite hubris of nascent post-colonial welfare states. This was followed by a new resistance to market capitalism as these nation-states engaged in neoliberal restructuring. Religion has been integral to these emerging solidarities. As Sirat and Abdullah (2006) argue, mosques are
key civic spaces in Malaysia, for while they are regulated by the state, there are different applications of regulation depending on the mosque’s location in Kuala Lumpur. Because higher-income mosques are regulated less, they can perform multi-functional roles as mixing spaces for Malaysian citizens, organizing their communities in ways that have recently become threatening to the state as ‘insurgent sites’ (Sirat and Abdullah 2006: 118). As Kong (2001) points out, these usages of sacred spaces often confounds secular urban planning, such as in residential zoning (Kong 2002) and national educational curricula (Kong 2005a) in Singapore. Following Hirschkind’s (2007) study of mediated Islamic counterpublics, Kong (2006) suggests that religious counterpublics empower civil societies to resist strategies of state subjectivity formation. The purpose of these resistances is to produce de facto democratic negotiations between the state and citizenry in the midst of Asia-Pacific nation-building strategies. To appeal to democracy in turn challenges the iron cage of ‘Asian values,’ for they contest the legitimacy of ‘Asian’ authoritarianism in both its welfare and neoliberal guises with an alternative vision of democratic civic participation.

The usage of religion to form spaces of resistance borrows itself from colonial utilizations of religious sites as hubs of cultural solidarity over against Euro-American colonizers. Acting as meeting sites for colonized populations, these places became forums for intra-native conversation, out of which colonized elites emerged to negotiate with their colonizers. These religious sites thus enabled strategies of simultaneous resistance to and collaboration with colonizing authorities. This pattern is seen clearly in Yeoh’s (1996) examination of colonial Singaporean urban formations, where a strategically essentialized Chinese community in Singapore was able to speak to colonial elites, negotiating with them
to preserve sites where herbal medicines could be merchandised, buildings could be built according to the rules of Chinese geomancy, and burial sites would follow Chinese customs. Likewise, Hong Kong historians have argued that in order for British colonialism to have worked in Hong Kong, there had to be some collaboration with the Chinese community. To achieve this collaboration, religion was often deployed as a cultural strategy. As Carl T. Smith (1985/2005) argued, British Christian schools educated young Chinese boys in the mid-nineteenth century the rules of English grammar, economic models, and Chinese classics. When they were older, they were able to be the economic middlemen that enabled the Hong Kong colonial economy to work. Moreover, as Elizabeth Sinn (2003) shows, these middlemen, while educated as Christians, were able to flip the Confucian order in their favour by appropriating the Taoist functions of the Man Mo Temple as an order of priestly merchant elites. Colonized communities thus used religion as a tool of assertion, establishing local elites who could interface with Euro-American colonizers on behalf of the colonized.

The tension between collaboration and resistance suggests that there are also conservative actors who use religious symbolism to legitimize post-colonial Asia-Pacific state regimes and to tighten the bars of the modern Asian iron cage. Kusno (2000) argues that these forms of conservatism also have roots in the colonial period. In Indonesia, Dutch colonizers utilized essentialized Indonesian religious architecture to demonstrate the benevolence of their regime. As the Sukarno government embarked on its postcolonial nation-building project, it reused these architectural tropes, combining them with Islamic architecture to inculcate a form of governmentality among the new Indonesian citizenry. The Suharto administration followed by adding neoliberal structures of flying highways
and consumption spaces to demonstrate its leadership as it guided Indonesia into the global economy. Kusno notes that in each case, the built environment reflected an imagination of the spiritual landscapes of Indonesia, whether it was folk religion, Islamic spectacles, or the flying highways. The use of religion in the built environment, Kusno suggests, is thus political because they reinforce the legitimacy of the state’s regime.

These conservative usages of religion actively propagate Asian values as paths to modernization. Judy Han’s (2010b) association of Korean missionary activity with the geopolitics of development suggests that ‘Asian modernities’ co-opt religious discourses to justify neoliberal regimes. As Han (2011) argues, Korean missionaries preached a ‘gospel of development’ when they were in Africa that spread values of hard work for the sake of African nation-building. Han suggests that this is an exporting of ‘Asian values,’ emphasizing hard work as a religious and ‘Asian’ contribution to Africa for their own nation-building regimes. Similarly, Tu Wei-ming (1994, 1996) argues that Confucian traditions were the key factor in the rise of Asia-Pacific economies through putatively Asian values. In other words, religious traditions have sometimes been strategically orientalized through state rhetoric to explain the uniqueness of Asian modernization.

However, in both progressive and conservative uses of religion vis-à-vis the iron cage of Asian values, the interfacing of religion with questions of political economy suggests that the deployment of ‘Asian values’ leads to a proliferation of Pacific secularities. The politics of religion in Asia-Pacific modernities can be interpreted as simultaneously contesting the powers of neoliberal regimes through civil society and collaborating with them to reinforce Asia-Pacific state legitimacy and their agendas for nation-building. Contradictory as these two causes may be, what brings them together is that the public face
of religion in the Asia-Pacific is primarily about the assertion of post-colonial identity as enshrined in ‘Asian values.’ Their religious responsiveness to legacies of colonization thus often represents the grounding of secular theologies.

2.4.3 **Asian North American religions: coping with legacies of orientalizing racism**

While seemingly disconnected from the Asia-Pacific, Asian American and Asian Canadian movements have often been conceptualized as similar attempts to confront legacies of orientalizing racism in similar ways to how post-colonial Asia-Pacific political leaders have attempted to deal with histories of colonization. As literary scholar Kandice Chuh (2003: 88) rightly argues, the disconnection of the Asia-Pacific and Asian North America must be resisted because ‘the practice of holding “Asia” at a cognitive distance sustains a certain kind of imperialist epistemology responsible for conceiving Asian-raced peoples, among others, as Others.’ To the extent that they too use religion to produce new, post-colonial ideologies that link identity politics with political economy, Asian North Americans also participate in Pacific secularities. What I shall show here is that the difference between Asian North Americans and the Asia-Pacific is that though both deal with the post-colonial legacies of orientalizing racism, it is not incumbent upon Asian North Americans to fashion their own post-colonial states. As a result, it has been said that Asian Americans and Asian Canadians often use their grounded theologies to interface with the liberal religions of white settler colonizers in North America, Protestant Christianity. The unintended consequence of this interaction is that many Asian North American religions now find themselves doing comparative work with Protestantism, to the point that there are currently complaints that conventional ‘Asian’ religions, familial practices, and
indigenous spiritualities have been insufficiently explored (Williams and Moriya, 2010). These constant comparisons with white Protestantism is yet another instance of Pacific secularity, for scholars working in this research vein often demonstrate that religion can be used for the immanent purpose of coping with legacies of racialization (see Pascoe, 1991; Yung, 1995; Yu, 2001; Yoo, 2000, 2010; D Chang, 2010). Paralleling the Asia-Pacific, these Pacific secularities also have progressive and conservative variants, for experiences of orientalizing racism do not automatically prescribe responsive actions.

To make this argument, however, Asian American studies must transcend the Marxist underpinnings of the Asian American movement. Most accounts of Asian American studies trace the discipline to the student strikes led by the Third World Liberation Front at San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley in 1968 (Nakanishi, 1986; Hune, 1989; Umemoto, 1989; Wake, 1989; Omatsu, 1990, 1994; Fujino, 2008). Claiming solidarity with the economically marginalized in the Asia-Pacific ‘third world,’ the strikers demanded the formation of ethnic studies departments that would teach them skills to empower their racialized communities to achieve economic equality in America. These emphases on structural injustices indicated that the student strikers at the time were influenced by Marxist ideologies. As Yoo (1999: 8-9) puts it baldly, these Marxist orientations have in turn long insisted on an ideological materialism in Asian American studies, for ‘religion generally has been cast as an opiate of the masses and ephemeral in nature’ and framed as ‘a key weapon in the social and cultural arsenal of the United States’ that is ‘associated with Christian missionaries who linked arms with diplomats and businessmen to create an imperial apparatus that reaped huge profits for the United States while wreaking havoc in Asia.’ Yoo critiques such reductionistic moves, for this focus has
blinded the discipline from seeing the vibrancy of religion as a form of agency assertion, a key theme in contemporary social science research. Charging that the activities of white American Protestant missionaries were complicit in the economic disadvantaging of Asian populations in America (Yu, 2001), Asian American scholars have conventionally looked askance at studies of Asian American religions, to the point that, as Jane Iwamura (2003: 1) puts it, the sacred needs to be revealed again in Asian Pacific America, ‘to a new way of seeing the world, a new way of being.’

This revealed sacrality, however, would fit well within the rubric of Pacific secularities. As Rudy Busto (2003) argues, conducting ethnic studies and religious studies as joint ventures ‘disOrients’ both disciplines, for it would reveal the mundane, everyday quality of religious practice among Asian Americans. Paralleling Milbank’s (2006) polemic against the sociological ‘policing of the sublime,’ Busto cautions against a facile reductionism in the interpretation of Asian American religious experience, for the supernatural is experienced as real by Asian American religious practitioners. However, while this agenda sounds like an apologetic for religion over against the prevailing secularism of Asian American studies, David Kyuman Kim (2003) appeals to Durkheim (1915/1965) to call Asian American studies itself a totemic, enchanted diaspora to which ethnic studies scholars and activists cling religiously. Subverting the secularities of Asian American studies, they imply that Asian American studies itself is a theological impulse. It is consequently through the grounded theologies of Asian North America that religion and the secular can be revisited.

Responding to the neo-Marxist origins of Asian American studies, then, the first step is to revisit the theological orientations of the white Protestant missionaries who have been
charged with complicity in Asian American racial formations. Asian American scholars often object to the ways that Asian Americans and Asian Canadians were presumed to be ‘perpetual foreigners’ and ‘inassimilable aliens,’ conditions that led them to become populations on whom sociological integration experiments could be performed (SC Chan, 1991; RG Lee, 1999). Henry Yu (2001) makes the link between the sociological studies that made these discourses of inassimilability possible and the missionaries who preceded them. He examines the Chicago School’s sociological study of whether ‘orientals’ could assimilate into the American mainstream through education, religion, and intermarriage.

In an analysis that parallels Charles Taylor’s (2007) examination of a secular age, Yu argues that the secular sociological questions of race were premised on theological issues raised by missionarieds who were attempting to make proselytizing inroads in the Orient (see Pascoe, 1991). Attempting to try their methods on home soil, he concludes that these missionaries conducted ministry experiments in urban Chinatowns, assuming an essential racial unity between Asians in America and in the Asia-Pacific. Derek Chang (2010) and Gordon Chang (2012) have both shown that these missionary activities also sought in turn to see whether Asian Americans of previous generations could become citizens of a Christian nation sent out to civilize the Orient. Similar processes were also noted in Canada, where a consensus has emerged that the Chinese were historically viewed as threats to a Canadian nation-state conceived as a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant nation while simultaneously being the target of ‘civilizing’ missionary activity (Roy, 1989, 2004, 2006; Anderson, 1991; Wang, 2006; LR Mar, 2010). These missionary grounded theologies thus appear more concerned about what Omi and Winant (1994) term ‘racial formations,’ a process by which race consciousness is formed among peoples. In the case of the
missionaries, racialization also included orientalist imaginaries of an Asia to be proselytized and a prescriptive place for Asian migrants as the oriental ‘other’ in the American and Canadian nation-states. Theologically oriented toward the immanent, this-worldly concerns of race and nation, then, this scholarship can be said to have formed a consensus that these missionary impulses have (albeit unintentionally) set a secular course for contemporary Asian North American religions.

As Asian North American religious communities are formed in relation to these secular racializing theologies, they are rarely ideologically consistent with the Asian American movement’s radical, antiracist politics. Indeed, that many Asian American Protestant communities have been assessed for their ability to help new migrants assimilate is one area of dissonance. While Min and Kim (2001) assert that Asian American faith congregations are key to understanding the dynamics of contemporary Asian American communities, they make little comment on the ideological bent of these communities. In congregational sociologies that adopt the new paradigm’s methodologies, the ideologies present in Asian American religious communities appear to be Americanist, encouraging migrants to assimilate into American civic culture without critically engaging white missionary theologies of secular racialization (e.g. Yang, 1999; Jeung, 2005; Chen, 2008). While attempting to develop intra-communal Asian American networks, then, these assimilationist strategies suggest that Asian American religious groups tend to be ideologically dissonant from a movement that eschews assimilation for a structural re-visioning of a currently unjust civil society.

This dissonance in turn suggests that the ethnic identities forged within these communities do not necessarily accord with an ethnic studies agenda. Borrowing from Yen
Le Espiritu’s (1992) seminal work on Asian American pan-ethnic solidarities, Jeung (2005) demonstrates that different congregational theologies build varying conceptions of pan-ethnicity, some of which follow the progressive anti-racist solidarity of the Asian American movement, while others use the language of Asian America to emphasize the power of religion to cast off racial and ethnic shackles. These conservative variants have in turn led Janelle Wong and Jane Iwamura (2007) to call for sustained studies of Asian American conservative congregations, unpacking their ideologies in light of their dissonance with the Asian American movement’s progressive solidarities. In other words, while Asian American religious groups are distinctively influenced by and responsive to the legacy of white missionary activities, their responses can take a range of ideological positions that do not necessarily cohere with the solidarities prescribed by the Asian American movement.

That the ideological inconsistency among Asian American religious communities has also been observed in Asian American historiographies suggests that religious studies lies somewhere near the core of revising the agenda of Asian American studies altogether. Granted, there have been attempts to make history fit the pattern of anti-racist resistance. David Yoo’s (2000, 2010) explorations of Nisei and Korean American religious communities highlight how they needed to develop alternative Christian theologies because their identities were informed by their exclusion from American Protestant communities. So too, Timothy Tseng’s (1996, 1999, 2002, 2003) history of Chinese American Protestantism demonstrates that Chinese Protestants were themselves involved in asserting the rights of Chinese Americans even during the Chinese Exclusion era. However, these theologies are remarkably Americanist and politically conservative, showing that the dominant way that racialization is addressed in these religious
communities was not a revolutionary anti-racist politics, but ideologies that emphasized individual assimilation into American civil society. They were not trying to contest the racial formations (among other things, including a Gospel of hope that led to more egalitarian social patterns [see Pascoe 1991; Yung 1995]) that the white missionaries brought them; they were instead assimilating into them.

The dominance of white missionary influence throughout Asian North American religious studies suggests in turn that even non-Christian Asian North American religious communities often position themselves vis-à-vis forms of American Protestantism. Sharon Suh’s (2004) study of Korean Buddhists in Orange County is explicitly positioned against the vibrancy of Korean American evangelicalism, pointing out that her interview subjects themselves often constructed their religious identities simultaneously by borrowing terms from and explicitly repudiating popular Christian discourses. Duncan Williams and Tomoe Moriya (2010) also note that while much has been made of Asian American Christianities, it is crucial to look at how first-generation Japanese Buddhism created publics that reacted to these Christians in the public sphere. Likewise, Anne Fadiman’s (1997) poignant account of a Hmong child’s tragic struggle with epilepsy because she was caught between the health recommendations of an American hospital and her family’s spirit-filled world reinforces this positioning of Asian American religions vis-à-vis forms of Christianity and secularism they encounter in the Americas. So too, Augusto Espiritu (2005) notes that transnational Filipino American intellectuals constructed their own identities by fusing folk Filipino religions with lay Catholicism to make sense of their transnational experience between the Philippines and America. In each of these cases, these studies address the question of racialization vis-à-vis both historical white missionary legacies and the contemporary
forms of Asian American evangelicalism as they wrestle with these racial formations.

Therefore, because religion in the Americas has long been dominated by white missionary influence, the description of Asian American religious experiences cannot be divorced from these encounters. Asian American religions are not isolated traditions; they actively relate to each other, sometimes even in active contestation.

Asian North American religion scholars thus position race as the starting point of their scholarship, suggesting that this literature also feeds into a conversation about Pacific secularities. Even in its conservative forms, religion is deployed as a tactic to assert agency in the face of orientalizing racism. This action may take on various ideological forms, some in solidarity with the Asian American movement, while the vast majority lives in tension with assimilating and resisting the historical legacies of racial formations. To reveal the sacred in Asian Pacific America, then, is to explore how they manifest Pacific secular theologies. Indeed, newer work in Asian American religious studies points in this direction by protesting the romanticizing and exoticizing portrayals of Asian religions as mystical, for they elevate East-West differences to reinforce white supremacist binaries. Jane Iwamura’s (2011) study of Asian American religions as portrayed in American popular culture reveals that the figure of the ‘oriental monk’ often stands in as an asexual spiritual master through which Asians in America have often been read and stereotyped. So too, Joseph Cheah’s (2011) study of American Buddhism demonstrates that white Buddhist practitioners often see themselves as spiritually superior to their Asian counterparts because they emphasize meditative practices more than those who are ‘culturally’ Buddhist. Following this scholarship, the next step would be to complicate the portrayal of white supremacy altogether, demonstrating how complex Asian North American religious communities
interfaced with equally complex white missionaries with a multivalent agenda. Doing so would probe the secular theological strands inherent in how Asian North American religions have been conceptualized as orienting their theologies to deal with processes of racialization.

The practice of religion in the public spheres of the Asia-Pacific and Asian North America is thus remarkably similar for their post-colonial strategies: they are public religious attempts to deal with modernization against a backdrop of colonizing orientalist racism. While Asian North Americans have not indicated that they want to develop an alternative, independent post-colonial state of their own,\(^8\) the theological orientations of Asian populations on both sides of the Pacific Rim tend to be directed toward developing a post-colonial identity. As Taylor (2007) rightly notes, however, these efforts seldom produce ideological uniformity. Instead, they often result in a nova effect of new religious subjectivities, all pursuing quests for fullness without agreeing on either what fulfillment would look like or the methods to achieve it. Pacific secularities operate in a similar fashion. Though they all deal with legacies of colonization and racism, the shape that they take can range the spectrum of radically progressive and authoritarian conservative forms.

That 'secularization' is the term that describes this fragmentation implies that theories of 'religion' and the 'secular' are far from inapplicable to the Pacific Rim. They are instead integral to understanding it.

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\(^8\) While this sounds implausible at face value, I offer the contrast of the Nation of Islam as an attempt to construct African American nationhood within the United States.
2.5 Conclusion: grounded theologies and Pacific secularities

This chapter has finally come full circle. Starting with Pacific Rim religious communities in the new paradigm in the sociology of religion, it first critiqued an uncritical view of secularization theory that led both to an overly celebratory dismissal of the secularization thesis and a sense of theoretical confusion over what constituted religion. The second section then explored a revisionist definition of ‘the secular’ as a theological orientation, affirming Casanova’s (1994) prescient reminder that ‘public religions’ often reinforced the secularization thesis, in both its progressive and conservative forms. Returning to the problem of Pacific Rim religions, then, the third section proposed an alternative theoretical framework through which public religions should be examined: Pacific secularities. Instead of a naïve dismissal of secularization, this final part demonstrated that post-colonial grounded theologies are often responsive to secular colonizing pasts, seeking to establish their own ethnic and racial identities by using religion. As a result, these attempts often use secular theological concepts, orienting grounded theologies to this-worldly, immanent concerns of how to build a nation, how to resist structural injustices, and how to establish one’s identity in light of historical racial formations.

The continuous mutual implication of grounded theologies and the secularization process thus calls for a methodology that transcends conventional congregational studies and explores how religion works and is transformed in the public sphere. In the next chapter, my task will be to provide such a methodology. As I noted in this review, what are sometimes regarded as deprivatized religions that transgress public-private boundaries are often the expression of modern agency meant to be liberating. The task of a geographer
of religion in these contexts is to ensure that, whatever his or her personal politics are, the focus of the study is on how the ways that grounded theologies are internally constructed, exploring their theological orientations and noting the spaces that these cosmological narratives aid in constructing. The grounded theological sites that are formed, moreover, often lack ideological consistency, for secularization is not a univocal prescription for action. Instead, because of the conservative and progressive variants engendered by religious attempts to relate to the immanent frame, secular space has been under ideological contestation in a putative culture war between ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ public religions. That ideological contestation and the methodological issues that it produces is the subject in the next chapter.
Chapter 3: Transcending the Culture Wars: a theological methodology for secular public spaces

3.1 Introduction: transcending the culture wars

‘Culture wars’ is the name given to the polarization of values in the public spheres of North America (and arguably, throughout the Pacific Rim). Borrowing the term Kulturkampf from the late nineteenth-century German purge of Catholicism from its national education system under Otto von Bismarck, sociologist James Davison Hunter (1991) suggests that the culture wars in America in the 1980s and 1990s were similar to the Bismarck regime’s secular consolidation of power. Indeed, the central themes of both Kulturkampfs revolved around the place of religion in the operation of the nation-state. In its contemporary form, Hunter argues that the battles pit religious conservatives and political progressives against each other. Conservatives are said to defend moral norms inscribed in Scriptural texts and an idealized national Christian heritage. Progressives allegedly champion causes of radical secularization and equality, often invoking theological language themselves with an egalitarian, democratic hermeneutic (see also Neuhaus, 1984; Noll, 1994; Wellman, 2007; Taylor, 2007; BS Gregory, 2012).

In their forays into the public sphere, some Cantonese Protestants have become part of the culture wars (Wong and Iwamura, 2007; Han, 2010). On the one hand, conservative Cantonese evangelicals have protested the state recognition of sexual orientation as an axis of discrimination; they thus oppose the redefinition of marriage as gender-neutral while attempting to elect politicians favourable to their politics. Meanwhile, other progressive Cantonese mainline Protestants have contested these activities, arguing that they reinforce
forms of structural inequality. During my ethnographic fieldwork, my interactions with people on both sides led to a methodological dilemma. As I tried to be empathetic to Cantonese Protestants of a variety of political persuasions, all sides tried to convince me that it was my duty as a Christian of Chinese ethnicity to join their cause, inadvertently attempting to politicize my research.

While I agree that all academic knowledge is political, I categorically reject the proposition that researchers must take one side of the putative culture wars. Instead, the political contribution of academia must lead to paths that transcend the culture wars. The methodological solution that I propose contends that both the conservative and liberal sides of the culture wars are products of secularization. Following the review in chapter 2, secularization is not a descriptive term that denotes the absence of religious phenomena. It is rather a critical rubric through which to evaluate theological orientations. As Hunter (1991: 64) himself suggests, the culture wars are secular trends in disguise, for they are constituted by ‘a conflict over “the means of cultural production”’ so as to ‘have the power to define the meaning of America.’ Both, in short, are attempting to enshrine their values in secular space, engaging in what Milbank (2006) terms an ‘ontology of violence’ in a secular political sphere. The irony could not be more striking. The conservatives who protest the secularization of society and the liberalization of moral norms employ secular methods to stake their claims on immanent space. Meanwhile, their putative opponents, who supposedly propagate radical forms of secularization, often champion equality based on an egalitarian reading of Judeo-Christian theology.

A position that approaches the culture wars from a vantage point of critical distance must be theological self-reflexive. As Charles Taylor (2007: 766) rightly argues, the
conception of ‘faith’ needs to be more carefully interrogated in the context of the culture wars, for it ‘can all too easily become defined in terms of certain codes and loyalties… and those who fall outside these tend to appear more easily as renegades than fellow Christians from whom one may have something to learn.’ This is especially true in the ‘contemporary Kulturkampf, particularly in the U.S.A., in which some churches are induced to take on the “secular world” on some issues of sexual ethics, often narrowly defined; which leads to a condemnation of other Christians who are reluctant to be recruited into this Crusade, and hence to a kind of civil war in the Church.’ To probe what is meant by ‘faith’ is do theology. It is to claim that from a theological vantage point, the culture wars fail to account for the pluralism within the global Christian church. More seriously, it neglects the scandalous traditions within Christian history of freedom, hospitality, creativity, and pacifism, all of which originate from Jesus himself. It thus negates the common points of praxis shared among a variety of theological and cosmological positions for narrowly defined ideological agendas (Yoder, 1976; Wright, 1992, 1995, 2003; Volf, 1997; Girard, 2001; RD Williams, 2001). On a theoretical level, they also present an overly narrow view of what secularization is, with conservatives often failing to see that their theological interventions are motivated by secular agendas, while progressives are blinded to the notion that their secular ideologies of equality are often theologically undergirded.

Taking the radically orthodox view that secularization is often a subversion of Christian theology (Milbank, 2006; Pickstock, 1998; Milbank et al., 1998; Cavanaugh 1998, 2002, 2009; Tse 2013), this chapter will foreground an explicitly Christian theological approach, one that requires the constant seeking of common ground for peacemaking purposes (see Wolterstorff, 1984; Taylor, 2007; Volf, 2011). First, I shall outline the
population to be studied: ‘Cantonese Protestants.’ The second section then unfolds this thesis’s theological understanding of the secular public sphere where the culture wars are putatively located and proposes geographical sites in which to locate the presence of an objectively existing public sphere with which Cantonese Protestants engage. As this thesis is about how I as a researcher am approaching that public, the third section provides an autobiographical sketch so as to reveal the theological commitments that I bring to this thesis. The fourth section details the qualitative methodology that I used to uncover the theological orientations and the public secularities of Cantonese Protestants. These four sections map the theological positioning of four groups: the secular public sphere, research subjects who may be religious, the secular academy, and the researcher’s own theological commitments. This chapter thus acts as a bridge between the theoretical review in the previous chapter and the empirical work in the forthcoming chapters, demonstrating how it is possible to argue that Cantonese Protestants are part and parcel of a secular age.

3.2 Cantonese Protestant: the study population

This thesis focuses on Cantonese Protestants. In this section, we will take both ‘Cantonese’ and ‘Protestant’ in turn to demonstrate that they are more complex than at surface value. These complications indicate that these terms are contestable on the ground and that various Cantonese Protestants leverage different understandings of these terms in their activities in the public sphere. They also inform how we can understand ‘Cantonese Protestants’ with all of their myriad internal contestations as relating to a secular public sphere, especially through theological lenses.
3.2.1 ‘Cantonese’ Protestant: contested ethnicities and Chinese Christians

On the surface, ‘Cantonese’ would seem to be a readily quantifiable term. As the enduring *lingua franca* of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, there seems to be a special relationship between the dialect and the city (Matthews et al., 2008; Law, 2009). The Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department put Hong Kong’s total population at 7,136,300 in mid-2012. In 2012, a government household survey found that 90.3 percent of Hong Kong residents aged six to 65 listed Cantonese as their first language, while only 23.7 percent reported their English as good and 24.1 percent said the same of Mandarin Chinese (Census and Statistics Bureau, 2013: 8-9). With evidence that this marker of a Hongkonger identity still carries over to the present day, the importance of the historical rise of a uniquely Hong Kong subjectivity can be traced to the 1970s. In the wake of the Cultural Revolution in the PRC and the 1968 riots in Hong Kong that attempted to draw the British colony back under Chinese rule, Hong Kong residents, especially the generation born there after the 1950s, began to refer themselves as *Hongkongers* (Cantonese: *heunggongyan*; Mandarin: *xianggangren 香港人*). Many positioned a *Hongkonger* identity in opposition to being *Chinese nationals* (Cantonese: *zhongguoyan*; Mandarin: *zhongguoren 中國人*). Aiding in this was the development of Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong television in 1968 and Cantonese cinema in the 1970s (Lau, 1989; Ma, 1997; Tse, 2007). In the 1980s, these shows introduced a new character onto the screen: *Ah Chan*, a village bumpkin from the mainland whose mannerisms hilariously clashed with the established etiquette of Hongkongers, cementing a perceived cultural divide between Hong Kong and the PRC (Ma, 1997; Mathews et al., 2008). Cantonese would seem not only to be
the *lingua franca* of Hong Kong, but a language that can be used to posit geopolitical differences between the Special Administrative Region and its mainland.

While about 9.4% of Hong Kong’s population is estimated to be Christian, those emigrating from Hong Kong report a higher degree of affiliation with Christianity. A fact sheet issued by the Special Administrative Region in 2008 estimated about 355,000 Catholics and 320,000 Protestant Christian practitioners in Hong Kong. The Protestants were composed of 1400 congregations in over 50 denominations (Information Services Department, 2008: 2). Those leaving Hong Kong exceed these numbers. Since March 2012, the Pew Research Center’s Religion and Public Life Project (2012a) reported that 170,000 (24.2%) out of 700,000 emigrants from Hong Kong are Christian, also exceeding that of the number of Buddhists (90,000, or 12.8%). Of the 700,000 total emigrant population, 460,000 (65.7%) travelled to North America.

While not all Cantonese speakers in North America are from Hong Kong, Hong Kong as a place of origin may serve as a somewhat reliable indicator of how many Cantonese-speakers there are, though it may provide an underestimate by not factoring in people born in the PRC, Southeast Asia, or North America. Given this quantitative rubric, there is a slight discrepancy between the decreasing numbers of Cantonese-speakers relative to Mandarin-speakers and the maintenance of Cantonese-speaking congregations in San Francisco and Vancouver. Let us begin with the number of Chinese Americans in the Bay Area. The 2010 census estimates that there are 561,647 (9.18%) out of a total population of 6,117,033 who listed their ethnicity as ‘Chinese alone’⁹ in Bay Area counties. Broken

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⁹This number includes Taiwanese, but it excludes mixed-race populations.
down by county, there are 172,181 (21.4%) Chinese Americans in San Francisco County, 64,796 (9.0%) in San Mateo County, 152,701 (8.6%) in Santa Clara County (better known as the Silicon Valley), 146,934 (9.7%) in Alameda County, 40,360 (3.8%) in Contra Costa County (40,532/1,049,025), and 4,132 (1.6%) in Marin County (US Census Bureau, 2012a). Within these numbers, the Hong Kong population is remarkably small. While adjusting for place of birth in Hong Kong would exclude Cantonese speakers born elsewhere, only 12.5% were born in Hong Kong while 14.2% were born in Taiwan and 58.8% in the PRC (US Census Bureau, 2012b). Moreover, if one factors in American-born Chinese, 34% were born within the United States while 66% were born outside.

![Figure 3.1: Foreign-born Chinese American Place of Birth, San Francisco Bay Area (US Census Bureau, 2012b)](image)

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10 This percentage represents the number of ‘Chinese only’ listed by county divided by the total population of the county.
Figure 3.2: Chinese Americans, Place of Birth, US and non-US (US Census Bureau, 2012c)

However, narrowing the population by religion demonstrates that Cantonese is still salient among Chinese American Protestants, despite the anticipation that a smaller Hong Kong community might lead to fewer Cantonese-speaking congregations. Of the total population of Chinese Americans in the Bay Area, the Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity (2008) has counted 30,130 church-goers (6.3%). This modest expression of religious affiliation is consistent with the finding by the Pew Forum that while Christians make up the most dominant Asian American religious group in the United States at 42% (22% Protestant, Catholic 19%), 52% of Chinese Americans describe themselves as unaffiliated while 31% are Christian (Protestant 22%, Catholic 8%) (Pew, 2012b: 8, 11, 13).

While Cantonese is only used in 29% of Chinese churches in the Bay Area as the language of worship, a closer examination by county demonstrates the dialect’s ongoing

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11 As sociologist Russell Jeung (2011) notes in a study of Chinese home shrines, however, one must qualify this claim of religious non-affiliation. ‘Non-affiliation’ does not imply ‘non-religious’ or even ‘secular’ in both its conventional or revisionist sense. It simply means that the ethnic Chinese who were surveyed did not identify as members of any formal religious institution.
significance. In San Francisco County, for example, the 39% of the churches that use Cantonese is just marginally fewer those that use English (44%) and significantly higher than the Mandarin tally (14%). Cantonese and Mandarin in churches are more on par in San Mateo County (33% Cantonese, 29% Mandarin) and Alameda County (32% Cantonese, 31.5% Mandarin). It is only in the counties furthest away from San Francisco—Contra Costa County (18% Cantonese, 39% Mandarin) and Santa Clara County (20% Cantonese, 50% Mandarin) that Mandarin usage in congregational worship exceeds that of Cantonese (Tseng and Chuck, 2008). Such data suggests that despite the lower percentage of Chinese Americans as a whole who were born in Hong Kong, Cantonese still remains a vibrant dialect among the Protestants in the Bay Area.

Table 3.1: Language Use in Worship in San Francisco Bay Area Churches (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 8)12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Cantonese</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alameda</td>
<td>2176 (32%)</td>
<td>2359 (35%)</td>
<td>2083 (31.5%)</td>
<td>100 (1.5%)</td>
<td>6718 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contra Costa</td>
<td>277 (18%)</td>
<td>579 (37%)</td>
<td>611 (39%)</td>
<td>88 (6%)</td>
<td>1555 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marin</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>65 (76%)</td>
<td>20 (24%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>85 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>3494 (39%)</td>
<td>3910 (44%)</td>
<td>1146 (14%)</td>
<td>280 (3%)</td>
<td>8830 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Mateo</td>
<td>735 (33%)</td>
<td>794 (36%)</td>
<td>669 (29%)</td>
<td>33 (2%)</td>
<td>2222 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
<td>2180 (20%)</td>
<td>2738 (26%)</td>
<td>5227 (50%)</td>
<td>455 (4%)</td>
<td>10280 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8862 (29%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>10445 (35%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>9867 (33%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>956 (3%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>30130 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers in Canada are similar. Since the previous Hongkonger and current PRC migrations over the last twenty years (Li, 2005), the 2006 Canadian census counts 381,535 (18%) people who gave a single response as being of Chinese ethnicity in Metro

12 The emphasis on Cantonese is mine.
Vancouver. This number comprises 94% of the Chinese population in British Columbia. As Figure 1.3 shows, the highest concentration of ethnic Chinese in 2006 were in Richmond (43.6%), Vancouver (29.4%), and Burnaby (30.3%) (Statistics Canada 2007).\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3_3}
\caption{Chinese Population in Metro Vancouver, by city (Statistics Canada 2007)}
\end{figure}

The last census count of religious affiliation in Canada was 2001, in which Christians in the Chinese population numbered roughly 8% Catholic, 8% Protestant, and 8% non-categorized Christian, for a total of about 24% Christian, a population higher than a 15% Buddhist segment (Li, 2010; Tse, 2011). However, 61% listed their religious status as unaffiliated (Statistics Canada, 2003). For a more recent count, the Vancouver Chinese

\textsuperscript{13} These percentages are taken from the total population of the census subdivision.
Evangelical Ministerial Fellowship counted 120 Chinese evangelical churches in Metro Vancouver in 2010. My count in their 2007 directory with the help of an anonymous pastoral member of the Fellowship found that 74% of these churches (at the time, n=106) were primarily Cantonese-speaking (Tse, 2011: 758). Li Yu’s (2010: 244) count comes from the 110 Chinese Christian congregations listed in the monthly periodical Truth Monthly in March 2006. Of this number, he counts 75 (68%) that use Cantonese in their services (Li, 2010: 248).

However, salient as this quantitative data may be in revealing the ongoing significance of Cantonese within Chinese Protestant circles, it cannot demonstrate the layered complexities among Cantonese Protestants in each of these sites. While the Pew Forum (2012a) observes that 24% of emigrants from Hong Kong identify as Christian, it does not follow that every Cantonese-speaking person counted is from Hong Kong. As I have already indicated, counts from Hong Kong exclude those born elsewhere, including migrants from South Chinese provinces and Southeast Asia, as well as those who were born in North America. Moreover, despite an ongoing differentiation between historic Taishanese migrants to Chinatown and newer Hongkonger migrations to North American suburbs, both speak forms of Cantonese and may attend churches categorized as ‘Cantonese-speaking.’ Indeed, to be a historic Taishanese population does not indicate extinction; it suggests that these Cantonese Protestants may be well into old age and have produced further generations to carry on their family line. These different forms of

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14 I understand that those from Southern China prefer to refer to themselves as ‘Hoisanese.’ However, I use ‘Taishanese’ because it follows the literature in Asian American studies, particularly in the work of Madeline Hsu (2004) that notes that the majority of migrants to North America were from the village of Taishan, so much so that Taishan erected a gate that read ‘Home of the Overseas Chinese.’ It also follows the usage of my Cantonese Protestant respondents. I am thankful to both Genevieve Leung and Sze-kar Wan for kindly alerting me to these nuances, although I will be using ‘Taishanese’ for the rest of this thesis.
Cantonese have geographical consequences. For example, they may not all agree on what it means to be ‘Cantonese-speaking’ much less ‘ethnic Chinese.’ Some may attribute cultural characteristics and moral virtues to being Cantonese Chinese, only to have their assumptions challenged by other Cantonese-speaking groups. Others may ascribe a possible homeland for the ethnic Chinese, only to be met with assertions that another place is home.

Indeed, what has come to be known as ‘the Chinese diaspora’ is a field of immense complexity (Ang, 2001; Ma and Cartier, 2003). As Ma and Cartier (2003) demonstrate, there is no material reality to the Chinese diaspora, for though China is often assumed to be the motherland, the question of homeland is ambiguous at best. After all, many ethnic Chinese migrants are second-time migrants whose personal roots may not lie in China. Accordingly, while the topic of Cantonese Protestants might evoke some interest in questions of religious freedom and vitality in China (Aikman, 2003; Yang, 2004, 2005, 2011, Lim, 2010; Lian 2010; Cao, 2011; Liao, 2011), people who are ethnic Chinese may have little personal connection to the People’s Republic of China. Instead, they might claim homelands in places outside of China, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. Ien Ang (2001) thus exposes the Chinese diaspora to be a political ideology meant to unite all ethnic Chinese under the banner of huaren (ethnic Chinese) without adequately noting that some ethnic Chinese cannot even speak any of its linguistic dialects.

However, instead of focusing on the intra-Chinese contestations that occur among these subethnic groups, the existing literature tends to separate historic migrations from South China and contemporary Hongkonger transnationalities. Historical studies have
focused on how Taishanese migrations to Chinatowns in the United States and Canada constructed Taishan, their home village in Guangdong Province, as *huaqiao zijia*, the 'home of the overseas Chinese,' as its economy was built on a majority of its men migrating to North America and sending remittances home (Hsu, 2004; Mar, 2010). However, because these paradigms are historical, Chinatowns are thought of as remnants of a past before ‘a Weberian category shift...from the caste status of colonial society to the class status of a globalizing era’ (Ley, 2010: 64). Recent transnational studies of the Chinese migrations to the West Coast often focus on the political and economic calculations of migrants as they negotiate within their families the prospect of staying in Hong Kong and moving to North America, sometimes settling on both in a trans-Pacific shuttle. In the Bay Area, these workers seem to have contributed to the boom of a high-tech industry in Silicon Valley (Ong, 1999, 2003). In Vancouver, they have transformed the urban landscape, educational institutions, business models, property markets, and familial structures through transnational capital (Waters, 2002, 2003, 2008; Ley and Kobayashi, 2005; Ley, 1995, 2003, 2004, 2010). For Nonini and Ong (1997), these geographical formations of transnational Chinese are ‘ungrounded empires’ constituted by an alternative modernity in late capitalism where flexible accumulation happens through familial strategies (Harvey, 1989; Ong, 1999). In contrast, Weiqiang Lin (2011) suggests that there are alternate forms of Chinese cosmopolitanism that do not rely on these familial calculations, but rather, say, in the Singaporean case, are motivated by a desire to re-constitute the self through global education.

The purpose of using ‘Cantonese’ as a rubric of study is to bring these two strands of Cantonese migrations together. This approach avoids a narrow focus on generational
change so often taken in studies of Asian North American religions (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000; Jeung, 2005; Chen, 2008). It also offers a localizing corrective to the transnational focus of much current Chinese diasporic study. While sociologists of religion have been careful to differentiate between generations and migration waves, lumping them all together under the banner of ‘Cantonese’ captures a different picture: one of local contestation over the meanings of ‘Chineseness.’ Therefore, while conservative Cantonese Protestants engage in family values politics by deploying the narrative of a Chinese model minority, their efforts do not go uncontested, even among Cantonese Protestants. In the North American sites, these representations are constantly challenged by an increasingly vocal minority that includes both older second-generation Cantonese- and Taishanese-speakers from Chinatowns and the younger children of migrants from Hong Kong. Their discontent rests on the notion that the model minority is an inadequate representation of Chineseness, preferring rather an ethnic Chinese solidarity to resist prevailing forms of racialization. In Hong Kong, a minority group of liberation theologians has inspired a younger generation known as the ‘post-80s’ (batsup hou) to challenge establishment representations of what it means to be Chinese and to work with Chinese national sovereignty. ‘Cantonese’ is thus not a term of uniformity. It is a rubric that relativizes claims to essential forms of ethnicity while making space for dissent.

3.2.2 Cantonese ‘Protestant’: mainline and evangelical theologies

The complexities around ‘Cantonese’ are matched by the variations of what it means to be ‘Protestant.’ The current terms used to differentiate Protestant theological strands are ‘mainline Protestant’ and ‘evangelical.’ While it would be facile to associate ‘mainline’ with being theologically liberal and ‘evangelical’ with conservatism, it is more helpful to
briefly explore their terminological genealogy. Drawing from sociologist Robert Wuthnow (1988), the ‘mainline’ refers to Protestant Christians whose congregations belong to denominational bodies, such as Anglicans (or in America, Episcopalians), Presbyterians, United Methodists, and most Baptists. While these denominations were historically formed out of theological struggles over church polity and doctrinal articulations, they in fact encompass a spectrum of theological views, including progressive theologies of liberation and conservative theologies of personal salvation. These divisions were derived from the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early twentieth century. In this struggle, ‘modernists’ sought to reconcile Christian faith with scientific discoveries and social engagement (see esp. Klassen 2011), whereas ‘fundamentalists’ argued that these rapprochements compromised the purity of the church and sought refuge in the fundamental propositions of Protestant theology (Bebbington, 1989; Marsden, 1993; Noll, 1994; Hart, 2004; Larsen and Treier, 2007).

As Wuthnow (1989) demonstrates, denominations in America further fractured in the 1970s, giving way to the rise of ‘evangelicals.’ While indebted to the fundamentalist legacy, ‘evangelicals’ such as Billy Graham, John Stott, Harold Ockenga, Charles Fuller, and Carl Henry rejected the notion that Protestants must retreat into their private congregations without engaging civil society. In movements developed since the late 1940s, the formation of congregations that were independent of denominations and organizations based on specific theological points of uniformity began to populate the American Protestant theological landscape in the 1970s. Compared with the theological varieties available in mainline denominations, evangelicals are regarded as more theologically conservative. In particular, evangelicals are known to have an individualistic,
relational reading of the Christian Gospel, emphasizing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as the means for salvation. Evangelicals in the 1980s and 1990s are said to have developed ‘new paradigm’ forms of evangelicalism, highlighting informal, individualistic, therapeutic, and moralistic practices that tend to emphasize direct ‘charismatic’ encounters with supernatural presence (Miller, 1999; Busto, 2003; Alumkal, 2003; Luhrmann, 2012; Wilford, 2012). As sociologists Michael Emerson and Christian Smith (2000) demonstrate, the emphasis in evangelical theology on an individual encounter with God often leads to a de facto political conservatism, while the relational elements of evangelicalism have also bequeathed a de facto communitarian orientation toward many evangelical churches that understand themselves as mandated to care for their communities (Elisha, 2011; Pally, 2012). The political views of evangelicals thus often foreground personal initiative in a market-based economy while denying the existence of social structural injustices. While Christian Smith (2002) qualifies that this does not automatically translate into all evangelicals posturing themselves for a conservative takeover of the nation, it does suggest some correlation between theology and political position. That mainline Protestants have a spectrum of theological and political views within their denominations, then, might be labeled ‘liberal,’ insofar as they appear to be tolerant of a variety of positions.

While many Cantonese Protestants would self-describe as having an ‘evangelical’ theological orientation, not all Cantonese Protestants are theologically, socially, and politically monolithic. Indeed, the Pew Forum (2012b: 41-43) finds that 58% of the Chinese American Christians they surveyed self-described as ‘evangelical,’ while the 42% that either did not know or did not self-describe as evangelical were listed as ‘mainline.’ In addition, 21% of Chinese Americans (often evangelical, but some mainline) described
themselves as having charismatic and Pentecostal orientations. Each of these theological descriptors, however, are contested, even more so by the fact that they originated from a British-American context and that this thesis is about an Asia-Pacific population. Despite the genealogical origins of these theological differentiations, they remain salient for Cantonese Protestants as they construct theologies of social engagement vis-à-vis their congregations.

3.3 The secular culture wars: locating an objectively existing public sphere

This chapter now explores the theoretical construct of the public sphere. Because the notion of a singular public sphere has come under some contestation since the English translation of German critical theorist Jürgen Habermas’s (1962/1989) *Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere* (see Calhoun, 1992), this section will defend my methodological usage of a single public sphere with which Cantonese Protestants engage. As I indicated in chapter 1, I take ‘the public sphere’ to refer to a general forum of all democratic citizens in a given civil society in which civic discourses are contested and public policies are debated. This definition means that I am less concerned in this thesis with matters that remain internal within Cantonese Protestant congregations and am more interested in their engagements with an objectively existing public forum that can be determinative of public policy. These debates are located in concrete spaces, a methodological implication that I will explore at this section’s end. Because research that engages these debates poses the methodological problem of how a researcher should take sides in public conflicts, I shall conclude this section with some thoughts on the secular public sphere and the culture wars, that is, attempts to co-opt the democratic discussion of
the public sphere with the absolute ideological claims of either the left or the right. These skirmishes, I will argue, demonstrate that the public sphere’s secularity is in fact theoretically constituted, for the locus of these ideological battles often take place in sites outside of the church while attempting to influence the state’s public policy, an arena that has not conventionally been under church governance since the advent of modernity (see Casanova, 1994; Asad, 2003; Milbank, 2006; Taylor, 2007; Lilla, 2008; Cavanaugh, 2009; BS Gregory, 2012). This secularity sets up my argument in this chapter’s subsequent sections where I will show that Cantonese Protestant participation in the secular public sphere must be approached from explicit theological vantage points.

3.3.1 An objective public sphere still exists: answering Habermas’s critics

The intellectual genealogy of the public sphere can be traced back to Jürgen Habermas’s (1962/1989) *Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*. Habermas argues that the public sphere is a metaphorical forum originating from the Enlightenment where the ‘public opinion’ of a civil society is articulated in ways that may contest the public authority of the state over its citizens. In so doing, the public sphere enshrines civil society as a site of social relations where democratic reasoning is preserved over against forms of totalitarianism. In democratic societies, it can be argued that (at least ideally) public opinion directly influences the operations of governments through citizen votes, parliamentary discussion, press journalism, and the circulation of democratic discussion through arts and culture.

Habermas’s unitary conceptualization of the public sphere has recently been troubled by a lack of clarity around the word ‘public.’ Indeed, though Habermas’s work has been influential, the ‘public’ has since been appropriated to denote a variety of meanings.
This theoretical chaos is especially troubling in human geography, a discipline where attempts to represent the public sphere in physical space have met with some difficulty. Staeheli and Mitchell (2007) have remarked on the looseness of terms such as ‘the public,’ ‘public space,’ ‘publicity,’ and the ‘public sphere’ in human geography. Appropriating Weintraub’s (1995) taxonomy of the public, they find that these terms can refer to at least four different paradigms. There is a liberal-economistic one where the ‘public’ refers to the state as opposed to the private economy. This is different from a republican-virtue vision where the ‘public’ refers to the community as opposed to the private household. Some hold to a sociability model where the ‘public’ refers to the compartments of individual lives that are on social display to others, whereas other aspects of life are kept privately concealed. Radical scholars might prefer a Marxist-feminist paradigm where the public refers to the political economy as governed by the state and the market as opposed to the private home and family (Staeheli and Mitchell, 2007: 795). Speaking with geographers, Staeheli and Mitchell (2007) find that most in conversation refer loosely to the public as the community to which individuals display their social self-representations. However, because the term itself remains undefined in geography, it is unclear from these observations how exactly geographers should use the term ‘the public sphere.’

While lack of precision plagues theories of ‘the public’ on the one hand, another layer of confusion can be seen from theoretical critiques of the singularity of Habermas’s public sphere. Critical theorists contend that Habermas’s public sphere is too unitary and may be better characterized by a multiplicity of publics and counterpublics (Fraser, 1992; Warner, 2002). By publics in the plural, Nancy Fraser (1992) refers to the coexistence of a variety of public spheres in a pluralistic democratic society. These publics, Michael Warner
(2002) contends, are in fact audiences that are called into existence by virtue of being addressed. Because of this, there are not only a multiplicity of publics, but the existence of smaller, interest-stratified counterpublics. These publics and counterpublics allegedly contest the dominance of a single public sphere, which in turn implies (at least for these critical theorists) that a unitary public sphere does not actually exist. Instead, researchers should study the contribution of subpublics and counterpublics to a civil society’s ever-fragmenting democratic debates, uncovering new voices and novel audiences that are always being called into existence.

Responding to these theoretical confusions and critiques, this thesis takes the view that if publics and counterpublics are still engaging in democratic debate, the large metaphorical forum in which they engage is still a unitary, objectively existing public sphere. Although Habermas’s critics are right to note that a multiplicity of publics and counterpublics will lead to a more pluralistic democratic forum, these critiques tend to be more prescriptive than they are descriptive. In other words, while it is true, as in Warner’s (2002) case, that, say, gay counterpublics have arisen to challenge the heteronormativity of a public sphere dominated by straight property-owning white men, it does not follow that the putatively heteronormative public sphere that Warner challenges no longer exists simply by virtue of being challenged. To speak of a more general public forum is to acknowledge that there is a metaphorical space into which these counterpublics enter into conversation. Whether it is individuals or collective publics participating in this forum, there is still a general space—an objective public sphere—for civic discussion among these publics and counterpublics.
3.3.2 Approaching the public sphere: concrete sites and culture wars

To study this objectively existing public sphere, specific sites need to be named as places where the public forum takes place. In human geography, Don Mitchell (1995) took People’s Park in Berkeley as his case study of how a physical open space—a public park layered with the historical legacy of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement—became a site of contestation in the 1990s over different meanings of the word ‘public.’ While no one objects to the definition of People’s Park as a public space, two broadly defined parties sought to lay claim over what the ‘public’ meant. On the one hand were progressive activists who saw it as a messy democratic space where anarchist protests could happen. On the other hand, neoliberal urban officials viewed it as a site that had to be policed for public order so as to encourage private citizens to utilize the park in an orderly fashion. Mitchell’s characterization of People’s Park as a public space serves as a guide for how public spaces should be approached in geography. While Mitchell cites Fraser’s (1992) understanding of multiple public spheres, People’s Park serves as an objective site where those publics meet and contest each other over the meanings of publicity. Although Mitchell is interested in those specific publics insofar as they interpret People’s Park, his central focus is on how the site of People’s Park is being interpreted, not on the internal dynamics of the various publics that contest that space.

Following Mitchell’s subordination of the internal dynamics of counterpublics to an interest in their contributions to and contestations within a broader arena, my interest lies not in the internal dynamics of Cantonese Protestant churches, organizations, and Christian media, but in how these Cantonese Protestant publics engage an objective public sphere. In other words, while I am studying the specific public (if not counterpublic) of Cantonese
Protestants, I am interested in how they bring their social and political concerns to a broader civic arena. That forum can be conceptualized as the civil societies of the metropolitan areas in which they reside.

Again following Mitchell’s analysis of People’s Park, examining this forum calls in turn for a delineation of the specific sites where this public forum is manifested. I begin with Cantonese Protestant congregations, for while this thesis is not about the internal dynamics of Cantonese Protestant institutions, congregations are often driven by a grounded theology of the relationship between church and secular society. Differentiated from congregations, Cantonese Protestant engagements with society are usually animated in three kinds of public spaces. First, Cantonese Protestants use public places as rallying sites of protest against policies with which they disagree. Second, because social services are provided in physical spaces that require some degree of property ownership, Cantonese Protestants often engage the public policies of urban planning and organizational governance when building congregations and non-congregational social service agencies. Third, Cantonese Protestants are engaged in the democratic process of electoral campaigns, seeking to participate in the civil societies to which they have migrated and sometimes attempting to elect candidates who will enact policies similar to their values. These sites are often conceptually separate from Cantonese Protestant congregations, encompassing a broader public forum than intra-Cantonese Protestant counterpublics because they attempt to influence the public policies of democratic civil societies. These places are thus sites that manifest the existence of an objectively existing public sphere in which publics and counterpublics, including those of Cantonese Protestants, come into mutual contestation.
Because the objective public sphere tends to lie outside Cantonese Protestant congregations, my contention is that the sites that Cantonese Protestants engage as the public sphere are generally conceived as secular. This secularity presents a second methodological problem, one that concerns the place of religion in civil society, especially in light of the culture wars. As originally conceived, Habermas’s public sphere is a secular space, a civic forum that requires citizens to show that public activities are undergirded by a common good that can be articulated with immanent reasons. Even in Habermas’s (2003, 2005, 2006) recent declarations that the public sphere is post-secular, his call for complementary learning processes between religious and secular citizens suggests that his public sphere is still a secular one. Religious citizens still have to give immanent reasons that appeal to the common good, and secular citizens need to be respectful toward those reasons. As Taylor reminds Habermas, his post-secularization is not a radical transcending of the secular public sphere; it reinforces secular democratic reason (Habermas and Taylor, 2011).

This public forum has become troubled by the culture wars, ostensibly non-rational religious contestations over the moral values of secular space. However, Catholic theologian William Cavanaugh (2002) argues that when churches say that they need to get involved in civil society, they are admitting that their own liturgical practices are politically irrelevant to the public sphere (see Casanova, 1994; Hauerwas, 2000, 2001; Milbank, 2006; Paddison, 2010). In other words, that Cantonese Protestants often conceptualize their engagements with the public sphere as spatially separate from their congregational life suggests that their theologies of engagement are informed by secular theologies, however influenced they are otherwise by religious values. Indeed, as I showed in chapter 2, the
theological secularization of public religions has resulted in what Taylor (2007) calls a nova effect of new religious subjectivities that range the ideological gamut. Even if the values that they bring to the public sphere are theologically conservative along sexual and moral lines, their contributions are still informed by a secular ideology that separates action within the church from activities outside.

The theological secularity of the culture wars has thus led to the development of recent ambivalence among putative culture warriors concerning the wisdom of contesting that secular space with their theological values. Examining the idea of a ‘Christian America,’ Christian Smith (2002: 195) argues that perhaps the greatest triumph of evangelicals in the culture wars is the ‘triumph of ambivalence.’ Indeed, in Smith’s (2002: 37) analysis, the hallmarks of the lost Christian America that evangelicals are allegedly trying to reclaim ‘was one of civility, tolerance, and voluntary persuasion’ that relied on the cultivation of individual, personal, faithful lives (see also Ammerman, 1987; Wellman, 2007; Hunter, 2010). These values are not unique to conservative Christianity. As Taylor (2007) suggests, these are instead secular values of civility, virtues that need to be disciplined into citizens in order for them to participate in a direct-access state. Following Taylor’s (1992) argument in Sources of the Self, the development of democratic citizen participation has in turn engendered egalitarian values, that is, the notion that all citizens should be able to make an equal contribution to a democratic state. The propagation of this egalitarianism has been a hallmark of activism on the left of the culture wars. In other words, while the debates in the culture wars are ostensibly about the place of religion in the public sphere, they are in fact contestations over what it means for the public sphere to be truly secular.
In short, the advent of the culture wars has led to a crisis of sorts in the objective public sphere over the nature of its secularity. While Habermas (2006) has proposed complementary learning processes as a possible method for a *rapprochement* between religious and secular citizens, Taylor (2007, 2011) argues that what is needed is a more radical redefinition of secularization altogether. Recalling the argument in the previous chapter, then, this thesis premises its analysis on the following proposition: the secular public sphere is in fact a *theological* forum oriented toward this-worldly, immanent concerns, conceptualized as separate from church governance, and informing the secular state’s enactment of public policy through its civic conversations. Examined more thoroughly, the publics and counterpublics that contest each other in the public sphere are also theologically constituted by narratives that bend their theological orientations toward this-worldly ends that have been achieved by immanent contestation in the public sphere.

Therefore, the three sites I have proposed for examination—public sites of protest, parachurch social service agencies, and electoral campaigns—are all spaces that are themselves theologically constituted, as I am using the term. The geographical task, then, is to demonstrate how the imaginations of the grounded theologies that govern the relationship between church and state are put into practice, differentiating activities in these sites as secular or religious while orienting theological concerns toward both this-worldly and transcendent matters. To do this requires that we examine the theological commitments that Cantonese Protestants bring to this public sphere, as well as the convictions I bring to this thesis. The following section will give my autobiographical details; the rest of the thesis will explore the grounded theologies of Cantonese Protestants.
3.4 ‘Just another Chinese Christian?’: a personal theological sketch

This chapter proposes that to adequately interrogate the secular theologies of the objective public sphere, researchers always approach that forum from a theological vantage point and thus ought to be reflexive about these formulations. This section thus unfurls the theological commitments that I bring to this analysis, explicitly exploring my positionality as a practising Protestant Christian of Chinese ethnicity who speaks Cantonese. In an article that I submitted to Schema Magazine’s ‘But Where Are You Really From?’ series, I hinted at my frustration at how my religious underpinnings are often assumed without being given a fair hearing:

Or perhaps my religion is the problem. I happen to be a Christian of Chinese ethnicity who studies Chinese Christians. As if being asked to comment on house churches wasn’t bad enough, some people in my profession have told me to hide my Chinese Christian background for fear that being from this community would be detrimental to my career.

The assumption, of course, is that we Chinese Christians are conservative fundamentalists, anti-intellectual and obstructive to a progressive agenda, and if I’m going into academia, it’s because I want to justify their exclusionary practices. (Tse, 2012b)

In my answer to these assumptions, I told the story of my family’s journey through Taiwanese American and Hong Kong-based evangelical Christian communities. I argued that my religious experience was not limited to these gatherings, but also included progressive theological seminaries, African American liberation traditions, militaristic Christian schools, and liberal Catholic groups. I wrote: ‘As far as my religious background leading to professional suicide is concerned, just because I happen to have grown up in Chinese Christian churches doesn’t mean that my religious experience was and is totally framed by an insular ethno-religious community. ‘ I also stressed the heterogeneity of my experience, as ‘my supposedly homogeneous friends ran the gamut from Latino
Pentecostals to Filipino Catholics to (yes) Chinese Christians and Buddhists to complete atheists’ (Tse 2012b).

This section demonstrates that the diversity of my theological formation is important in relation to both the theological construct of a secular public sphere and the putatively religious engagements of Cantonese Protestants with that forum. While I too am a Protestant Christian of Chinese descent, I shall demonstrate that some of my personal biographical details transcend this ideal type, affording me critical distance from the culture wars while granting me enough insider access to be able to conduct this research. We will begin by noticing that theological positionality has become a key issue in the social scientific study of religion. We will then move to my autobiography, from which I reconstruct my own religious orientation.

3.4.1 Insider religious ethnographies: access and critique in the social science of religion

It is not unusual for members of religious or ethnic communities to conduct research on their own sociological groups, for as insiders, they are able to gain quick access to their ethnographic sites. While some may find such research to lead in suspiciously uncritical directions, many insider ethnographers use their findings to perform internal critiques of their communities. Fenggang Yang (1999) suggests that had he not been baptized in the Chinese church he was studying in Washington, DC, members of the church might have attempted to convert him over the course of his research. They may also have attempted to exclude from the record anything that would paint the Chinese church in an unfavourable light, fearing that it might hamper their future proselytizing prospects.
However, Yang’s research is not uncritical: while sympathizing with mainland Chinese intellectuals who came to Christian faith when they migrated to America (Yang 1998a), Yang (1998b) also reveals that his community was plagued by the tensions of ethnicity and personal micro-politics between PRC Chinese and Taiwanese migrants. Likewise, Karen Chai (1998) participated in the activities of a second-generation Korean American congregation in Boston. Her participation has led to a surprisingly harsh critique of the insular patriarchy, ageism, and self-segregation of Korean American Protestant churches (see also Chong, 1998; AR Kim, 1998; JH Kim, 1998). Demonstrating that Korean congregations often compete with English-speaking parachurch organizations for their youth’s attention, Chai argues that immigrant congregations in fact need to embrace multicultural ministry as the way forward from de facto racial segregation in the American Protestant landscape (deYoung et al., 2005; see also Fong, 1999; Chai, 2002; Gibbons, 2009). These examples demonstrate a surprising dynamic of insider research: the trust that comes from already being known by a community leads to quick access into the internal problems of community life. As these private matters come onto the record, researchers can cautiously reveal sensitive material about communal fractures that can in turn shed light on what actual potential these congregations have to contribute to the public sphere.

However, the study of religion often mandates that all researchers, whether insiders or outsiders, reveal their theological positionities, for theological commitments, whether conventionally religious or secular, often colour research analyses. Russell Jeung (2005) admits that his analysis of Asian American pan-ethnic churches in the San Francisco Bay Area is coloured by his own involvement in ‘New Hope Covenant Church, an evangelical,
multi-ethnic congregation that ministers to a low-income neighborhood.’ Jeung has been open elsewhere about how his personal politics were emblematized when he as a member of New Hope Covenant Church was a community organizer for a Oakland apartment complex’s class action lawsuit against a negligent slum landlord (DeFao, 2000; Jeung, 2007, 2013; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2008; Soe and Jeung, 2010; Abramson, 2010). Accordingly, his study does not limit itself to Asian American evangelicals, but seeks to unpack mainline social justice dimensions of Protestant practice as well, traditions that mirror his own Christian practice closely. Likewise, three British historical geographers, David C. Harvey, Adrian Bailey, and Catherine Brace, recounted their experiences of constructing an archive of Methodist history in nineteenth-century Cornwall. Upon reflection, all three geographers found different sources that fit their personal positions about Methodist Christianity. Harvey’s atheism led him to interpret source material on temperance as religious policing. By contrast, Bailey’s personal Methodism pointed him to cases where Methodists were faithfully practicing Christian pacifism in Cornwall. Brace’s agnosticism resulted in the wish that this could all just be a straight-forward history without either secular or religious biases (Bailey et al. 2009). So too, political geographer Judy Han (2010) declares that she is an openly lesbian woman from a Korean Protestant family. Han’s initial forays into religion were as an anti-Christian activist aiming to contest the homophobia of evangelicals as they entered the public sphere (Han, 2010: 11). Han’s personal journey led her to conduct ethnographies of Korean evangelical missionaries to North Korea and the Chinese border regions, to Africa, and to Central Asia. This research brought Han into close personal contact with Korean evangelicals, encounters that resulted in the realignment of her personal position from being anti-Christian to a middle ground of being neither allied
with her research subjects in evangelical solidarity nor working in open hostility against them.

Reflexivity about religious identity vis-à-vis the practice of geography is not new to human geography, particularly in the production of *religious geographies* that aim to tackle social justice issues from explicitly theological perspectives (Kong, 1990; Park, 1994). Geographers such as David Martin (2009), Yifu Tuan (1974, 1978, 2012), and J.D. Dewsbury and Paul Cloke (2009) have written on Christianity as providing a phenomenological spiritual reality through which they experience everyday geographies. These religious experiences in turn influence these geographers’ ethical commitments, especially in their research paradigms. Critiquing Marxist perspectives of social justice as enacted through new social institutions, David Ley (1974) argues that what cities need is a Christian anthropology that realizes that unless persons are ontologically converted, their propensity to sin will continue to perpetuate the social evils of greed that lead to economic inequality. So too, Megoran (2004) contends that it is because he is an evangelical Christian that he pursues critical geopolitics in the face of political violence. Paralleling Ley, Megoran also argues for personal penitence as the source of peacemaking, showing that in the case of evangelical Christians in London who have publicly apologized for the Crusades, a truly critical geopolitics that is effective in making peace will require not only critique, but confession of sin and repentance to lead a new pacifist life. Also arguing from a Christian perspective, Paul Cloke (2002) explores the nature of ‘ordinary evil’ in human geography:

> I want to claim that homelessness is evil. Sometimes it does arise as a result of malevolent or malicious action, but more often it is an effect of more ordinary evils by which individuals, families, landlords, public-sector departments, charities and governments are bound together in social relations which produce and reproduce
the harmful effects which we construct as homelessness. Accordingly, it is usual for no one but the victims themselves to be held responsible for homelessness. Personal consciences can be held broadly clear, and daily routine behavior can be regarded as reasonable, ethical and even sympathetic towards homeless people, all without any response to the needs of such people. We thereby sustain systemic power relations between the 'homed' and the 'homeless' (Cloke, 2002: 598-599)

While seeming initially to contradict Ley's (1974) Christian anthropological opposition to an obsession with systemic evil without personal conversion, Cloke's argument is subtly similar: systemic evils are based on ordinary evils that happen out of interpersonal contact and everyday lives. In his conclusion, then, Cloke turns this critique of banal evils onto geographers themselves, claiming that while they make moral claims about evil in their work, their everyday lives may sustain the very unjust systems that make evils like homelessness possible.

In short, revealing one's theological commitments in secular academia has become increasingly commonplace as a matter of reflexivity on research positionalities. While it seems that the onus of self-revelation would be on insiders, that secular researchers exploring religion have had to specify their ideological commitments and track their personal transformation over the course of research troubles the insider-outsider binary. These reflections in turn suggest that the 'secular' in academia is becoming increasingly recognized as itself a theological ideology, one with which researchers must position both themselves and their research subjects. Revealing the researcher's own theological commitments is thus mandatory in religious research, for it will highlight the relationship one has with secularization processes.
3.4.2 An autobiographical sketch: practicing communion in the midst of schism

In what follows, then, I provide a sketch of the personal theological commitments that I bring to this research. Much of my Christian life has indeed been spent within Chinese evangelical churches in the San Francisco Bay Area and Metro Vancouver. As other congregational ethnographers have also observed, one of the ‘ordinary evils’ that can be found in these churches is contentiousness over language and geopolitics (Cloke, 2002: 598), themes about which I have written as the everyday tactics through which congregational quotidian lives are constructed (Tse, 2011; Ley and Tse, 2013; see also Chong, 1998; Yang, 1998a; Chai, 1998, 2005). This contentiousness has often led to divisiveness within churches that I attended as a child, an adolescent, and a young adult. It has also coloured my research, for I tend to gravitate toward stories about how Chinese Christian communities have been internally fractured. However, through my own personal journey, my theology has developed into a sustained reflection on how to practice a Christian commitment to communion in the midst of schism. Ultimately, my hope is that this mandate of communion in the Christian practices of charity, hospitality, and forgiveness will inform the ethical implications of my research.

Though I recount my personal encounters with congregational contestation with an attempt to balance candour with pragmatic vagueness, I use this narrative to develop a reflection on my theological positionality as it currently stands, one that remains committed to orthodox Christian creedal formulations. I grew up in a Chinese church on the East Bay of the San Francisco Bay Area that had been started by Mandarin-speaking Taiwanese American evangelicals. When I was seven, my father took on a pastoral internship at a Cantonese church in an upscale Contra Costa County neighbourhood.
Conflicts over the administration of their Chinese school persuaded my parents to return to the Mandarin-speaking congregation of my childhood. Though my father led its small Cantonese congregation, he soon had to represent the entire staff to apologize for a pastor’s sexual misconduct, an affair that divided the church, decimated its numbers, and resulted in a custody case for one of my best friends at the time. As for the Cantonese congregation, it was soon ejected from the congregation by new leadership with a new vision for a Mandarin-only church structure. Forming a new church plant, my father’s fledgling congregation suffered financial mismanagement by the board as well as a contentious membership case in which a prospective member was confronted for improprieties in his private life. Moreover, due to its financial struggles, this congregation eventually stopped providing for my father’s medical insurance.

It was then that our entire family moved back to Vancouver, where my father took a pastoral job at an evangelical church in the Vancouver suburb of Richmond. Again, there was contention, this time over the retired senior pastor retaining authority over the deacon board to ensure funding for his overseas missions projects. My father departed that church dramatically, having suffered a minor heart attack. He then entered the Anglican Communion via a conservative Chinese congregation that had realigned with the Province of Rwanda due to the Diocese of New Westminster’s radical stance on sexuality. Yet for this church’s orthodoxy (see Sadgrove et al., 2010), it too experienced a set of splits when staff were hired from other evangelical churches and brought their traditions to contest the legitimacy of Anglican ritual and ecclesial structure as viable Christian practice. Finally, my father retrained as a multifaith hospital chaplain, currently works in a local hospital, and acts as a pastoral consultant to a variety of Protestant congregations in Vancouver.
I do not recount this narrative out of malicious intent (indeed, I have named no church or personal names); instead, these experiences have informed my own theological journey while leaving me without rose-tinted glasses about my fellow co-religionists. Because I am not currently serving in a formal ministry capacity, I have been afforded space to reflect on how Christian theology should be practised. A formative passage was in the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams’s (2003) study of *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*. Williams argues that Arius, a third-century heretic who had denied the divinity of Christ, ‘was a committed theological conservative’ with ‘a strongly accented doctrine of God’s unknowability, and...believed that God alone could overcome the distance that necessarily separated the divine life from the contingent order’ (RD Williams, 2003: 175). Williams then suggests that the rebuttals to Arius at the Council of Nicaea were orthodox precisely because they were theologically creative. This creativity in turn suggests (contrary to popular Christian discourse) that doctrinal conservatism does not necessarily equate with orthodoxy and that the progressive development of doctrine does not always necessarily equate with heresy; in fact, conservatism may lead to heresy, and progressivism may be strangely orthodox. Another theologian whose work shaped me at this time was Miroslav Volf (1996) in *Exclusion and Embrace*. Volf argues that while Protestant theology since the Second World War has focused on practices of liberation, these political theologies ignore the reality that the practice that is most considered ‘sin’ in Christian theology is the exclusion of the other on any lines of social, political, cultural, and economic fracture. He calls Christians to develop both a ‘catholic’ and an ‘evangelical’ personality. By ‘catholic,’ he means a sense of inclusivity toward fellow brothers and sisters in Christ that transcends our political convictions. By ‘evangelical,’ he refers to the
prophetic practice of following in the footsteps of Jesus by speaking truth to power, embracing a pacifism that leads to political persecution, and living in the metaphysical matrix of death and resurrection (see Yoder, 1996; Hauerwas, 2001). Volf’s work then paved the way for me to read John Milbank’s (2006) *Theology and Social Theory*. While I have used Milbank’s work to set up my argument about secularization as a grounded theology in the previous chapter, the heart of Milbank’s argument that struck me was his call for the Christian church to live out an alternative ontology of harmonious communion premised on radical forgiveness of historic wrongs. Such a life, Milbank contends, bears witness that there can exist a different way of being over against secular ontologies of violence that emphasize primal contestation.

It was during this time of personal reflection that I also realized that my Christian life had not in fact been only contextualized by contentious Chinese evangelical churches, but by a diverse (and at times, dizzying) array of fundamentalist, evangelical, Pentecostal-charismatic, mainline progressive, and Roman Catholic personal influences. At my elementary school (which itself was attached to a Pentecostal Assemblies of God church), there were a variety of teachers from varying Christian traditions, including several Latino Pentecostals, a Presbyterian woman turned charismatic associated with the Vineyard Movement, a Southern Baptist history teacher who later earned a PhD in philosophical theology, and a Mennonite from a farm in the Canadian prairies. This school emphasized the power of the Holy Spirit as a vehicle for inner transformation and a personal relationship with God, a doctrine whose anthropological workings have been well-documented (Smilde, 2008; Luhrmann, 2012). It was also dominated by teachers who hinted that students should be trained to participate on the right of the culture wars.
However, my religious experience in high school was a contrast: I attended a Roman Catholic school run by the Congregation of Holy Cross that emphasized the preferential ‘option for the poor’ in Catholic social teaching. Teachers there contrasted those at the elementary school, for many were theologically and politically progressive. Accordingly, a Christology teacher taught us redaction criticism through the Gospel of Mark, a feminist theologian had us read Genesis and Ruth alongside African American feminist works, and English teachers had us consider the intersection of modernism and sacramental ontology in the work of James Joyce, Juan Rulfo, and Toni Morrison. A memorable creative writing mentor was a Catholic priest with whom I founded the school’s literary magazine; I found out later that he was the playwright-in-residence at Berkeley’s Graduate Theological Union and that he was interested in using conservative Catholic theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar’s (1988) notion of *theo-drama* (a Christian theological notion that the Triune God involves the church in a divine drama of redemption) to understand queer experience as fundamentally human encounters in plays that he wrote. If I was ever on the right of the culture wars, one could say that my Catholic high school experience swung the pendulum at least to the centre by providing me with sustained encounters with a progressive form of Catholicism.

Accordingly, while it is not my agenda to present a rosy picture of Cantonese Protestants, I remain committed as a Christian to the hope of communion in Jesus Christ that is continuously being perfected amidst the setback of ecclesial fractures. As a baptized Christian, my theological convictions are circumscribed by the baptismal creed, in which I say, ‘I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of sins, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting.’ Belief in the
universality and diversity of the ‘holy catholic church’ requires that I believe that each Christian circle I have inhabited, while flawed in their own ways, is a legitimate expression of what Christians term ‘the Body of Christ,’ the unified, catholic gathering of all Christians into mystical fellowship as co-participants in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see de Lubac, 1947/1988; Bonhoeffer, 1955; Volf, 1997, 1998, 2005; Hauerwas, 2001; Milbank, 2006; Benedict XVI, 2005, 2008, 2009; Francis, 2013). To name flaws and to critique the church is not to condemn it, but to strive for Christian unity together with all of my brothers and sisters in Christ with the hope of redemption and restoration. There is, after all, such a practice as ‘the forgiveness of sins’ in Christian theology.

I realize that some readers will contest my metaphysical faith in the Body of Christ, calling it a false consciousness that functions as an ‘opium of the people’ distracting me from the important critical work of egalitarian liberation (Marx, 1972: 12). Indeed, this was the reply of Marxist geographer Allen Scott (2010) to a conference organized in the UK on geographies of religion, faith, and spirituality on the Critical Geographies Listserv. Scott lamented that the event might ‘serve covertly as a vehicle for some sort of positive affirmation of the intrinsic value of religion etc.’ The response of many geographers was that Scott’s hard materialism had blinded him ideologically to the value of the empirical study of religion in geography (see Kong, 1990, 2001, 2010; Holloway and Valins, 2002; Falah and Nagel, 2005; Proctor, 2006; Hopkins, 2007b; Yorgason and della Dora, 2009). After this positionality statement in which my own religious leanings lie exposed, however, I do not have recourse to the ‘mere empirics’ argument behind which to hide.

Allow me to offer a defence of my theological statements, then. Charles Taylor (2007: 728) explores ‘some of those who broke out of the immanent frame; people who
went through some kind of "conversion" through an exploration of a series of ‘impeccably orthodox Catholics,’ such as Ivan Illich, Jacques Maritain, Charles Péguy, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, characters whose literary and artistic lives did not seem to fit the mould of a secular age. Taylor contends that the common point among all of them was that they had re-discovered the core of Christian ontology to be the Communion of Saints, ‘not just as a communion of perfected persons, who have left their imperfections behind them; but rather as a communion of whole lives, of whole itineraries towards God,’ for ‘the Church, as a communion of different peoples and ages, in mutual understanding and enrichment, is damaged, limited, and divided by an unfounded total belief in one’s own truth, which really better deserves the name of heresy’ (Taylor, 2007: 754-755). With this theological statement, Taylor revisits the central theoretical contribution of A Secular Age: secularization occurred because of shifts within the medieval Catholic Church that moved away from an emphasis on the communion of saints to a consolidation of ecclesial hierarchy, an obsession with organizational structure, and a desire to discipline the masses to practice higher intensities of spiritual devotion. Taylor argues that this seizure of power betrayed orthodox Christian practice: ‘But in fact the direction of this Reform was towards a far-reaching excarnation; that is one of the main contentions of this book’ (Taylor, 2007: 614). For Taylor, excarnation refers to the propensity of elites to impose disembodied ideologies on the everyday lives of the masses, even if they are conventionally religious ones.

By excarnation, Taylor implies the opposite of incarnation, a core Christian teaching that because Jesus came into the world in the flesh, his followers must also practice the
imitation of Christ in their flesh through communion with him—and by extension, through communion with all others in Jesus. As Taylor explains in *A Catholic Modernity*:

Redemption happens through Incarnation, the weaving of God’s life into human lives, but these human lives are different, plural, irreducible to each other. Redemption-Incarnation brings reconciliation, a kind of oneness. This is the oneness of diverse beings who come to see that they cannot attain wholeness alone, that their complementarity is essential, rather than of beings who come to accept that they are ultimately identical. (Taylor, 1999: 14)

Indeed, this plurality in the life of God is what is meant by the communion of saints. Taylor thus seeks ways to cast off the disciplinary framework of the immanent frame so as to once more embrace incarnation, communion, catholicity, and the sense that the world could have always been enchanted, recapturing the sense of the Church as ‘the place in which human beings, in all their difference and disparate itineraries, come together; and in this regard, we are obviously falling short’ (Taylor, 2007: 772). In short, Taylor suggests that if there is a false consciousness to be had, it is not religion as the opiate of the masses. It could instead be the disciplinary process of secularization as the hallucinogen of the elites.

If there is a public contribution from within my theological tradition that I am bringing to the secular academic table in this study, it is that peacemaking comes from a deep sense of a common humanity that is deeply interested in embracing the personhood of the other (see Volf, 1996). As I wrote in my post on the online *Schema Magazine*,

> So what’s my ulterior motive for being a Chinese Christian studying Chinese Christians in academia? I’d like to think that I don’t have one, but if I had to have one, it’s perhaps to promote what my faith has to say about love for enemies in a divisive, polarized world. (Tse, 2012b)

The politics that I promote is thus neither a contribution to one side of the culture wars nor a proselytizing attempt to convert others to an immaterial false consciousness. It is instead an attempt to transcend the culture wars themselves, to expose the secularity of both sides
as operating via a will to power. Seeking to make peace in a polarized world, my faith tells me that we begin by confessing the sins of divisiveness, exclusion, and ideological entrenchment in order to walk a path of forgiveness and reconciliation.

3.5 Cantonese Protestant grounded theologies in the public sphere: a methodology

This section demonstrates how an inquiry into religious and ethnic counterpublics like Cantonese Protestants can be conducted. Instead of asking religious research subjects to speak in an immanent key to answer a secular research question, the terms of research must themselves be explicitly theological. This research paradigm in fact assuaged the fears of many of my research subjects as they spoke about their religious commitments. Indeed, countless interviewees commented on how my thesis would be ‘made public,’ along with their statements in it. Assuring them in a written consent form that my portrayals of them would eschew caricature and pursue a ‘fair, accurate, and scholarly representation’ (see Appendix A), I contend that this analysis must ultimately be a theological one, demonstrating how their religious and ethnic orientations inform their engagements with a secular public sphere. The surprise, however, was how often my respondents would respond to my questions about theology describing practices that inadvertently and unintentionally reinforced the secularization thesis.

The majority of this research was conducted in oral Cantonese. The question of language in social science methodology is fraught with debate over whether the access possible through being a linguistic insider is worth the tradeoffs of not being able to do ethnography as an outsider who is able to observe and comment on phenomena that would
be difficult to either see as significant or analyze carefully because of the emotional tensions of insider ethnography. My research strikes a middle ground between these two approaches. First, my methodology is influenced by Lisa Rose Mar’s (2007, 2010) argument that an alternative Chinese public sphere is only fully accessible via language skills in Chinese. This is because language uncovers both events and a Chinese community’s interpretations of them that have hitherto been unknown in Chinese North American history. As Chinese American historian Him Mark Lai (2000: 29) notes, ‘Chinese-language materials are essential for in-depth investigations of many facets of the Chinese American historical experience, especially those connected with the community’s internal dynamics.’ But second, I recognize that these comments must be balanced with the empirical research that has abounded in geography that does not use Chinese-language sources and has contributed valuable outsider perspectives on North American transnational migrants. Indeed, the research on transnational Hong Kong immigrants to Vancouver has predominantly relied on ethnographic interviews that do not require Chinese language skills (Ley, 1995, 2003, 2004, 2010; Olds, 2001; K Mitchell, 2004; Ley and Kobayashi, 2005; Preston et al., 2006; Waters, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2011).

I strike a middle ground between both views by elevating the importance of interview data that is then contextualized by extensive methods. This middle way is possible because my oral Chinese skills are superior to my ability to access Chinese print culture. I learned Chinese reading and writing in Mandarin when I was a child, so I have some basic reading skills; moreover, my parents and my wife both read Chinese and have been able to translate more difficult passages for me. However, the majority of this research has been oral, and I am orally fluent in both Cantonese and Mandarin because
frequent, everyday interactions with my family and church communities have made this possible. Not only have these skills enabled conversations with non-English-speaking Cantonese Protestants, but understanding aural Cantonese gives me access to a variety of untranslated Cantonese audiovisual materials. Indeed, Cantonese is an aural dialect, so while most scholars might be able to read Chinese characters, listening to the nuances of the Cantonese dialect is more difficult for many, as it tends not to be taught at the university level and requires a level of community socialization to fully understand. If there is a linguistic contribution that my methodology can make, it is that Cantonese Protestants are not only historical subjects to be studied solely in print, but are living persons who need to be studied in the Cantonese dialects in which they communicate orally through interviews and their production of audiovisual materials. This research thus relies heavily on the oral Cantonese data that is subsequently supplemented and triangulated by written and audiovisual documentary evidence. This triangulation in turn provided context for the statements of Cantonese Protestants who might have overly universalized their claims to apply to all Chinese people in their civil societies; while I seldom interviewed non-Christian Cantonese-speakers (except in one case in San Francisco), the archival texts provided extensive context that allowed me to consider some of their voices.

My methodological strategy had three phases. In the first phase from 2011 to 2012, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with 50 key informants in Metro Vancouver, 47 in the San Francisco Bay Area, and 43 in Hong Kong. Most of these happened face-to-face, while some also took place via phone or Skype, giving consent by faxing or emailing their consent forms to me. In each of these cases, consent forms were
signed that asked for permission to use the key informants’ actual names unless there was an indication that they wanted to be anonymous. In the second phase, beginning in Fall 2011, I gathered focus groups of automatically anonymized Cantonese-speaking Protestants in each site: three in Metro Vancouver, five in the San Francisco Bay Area, and four in Hong Kong. The total number of people who eventually attended these focus groups was about 40 per site \((n=120)\). In the third phase, I triangulated the fieldwork data that I gathered with media reports in both English- and Chinese-language media sources as well as quantitative census data. I make no pretensions about the completeness or representativeness of all of this data. However, because of the repetitiveness of the data I have collected, I contend that what has been gathered is able to paint a picture of how Cantonese-speaking Protestants imagine civil society, what networks they use to engage it, and what practices they perform in each site’s public spheres.

3.5.1 Phase I: key informant interviews

In the first phase, I identified and contacted key informants for semi-structured interviews. These were done over the course of four months in Vancouver in 2011, three months in San Francisco in the summer and fall of 2011, and two months in Hong Kong in the spring of 2012. The criteria for these key informants was that they either a) were Cantonese-speaking Protestant Christians who could speak about how Cantonese Protestants engaged the public sphere or b) had worked closely with Cantonese-speaking Protestants Christians and could speak as outsiders to confirm what data I collected from Cantonese Protestants and to contest some of their self-portrayals. Moreover, I constructed a general schematic of three kinds of key informants to whom I wanted to
speak: congregational pastors, directors and staff at faith-based organizations (FBOs) and electoral campaigns, and lay Cantonese Protestants who were very involved in either churches or FBOs. The initial list of contacts derived from this organizational scheme was contacted in two ways. First, I had mutual Cantonese Protestant friends who enabled access into these communities. Second, I conducted some ethnographic work in each of these sites through which I identified and contacted key informants. From there, I snowballed more interviewees for an average total of 45 key informants per site. Accordingly, these interviews were not meant to target a representative sample of the population. They were selected informants who could comment with some depth on specific organizations and congregations in relation to how Cantonese Protestants engaged the public sphere in each site. Because of the large sample size overall, many of these interviews were only partially transcribed. However, in order to ensure that quotations were taken in the context of conversation, extensive notes that include time-stamps have been drawn up and analyzed.

I began each interview by outlining some of the ground rules for our engagement. I established my own positionality in multiple ways. First, I was clear that I am myself a Cantonese Protestant from an evangelical background. However, I also clarified that I am working in mainstream academia to challenge some social science assumptions about Christian theology. Finally, I reiterated that I ultimately contribute to a secular academic discourse insofar as it was differentiated from ecclesial regulation (Habermas 2006). Moreover, referring to the terms set out in the consent form, I assured interviewees that my approach would aim for a ‘fair, accurate, and scholarly representation’ that would eschew the popular caricature to which some had been subjected. I also told interviewees
that they were free to speak in Cantonese or in English and that the notes and transcripts would be ultimately translated into English, but that Cantonese nuances should stay on the record.

Having set the ground rules, the semi-structured interviews proceeded along themes that interrogated the primary research question: *what were their conceptions of civil society and concrete political networks and practices in the public sphere?* To aid in getting a fuller picture of each individual interviewee, I first asked each respondent to tell the story of how they arrived at the position of influence through which they could comment as key informants on Cantonese Protestant engagements with the public sphere. Then we proceeded through five themes that provided a semi-structure for the interviews (see Appendix B). The first theme covered their *concrete practices* in the public sphere. The prompt for this first theme was to ask whether they thought that it was appropriate for Christians to engage social or political issues. Further prompts included discussions of traditional family values politics, electoral campaigns, social services, and any other practices I might have missed in which they or their organizations were involved. The second theme asked about their *theology of the public sphere*, which answered the portion of the primary research question that asked for conceptions of civil society and the public sphere. By asking for theology, I was intentionally asking about their *grounded theologies*, making space for my respondents to answer along lines of faith without having to self-police their language because they were speaking to a secular academic. It was thus interesting when tropes of secularization still emerged from these interviews. From there, we moved into the third theme, in which I asked them to gauge the *effectiveness and impact of their public engagements* with their own subjective metrics. This theme allowed
respondents to speak freely both about what they deemed to be their successes in engaging civil society as well as (with some degree of frequency) their frustrations with Cantonese-speaking Protestantism in their metropolitan areas and in its transnational shape. Discussing effectiveness led into the fourth theme about the concrete networks in which these key informants moved. Key churches and organizations in each site were identified and discussed by name. I also asked about transnational organizations and institutions across sites to gauge the level of connectivity (or more often, lack thereof) across the sites. Finally, I asked about the uniqueness of the metropolitan areas they served. This theme allowed them to articulate what they thought were the geographical particularities of their sites, often in relation to their imagination of my other two sites. When they made comparative remarks, it often demonstrated that many were not moving across my three sites and if they were, their current public participation was primarily limited to the scale of their own metropolitan area. Moreover, this was an opportunity for them to talk about what they saw as developments in the PRC and for me to gauge their interest in mission work, business prospects, and political activities in China. I ended the interviews by asking interviewees to comment on whether some material was too sensitive to publish (this did not happen often, and usually, the strategy was to quote the material while leaving the respondent anonymous for those items), whether I had missed any key themes, and whether they had further comments on things they had said earlier. I am still in contact with many of these interviewees for follow-up work and to obtain documents that they referenced in their interviews.

I began my fieldwork in Vancouver in April 2011; most of the interviews (n=50) were conducted from April to May 2011. Because I make my permanent residence in
Vancouver, follow-up interviews were conducted during the times that I was living in Vancouver in September and December 2011. My research began with the Alice Wong campaign for Member of Parliament (MP) in the suburb of Richmond that culminated in her victory on 2 May 2011. Using an ethnographic approach to generate key informant interviews, I participated in the campaign by knocking on doors and attending campaign events, where I met key members of her campaign team, including her campaign manager. Through my personal contacts and mutual friends, I gained access to a wide geographical array of congregational pastors, with voices from Richmond, Vancouver-South, Vancouver Chinatown, Kitsilano, Burnaby, and Coquitlam. Field work and mutual contacts also provided access to key Cantonese Protestant faith-based organizations, including the Chinese Christian Mission (CCM) Canada, the newspaper Herald Monthly, the Canadian Alliance for Social Justice and Family Values (CASJAFVA), the Christian Social Concern Fellowship (CSCF), and the Cultural Regeneration Research Society (CRRS).

I then conducted fieldwork to recruit key informants (n=47) in the San Francisco Bay Area in two phases: in June and July 2011 and in November 2011. Because of the diversity between the San Francisco and Oakland Chinatowns and the suburbs, I made it again a priority to have key informants that could speak to a variety of locales within the Bay Area. These contacts were made again both by ethnographic fieldwork and through mutual contacts. It quickly became apparent that ‘Cantonese’ and ‘Protestant’ were not equivalent terms to their counterparts in Vancouver, for they could not control for ‘Hong Kong’ and ‘evangelical’ equivalency. Indeed, ‘Cantonese’ covered at least three types of people: Chinatown Chinese, Hong Kong migrants from the 1970s, and post-1980s Hongkongers. Moreover, ‘Protestant’ in Chinatown contexts could refer to mainline
Protestant persons with more progressive politics. Furthermore, there were second-generation Cantonese-origin informants who had worked in Cantonese Protestant contexts, and there were Cantonese-speaking informants who did not attend Chinese-language churches. Instead of trying to strictly control the data, I interviewed this diverse array of respondents as *key informants* who could speak the vastness of Cantonese Protestantism in the San Francisco Bay Area, for they were all able to inform me about their interactions *vis-à-vis* how Cantonese Protestants were popularly portrayed in their engagements with the public sphere. Interviewees came from a variety of geographical locales, including the Sunset, Richmond, and Chinatown districts in San Francisco, Oakland’s Chinatown, North Bay suburbs, East Bay suburbs, Peninsula suburbs, and the Silicon Valley. Moreover, key Cantonese Protestant organizations were targeted for interview, such as the Chinese Christian Mission (CCM), the Chinese Christian Herald Crusade (CCHC), Prince of Peace Enterprises, the Traditional Family Coalition (TFC), Global Outreach (GO) International, and the Great Commission Center International (GCCI).

Finally, I conducted an extended period of fieldwork with key informant interviews (*n*=43) in Hong Kong from February to April 2012. My strategy in Hong Kong interfaced heavily with what I had been told in my North American sites about the pluralization of political ideologies among Protestants in Hong Kong. Initial contacts were first established by the help of mutual friends in North America. When enough of a base was developed in Hong Kong, I further snowballed my interview sample to tap more into the local scene. As in the other two sites, I made attempts to have key informants from a variety of sites within Hong Kong, including Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories. Key organizations were again targeted, including Breakthrough Youth Ministries, the Family
Foundation, the Society for Truth and Light (STL), Hong Kong Sex-Culture Society (HKSCS), the Chinese Christian Mission (CCM), the CEDAR Fund, the Great Commission Center International (GCCI), the Chinese Christian Herald Crusade (CCHC), the China Graduate School of Theology (CGST), Chung Chi Divinity School, the Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC), the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI), the Hong Kong Church Renewal Society (HKCRM), the Alliance for the Return to the Christian Spirit, and Narrow Road Church.

3.5.2 Phase II: focus groups

The second phase began in Autumn 2011 when the majority of the key informants from Vancouver and San Francisco had been interviewed. The purpose of the focus groups was to gauge to what extent the key informants working among Cantonese Protestants in each site had been effective in communicating their messages. Unlike the key informant interviews, members in random congregations recruited these focus groups. I also made sure that the sample included a spread of groups throughout the three metropolitan areas. In order to ensure diversity, I purposefully did not recruit from FBOs, for respondents from those organizations would have interests that would skew the data. Instead, because congregations are themselves heterogeneous sites of contestation (Yang, 1998a; Chai, 1998; Tse, 2011), the focus groups were recruited from Cantonese-speaking Protestant congregations. The only factor for which I controlled was that all of the participants had to speak Cantonese and profess Protestant Christian faith. At times, the focus groups were controlled themselves by the social location of a key informant within each congregation who recruited the participants, so that some groups were relatively homogeneous on age- or class-stratified factors while others were more diversified. Though randomized, effort
was not made to gather a representative sample; instead, the intention behind these focus groups was to triangulate the key informant interview data to see how the laity was receiving the messages of Cantonese Protestant leaders. Indeed, while many of the key informants were the leaders of Cantonese Protestant organizations, these were their putative followers. As the breakdown of the focus groups will show, the groups cannot be taken as representative of all ages and socioeconomic classes, for the participants were mostly middle-aged and generally middle-class.

The focus group interview strategy was similar to the key informant interviews, but it could not be as open-ended as the one-on-one conversations because of the number of people in the room. Accordingly, the prompts had to be more specific. I told each group that the questions I would ask would discuss their political activities and their understandings of civil society. I began each group with two open-ended questions: 1) what did they take to be the appropriate role of a Christian in politics? and 2) would they personally get involved in political activities? The reason for the specific usage of politics in these opening questions, as opposed to civil society or society, was to focus the groups toward a quick answer as to whether they were interested in matters of the state, before getting into the putatively less political issues of society, social service, and social concern. Because traditional family values politics had been the most reported in the news, I substituted my first theme prompt with a direct question about their personal involvement in traditional family values politics. After lengthy discussion about these issues, I also touched on other specific issues that I had extracted from the key informant interviews, such as gambling and drug policy. To target the question of civic imaginations, I also asked whether these issues were related to democracy and what the Bible had to say about these
issues. From there, I moved away from political issues into their comments about specific Cantonese Protestant social service organizations in the area. This led directly into the equivalent of the fourth key informant theme: specific people that I had interviewed on whom I wanted grounded feedback. Predictably, most focus group members had not heard of all the people that I had interviewed. I then ended the focus groups by thanking everyone and by asking everyone to sign a common consent form. I also promised that neither their names nor the names of the congregations from which I had recruited them would be revealed in my study.

In Vancouver, I conducted three large focus groups. Focus groups were drawn from church congregations in Richmond, Coquitlam, and Burnaby. The Richmond focus group comprised 10 participants, equally divided between men and women with ages ranging from 40 to 50. The Coquitlam group comprised 15 participants, also equally divided between men and women with ages ranging from 50 to 60. The Burnaby group comprised 18 participants, equally divided between men and women, with the majority of ages ranging from 30 to 50, although three younger English-speaking second-generation Chinese Canadians in their late teens and early twenties also joined.

In San Francisco, I conducted five smaller focus groups of about 4-7 people each. Focus groups were drawn from church congregations in San Francisco, an Oakland suburb, two in Fremont, and one in the Silicon Valley. The first Fremont group comprised eight participants, evenly divided between men and women, with ages ranging from 35 to 70. The second Fremont group comprised five participants, with two men and three women, with ages ranging from 35 to 50. The Oakland suburb comprised 12 participants, evenly divided between men and women, with ages ranging from 35 to 60. While the other groups
comprised mostly professionals, this one was composed of mostly of low-income
restaurant workers who worked in the East Bay; what was interesting, however, is that the
data that this focus group generated did not diverge significantly from my findings from the
other group. The San Francisco group comprised 10 participants, evenly divided between
men and women, with ages ranging from 50 to 65. The Silicon Valley group comprised
eight participants, evenly divided between men and women, with ages ranging from 30 to
60.

In Hong Kong, I conducted four focus groups of about 4-7 people each. Focus groups
were drawn from church congregations in North Point, Sha Tin, and Tuen Mun. The North
Point group comprised 15 participants, all of whom were women, aged 50 to 65. There
were two Sha Tin groups, each of which comprised four participants, evenly divided
between men and women, ages 30 to 50. The Tuen Mun group comprised four
participants, evenly divided between men and women, ages 30 to 40.

3.5.3 Phase III: extensive methods and documentary triangulation

While the third phase had been running concurrently with the first two phases
because key informants also gave me written and audiovisual articles, I began an
independent search for representative newspaper articles, audiovisual material, and policy
documents in May 2012 when I returned home from Hong Kong. My purpose here was to
further triangulate the data I had acquired from the qualitative methods I had used, using
documentary evidence to corroborate or contest oral testimony, for while the qualitative
data was substantial, it could never be representative. Three types of documents have
been identified. The first are newspaper articles in both English- and Chinese-language
periodicals. These articles are sources from within civil society and helped to verify truth claims made in the interview data, while establishing source materials that the interviewees could rebut. Secondly, I searched for print and audiovisual material that was produced by Cantonese Protestants. This was because Cantonese Protestants have established a counterpublic of sorts by writing many articles of their own in their own periodicals, including *Chinese Christian Herald Monthly*, *Truth Monthly*, and *The Christian Times*. Indeed, even though *The Gospel Herald* (as well as its affiliate, *The Christian Post*) is a controversial source because of the reported cult-following of its founder, David Jang (see Olsen and Smith, 2012), I have also consulted material from this publication because, in the words of one key informant from San Francisco, after giving a long, pregnant pause when I asked about this publication and then completely dissociating himself from them, ‘They show up at all of our events, and the stuff they write is actually not bad.’

Moreover, Cantonese Protestants have produced audiovisual records of speeches, news media, events, conferences, and public demonstrations to which some have given me access. Many of these were given to me as supplements to the interviews that they gave. Others referred me to websites on which their materials were readily available. I also conducted Chinese-language web searches through which I was able to access documents that they have uploaded. These yielded websites, articles, and videos that I used to further triangulate the oral testimony.

In addition, I sought policy documents that would either corroborate or contest the oral testimony regarding Cantonese Protestant dealings with government. Many interviews focused, for example, on how organizations obtained property permits or how certain pieces of legislation were seen to be detrimental to Cantonese Protestants. I thus
made effort to obtain urban planning reports, agendas, and minutes of public hearings in which these items were discussed. I also sought out the full texts of legislation, court decisions, public hearing transcripts, and congressional and parliamentary discussion to which key informants referred. Many were publicly available on government websites and where needed, I contacted policymakers via e-mail for help in locating these documents. Again, these documents tell the story from the side of the state when interactions are made between Cantonese Protestants and civil society contesting areas of public policy. These documents triangulated the oral testimony from Cantonese Protestants with the other side of the conversation from government officials without having to interview those parties.

Finally, to further triangulate the data, I consulted already existing quantitative databases. Often, this involved consulting national census data. However, organizations specializing in statistical surveys have also been helpful. The Pew Research Forum, for example, has extensive survey reporting on Asian American populations, their faiths, and the migration of world faiths. The National Asian American Survey has also been helpful in analyzing the American data. This already existing survey data contextualizes qualitative data by hinting at how representative my respondents were of the more general population. For a quick example, the Pew Research Forum (2012b: 102) recently reported that of Asian Americans who self-identified as evangelical, 41% believed that government should be smaller with fewer services while 51% believed in a bigger government with more services. This data is interesting when put beside my empirical findings where Cantonese evangelical social conservatives tended to argue for a smaller government because private social service organizations could provide higher quality services without being policed by a secular state. The quantitative data thus relativizes the universal truth
claims made by key informants, for example, that there is something ‘culturally Chinese’ about small government ideologies; given these extensive methods, this assertion is rendered dubious at best. So too, election data on Proposition 8 in California suggests that the Bay Area counties voted by a landslide to reject the proposition’s defence of marriage as between one man and one woman, yet many of the key Cantonese activists were from the Bay Area (see chapter 5). Quantitative data is helpful, then, as a means by which to contextualize my qualitative findings with a more representative picture, relativizing sweeping claims made by interview respondents and allowing for more nuanced generalizations to be made about Cantonese Protestants as a whole. However, what quantitative data cannot target is how Cantonese Protestants articulate their diverse imaginations of and practices in the public sphere, which is why the core of this project remains qualitative.

In short, I used an eclectic, multiple-method data collection strategy in lieu of producing a representative sample. The purpose of the oral data collection was to obtain the voices of the key informants in their own words talking about their own imaginations and practices without the filters of editing, giving personal context to material produced both by and about them in the public sphere. My data serve as windows into how Cantonese Protestant activities in the public sphere should be interpreted. While these engagements have often been covered in other media, the added value of the oral qualitative work is that it unpacks the inner logics of Cantonese Protestant interactions with civil society, imaginations that are sometimes able to contest how the media portrays these interactions. This triangulated data is thus able to answer the core research question about conceptions of civil society and concrete networks and practices at a level of depth
cannot be attained by simply looking at the public textual and audiovisual material. However, while the data offers snapshots of heterogeneity among Cantonese Protestants, and although I have matched the data with already existing quantitative surveys, what this data is ultimately not able to answer is how representative these imaginations and practices are of all Cantonese-speaking Protestants in each site. Instead, my task is to interpret the material before me, allowing for further research to sketch the statistical extent of my findings (see chapter 8). My interpretation in turn allowed for surprises, for I consciously asked my respondents to explain themselves theologically. It was only when the responses I heard consistently played into the secularization thesis that I decided that I needed to consider framing the interpretive grid around an interrogation of secular theology.

3.6 Conclusion: Cantonese Protestant theological orientations in secular public spaces

To place a geographer in the midst of the culture wars is to ensure that that geographer will be open to surprise by his or her empirical work. As I showed in this chapter, while Hunter (1991) depicted the culture wars as an apocalyptic battle for cultural dominance by ‘orthodox’ and ‘progressive’ elites, a more careful analysis of the culture wars reveals that evangelical Christians by and large are ambivalent about their putative role in these battles for religion in the public sphere. Attempting to transcend the culture wars, I explored the theological positions of four arenas: the secular public sphere, secular academia, my personal positionality, and my religious research subjects. Arguing for the objective existence of a unitary secular public sphere that is constantly contested by
publics and counterpublics, I demonstrated that the public sphere can be found in three geographical sites outside of religious congregations: spaces of public protest, social service agencies, and electoral campaigns. These places are in turn constituted by secular theologies, that is, ideological readings of divine action and faith-based practices that emphasize the establishment of power in this-worldly space. Moving into an analysis of my own complex positionality, I showed that many academics have been mandated to reveal their own theological commitments, whether they are insiders or outsiders to the communities that they study. I suggested that my biography as a second-generation ethnic Chinese Cantonese-speaking Protestant Christian is influenced by personal experiences of contentiousness and forgiveness in ethnic Chinese evangelical congregations and that I have also had theological exposure beyond these communities. Finally, I outlined my qualitative methodology for this project along with the extensive methods I used to triangulate my data, stressing that while this study was not a representative survey of Cantonese Protestants, its goal was to answer the central research question concerning the theological imaginations and spatial practices of Cantonese Protestants in the public sphere.

My aim in the following chapters is then to sketch the geographies that I have explored with this methodology. The next chapter (chapter 4) will first lay the groundwork of the cultural geographies of Cantonese Protestants, exploring the historical development of Cantonese Protestant congregational theologies vis-à-vis the public sphere. I will demonstrate there that Cantonese Protestantism across the Pacific Rim has come to be dominated by forms of evangelicalism that emphasize theological action within the private space of religious congregations and that regards the public sphere as secular and thus
irrelevant to Protestant practice. These evangelical grounded theologies are then subverted in the fifth chapter, where it is precisely Cantonese evangelicals who engage in traditional family values politics in Pacific Rim civil societies. These politics of public sphere contestation will be followed in chapter 6 by an analysis of how they have built extra-congregational sites to provide social services as positive contributions to civil society. The seventh and final empirical chapter will focus on their secular engagements with democratic civil societies through electoral campaigns. In each of these cases, my central argument will remain consistent: Cantonese Protestants theologically reinforce the secularization thesis by holding that their religious views are private while leveraging their ethnicities to engage the public sphere as secular citizens.
Chapter 4: Beyond Chinatown: shifting relations between the ‘church’ and the ‘world’

4.1 Introduction: the ‘church’ and the ‘world’

This chapter provides an historical overview of how Cantonese Protestants in San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong have conceptualized the division between their congregations and the public sphere. Examining the grounded theologies that inform how these communities historically grappled with secularization processes since the 1950s, it asks: how have congregational spaces related to the ‘world’? By the ‘world,’ I mean the objectively existing secular public sphere whose politics and policies affect Cantonese Protestants’ everyday lives outside of church walls (see chapter 3). By congregational space, I refer to Warner’s (1998) conception of the ‘congregation’ as a gathering site for religious practitioners in which grounded theologies are performed. As I theorized in chapter 2 and as I will show from the data beginning with this chapter, there are ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ variants regarding how the church should spatially relate to the world.15 Though both positions reinforce the secularization thesis by positing a spatial differentiation between congregational space and civil society (see Casanova, 1994; Milbank, 2006; Taylor, 2007; Wilford, 2010, 2012; Tse, 2013a), the ‘progressive’ Cantonese Protestant version of these divisions historically brought the institutional church officially into the public sphere through political activism and social services. This theological variant was contested and gradually lost its dominance to ‘conservative’ Cantonese

15 I am using ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ as value-neutral terms that function more as spatial metaphors, as a congregation literally ‘progresses’ into civil society when it is ‘conservative’ and ‘conserves’ the integrity of its congregational space when it is ‘conservative.’
Protestants, who posited a strict division between activities that take place inside the church and a civil society irrelevant to congregational activities.16

Rejecting essentialist arguments that attribute this conservatism to a universal Chinese ethnicity or an immutable Christian tradition, this chapter’s premise rests on the following proposition: grounded theological contestations since the 1950s have been at the heart of Cantonese Protestant conflict within congregations in San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong. While theological conflicts were the primary reason for congregational disunity, some respondents have observed that differences in ethnicity, particularly between older Taishanese-speakers in Chinatown and newer Cantonese-speakers from Hong Kong, have exacerbated this divisiveness. This chapter’s sub-argument, then, is that appeals to ethnicity are secular explanations for theological disagreements over how congregational spaces should be imagined and used. Its larger contention is that the real difference between Cantonese Protestant ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ grounded theologies lies in their orientation toward a secular ‘establishment’ external to the church congregation, be it a colonial state in Hong Kong, a Chinatown public sphere in Vancouver, or ecumenical Asian American practices of theologies of liberation that is publicly funded in the San Francisco Bay Area. These contentions in turn contribute to the overarching thesis by showing that both ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ variants of Cantonese Protestant congregational theologies are versions of Pacific region secularities, for both attempt to orient theologies to deal with immanent concerns of how ‘secular’ societies should be transformed.

16 By ‘irrelevance,’ I do not mean that these congregational activities are irrelevant to Cantonese Protestant private lives. This is a descriptive term about the public sphere, and it is also value-neutral.
4.2 Congregational contestations: shifting from ‘progressive’ to ‘conservative’

To hold the analytical terms consistent in this chapter, ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ were used by respondents to describe the theological orientation undergirding a Cantonese Protestant congregation’s imagination of how it should relate to civil society. As such, a Cantonese Protestant congregation should be described as ‘conservative’ when it seeks to untangle congregational space from the purview of the state, creating distance between the church and civil society. This conservatism should not be attributed to a simple combination of an essential ‘Chinese’ ethnicity with a particular strand of Christian theology, for there are minority ‘progressive’ congregations that challenge these geographical imaginations. By ‘progressive,’ then, I refer to congregations that are open to collaborating with the state and civil society to advance a secular agenda in civil society. As many in the emerging conversation on secularities have noted, both those who advocate for a more public expression of faith and those who argue for more insularity are indebted to the same secular binary, for both conceive of the ‘secular’ as a space outside of the church’s domain (Casanova, 1994; Asad, 2003; Milbank, 2006). These conceptualizations are in turn theologically undergirded by narratives that prescribe how the church should relate to the world.\(^\text{17}\)

As many scholars note (Pascoe, 1991; Yung, 1995; Tseng, 1999, 2002, 2003; Yu, 2001; Jeung, 2005; D Chang 2010), Cantonese Protestants have historically been mainline

\(^{17}\) I acknowledge the objection that ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ may obfuscate the terminology of this thesis by forcing readers to re-orient their temporal orientations into spatial ones. For some, terms like ‘actively engaging’ or ‘passively engaging’ may be preferable, especially because even ‘conservative’ congregations must always to some extent deal with the state in terms of taxes, property zoning, and organizational governance. However, these are the ways that ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ are used ideologically by Cantonese Protestants, and my usage of these terms is not imposed from without, but derived from within. Unless otherwise stated, then, ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ will be used in this thesis as spatial metaphors for congregational life.
Protestant, that is, affiliated with larger, non-Chinese denominational bodies that have also been in ecumenical, interdenominational, and (in some cases) inter-religious dialogue since the early twentieth century (Wuthnow, 1989). In North America, mainline participation in ecumenical and denominational organizations has sometimes produced a more progressive politics, mobilizing congregations to participate in social justice action in civil society. With a grounded theology that emphasized political engagement, these mainline Protestants deemed it appropriate for congregational spaces to participate in activities pertaining to secular public interests, such as building public housing, forming credit unions, starting social justice organizations, and fundraising from the community. In the 1960s and 1970s, evangelical institutions gradually replaced the dominance of this theological paradigm in North American Chinatowns. As Tseng (2003) notes, these new congregations and organizations tended to be independent of denominations and conservative in theology, producing an imagination of congregational space that focused on the religious activities of worship to the exclusion of social engagement. After all, secular issues (it was held) were irrelevant to the spiritual questions of eternal security in the afterlife.

The current dominance of such geographical-theological conservatism among contemporary Cantonese Protestants is not derived from an essential Christianity or Chineseness. It is instead a product of historical contestation over the theological ontologies undergirding congregational space. Following Ley’s (2010: 162) insight that ‘immigrants…never touch down in unclaimed land or unoccupied space,’ conservative Cantonese Protestants from Hong Kong did not enter a theological vacuum when they arrived in San Francisco or Vancouver. In the San Francisco Bay Area, mainline Protestant churches in San Francisco and Oakland Chinatowns were united for social justice causes by
the National Council of Churches’ National Conference of Chinese American Churches (CONFAB). As primarily second-generation Cantonese-speaking Protestants, they were challenged by the emergence of ‘conservative’ Cantonese understandings of congregational space, particularly first-generation Cantonese neo-evangelicals emphasizing charity work in San Francisco and second-generation Chinese American fundamentalists in Oakland who sought to radically dissociate the church from civil society. Similarly, in Vancouver, Cantonese-speaking mainline Protestants in Chinatown had developed a conception of congregational space as a functional community centre of historical significance. New Cantonese evangelicals from Hong Kong challenged their leadership in the 1970s and 1980s, producing views of the congregation that were deemed more faithful to Christian practice, both in the formation of new congregations outside of Chinatown and in a controversial lawsuit over church property in Chinatown.

Although the ‘conservative’ evangelicals in each site were from Hong Kong, this chapter in turn suggests that Hong Kong itself was a site of theological contestation between a mainline Protestant establishment and new evangelical institutions generated by revivalist preachers. This approach eschews a simplistic transnational geography that frames Hong Kong as a breeding ground of sorts for conservative evangelicalism in order to trace the history of church-state relations in Hong Kong. While studies of church-state relations abound in Hong Kong (Leung and Chan, 2003; Kwong, 2008), few are willing to attribute the development of conservative Cantonese Protestantism in Hong Kong to the rise of a new evangelical grounded theology in the 1950s. Indeed, revival movements in 1950s Hong Kong and the rise of evangelical organizations in the 1970s challenged the mainline establishment’s collusion with the colonial government. In Hong Kong, it was
precisely this disentanglement of church from the colonial state that led to the development of an evangelical public theology, in which ‘conservative’ clergy in the 1980s proposed the creation of a new democratic public sphere to replace church-state collusion and establishmentarianism. In this sense, mainline participation by North American Chinatowns in the secular public sphere can be read as church-state entanglement, projecting the Hong Kong colonial state’s church-state relations situation onto North America. When migrants from Hong Kong went to North America, they thus established ‘conservative’ churches that safeguarded the theological purity of congregational space over against the embeddedness of mainline churches with civil society, even if some mainline churches saw themselves as progressive, prophetic, and working for community improvement. The next parts of this chapter track this development, showing that evangelical contestations in mainline space produced a new conservative congregational hegemony that persists in contemporary Cantonese Protestant activism.

4.3 San Francisco: Asian America meets the Cantonese evangelical

When the Rev. James Chuck remembers the 1970s, he thinks of a split in the church he pastored for forty years since 1951, First Chinese Baptist Church on Waverley Place in San Francisco’s Chinatown. In a paper presented to the mainline Chinese Christian Union (CCU) in 1970, Chuck noted a tremendous numerical growth in Chinese American evangelicals who were active in university campus ministries and congregational planting initiatives while being less interested in the social justice politics of their Chinatown mainline counterparts. Arguing that ‘evangelism’ was ‘nothing less than the totality of all that the church does,’ Chuck stressed that if faith is ‘intensely personal...it is never private.’
He continued, 'The Christian lives a “separated” existence only in the sense that his life is different from, or distinguishable from that of the world; but the Christian never lives apart from the world’ (Chuck 1970; quoted in Tseng 2003: 263-264). Eight years later, Chuck’s church experienced a split due precisely to an influx of evangelical Protestants with private congregational theologies from Hong Kong. An anonymous interviewee, Mr. Ho, told me that he left for theological reasons: he ‘found out that [First Chinese Baptist Church’s] faith content is mah mah [so-so]’ and that when ‘the church broke,’ his family was able to move to more evangelical congregations. Chuck explained in a key informant interview that ‘at this stage of human evolvement, the average person can’t handle too much difference,’ recalling another time when the church

had 15 people in the English choir and 15 people in the Chinese choir. If we were to combine them, if we do the math, we should have a choir of 30 people. But it doesn’t work that way. When you combine the two choirs, you have increased the diversity so that the people on both ends who can’t handle it drop out. (James Chuck, personal communication, 10 June 2011).\(^{18}\)

However, as The Bay Area Chinese Churches Report (2008) tells the story, the reasons for leaving also revolved around ethnicity, for the 60 members who left First Chinese Baptist in 1978 intended to plant another Baptist church ‘specifically to reach new immigrants’ (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 61).\(^{19}\) Not only were the differences theological, then; they leveraged their migration wave to justify their exodus.

\(^{18}\) I only cite the interview dates for the first time each respondent appears. I do not cite interview dates for anonymous respondents.

\(^{19}\) People who know James Chuck might object that he is hardly a good example of a Cantonese-speaking Protestant. After all, James Chuck is a second-generation English-speaker who grew up in San Francisco’s Chinatown in the 1930s and 1940s. However, not only does Chuck speak Cantonese; he served as his entire church’s senior pastor from 1954 to 1991, learning Cantonese from a staff member at his church, Dr. P.K. Chau (Chuck, 2002: 26). Chuck’s networks in turn are transnational, for his Cantonese abilities have enabled him to teach seminary even at the Chung Chi College of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.
My argument here is that while the dominant theologies changed from progressive to conservative among Cantonese Protestants in the San Francisco Bay Area, both of these theological strands shared impulses that unwittingly reinforced secularization processes. Historically, Chinatowns were segregated urban districts to which a racialized Chinese population had limited rights; in the 1960s and 1970s, these same Chinatowns became sites of radical grassroots political activism (Yung, 1995; Chen, 2000; LLC Wang 1969/2007). However, during precisely that time period, evangelicals from Hong Kong began to tilt the theological landscape of Cantonese Protestantism from a progressive, social justice orientation to an evangelical one with an emphasis on the congregation as a private space of worship, not social service, and certainly not social action. In particular, two 'conservative' models were advanced, one 'evangelical' one that emphasized charity-based evangelistic work while another 'fundamentalist' model sought to completely differentiate congregational space from civil society. The irony was that though these ‘conservative’ congregational theologies contested their progressive counterparts as overly liberal and secular, the strategic differentiation between private and public spaces reinforced an ironic variant of secularization: they actively promoted a privatized understanding of congregational space, resulting in divisive confrontations with the mainline congregations that had preceded them.20

20 I fully recognize that one may object to this framework, for it seems to frame ‘progressives’ and ‘conservatives’ in ways that cannot escape the conundrum of reinforcing secularization. It may sound ridiculous, for example, that simply ‘naming’ the world as other to the church might reinforce the secularization thesis. One objection might be: what of, say, the Gospel of St. John (e.g. 15.18-25) in the Christian Scriptures where Jesus Christ talks repeatedly of the ‘world’ that hates his disciples? My response is twofold and is more fully drawn out in the conclusion in chapter 8. First, although the contestations among Bay Area Cantonese Protestant congregations in the 1970s were indeed between ‘progressives’ and ‘conservatives,’ these two options do not exhaust all of the theological options for how to conceptualize a congregation, which means that there may well be other ways of being the church that do not reinforce secularization. Secondly, while it might be tempting to see the ‘world’ as a spatial other in the Christian
4.3.1 Becoming Asian American: the mainline and the movement

Asian American scholars have long observed a tension between the colonial impulses of the white missionaries who started Chinatown missions and their empowerment of racialized Chinese American populations. On the one hand, celebratory accounts of white missionary women contend that they served as ‘proto-antiracists’ and ‘cultural feminists,’ enacting liberation among women in Chinatowns (Pascoe, 1991; Yung, 1995). In turn, these efforts were also culturally embedded in colonizing practices that separated Chinese churches from American ones because of essentialist racialized views, that were often leveraged to attempt missionary work in the distant Orient (Yu, 2001; D Chang, 2010; GH Chang, 2012). As a report by the National Council of Churches in the 1950s noted, the first missionary efforts were initiated in San Francisco Chinatown in October 1869 by the Presbyterian Church (Cayton and Lively, 1955: 38), followed by four other denominations: the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1868 and the Congregational Church, the Baptist Church, and the Episcopal Church in 1870. The central problem, as Cayton and Lively (1955: 41) noted, was, ‘The pastors of all the churches were Caucasian, a fact which must have presented numerous problems and misunderstandings,’ although

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Scriptures, it would be anachronistic to read a text like John's Gospel as enforcing a church-world spatial division. Indeed, the writer of John's Gospel proposes that what makes the disciples distinct from the 'world' is not 'spatial,' per se, but ontological: they exist in love in the midst of world of violent contestation (especially when Jesus confronts Pilate about his kingdom 'not being of this world' in John 19). Speaking theologically, the way that the church avoids reproducing secularization is through a radical practice of communion, not the erection of spaces contra mundum, which is what the 'conservatives' do here. Indeed, this is arguably what Jesus calls the church to be in his prayer in John 17, where the church is not told to avoid the world, but to engage in a radical oneness found in sacramental communion with the Triune God; such an approach would be neither 'progressive' nor 'conservative,' but as Milbank (2006) would call it, 'radically orthodox.'
these clergy advocated for Chinese labour and immigration issues as well (see GH Chang, 2012).

From the vantage point of Pacific secularities, both missionary work and the subsequent activism generated by second-generation Chinese Americans were theologically secular because of their obsession with fitting race into nation. In 1933, the Tahoe Christian Conference brought young, mainline Protestant Chinese Americans from a variety of churches to Zephyr Point in Lake Tahoe, a Presbyterian campground, to talk about engagement in civil society and to seek guidance for family and career. While mainline Protestant, the issues with which they grappled were secular, such as the ‘problems of American-Chinese youth’ that were ‘accentuated’ by the Great Depression and the ‘prevailing skepticism’ among Chinese American youth following the fundamentalist-modernist controversy (see chapter 1).21 Following World War II, the Tahoe Conferences joined with the Silver Bay Youth Conference and the Chinese Students’ Christian Association (CSCA) to develop a post-war Chinese American youth agenda, a population conceptualized in their commission report as bicultural, for ‘born and reared in the Occident we have grown to manhood and womanhood under the benign influence of the Christian faith’ (Tahoe Rethinking Commission Report, 1949). Framing Christianity as a Western religion, they argued that their Protestant influences combined with their Chinese ethnicity had shaped them into East-West hybrids. Drawing on this hybridity, the reconceptualized Tahoe Conference called on the postwar Chinese American generation to integrate further into American civil society while bringing Christian theology to bear on

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21 I am very grateful to Timothy Tseng for graciously providing documents on the Tahoe Conference and CONFAB that he had accessed from the Edwar Lee papers at the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California, Berkeley. I also thank the Rev. James Chuck for giving me the CONFAB conference proceedings.
secular social issues, particularly ‘to endeavor to integrate the minorities, more particularly the Chinese in America, into the larger American society and work toward a Christian world.’

In other words, the proposed vehicle through which to revitalize postwar Chinese American mainline congregations was to enact a social rapprochement between congregations and civil society. Following the release of a pessimistic report on the financial straits of American Chinese churches by the National Council of Churches (Cayton and Lively, 1955), the Rev. James Chuck hosted the National Conference of Chinese American Churches (CONFAB) at First Chinese Baptist Church in 1955. Compiled by Tahoe Conference organizer, Oakland Chinese Methodist Church’s Rev. Edwar Lee, CONFAB’s final report argued that the central problem was that Chinese Americans were ‘living in an age of conflicting Loyalties’ both within and without the church due to ‘racial tensions’ in society at large and ‘the inter-group tensions within the groups.’ To address these problems of orientalizing racism, CONFAB was institutionalized as a conference that met every three years, working to develop a bilingual hymnal to be sung in both Cantonese and English, to recruit young Chinese American ministers, to review clergy salaries, to provide theological training, and to aid in Chinese American refugee resettlement. Explicitly rejecting the notion of ‘considering our own congregation as an entirely independent church’ on the theological grounds that ‘we are saved not for isolation, but for fellowship,’ CONFAB pooled the resources of mainline Protestant churches to advance Chinese American justice causes both within and without congregations (CONFAB, 1955).

These resources in turn pushed mainline congregations out toward institutional participation in the 1960s War on Poverty (Yung, 1995: 290). Led mostly by YMCA leaders
Alan Wong and Larry Jack Wong, mainline churches participated in the San Francisco Council of Churches (the local, ecumenical NCC branch) to start publicly-funded non-profit organizations in San Francisco Chinatown, including the Asian League (an organization to empower minorities and women to own businesses), the Chinatown-North Beach Credit Union (an organization that helped Chinese and Italian Americans in San Francisco obtain loans for small businesses), and Self-Help for the Elderly (an organization to empower senior citizens in San Francisco communities). They also participated in non-Chinese social justice activism, such as founding Planned Parenthood and joining Ron Dellums’ Concentrated Employment Program. The National Council of Churches provided the model for these initiatives’ operations. For example, Alan Wong recalls that Self-Help for the Elderly was inspired by initiatives when ‘the National Council of Churches started senior centers at churches’ (Alan Wong, personal communication, 16 July 2011). So too, James Chuck recalls that when the Chinese Hospital in Chinatown was founded, ‘it was actually the church people that were on the boards and committees, and the early directors were church people.’ In short, mainline Protestants practiced the CONFAB mandate by pooling congregational resources to do work outside of congregations, empowering local minorities to better their material conditions.

Community organizing coincided in the late 1960s with the radical politics of the Asian American ethnic studies movement at San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley (HJ Kim, 2006). Joining the Black Student Union’s efforts to start

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22 Alan Wong noted to me that the founding of Planned Parenthood took place prior to Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973), the United States Supreme Court case that decided that early-term abortions were inscribed in a woman’s right to privacy. While abortion debates precede Roe and were in turn caught up in the controversy surrounding contraception in Griswold v. Connecticut, 381 U.S. 479 (1965), Wong told me that founding Planned Parenthood took place with relatively little controversy among Cantonese Protestants because there was little publicity about these sexuality issues at the time.
community-based ethnic studies programs at San Francisco State, Alan Wong became involved in the strikes in ethnic studies when he was transferred to work with students at San Francisco State College in 1968, subsequently teaching ethnic studies at state universities in Hayward and San Francisco (Umemoto, 1989). For Wong, participation in the strikes was a direct outgrowth of both his community work and a theological mandate he articulated through Jesus’ words in Matthew 25: ‘When you saw that I was hungry, you fed me.’ Seeking empowerment for Asian Americans and other previously disadvantaged minority groups in America, the radical politics of Asian American studies coalesced with a new theology of liberation developing among some Asian American mainline clergy. In 1973, the Rev. Roy I. Sano, a Japanese American United Methodist pastor (and later bishop), initiated the Pacific Asian Center for Theologies and Strategies (PACTS) at the Pacific School of Religion, which later became the Pacific Asian North American Center (PANA). The centre generated interest in the development of Asian American liberation theology, an effort that led to the initiation of Asian American caucuses within predominantly white mainline denominations (see also Jeung, 2005; HJ Kim, 2006). Indeed, as the Rev. Katie Choy-Wong told me, most American Protestant denominations had ‘Asian desks’ that engaged in ecumenical dialogue with Asian American representatives within the National Council of Churches. Combatting racism within denominations, the Asian caucuses sought to nominate clergy for leadership positions, such as in 1971 when the Rev. Wilbur Choy became the first Asian American Methodist bishop. They also addressed nation-wide Asian American issues, such as in a letter-writing campaign following the trial surrounding the murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit, a Vietnamese Chinese man who was brutally murdered by laid-off automobile factory workers who thought that he was Japanese and connected to
the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs to the Asia-Pacific (Zia, 2000). Though Chin was not Christian, Choy-Wong remembers that the Asian desks wrote letters to the judiciary system and contacted movement leaders when the judge acquitted Chin’s murderers (Katie Choy-Wong, personal communication, 16 June 2011).

The congregational theology practised by these mainline Protestants transformed congregations into hubs of action. The Rev. Harry Chuck, the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Church’s Donaldina Cameron House from 1977 to 2001, co-chaired the Chinatown Coalition for Better Housing. Harry Chuck organized congregation members, local business owners, and Asian American college students to develop a seniors’ home at his church, the 175-unit Mei Lun Yuen Project at Cameron House. Following Cameron House staff worker Gordon Chin’s proposal to the San Francisco Foundation on Chinatown’s affordable housing agenda, the San Francisco Planning Department released a report in 1972 in conjunction with the Chinatown Citizens Advisory Committee, contending that over 2,000 new units needed to be built and 2,000 more needed to be renovated for Chinatown to be considered a site that had available affordable housing (Presbyterian Church in Chinatown, 2012). However, because the patch of land that Cameron House wanted was a site that affluent Nob Hill residents adjacent to Chinatown wanted for property redevelopment, new strategies from the strikes orchestrated by students in ethnic studies were deployed for Chinatown community organizing. The church itself rallied senior citizens in its own congregation to go to City Hall to demonstrate for their own housing. The result was that close to 300 Chinatown residents, many of them seniors and affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown, showed up for a public hearing at
Commodore Stockton School on 13 January 1977, persuading the city to side with them over against the Nob Hill residents (*East West*, 1977: 1; see HJ Kim, 2006: 60-62).

Similarly, mainline Protestant congregations in Oakland provided institutional sponsorship to Chinatown community organizations. Oakland Chinese Presbyterian Church’s Rev. Frank Mar founded a series of non-profit organizations in Oakland that remain in operation today. Advancing the cause of ‘Christian service,’ Mar (1984) was instrumental in starting many community organizations in Oakland’s Chinatown while using the church’s name as an official sponsor. Using funds left over from the defunct Oakland Council of Churches Social Service Department, Oakland Chinese Presbyterian Church became one of the formal sponsors of the Chinatown senior affordable housing project, Doh On Yuen, in 1969. An Elderly Nutrition Program followed in 1973, which in turn led to the formation of the Chinese Convalescent Hospital Committee and the Chinese American Health Organization to develop facilities to provide health care for senior citizens. Moreover, Mar (1984: 12) cooperated with students from Berkeley’s Asian American movement to form the East Bay Chinese Youth Council at the Presbyterian Church’s social hall. This group then formed the East Bay Asians for Community Action (EBACA) in 1970, out of which Asian Health Services was organized in response to concerns about Asian American community health and the Asian Law Caucus to represent Asian Americans who were being unjustly targeted by the police system, both in 1972. The Asian Community Mental Health Services was also a Presbyterian initiative, beginning with the efforts of social workers, supported by the community, and first headed in 1974 by San Francisco Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Dennis Loo. Mar was also involved in the Chinatown Project Area Committee (PAC) to renew Chinatown’s built environment in 1973,

Mainline Protestants also addressed gang warfare by a transnational Hong Kong youth society known broadly as the Wah Ching Gang, a group composed of young people from Hong Kong who targeted American-born Chinese in order to claim San Francisco Chinatown for their turf (W Lee, 1999: 61-62). In 1971, one of the Wah Ching members, Joe Fong, left the gang with half of the members; in 1972, they formed the Chung Yi, better known as the ‘Joe Boys.’ Fong’s departure from Wah Ching precipitated a gang war in San Francisco’s Chinatown that culminated in the Golden Dragon Massacre in 1977. Earlier, in 1966, Alan Wong teamed up with Asian American studies doyen Ling-chi Wang to protest against the Chinatown establishment’s neglect of the Wah Ching problem (see LC Wang, 1969/2007). So too, Katie Choy-Wong remembers the actions of mainline Chinatown clergy around the 1972 case surrounding the incarceration of Joe Fong, the namesake of the Joe Boys, for a murder that he did not commit. Incarcerated at Dalton State Prison for a drive-by shooting in 1972, Fong’s role in the murder was exonerated by San Francisco Chronicle investigative journalist Paul Avery, who published an article revealing that assistant police chief, Pierre Merle, had mishandled the case by ignoring an alternate confession to the murder (WP Lee, 2006: 246; see McCoy v. Hearst Corp. 1986). A pivotal part of the Joe Fong story that receives little attention, Choy-Wong emphasized, was that the mainline Chinatown Protestant clergy had also written letters on Fong’s behalf. Substituting in a pastoral role at First Chinese Baptist ‘when James Chuck was on vacation,’ Choy-Wong teamed up with Asian American churches: ‘we wrote on his behalf, to justify, to

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23 Additional information here was provided in key informant interviews with the Rev. Katie Choy-Wong on 16 June 2011 and the Rev. Russell Yee on 5 July 2012.
re-open the case. And that was Christian involvement that nobody knew.’ Following his release, Fong wrote a letter of thanks to the mainline clergy, went to graduate school, and became a sociologist and ethnic studies professor at the College of San Mateo (see McCoy v. Hearst Corp., 1986; WP Lee, 2008).

These examples demonstrate that mainline Chinatown clergy developed theologies of liberation focused on challenging structures of social injustice in Chinatown with social institutions that empowered minority communities. While many of these actors were second-generation Asian Americans, the Cantonese-speaking abilities of clergy and community leaders like James Chuck, Harry Chuck, Edwar Lee, Frank Mar, and Alan Wong enabled them to pastor Cantonese-speaking congregations, to advocate for the well-being of Chinese congregations within mainline denominations, to start NGOs like Self-Help for the Elderly and the Mei Lun Yuen Housing Project, and to contend with Wah Ching gang violence on Chinatown streets. It is these progressive Cantonese Protestant theologies that were in turn challenged by the emergence of Cantonese evangelicalisms in the 1960s and 1970s, criticized as secular because of their propensity to do more work with secular civil society than to theologically consolidate their congregations.

4.3.2 Cantonese evangelicals in the Bay Area: strategically contesting the mainline

The rise of liberation theologies among Asian Americans in San Francisco and Oakland coincided with the immigration of students from Hong Kong with evangelical orientations. Led by evangelical campus fellowships such as Moses Chow’s Ambassadors for Christ (AFC) and Thomas Wang’s Chinese Christian Mission (CCM), Cantonese Protestant landscapes dramatically shifted at the same time that the mainline pursued their
theologies of liberation. Indeed, of the churches planted in the Bay Area between 1950-1972, sixteen were considered ‘theologically conservative’ while nine cited no denominational affiliation (Jeung, 2005: 26; Bird, 1968). In other words, the mainline activism described in the previous subsection paralleled the emergence of new evangelical organizations pursuing more conservative theologies. As historian Timothy Tseng (2003) notes, separatist revivalists fleeing the Chinese communist regime in the 1940s began to migrate to America, bringing with them theologies that emphasized the apolitical nature of the church, separating ecclesial space from the purview of the state. The presence of these new theologies did not necessitate contestation, for mainline Protestants initially expressed possibilities for collaboration with these new conservative actors. Of the eight mission agencies that Frank Mar listed as possible collaborators for Chinese mainline pastors, seven fell under Tseng’s typology of evangelical separatists: the Chinese Christian Mission in Michigan (with the Rev. Thomas Wang), Ambassadors for Christ in Washington DC (with Moses Chow), the Evangelize China Fellowship in Los Angeles, Chinese for Christ in Los Angeles, the Ling Liang World-Wide Evangelistic Mission in Los Angeles, the Chinese Christian Literature Society in Kowloon (presumably the forerunner to Breakthrough Publications), and the China Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong. The only mainline Protestant organization on the list was the Chinese Presbyterian Missionary Society in San Francisco, that is, Cameron House (Mar, 1976: 434).

However, newer evangelical church plants based on conservative theologies in the Bay Area came to outnumber the mainline ones from the 1950s to the 1990s. Prior to 1950, there were 15 ethnic Chinese Protestant churches in the Bay Area, most of them associated with mainline Protestant denominations. By mid-1996, there were 158, many of
them suburban and evangelical with little affiliation to mainline denominations (see Table 4.1). Between the 1996 study and 2008, there was a 23% increase in Chinese church plants and a 41% growth in church attendance, again mostly in the suburbs (see Table 4.2).
Table 4.1: New Church Starts by Decades and by Counties: 1950 to mid-1996 (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Pre-1950</th>
<th>1950s</th>
<th>1960s</th>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>1980s</th>
<th>1990s</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alameda</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contra Costa</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>158</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Church Growth, Plants and Attendance, 1996-2008 (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>1996 Churches</th>
<th>1996 Attendance</th>
<th>2008 Churches</th>
<th>2008 Attendance</th>
<th>% Increase Churches</th>
<th>% Increase Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alameda</td>
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<td>5150</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6718</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contra Costa</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1180</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1555</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8090</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8830</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>San Mateo</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1270</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2222</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5745</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10720</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>158</strong></td>
<td><strong>21435</strong></td>
<td><strong>194</strong></td>
<td><strong>30130</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the growth in evangelical churches, only 33 churches with 150 delegates nationwide were associated with CONFAB in 1998, which in turn met its institutional demise in 2000 (Chuck, 1998).

These new Cantonese evangelical church plants often portrayed their growth as due to their work among Cantonese students and young families. Often begun through small Bible studies, Cantonese evangelicals in the San Jose-South Bay area, for example, focused
on evangelizing Chinese migrants who moved there for economic reasons. At the calling of the evangelical Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination, the Rev. Abraham Poon moved from Calgary to plant a church in the South Bay (Abraham Poon, personal communication, 30 June 2011). Beginning with thirty people, a majority of whom were college students, the church began by borrowing facilities, first from Willow Glen Alliance Church, then renting a space in 1983 from a high school in Campbell. The church erected its own building from 1985-87, during which period a Mandarin service was added (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 117). Similarly, in 1962, New Life Church, Nazarene, was started, constructing a worship centre in 1966 on a 2.7 acre site (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 114). So too, Lord’s Grace Christian Church was organized in 1973 by a Cantonese-speaking elder who evangelized Stanford University students and faculty, meeting in Palo Alto’s Masonic temple until 1989, at which point they purchased their own property in Palo Alto\textsuperscript{24} (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 113). The Chinese Baptist Church of San Jose, a Southern Baptist congregation with a membership mostly from Hong Kong, also began in 1975 as a family prayer meeting. Their first service was at a home in November 1975, after which they rented the fellowship hall of the First Baptist Church of Campbell in January 1976 before settling on their own site, also in Campbell. Influential pastors who emerged from this congregation included the Rev. Daniel Ng (now senior pastor at Kong Fok Evangelical Free Church in Hong Kong’s Admiralty district) and the Rev. Abraham Chiu (founding senior pastor at Crosspoint Chinese Church of Silicon Valley in Milpitas) (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 98). The Chinese Bible Baptist Church in Los Altos was planted in 1980, again mostly with

\textsuperscript{24} Lord’s Grace Christian Church has since moved in 2000 to Mountain View. I am grateful to the Rev. Andy Ching, a former pastor there, for confirming this information in a key informant interview (Andy Ching, personal communication, 11 December 2012).
a congregation from Hong Kong (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 98), as was the South Bay Chinese Baptist Church in Milpitas by twelve Christians who later moved to San Jose (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 119).

Though they seemed independent, these evangelical congregations and their affiliated parachurch organizations strategically contested mainline Protestant progressive theologies with their conservative ones. In 1961, the Chinese Christian Mission (CCM) began in Rev. Thomas Wang’s garage in Detroit as a small congregation, merging with the Chinese Bible Church of Detroit in 1964, while issuing a regular periodical, *Chinese Christians Today* (Chinese Christian Mission, 2011: 9). Wang also embarked on cross-country mission trips throughout the 1960s, gathering young students who became key staff workers at CCM, such as the Rev. Micah Leo, the Rev. Peter Chow, the Rev. Abraham Law, and the Rev. Wally Yew. As Yew remembers, CCM moved to the Bay Area in 1972 to consolidate with another Chinese evangelical ministry, Far East Broadcasting, a radio project that broadcast biblical teaching into the People’s Republic of China. However, because land was ‘less expensive, more economical’ in Petaluma, CCM headquarters purchased property there, 39 miles north of its target site (Wally Yew, personal communication, 6 June 2011). To reach out to the city, a Gospel Center ministry was established in San Francisco’s Chinatown in 1979. Originally a book centre, the site has become a *de facto* social service hub where English and citizenship classes are held, a model that has expanded to Honolulu, Houston, and Cupertino.

Though CCM was representative of the new conservative evangelicalism contesting the mainline as secular, its theology was oriented toward converting the American nation by leveraging its Chinese Christian population as evangelists. Until 1967, Wang’s preaching
mirrored apocalyptic trends in neo-evangelicalism, calling America to national repentance from her secularism while decrying non-evangelical liberal and Roman Catholic theologies as anti-Christian (Tseng, 2003: 260-261; cf. Ockenga, 1948/2004). In 1967, Wang began to leverage ethnicity for his evangelism, writing that ‘one of the things that annoy Asian intellectuals is the very subtle but insistent refusal by westerners to accept Asians as Asians and as equals’ as they ‘try to absorb and engulf Chinese Christians into their own patterns and programs’ (Wang, 1967; quoted in Tseng, 2003: 261). That evangelism was intimately tied to agendas of race and nation, however, suggests that conservative theologies are but another response to the earlier work of missionaries who had set a secular tone for Protestant practice in Chinatowns. These conservatisms simply differed practically from their progressive counterparts, for instead of developing theologies of liberation to be enacted in civil society, they argued that congregations were sites of evangelism, continuous with the work of missionary proselytization that reinforced modern notions of races and nations and used these secular categories in their missiology.

These secular resonances played out in the restructuring of certain Cantonese Protestant congregations along conservative theological lines, such as Cumberland Chinese Presbyterian Church on San Francisco Chinatown’s Jackson and Powell Streets. While its earlier progressive pastors (such as the Rev. Samuel King Gam) had been core members of CONFAB, the Rev. Ernest Chan, who was hired in 1965, transformed the congregation into a site of evangelism. Controversially disposing of the deacon board,25 Chan advocated a multi-staff model, strategically consolidating congregational power in staff pastors while

25 The YMCA’s Alan Wong was also an elder at Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church and opposed this move. He told me that he was out-voted. Ernest Chan’s actions were thus ‘controversial’ as they engendered some contestation.
growing the church to about 800 members across Cantonese, Mandarin, and English congregations (Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church, 1994: 5). These pastors in turn became leaders who planted Cantonese evangelical churches throughout San Francisco. Cumberland’s student minister, the Rev. Chanson Lau, began Cornerstone Church with students and young families in 1975 in the Sunset District, originally renting out storefronts until they acquired and retrofitted the former Simpson Bible College (Lau’s alma mater) as their church building and school premises for Cornerstone Christian Academy in 1988 (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 42; see chapter 6). So too, in 1987, Cumberland’s Cantonese associate pastor, the Rev. Wing So, led 140 people to merge with the Richmond District’s Chinese Evangelical Free Church to form the San Francisco Evangelical Free Church in a residential area near Chinatown (Chuck, 1996: 48; Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 63), which in turn planted Hope Evangelical Free Church in the Sunset District in 1999 (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 52). In addition, Ernest Chan’s assistant, Kenneth Yeung, later founded the Chinese herbal medicine and health food company, Prince of Peace Enterprises. Admittedly, Cumberland was not the only church planting congregation in San Francisco, for in 1975, the conservative Chinese Independent Baptist Church in San Francisco had also begun a mission in the Sunset District that came to be known as Sunset Chinese Baptist Church in 1980 (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 68). Moreover, the San Francisco Chinese Alliance Church also started from a student Bible study in San Francisco Chinatown, which in turn planted and affiliated denominationally with Chinese churches in Concord, Hayward, Milpitas, Oakland, San Jose, and San Mateo (Tseng and Chuck, 2008: 60).
Cumberland’s conservative theologies reframed congregational engagements with civil society to one undergirded by evangelistic motivations and a charity framework. These conservatisms were in turn implicitly averse to tactics that challenged public policies as unjust. In 1979, Kenneth Yeung led the church in an official sponsorship for Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees to the San Francisco Bay Area. Recalling that war refugees ‘flocked to the U.S.’ shortly after he was hired at Cumberland (see Ong, 2003), Yeung recalled that the American immigration policy that allowed family reunification of at most three members implicitly excluded large Vietnamese families ‘of about four or five, and then grandma, uncle, and because they ran away the goats together’ and they don’t want to be separated because this is such a new country’ (Kenneth Yeung, personal communication, 5 December 2011). Instead of challenging this immigration policy as exclusionary, Yeung proposed that congregation members team up to sponsor large families, ‘like your family plus B and C couples, I mean, families, three of us sponsor this family of ten persons so they don’t need to be separated into different states, different cities.’ When they arrived in San Francisco, Yeung mobilized his congregation’s charitable instincts to work around discriminatory housing and employment policies: ‘So we get church people to help: find jobs, find housing, find school for the kids, take these people around, so they know how to be independent and live in the city and so it was a very good testimony.’ In other words, these acts of charity were in turn evangelistically strategic, conveying a church image that was implicitly more effective at providing new migrants

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26 Yeung is painting a picture of Vietnamese rural life here.
27 I am thankful to Kenneth Yeung and his secretary, Maisie Chan, for providing me with two interviews with him, one on 6 June 2011 and one on 5 December 2011.
with social care than ones that directly challenged discriminatory policies, as his progressive counterparts would have.

Across the San Francisco Bay, conservative churches advocated for an even stricter differentiation of church spaces from civil society. While begun by Cantonese-speaking Protestants, older churches like the Chinese Independent Baptist Church (CIBC) and the Chinese Bible Church (CBC) leveraged English-speaking ministries and Americanizing tactics in their proselytizing strategies. CIBC was planted in Oakland after the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco and became independent from its San Francisco mother church in 1967 when a new building was constructed (Chinese Independent Baptist Church, 2009: 11-13). This independence coincided with a conservative shift when its networks became intertwined with that of Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), a school that emphasized a ‘dispensationalist’ evangelical strand that held that the ages of the world were divided into ‘dispensations’ of divine activity and would end with a ‘rapture’ of believers prior to a seven-year-long ‘Tribulation’ (see Dittmer, 2008; Dittmer and Spears, 2009; Dittmer and Sturm, 2010). As the Rev. Russell Yee remembers his childhood there, it was his family’s attendance at DTS retreats hosted in the Santa Cruz Mountains where his parents—and by extension, the church—were brought into contact with the CIBC leadership (Russell Yee, personal communication, 5 July 2012). CIBC subsequently invited DTS professors such as systematic theologian Charles Ryrie and biblical exegete Stan Toussaint to speak at their own home church and retreats that they themselves hosted, which in turn influenced young men from CIBC to study at DTS.

Though many of its members could speak Cantonese, CIBC’s main affiliations were intentionally English-speaking for strategic evangelistic reasons. Finding it unhelpful to
affiliate with mainline Cantonese Protestant congregations in its own neighbourhood, it contested the theologies of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches as overly liberal and secular and thus ineffective for congregational growth. On a tour that we took together of Oakland’s Chinatown, Yee humorously described this phenomenon as the spatialization of the ‘fundamentalist-modernist divide in Oakland Chinatown,’ a situation in which ‘we were the evangelizing, tract-passing, have-evangelistic-basketball-games kind of youth group’ and the Presbyterians across the street ‘were going to have dances and not pass out tracts.’ When pressed about whether the churches ever interacted because of their close proximity to one another, Yee replied that the interaction was ‘zero, absolutely zero, just sinfully zero,’ for he, like many in the church, had internalized a narrative that evangelicals were growing inversely to the mainline’s decline because of ‘God’s favour.’ In short, this theological narrative held that the mainline was strategically misguided based on the empirical evidence that CIBC was growing whereas the mainline’s openness to interactions with civil society was causing it to decay internally.

A Chinese church that often partnered with CIBC was the Chinese Bible Church (CBC)—later renamed ‘Bay Area Chinese Bible Church’ (BACBC)—planted by Pastor Sen Wong in 1956 in Oakland. While Wong himself was Cantonese-speaking, his vision was for a Sunday school that started with English-speaking children’s ministries so as to proselytize the Chinese American second generation. According to BACBC’s current senior pastor, Steve Quen, Wong acquired a job at the local post office and started a Vacation Bible School, a summer evangelistic program for children (Steve Quen, personal communication, 2 December 2011). As his children’s ministry grew, Wong’s search for new property led to a rental on East 29th Street,
where there was a large house that we converted to a church, then we rented the apartments one by one next door, eventually rented the whole apartment complex, 20-something, 30-something rooms, for our Sunday school as well as our school that we started in 1979. Basically, we were bursting at the seams.

Quen describes Chinese Bible Church’s theology as initially a form of fundamentalist separatism that was a reaction to theological liberalism:

We were that brand of fundamentalism where if you didn’t believe exactly what we believed, if you were not for me, you were against me. We believed almost King James-only, almost that close. We believed that the way to come to church was suit and tie, dresses, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night church. Yeah, and dress codes, and music—anything besides piano and organ is from the devil, that kind of thing. So that’s what we came from. You only associate with churches of like thinking…but we were well-known, especially as a Chinese church in those circles.

Quen pressed his point by stating that in the early days, even Southern Baptists were too liberal for affiliation; instead, they networked among likeminded American congregations, and sometimes, even CIBC was ‘too liberal,’ although they held summer camps together. These theologies were thus oppositional, actively contesting the progressive mainline by becoming spatially differentiated from any interaction with civil society and thus privatized.

These independent churches began their own networks throughout the Bay Area. CIBC later planted a CIBC Fremont in the 1990s further south in the Bay Area. Pastor Sen Wong began a network of Chinese Bible Churches throughout California, including the Chinese Bible Mission in San Francisco, Chinese Grace Churches in Sacramento and Stockton, and the Fellowship Bible Church on the Bay Area Peninsula. The Oakland Chinese Bible Church itself moved out of Oakland in the 1980s, renting property from San Leandro public schools to start a Christian school while renaming itself as Bay Area Chinese Bible Church. Mirroring the Oakland models, these congregations were mostly English-speaking operations that subsequently developed Cantonese ministries because newer Chinese
American students were also arriving. Indeed, Dr. Alvin Louie, a pastor who trained at CBC before becoming CIBC's senior pastor in 1989, pressed this point: ‘While ministering at the Oakland Chinese Bible Church as visiting director, an influx of Cantonese young people began coming to our church and later, joining our visitation teams...It was then I saw the need to speak Cantonese. Nobody told me this time...I wanted to!’ (Louie 1985/1986: 103-104). Louie’s passion for Cantonese student ministries led him to take language courses from the University of California, Berkeley. These evangelistic efforts in turn contested the liberal mainline hegemony in Oakland with a strategy to target English-speaking young people. While many included strong Cantonese congregations, they were English-speaking in order to proselytize young people away from the secularity and liberalism of Oakland’s civil society and the mainline churches that engaged it.

However, that both conservative ‘evangelicals’ and ‘fundamentalists’ actively contested mainline Protestant progressive theologies as overly secular does not mean that conservative Cantonese Protestants did not themselves stop reinforcing secularizing processes, albeit often unintentionally. While indeed these organizations were putting into practice the biblical Great Commission in Matthew’s Gospel (28.16-20), that they did so in congregations and organizations that repudiated cooperation with the mainline suggests that the spatial effect of evangelistic activity was a steady marginalization of the mainline and its interest in direct social engagement alongside the triumphal growth of evangelical and fundamentalist institutions.\(^28\) What made these organizations different from the

\(^{28}\) Indeed, I have written about the Great Commission in an evangelical publication, *Converge Magazine* (Tse, 2013b). I argued that there are popular interpretations of the Great Commission as proselytization and attempts at cultural transformation that do indeed reinforce secularization, whereas the Gospel according to St. Matthew in the Christian Scriptures reads the ‘obedience’ to the teaching of Jesus within what Jesus actually taught his disciples, namely in the Sermon on the Mount, about an existential conversion into the ‘kingdom of heaven’ that emphasizes weakness and poverty. To the extent that the Cantonese evangelicals
mainline was that conservative congregations understood their congregations theologically as differentiated from the public sphere, albeit on a spatial continuum of conservatisms. For example, Cumberland’s conservatism sought to leverage charity work for evangelistic purposes, drawing the line at contesting public policy in favour of congregational neutrality. By contrast, churches like CIBC Oakland and the Chinese Bible Church adopted a stricter public-private division, resulting in the need to strategically position their congregations as sites to proselytize the American-born Chinese. However, these evangelistic strategies in turn were not non-secular, for they too functioned as public religions, albeit conservative ones. Falling within the missionary tradition of attempting to convert modern racial and national groups to Christianity, these strategies saw personal conversion as a means for greater social transformation than the policy work of the mainline, a conversion of individual hearts rather than a challenge to political structures.

In this conservative framework, the progressive mainline was thus regarded as misguided and irrelevant to the question of how congregations should transform a secular civil society, for launching social justice institutions and contesting unjust policies only addressed symptoms, not the root cause of individual sinfulness. Indeed, the evangelistic work of influential conservative churches like Cumberland, CIBC, and Chinese Bible Church was strategic, producing new evangelical subjects within Cantonese populations who could individually change the world (see Hunter, 2010). As Taylor (2007) notes, these conservatisms in turn employ narrow definitions of the ‘secular.’ After all, a secular age is not one in which religion is absent, but in which theological orientations are bent toward

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and fundamentalists here espoused a triumphalist narrative of being independent from the mainline, one might need to interrogate further not if they are practicing the Great Commission, but how they understand the Great Commission and the kingdom of heaven in Matthew’s Gospel.
immanent purposes. For Taylor, these this-worldly impulses are ironically most clearly seen in missionary impulses, for while they intended to bring about individual spiritual conversion, the spatial expansion of independent evangelical organizations at the expense of the mainline suggests that the net effect was a spatial transformation in the Bay Area. The stakes of contestation between progressive and conservative Cantonese Protestants in the Bay Area thus revolved around how congregations were strategically positioned to make definitive religious marks on civil society. Their disagreements, in short, lay in how precisely to impact civil society with their theological practices. Thinking strategically, then, conservative Cantonese evangelical congregations and organizations successfully replaced the dominance of the mainline Chinese churches in the Bay Area, making congregations sites of evangelistic practice differentiated from direct engagement with civil society.

4.4 Vancouver: Chinatown functionalists meet Hongkonger revivalists

In Vancouver, these ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ contestations boiled over into a lawsuit, Chong v. Lee, 1981 CanLII 732 (BC S.C.), 29 B.C.L.R. 13, that was filed with the Supreme Court of British Columbia. The case concerned theological changes in a Cantonese Protestant congregation in Vancouver’s Chinatown, the historic Christ Church of China. The petitioners, representing ‘a small minority of the congregation, mostly elderly people,’ alleged that a new pastor from Hong Kong, the Rev. Gentle Lee, had recently changed the mode of baptism from sprinkling to full immersion (Chong v. Lee 1981: 3). These

29 Chong v. Lee (1981), 29 B.C.L.R. 13 was itself a significant case in Canadian jurisprudence relating to religion. This case especially set precedent for the relation between the theology of churches and the
changes, while seemingly trivial as a doctrinal dispute internal to the congregation and thus irrelevant to a secular judiciary’s provenance, produced two legal problems. First, the petitioners argued that the changes altered the way in which persons could become legal members of the church. Indeed, it was alleged that because the mode of baptism had been changed, all previous members who were sprinkled at baptism were illegitimate.\footnote{According to the church’s 75th Anniversary booklet, however, this allegation can be refuted from the church’s meeting minutes on 11 January 1972 and 22 October 1978, where it states that persons applying for membership who have already been baptized may be those initiated by either sprinkling or immersion (SSK Lee, 1986: 21). The 1972 minutes show that while the church’s senior ministers do not conduct infant baptism, ‘if the Church member should insist on infant baptism, other ministers may be invited to conduct the ceremony. The committee should decide which minister should be invited.’ The 1978 minutes read, ‘...this Church would regard believers coming through either ceremonies as equal and without discrimination and would accept born-again Christians who had received either ceremony at other churches to become members of this Church.’} This issue, the court noted, was further complicated by the list of membership for the church having been ‘in disarray’ since 1975; according to the church’s own rules, the judge observed, the current pastor would not have been a legitimate member (Chong v. Lee, 1981: 4). Secondly, the theological change produced a spatial novelty: the building was altered to accommodate a large baptismal font at the front of the sanctuary. Although the judge understood that the court system should generally not interfere with theological doctrines ‘except in so far as may be necessary for the determination of the legal rights of the parties jurisdiction of the courts in future cases that seemed to always involve Asian Canadian Protestant churches. One case was Edmonton Korean Baptist Church v. Kim (1996), 189 A.R. 156 (Q.B.), in which a Korean Baptist church in Edmonton that had changed its denominational affiliation to the Christian and Missionary Alliance experienced contentiousness at the elder board level that resulted in the expulsion of two elders who went on to start their own congregation. The court dispute was over which congregation was the legal successor to the original church so as to determine who had entitlement to the monies and transportation vehicles in the church’s name. The theological doctrine in contestation was over the nature of denominational change. Another case was Bentley v. Anglican Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster, 2009 BCSC 1608, in which four Anglican parishes in Metro Vancouver broke with the diocese over rites of same-sex union blessing. The dispute lay with their claim to their properties: while these four parishes remained within ‘historic Anglican orthodoxy,’ they claimed that the diocese’s support for same-sex blessings would alter the theological use of the buildings. Two of the parishes were Chinese Canadian, and one also laid claim to a $3 million trust fund given by a deceased member, Daphne Chun, for a new building. In short, while Chong v. Lee may seem like an insignificant internal institutional dispute, the implications of this court case were wide-ranging in Canadian law in terms of defining the state’s interest in the internal disputes of religious communities.}
concerned,’ the court heard the case because it was about legal property ownership in light of internal doctrinal disputes:

Where a number of people group together to establish a Christian church and it is formed for the purpose of promoting certain defined doctrines of religious faith then expressed, property which the Church acquires is impressed with a trust to carry out that purpose, and a majority of the congregation cannot divert the property to uses inconsistent with such defined religious doctrines against the opposition of a minority of the congregation, however small such minority may be. (Chong v. Lee, 1981: 8)

The court’s interest in the church’s private property reveals the secular underpinnings of the purported theological conflict over modes of baptism. Paralleling the San Francisco case study, Chong v. Lee must be situated in a secular ethnic transition between historic Chinatown and newer Hong Kong migrants as they shaped and restructured Cantonese Protestant geographies in Vancouver.

This section proposes that while Vancouver’s Cantonese Protestant geographies seemingly parallel trends in the Bay Area, the secular theologies that the Hongkonger evangelical migrants challenged differed from the radical progressive Asian American movement’s liberation theology. Employing an Asian Canadian identity politics (see WC Ng, 1999; CM Lee, 2007, 2008; Day, 2007; LR Mar, 2010), Vancouver’s Chinatown establishment adopted a functionalist congregational theology, viewing the church as a community space from which to assert distinctively Chinese Canadian interventions in civil society. Functionalism explicitly refers to Durkheim’s (1915/1965) classic sociological reading of primitive religions as providing social cohesiveness for societies. Subverting Durkheim, this reading of functionalism relegates the theory to a notion held by Vancouver’s Chinatown Protestants, one that can be challenged by those who disagree that churches should be civil society establishments. While this grounded functionalism may
have been indebted to mainline theologies, that the Christ Church of China was not denominationally affiliated suggests that the term ‘mainline’ for Cantonese Protestants in Vancouver was governed not by denominations, but by the interests of the Chinatown community. Wrestling control from these ‘progressive’ theologies that tied the church to the ethnic establishment, Cantonese evangelicals altered what had been perceived by Chinatowners as the social function of the congregation, shifting it to a ‘conservative’ space of evangelism, revival, and worship. However, because these evangelical challenges to grounded functionalism differentiate religious space from that of society, they unwittingly reinforce the secular binary that posits the church as a sacred site distinct from profane space (Casanova, 1994; Milbank, 2006).

4.4.1 Vancouver’s mainline: congregational functionalism and the politics of identity

While much of the literature on Vancouver Chinatown’s mainline churches mirrors the obsession of Asian American studies with missionaries and racial formations, literary scholar Chris Lee (2007) is right to note that the Asian Canadian contrast revolves around the lack of an emergent radical politics in Canada (Ward, 1974/2002; Anderson, 1991; Roy, 1989, 2004, 2006). Instead, the historical data suggests that a politically powerful Chinatown establishment developed that viewed churches as functional community centres (Wickberg, 1982; WC Ng, 1999). As Jiwu Wang (2006) contends, Chinese Canadians were racialized, in part by Canadian missionaries who were unable to incorporate Chinese migrants into the idea of Canada as a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant nation-state, because of their exclusionary attitudes toward Chinese populations in Canada.
Responding to this missionary activity, Vancouver’s Chinatown Protestants asserted a Chinese politics of identity when they founded the Christ Church of China in Vancouver’s Chinatown, a congregation independent from Anglo-Canadian Protestant missionaries and their denominations (J Wang, 2006: 67). Splitting from both the Chinese Presbyterian Church in 1911 and the Chinese Methodist Church in 1913 (see Yee, 2006: 19), the Christ Church of China was self-funded by what Wickberg (1982: 97, 99-100) terms the ‘more substantial Chinese,’ that is, middle-class Chinese merchants who had economic means. Initially meeting at the Chinese Benevolent Association with about 100 attendees, the church represented ‘an indigenized, independent and self-supporting church with no denominational or missionary affiliation’ and included services for ‘worshipping God, proclaiming the Gospel, educating the illiterate, cultivating the virtues, helping the poor and being loyal to the Chinese nation’ (SSK Lee, 1986: 19).

The founding of the Christ Church of China reflected broader developments in Chinese identity politics among Chinatown churches, including those with denominational affiliations. In 1896, the Rev. Chan Yu Tan and his brother, the Rev. Chan Sing Kai, arrived in British Columbia after organizing the first Wesleyan school in Hong Kong (Kuchmij, 2007).31 They subsequently were instrumental in launching the Chinese Methodist Church in Vancouver. So too, Presbyterian and Anglican missionaries with some knowledge of Cantonese began missions with schools that developed into congregations still currently in existence, such as the Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church and the Anglican Church of the Good Shepherd (J Wang, 2006: 61, 64). While the founders of the Christ Church of China departed some of these churches because they protested their tie to the missionary

31 The Rev. Chan Sing Kai later became the pastor of the Chinese Methodist Church in Oakland’s Chinatown and thus one of the Rev. Edwar Lee’s predecessors.
boards, that the founding of these mainline denominational congregations can also be linked to a nascent Chinese Canadian identity suggests that the departures from these churches in the 1910s took these identity politics to a new level. Facing the double challenges of orientalization against Chinese migrants from white Canadian nationalists and the self-orientalization of Chinese migrants passive in the face of discriminatory policies, Cantonese Protestants exercised their agency as Protestants when they started these missions. Indeed, that these churches experienced divisions in the early twentieth century about whether to affiliate with Cantonese-speaking white missionaries suggests that there were vibrant debates about how to enact a Chinese identity politics through the church.

Again paralleling their counterparts in San Francisco, postwar Cantonese Protestants began to take leadership of Cantonese Protestant congregations previously operated by Anglo-Canadian missionaries and treated them as Chinese community sites. Within Canadian civil society, Chinese Canadian activist Roy Mah leveraged Chinese Canadian military participation to lobby for Chinese suffrage, an effort that led to the election of the first Chinese Canadian MP, Douglas Jung, who served under the Progressive Conservative party in the Diefenbaker government (Roy, 2007). So too, Chinatown churches leveraged their Protestantism against policies that disadvantaged Chinatown communities. The Christ Church of China strongly opposed the City of Vancouver’s slum redevelopment project in the 1960s, in which the city proposed severe demolition projects in Chinatown to clear putatively dilapidated buildings. The Christ Church of China was itself one of the buildings to be demolished in Redevelopment No. 2 (Lai, 1988: 129; Anderson, 1991: 196), for, as one alderman put it, “The church has no architectural
value...and it is holding up 300 units of public housing” (Anderson 1991: 199). Due to the threat of expropriation, the members of the church, represented by its committee’s chair, the lawyer Harry Fan, challenged the eviction. While Vancouver’s City Solicitor alleged that Fan’s letter protesting the expropriation was ‘without validity’ and that his proposal of an ‘exchange of properties’ was ‘quite unrealistic’ in September,32 negotiations between the two parties continued until December when Vancouver’s City Council passed a motion to compensate the church $21,000 in exchange for a public parcel of land on Pender and Gore that would be sold to them for $40,000. A new building, along with the senior’s home, China Villa, was constructed on the site.

Chinatown’s struggles thus revolved around asserting a politics of identity that came to be enshrined in the built environment, including church buildings. While activist clergy in San Francisco and Oakland enacted a theology of liberation that included both starting social justice NGOs and advocating for the institutional presence of Asian American studies, the church in Vancouver’s Chinatown was part of a new politics of Chinese identity that was asserting its place in Canadian civil society. Within this framework, the church served more of a functionalist role in Asian Canadian discourse than as a hub for liberation theologies. At the heart of this functionalism was the view that institutions in the Chinese community, including the church, served the purpose of strengthening Chinese (read: Chinatown) involvement in civil society after a history of disenfranchisement. It was this functionalism that was ultimately challenged when evangelicals from Hong Kong came to dominate the Christ Church of China.

32 This was reported in the City Council proceedings on 14 November 1967, citing the Solicitor General’s letter from 19 September 1967, and can be found in the City of Vancouver Archives MCR 1-102, vol. 97, p. 309.
4.4.2 Vancouver’s Cantonese evangelicals: re-orienting functionalism

Paralleling events in the Bay Area in the 1960s and 1970s, Vancouver’s Cantonese Protestant landscape was challenged by Cantonese evangelicals from Hong Kong. Part of the transformation took place through the planting of evangelical congregations outside of Chinatown, especially through the work of the Rev. Augustus Chao, a Christian and Missionary Alliance pastor. Chao was already an influential figure among Chinese Canadian evangelicals in the Canadian prairies when he moved to Vancouver in 1966. In 1960, he had planted Regina Chinese Alliance Church in Saskatchewan, the first Cantonese-speaking Christian and Missionary Alliance congregation in Canada. His ministry in Regina had taken him among a group of students in Winnipeg, MB (affectionately known as ‘the Winnipeggers’) who had formed the Chinese Christian Fellowship (CCF) on campus and who later planted the Winnipeg Chinese Alliance Church. He also spearheaded the Chinese Christian Winter Conference in 1961, which invited CCM’s Rev. Thomas Wang as its first speaker.

Chao subsequently moved to Vancouver in 1966 to capitalize on the growth of the Chinese migrant community there. A friend from Bible College, Joe Ottom, had written to Chao, ‘Here, very big fish in Vancouver, lots of Cantonese.’ This letter led Chao to reflect in his autobiography, ‘Regina was a small town and had only 500 Cantonese, but there were maybe 10,000 in Vancouver, so he urged me very much to come’ (Chao and Yu, 2002: 79). Ottom had begun a Cantonese ministry at a predominantly Anglo-Canadian church, Tenth Avenue Alliance Church. When Chao arrived, he conducted the Chinese ministry at Tenth as well as a Cantonese afternoon service at Chinatown’s Salvation Army hall; they also
handed out evangelistic tracts in Chinatown. When the ministries grew to a total of 200 people in 1969, their search for property led to a lot purchase in 1970 on Knight Street, into which they moved with 300 congregants in 1972 (Chao and Yu, 2002: 81). This new building then became a base for further evangelical ministry growth to Victoria, Richmond, Burnaby, Chicago, and South America. The church is currently known as one of Vancouver’s largest Chinese churches, numbering roughly 1700 in 2007 and currently spread over three campuses on Knight Street, Fraser Lands on Marine Drive, and North Burnaby (L2 Foundation, 2007). Moreover, key informants throughout Metro Vancouver told me that contemporary pastors from a variety of evangelical denominations and networks can trace their lineage to Augustus Chao’s work, including representatives in the Evangelical Free Church, Chinese Mennonite Brethren congregations, and independent churches like Lord’s Grace Church and Lord’s Love Church.

Within Vancouver’s Chinatown, the arrival of evangelicals in the 1970s precipitated the events of *Chong v. Lee* (1981). Drawing from the church’s minutes, a former Cantonese pastor at the Christ Church of China, Stephen Lee (1986: 20), observes that local evangelical revival speakers had spoken at evangelistic meetings as early as 1966. In 1970, the congregation called another evangelical minister from Hong Kong, David Poon. Having served an Alliance church in the Aberdeen district in Hong Kong, Poon was subsequently ordained by Augustus Chao in Vancouver in 1971. His arrival touched off a series of contestations between the newer Hong Kong evangelicals and their older Chinatown counterparts. When I asked Poon about the lawsuits that had happened at the church, he recalled:

At that time, the main cause was because the old members, they felt that the new people had taken their positions because they had been in the place for several
decades. They were like a fellowship, never change. They all speak Taishanese, because they were Taishan people, those old Chinese in Chinatown. (David Poon, personal communication, 25 May 2011).

There were about 30 to 40 people when Poon became the pastor. Poon set out to change the church’s culture, as he found that their Sunday worship, functionalistic as it was, lacked a formal time of preaching:

On Sundays, they have no pastor, no speaker—it’s like a fellowship: why do you have to find a pastor or invite a speaker? Every time was sharing. Sharing, you go up there and speak, and another says, hey, wait, come down, and another goes up to the stage.

For Poon, the lack of preaching suggested that the church’s practice had not been based on the Bible and was not in line with evangelical teaching. Instead, the church had become a centre where members of the community shared life but that had little connection to the Christian Scriptures.

Another aspect of the church’s practice that Poon changed was how the church raised revenue, for in Poon’s view, this too was overly functionalistic, if not (as he argued) pagan in practice. When I interviewed Poon, he wrote in my ethnographic notebook ‘$15.47’ and said: 'First Sunday offering. I still remember how much. This is the first Sunday offering.' Poon recalled that the church solicited ‘shops, restaurants, the grocery stores’ for funds that would ‘generate 800 to 1000 dollars’ weekly. Moreover, community members would each pitch five dollars for a weekly pastoral allowance, the equivalent of two $2.50 chickens. Protesting the idea of community fundraising as being ‘like those Buddhists’ whose monks begged alms on the street, Poon saw these local fundraising tactics as demonstrating a lack of faith that God would provide for the church’s needs. Poon changed the revenue collection program to one that he thought was more Christian, depending on God’s provision, not the community’s generosity. He stopped both the five-
dollar pastoral allowance donation and the community fundraising: ‘So guess what the
shifu [master], that Taishan guy said? “What will you eat? [Nei sik mut ah? Nei hak mut ah?]
You just want to eat this? You’ve just got $15 and some. You think about it.”’ However,
from 1971 to 1978, the expansion of a Cantonese-speaking evangelical membership,
including some new well-to-do attendees, increased the offerings to over 100 dollars
weekly, in addition to a $200,000 building project donation from a wealthy couple: ‘So you
know, the whole church said, ‘Hey, that lo Poon [the old guy Poon] is clever!’ Those
Taishanese people. ³³ Mirroring anthropologist Webb Keane’s (2008) interpretation of
Reformed Protestants as practising semiotic ideologies that vilify financial considerations
as overly worldly, Poon contended that community functionalism was a grounded theology
that contradicted his understanding of evangelical faith.

Theology aside, however, Poon’s continued references to the Taishanese contrast to
the growing Cantonese population indicates that grounded theologies and ethnic
imaginations were entangled. Under Poon’s leadership, the church outgrew its original
thirty to forty attendees to about 400 members by 1974. Unlike the old Chinatowners, they
were Cantonese-speaking and theologically evangelical: ‘Those new people love the Lord,
and so they choose those people to be the board members, and then they [the old
members] lost, so they had jealousy, and that caused many problems. That’s the main
point.’ These theological and ethnic differences resulted in the building again becoming a
site of contestation, for two factions within the church lay simultaneous claim to the
premises. The Cantonese church committee received notices from the ‘Board of the Christ

³³ As I noted in chapter 1, ‘Taishanese’ refers to the language spoken in Taishan, a village in Guangdong
Province from which Cantonese originated. Poon is making a distinction here between older migrants from
Taishan and newer ones (like himself) from Hong Kong.
Church of China’ and the ‘Trustee of China Villa.’ Composed of the old Chinatown members who had fought the expropriation in the 1960s, these alternative boards ‘devised a scheme to sell the church building for a dollar to a new organization controlled by them’ (D Leung 2010: 276). On 4 May, worshippers found the buildings locked by hired security guards, forcing the over-two hundred members at the time (it later grew to 400) to hold church services in the parking lot and in the basement, an event covered on the front page of the Vancouver Sun (S Lee 1986: 20). The battle for the property's ownership lasted for two years and was settled in 1976 by the Supreme Court of British Columbia in favour of Poon’s congregation, not the Chinatown members.

By the time that the Rev. Gentle Lee was hired in 1978, contestations within the church over modes of baptism in relation to both membership and the building had become commonplace. That year, Poon had left the church over misunderstandings with a pastoral search committee (D Leung 2010: 277-278). Before Gentle Lee was hired, a special general meeting on 22 October 1978 that was attended by 130 participants passed with an overwhelming 110 votes (84.6%) a motion to change the mode of baptism altogether to immersion, with sprinkling ‘only in exceptional cases (such as those physically unfit for immersion) with special permission from the committee,’ though it would permit applications for church membership by those who had been either sprinkled or immersed, as ‘salvation came not through baptism by either immersion or sprinkling, but through the redeeming grace of the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, while men's justification came by faith alone’ (SSK Lee 1986: 21). Sensing this to be divine confirmation to participate in the evangelistic revival of Canada (see G Lee 2006: 57-58), the Rev. Gentle Lee was hired on 28 November from Hong Kong and arrived for work on 1 October 1979. In March 1980, the
general meeting resolved to build a new building on the Pender and Gore site with 400 to 500 seats, along with a large baptismal pool in the front and an adjacent park that would serve as a parking lot. They also appointed new deacons that did not include old Chinatown members.

These changes in the church’s building and leadership structures led to the filing of Chong v. Lee, the court case in which older Chinatown members accused Gentle Lee of changing the modes of baptism, which resulted in their loss of status over the membership and the building. Anonymous letters from Chinatown members began to appear, while picketers calling Gentle Lee a ‘big sinner’ also began to walk the streets of Chinatown. So too, a Chinese Canadian Protestant newspaper also sided with the petitioners, filing accusations against Lee, ‘publishing articles that falsely accused the pastor of fighting with his congregation in the courts, damaging many people’s faith’ (G Lee 2006: 59). As Gentle Lee (2006: 59-60) recalls, many of the church leaders were young students who held prayer vigils in the church. In 1981, the petitioners’ case was struck down, for the court held that as a non-denominational, unaffiliated church that could vote on its own internal practices, the claim that a fundamental church baptism tradition had been altered could not be made. In an appeal, the petitioners then alleged that the congregation had also changed infant baptism to believers’ baptism. In Re Christ Church of China, 15 E.T.R. 272 (B.C.S.C.) (1983), the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled decisively against the Chinatown petitioners and for the new Cantonese evangelicals, arguing that the church had not changed its theology and that the petitioners had no actual rights to the properties (SSK Lee 1986: 22). By that time, not only had the Chinatown petitioners left, but Cantonese
evangelicals had dispersed from the congregation to form new churches; as one interviewee put it,

There was a lot of divisiveness, and the pastors came to here, and the elders went to there, and they went to many different churches...[after moving to Calgary for a time] I came back here, and because all the people had left, and they became church leaders elsewhere.

Gentle Lee himself left for Toronto in the late 1980s, which led to the promotion of the pastor for the English-speaking second-generation, the Rev. Edwin Kong, to be promoted to the Cantonese-speaking senior pastor post.

It was through these events that new evangelicals from Hong Kong fundamentally altered the imagination of Cantonese Protestant congregational space in Vancouver, albeit also unintentionally reinforcing another strand of the secularization thesis in the process.

When I asked Edwin Kong about what drove his current social service work at the faith-based organization, Chinese Christian Mission Canada (see chapter 6), he told me that the driving force for his current social work was due to a sense of guilt that during his past pastoral tenure from 1983 to 1999, he seldom engaged the Chinatown community:

My failure as a pastor, many times when I recall at that time, I drove my car and pressed a button, the gate opened. I drive into my parking lot, the gate shut. I pushed another button, open the church door, I use a key to go into my room, and then I ‘devoted myself to prayer and the ministry of the word,’ a direct quotation from Acts 6.4, the traditional teaching. I preached my butt off. I taught the people. I did everything that a pastor should do. And yes, I did a good job, I always say, this is not pride, but I am pleased that I have done my years as a pastor. But I came to a point that I said, ‘So what?’ The church is in Chinatown, but we are so cut off from Chinatown. The only thing that I know about Chinatown is the barbecue duck and the barbecue pork. (Edwin Kong, personal communication, 3 May 2011).

The contestations around Christ Church’s congregational space had resulted in the conception of the space as a completely privatized one, complete with a gate and locks.

This privatization in turn meant that the church saw itself as detached from the
community. This separation resulted in a different mode of reflection for Edwin Kong, for he told me that he forced himself to re-evaluate his theology. He discovered that he needed 'to put away evangelism first. Do I really care about them? And if I said I care about them, then why? I have to soul-search myself. In the past I care about you because I want you to sit in my church.’ Faced with congregational differentiation from civil society, Kong applied for the Christ Church of China to have a booth at the Chinatown Night Market in the 1990s that both distributed tracts and provided free medical services. However, as Kong laments, ‘it wasn’t very successful. After a couple of years, the excitement is gone. People like the excitement to start, the continuity, and then when you don’t see the so-called result, fades, and I learned from this.’

That Edwin Kong had to make ‘common ground’ with Chinatowners at the Chinatown Night Market while serving as senior pastor of what used to be a historic functionalist community site demonstrates that the congregation had become differentiated as a private site separate from public activities. As Milbank (2006) suggests, the sociological act of ‘policing the sublime’ can happen in two ways. On the one hand, a secular civil society might relegate religion to a private sphere of action irrelevant to secular, public, political deliberations. On the other hand, Milbank notes, ‘The pathos of modern theology is its false humility,’ for

A theology ‘positioned’ by secular reason suffers two characteristic forms of confinement. Either it idolatrously connects knowledge of God with some particularly immanent field of knowledge – ‘ultimate’ cosmological causes, or ‘ultimate’ psychological and subjective needs. Or else it is confined to intimations of a sublimity beyond representation, so functioning to confirm negatively the questionable idea of an autonomous secular realm, completely transparent to rational understanding. (Milbank, 2006: 1).34

34 Undoubtedly, there will be objections to my usage of John Milbank’s work to interpret an Asian Canadian landscape by those who see the project of ‘radical orthodoxy’ as subtly complicit with British imperial
While Milbank’s reflections wax polemical, I have argued elsewhere that his ‘radical orthodoxy’ can be used by geographers as an analytic, unfettered by his sacramental political imperative, for ‘a new research agenda might demonstrate how grounded theologies, whether conventionally “religious” or “secular”, are put to work in the contestations that continually shape everyday human geographies’ (Tse, 2013a: 5). With this lens, it is possible to interpret these evangelical re-orientations away from secular functionalism as inscribing a different strand of secularization in its use of congregational space, one that, following Casanova’s (1994) disaggregation of the secularization thesis, unintentionally posits that the church space is differentiated as a private religious site from its secular neighbourhood.

While the Christ Church of China is a case in point, this new secular imaginary of congregational space as differentiated from civil society was by no means unusual among newer Cantonese evangelical congregations. Ley (2008) notes that newer Chinese Canadian congregations often serve as informal service hubs for new migrants. These sites unofficially aid in emotional well-being, emphasizing spiritual health and personal counseling while also channeling resources among church members to aid specific material needs (see also Waters, 2003; Waters and Teo, 2003; Ley and Tse, 2013). While this spiritual geography seems typical and can be compared with older congregational models among German Canadians (see Beattie and Ley, 2003), an historical view suggests that the integration of private congregational space and formal services and community engagement is relatively new among Cantonese Protestants. Formed out of theological and nostalgia (see JK Carter 2010), I simply note that here, I am using Milbank’s incisive critique of secular reason as a descriptive analytic, not taking on board his prescription to return the world to a sacramental ontology. For more on how Milbank contributes to a geographical study of grounded theologies, see chapter 2.
ethnic contestations with functionalist congregational views in Chinatown, Hongkonger evangelicals like the Rev. Augustus Chao, the Rev. David Poon, and the Rev. Gentle Lee transformed the Cantonese Protestant landscape from the identity politics that characterized Roy Mah’s suffrage activism, Douglas Jung’s political candidacy, and the Christ Church of China’s legal challenge to City Hall’s Chinatown redevelopment project. While the Chinatowners reprised their legal and civil society abilities in Chong v. Lee (1981), the theological orientations brought by the new Hong Kong evangelicals emphasized Christian spirituality and revivalism, transforming congregational spaces into sites of worship. While these transformations seemed orthodox, they reinforced another variant of the secularization thesis. Contesting the secular tropes of social functionalism, they posited that their congregations were differentiated from civil society, privatizing religious practice while reinscribing the secularity of civic discourse.

4.5 Hong Kong: the mainline establishment meets evangelical revivalists

In both of the foregoing expositions of Cantonese Protestants in the San Francisco Bay Area and in metropolitan Vancouver, it might seem that evangelical grounded theologies undergirding opposition to the use of congregational spaces for socio-political purposes emanate from Hong Kong, as a source for evangelicals importing homeland theologies to their destination migration sites (see, e.g. Ibbitson and Friesen, 2010; Shih, 2010). However, Hong Kong itself has a complex, contested Protestant geography as well. From the 1950s to the 1970s, new theologies contested the alignment of the church with the colonial state by critiquing ecclesial complicitness with policy injustices, that is, by protesting how Protestant institutions were being used to legitimate unjust secular powers.
While this disentanglement led to the rise of conservative congregations in North America, it led to the development of an evangelical movement in a nascent Hong Kong public sphere, one that critiqued the colonial state by positioning churches outside of government control. In other words, while ‘conservatisms’ in North America led to functional differentiations between church and civil society, a particular form of theological conservatism in Hong Kong empowered evangelicals to lead grassroots challenges for workers’ rights and democratic change, challenging the established church’s collusion with the colonial state. Clergy practising these pro-worker evangelical theologies framed their action as public religion, bringing them into distinctively secular deliberations to propose the creation of a new democratic civil society, one that repudiated authoritarian colonizing strategies of governance, acted by civic consultation, and addressed the needs of Hong Kong’s workers. In short, one might be able to say that transnational migrations to Vancouver and San Francisco transported and localized a congregational spatial theology from Hong Kong there. However, one must also insist that those same congregational geographies take a distinct local form in Hong Kong that troubles the degree to which these migrations can be conceptualized as engendering simultaneous effects on both sides of the Pacific.

4.5.1 A ‘contractual’ relationship: the Protestant establishment and the colonial state

In 1985, Carl T. Smith (1985/2005) challenged historians in Hong Kong to restore Hong Kong Chinese residents who simultaneously challenged and collaborated with the colonial government as actors in their historical accounts. Prior to Smith’s challenge, the
history of Hong Kong had been dominated by a ‘colonial school’ that tended to be celebratory of British achievements in Hong Kong (see Eitel, 1895/1983; Norton-Kyshe, 1898/1971; Endacott, 1964) and a Marxist ‘Beijing’ school that invalidated any British colonial achievement with the accusation that Hong Kong fundamentally belongs to Chinese history (Ding, 1958; Yu and Liu, 1994, 1995). What has come to be known as ‘the Hong Kong school’ straddles these two extremes, arguing on the one hand that colonial subjectification accounts for the lack of viable political leadership in the post-colony (Faure, 2003; Matthews et al., 2008) while admitting that a Chinese elite must have colluded with the British in order to legitimate colonial rule (Smith, 1985/2005; WK Chan, 1991; Ngo, 1999; Munn, 2001; Sinn, 2003; Law, 2010). Indeed, Munn (2001) demonstrates that unlike the Singaporean model where a Chinese elite was given a role in mediating between the contestations of British and Chinese notions of urban space (see Yeoh, 1996), Hong Kong was put under direct British imperial rule, and it was only after a series of political scandals in the 1860s that a *de facto* Chinese elite at the Tung Wah Hospital arose in 1870 to negotiate between the British rulers and their Chinese subjects (Sinn 2003).

Despite the centrality of Cantonese Protestant actors in these narratives, there has been relatively little explicit reflection on the grounded theologies at work in Hong Kong, particularly over how Protestant collusion with colonial powers might suggest that these religious institutions were underwritten by secular theologies. Leung and Chan (2003: 21) argue that Christian churches in Hong Kong, both Protestant and Catholic, historically participated in a ‘contractual’ relationship with the British colonial government. This mirrors Smith’s (1985/2005) argument that prior to the emergence of Chinese elite compradors, British and American missionary schools trained young boys to become
skilled at the Chinese classics, the English language, and market economics. An example to which Smith repeatedly returns is Ho Kai, the son of the first Chinese Protestant pastor in Hong Kong, the Rev. Ho Fuk Tong. Ho Kai is portrayed as a comprador *par excellence*, a spokesperson for the Chinese to the British while maintaining an elite status within the Chinese community (Carroll, 2005). This elite role came with religious syncretism: Sinn (2003) shows that part of the duties of the directors of the Tung Wah Hospital was to direct traditional Daoist religious ceremonies at the Man Mo Temple, which the directors did even while contributing financially to Protestant missionaries. Becoming part of the establishment also meant collaboration with the colonial government. In K.W. Chan’s (1991) examination of class in Hong Kong’s social history, the major comprador players included Protestant Christians, including Robert Ho Tung, a Chinese tycoon who successfully broke a sailors’ strike in 1922, demonstrating in his negotiation with the striking seamen that it was in his interest to keep the peace so as to maintain the legitimacy of British colonialism, even if it meant sacrificing labour rights in the process. This in turn suggests that Protestant institutions in Hong Kong legitimated forms of secular power, establishing a Chinese elite that at once challenged and colluded with the colonial state. Challenging this secularity, Anglican Archbishop Paul Kwong (2008) argues that an indigenous Hong Kong theology needs to be developed for post-colonial times, positioning the church as distinct from secular power: ‘the Church functioned in partnership with the government in the provision of relief services to refugees, and education to create “elites or middlemen” who would support the colonial governance.’ Kwong contends that these practices problematically stifled the development of Hong Kong theological voices reflecting on colonial subjectification. However, this collusion between Protestants and the
state has in fact long been challenged by popular forms of Christianity in Hong Kong. That is where we must turn.

4.5.2 Challenging the church-state contract: toward an evangelical public theology

While Kwong (2008) suggests that political riots in the 1960s allowed Christians at a grassroots level to challenge the cozy relationship between the church and the state, this view overlooks how anti-establishment evangelicals challenged the secularity of the mainline establishment in Hong Kong in the 1940s and 1950s and proposed the creation of a new public sphere in the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, notable evangelical figures in Hong Kong’s current evangelical scene could trace their lineage to revival movements in Mainland China. When I asked Philemon Choi (the General Secretary of the Breakthrough Youth Movement) how evangelical social action in the 1970s began, he named Chinese reviverist preachers such as David Adeney, Rev. Philip Teng, Chao Jun Lin, Yu Ligong (Moses Yu), and Chao Yuen Nin (Stephen Chiu) (Philemon Choi, personal communication, 30 July 2010). For example, Philip Teng had attended student revival conferences in Chinese universities and had converted under the influences of American and Canadian missionaries like Dr. David Adeney, a prominent missionary with the China Inland Mission, and Dr. Stephen Knights, the founder of the Canadian branch of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship’s university campus ministries (see Teng, 1980; Fung and Yu, 1982; Alexander, 1982). So too, CCM founder Thomas Wang attributes his conversion in the 1950s to the preaching of reviverist John Sung (Levi, 2010).

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35 I conducted this interview as the first of a series of on-record interviews with Dr. Philemon Choi from 2010 to 2012. Choi insisted on having this first interview recorded for his own records and then sent me a copy. I am extremely grateful for his generosity in both the conception and the data collection of this project.
While revivalist movements might suggest an anti-secular approach to the problem of church collusion with the state, the reality was subtler: the church's differentiation from the state was a spiritual strategy to preserve the values of the Chinese nation. Lian Xi’s (2010) historical account of these Chinese popular revivalists suggests that their preaching drew strength from the upheavals of Chinese nation-state formation, attempting to renounce ‘western’ imperial control of the church by characterizing China with messianic ambitions and adapting missionary theology to these eschatological goals. Following Taylor (2007), these deep spiritual inflections remain symptomatic of a secular age because they are theological orientations that continue to be bent toward the immanent purpose of legitimizing particular national paradigms. These national revivalists arrived in Hong Kong in the 1940s and 1950s, fleeing the emerging political takeover of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), that is, a rival state regime that persecuted them for their ideologically dissonant Christian view of the nation. Stephen Chiu (1999) recounts in his memoir how his pastoral activities were put to an end by the CCP, for the party incarcerated him and subjected him to harsh interrogation techniques. Attributing his escape from prison as a miracle, he fled to Hong Kong by boat in 1958, taking up manual labour until he developed new networks as a revival preacher. Some of these figures, like Stephen Chiu and Moses Yu, moved from Hong Kong to North America, where they founded separatist conservative congregations (Tseng, 2003; Yau, 2010). Others, like Philip Teng, stayed in Hong Kong to work with students; in time, Teng founded the influential North Point Alliance Church. As Tseng (2003) notes, these refugees often brought with them a theology that emphasized a separation of the church from the state. For example, Watchman Nee's (1961) classic, The Spiritual Man, emphasizes practices of piety that
reflected true spirituality as opposed to ‘fleshliness’ (Lian, 2010; Yang, 2011). So too, Wang Mingdao argued against the registration of the house church in Beijing because the church’s spiritual purity should be safeguarded against the corrupting influence of entanglement with a hostile state (T Harvey, 2002; Lian, 2010). These new theologies challenged Hong Kong mainline emphases on collaboration with the colonial state and submission to earthly authorities, for they vested more authority in personal purity and proselytization as methods by which to preserve traditional cultural values (see also Garrard-Burnett, 1998; Mahmood, 2005; Deeb, 2006; Olson, 2006; Smilde, 2007; Engelke, 2007; Andersson et al., 2011).

The influence of Mainland Chinese revivalists led to conversions among Hong Kong’s young people within mainline denominations; these revivals in turn challenged a form of denominational establishmentarianism that was uninterested in youth initiatives. In 1951, a revival broke out at a Baptist youth camp in Cheung Chau. Shortly thereafter, a set of Gospel churches broke from the Baptists, led in some part by young converts such as David Ng, who founded Peace Evangelical Church, a ministry that he later developed into a grassroots mission to New Territories squatters whose huts were subject to fire hazards. By contrast, the Rev. Chan Hay Him, then the coordinator for the joint evangelical youth fellowships, disagreed with Ng’s separatist church movement, although he shared Ng’s frustration with ‘the establishment’ that was ‘suspicious of young people and spread rumours that they were communists’ (Chan Hay Him and Chan Lau Kit-Ching, personal communication, 14 April 2011).36 Unlike Ng, Chan felt that evangelicals should produce an

36 I had a joint interview with Rev. Chan Hay Him and his wife, Professor Chan Lau Kit-Ching, an emerita historian of Hong Kong from Hong Kong University. I interviewed both at the same time as due to an illness, Rev. Chan communicated best as a team with his spouse. I am grateful for both of their insights.
internal critique of the mainline establishment, retaining the term 'Baptist' to provoke establishment Baptists to re-evaluate their theological identities. Instead of forming separate congregations, Chan Hay Him and his colleague Chan Pak Fai, with the help of David Adeney, launched the Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES), a parachurch ministry to evangelical university students connected to a global network of university gatherings that came to be known as Intervarsity Christian Fellowship.

However, more pertinent for theorizing these putatively anti-secular challenges was the spirituality that came out of these revivals, one that posited a separated Christian existence from the ‘world.’ This separatism was on one hand a trenchant critique of the secularity of Hong Kong’s Protestant mainline. A story that was told in passing conversation to me was that of the St. Paul’s Seven, seven classmates suspended by St. Paul’s School because they began an evangelical Bible study and proselytized fellow students. While the school itself was a mainline Protestant (Anglican) school that should have been agreeable to these practices, the story alleged that the school suspended the students because their practices were theologically unsanctioned, demonstrating that these student movements were threatening the authority of a secularized Protestant establishment.37 Philemon Choi recalled to me that one of these students came to his government school and invited him to an inter-school evangelistic rally organized by the Inter-School Christian Fellowship (ISCF), the secondary school equivalent of college fellowships like FES and the Hong Kong University Christian Association (HKUCA). Echoing

37 I recognize that the actual situation at St. Paul’s School may have been more complex and that the heroic view of young evangelists persecuted by a mainline establishment may have been overly romanticized by those who told me this story. However, I am using the story of the St. Paul’s Seven to illustrate a larger point about evangelical challenges to mainline establishmentarianism. That the story is told from the perspective of evangelicals making these challenges reinforces my argument that they actively contested the mainline because they perceived it to be colluding too much with secular colonizing powers.
its origins in Chinese popular revival movements, the earliest iterations of the spirituality of students like the St. Paul’s Seven focused on pietistic practices that differentiated Christian life from worldliness. Professor Chan Lau Kit-Ching described to me in an interview that her early conversion spirituality was based on ‘purity,’ that she ‘would not even pass in front of a cinema,’ though she had ‘no qualm about TV.’ These separatist tendencies were moderated, she recalls, when her husband, Chan Hay Him, became the head of the joint Baptist fellowships. Chan’s FES connections to the global InterVarsity Christian Fellowship brought a spirituality based on ‘inductive Bible study’ that provided a ‘firm foundation as to why they believed.’ In other words, at the same time that separatist Gospel church movements were developing, another strand of evangelicals became moderates through their networks with Anglo-American evangelicals.

In the 1960s, these students composed migration waves to North America, bringing these evangelical theologies with them. Two immanent factors stand out as plausible explanations for this pattern. First, though many younger students had undergone evangelical conversion and had participated in splits with the mainline, limited space at the University of Hong Kong meant that they had to look elsewhere for university, graduate, and professional studies. Students seeking undergraduate degrees, as well as those pursuing professional training in medicine and engineering, found themselves in North American college towns such as Berkeley, Winnipeg, and Buffalo. Second, the 1960s was a time of political crisis in Hong Kong. In 1966, a lone protestor at the Star Ferry galvanized a Hong Kong public to contest the fare prices for crossing from the island to Kowloon. In 1967, as the Cultural Revolution was being waged in the PRC, leftist agitators sought unsuccessfully to use violent means to provoke Hong Kong sympathy to the communist
cause (Lui and Chiu, 2002; MK Chan et al., 2002). In the wake of political instability, students, including evangelical ones, migrated for secular reasons, seeking professional training abroad while escaping a tense political scenario.

Many of these students returned to Hong Kong in the 1970s with a renewed sense of evangelical mission, albeit one still oriented toward nationalistic concerns. In 1974, evangelist Billy Graham’s Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization gathered some 2,300 delegates from 150 countries (Lausanne, 1975). Some 70 Chinese delegates attended, forming the Chinese Coordination Center for World Evangelization (CCCOWE) as a ‘Chinese Lausanne,’ an attempt to leverage their Chinese ethnicity to reach the world with the Christian Gospel (Nagata, 2005). CCM’s Thomas Wang served as its general secretary from 1976 to 1986; Chan Hay Him succeeded him in the late 1980s and early 1990s. To build consensus among ethnic Chinese Protestants, one of the key staff working at CCCOWE, Dr. Gail Law, authored a report in 1981 on the state of Chinese churches worldwide, providing the basis for CCCOWE to establish regional centres from which to encourage Chinese evangelicals to join the global missionary effort (Law, 1981).38 However, as the organization was based in Hong Kong, anthropologist Judith Nagata (2005) also notes that one of CCCOWE’s key problems was that while Wang himself was Mandarin-speaking, many of CCCOWE’s staff were Cantonese-speaking, enabling them only to reach those within their linguistic sub-ethnicity. In other words, leveraging ethnicity became an issue since the founding moments of CCCOWE, for the instability of ‘Chineseness’ as a secular concept did not easily lend itself to theological purposes.

38 I also interviewed Dr. Gail Law on 23 February 2012.
However, CCCOWE influenced Cantonese evangelical students to return to Hong Kong to stage a nationalist Chinese proselytization campaign and to re-orient Hong Kong's civil society. To this end, these students attended theological graduate schools in North America and Western Europe so that they could launch academic institutions, such as the China Graduate School of Theology (CGST). In 1974, FES's Chan Hay Him helped to found CGST, even though he was not an academic. Echoing the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA, with demanding academic standards that required ‘every faculty member to be an accepted and recognized scholar in his own field’ (Ockenga 1948/2004: 17), Chan Hay Him had an evangelical vision for academic work that could be used to conduct future missionary endeavors in China. Because he was not himself an academic (though his wife was a noted Chinese historian at the University of Hong Kong), Chan contributed his connections, including sub-ethnic Swatow ones, to fundraise and to acquire Hong Kong land to build a seminary. Following secular ethnic strategies, then, theological education became a vehicle through which the nation could be transformed.

These Chinese nationalistic concerns became translated into efforts to shape secular public discourse in Hong Kong's civil society. Chan Hay Him’s work with FES formed the base from which the Breakthrough Youth Movement was launched in 1973. Collaborating with Josephine So Yan Pui, a journalist who had studied in the United States and worked in Taiwan and Singapore before arriving in Hong Kong, Chan gathered new graduates from Hong Kong University, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and North American universities to form an organization that aimed to shape youth media discourse, deterring it from its violent tropes and overt pornographic foci. Breakthrough drew inspiration from an iconic letter that Josephine So penned in 1972, 'What Can I Do For This City?' where she
wrote of how Hong Kong’s young people were being negatively transformed by corrupt urban conditions:

The city is growing too fast. There are too many changes. The only thing that has not changed is the sky...Apart from this, even the ocean has changed (many bays have been filled as reclaimed land). The colors of the mountains have changed (many once green peaks have been razed to the ground). But the greatest change is in our society, our young people!

The corruption of youth in turn boiled down to a problem of social capital in civil society more generally: ‘We dare not trust our fellow human beings any more,’ she wrote, illustrated by Hongkongers living behind bolted gates for fear of being robbed and murdered, as a mother and a child were on an early morning stroll in the North District’s reservoir area. So too, because high school students were being pressured to join gangs, Josephine So continued, ‘Brute force, the diminished value of life, the distortion of humanity has reached the limit.’ She emphasized that young people were both the perpetrators and the victims of this violence: ‘What disturbs me most is that the majority of crimes are committed by youths under twenty-one. These are our own young people! (Whose responsibility is that?)’ (So 1989: 96-98). She laid the blame on the church people who ‘attend regular meetings week after week, our members are all law-abiding middle class people’; in a separate piece, she called this ecclesial apathy a prime contributor to a ‘city of death’ (So 1973: 148-151). She concluded her letter: “Oh God, what can I do for this city?”—all I have is a frail body, and my pen. I have never felt so utterly depressed about the sins and crimes of this world, I have never felt so drastically inadequate’ (So 1989: 98).

While Yam Chi Keung (2005) criticizes Breakthrough for functioning as a conservative moral voice in Hong Kong’s civil society, Breakthrough Magazine recast the revivalist missiology separating church from state for national evangelism into the active
shaping of Hong Kong’s public discourse. Because Josephine So criticized the church for focusing on evangelism and church events at the expense of work with street youth, churches often accused the Breakthrough Movement of being too secular of an organization. Sookit Li, one of the original editors of Breakthrough Magazine, recalled that while members of Breakthrough must sign a statement of faith with evangelical theological propositions, the primary critique of Breakthrough was, ‘You should have a more clear voice, a stronger position, a more clear view; they say that you cannot avoid to have your editorial voice, which is true, but people don’t see it as a Christian view’ (Sookit Li, personal communication, 16 Mar. 2012). Moreover, Li remembered that the activities that Breakthrough hosted were also controversial. The magazine featured a column called the ‘Heart Understanding Mailbox’ (*ningsum sunseung*), named for its author, Ruth Chan Wai Ming, a counselor trained in English literature and psychology from the United States. Sookit Li recalled, ‘The churches say and the pastors say, “We counsel, no need for Christian counseling,”’ implying that Breakthrough’s emerging counseling department that was run by Ruth Chan was threatening the church establishment. So too, the magazine was castigated for discussing sex; as Li remembered:

> We have to respond to the principal. I remember we respond to the school principal who criticized that we have sex discussed in the magazine, it’s polluting the minds of the students. So we have to explain, that we say that if we don’t do that, the consequences are like that.

In my interview with Ruth Chan, she told me that because of these criticisms from the established church, ‘Breakthrough was influential to society more than to the church,
because many mainline churches were still holding back.\textsuperscript{39} They kept on asking how many people we led to Christ’ (Ruth Chan, personal communication, 21 December 2012).

Bypassing the church, the founders of Breakthrough were quickly invited onto radio shows to comment on social issues; moreover, as they gained the trust of the educational sector, schools often stocked their periodicals (Yam, 2005).

This critique of the church’s establishmentarian leanings climaxed with the 1978 Golden Jubilee Incident (see Morris and Sweeting, 1993). The yearlong ordeal revolved around a Catholic girls’ school in Ho Ma Tin, when teachers discovered that the progressive, pro-China headmistress of the Precious Blood Golden Jubilee Secondary School, Sister Beatrice Leung Kit Fun,\textsuperscript{40} had financial irregularities. When this was reported to the newly established Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), Leung resigned, stood trial, and pled guilty to charges of financial misappropriation. Capitalizing on press reports that the whistleblowers were leftists, the school retaliated by revising contracts to the teachers that renegotiated their terms of employment, including their salaries. In turn, students protested on the school playground, demanding full disclosure of the school’s financial situation. When this demonstration was quelled, John Baptist Cardinal Wu, the newly appointed Catholic bishop of Hong Kong, appointed another headmistress, Kwan Wai Yin, a reputed disciplinarian who forbade students from gathering for revolutionary activities. Discovering a meeting of four students, she suspended them,

\textsuperscript{39} Ruth Chan is not using ‘mainline’ in a technical sense here, but in a much looser way to talk about ‘the church establishment.’ Because Breakthrough Youth Ministries was not part of any church, its existence and status as ‘evangelical’ were questioned.

\textsuperscript{40} Beatrice Leung has since become Professor in the Department of Politics and Sociology at Lingnan University in Hong Kong and writes on Sino-Vatican relations (Leung, 2009) and church-state interactions in Hong Kong (Leung and Chan, 2003). While her history of church-state relations covers the educational services provided by her own order, the Precious Blood sisters, it omits the Golden Jubilee Incident (Leung and Chan, 2003: 30-40).
an act that not only galvanized teachers against Kwan, but caught the attention of Szeto Wah, a pro-democratic activist who had himself been a headmaster at a primary school in Kwun Tong before he became politically active during a strike against the teachers’ department’s threat to cut teachers’ salaries in 1971. Together, some 400 students, along with their teachers, staged demonstrations and vigils at the Hong Kong Catholic Cathedral Compound throughout May 1978, demanding the dismissal of Headmistress Kwan and the reinstatement of the suspended students (Wu, 1978). As tensions escalated, the colonial government’s Education Department, with the support of Cardinal Wu, dismissed all the teachers and sealed the school without consulting the protesters.

Sealing the school brought a variety of theological actors, including the Breakthrough Movement, into this escalating civil society crisis, one that had transcended the boundaries of Catholic educational institutions and embroiled the colonial state, establishment churches, and democratic activists. A Cantonese-speaking Italian Catholic practitioner of liberation theology, Fr. Franco Mella, recalled that the event propelled Szeto Wah to prominence as a democratic activist and gathered some 10,000 people at Victoria Park to protest; it was the largest gathering there since the 1967 riots in Hong Kong (Franco Mella, personal communication, 15 March 2012). It also restructured the Catholic Church, for when the Diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission condemned the corruption that had occurred in the school, Cardinal Wu closed its offices, even though, as its current director Jackie Hung noted, its creation had originally been established by the Second Vatican Council.\(^\text{41}\) So too, it brought Breakthrough’s evangelicals into the forefront of

\(^{41}\) Both Franco Mella and the Justice and Peace Commission’s current director, human rights activist Jackie Hung, expressed that this was a devastating blow. When the Justice and Peace Commission reopened, it only issued statements and did research until 1997, when the new political situation brought about by the
political activism. Two of my key informants who were working for Breakthrough at the
time, the Rev. Lo Sek Wai and Sookit Li, told me that they had gone to the sit-ins, along with
a Breakthrough Publications banner, and that they had sat on the side of the protesting
students and teachers (Lo Sek Wai, personal communication, 21 March 2012). Rev. Lo
Lung Kwong, a Lutheran pastor, remembers that Josephine So addressed ‘the position of
the Christian’ in the Golden Jubilee Incident, ‘the great challenge facing the church in Hong
Kong,’ saying that she was ‘not only a good counselor, a good sister, but more like a prophet
of the era, of the era. With insightful care and compassion proceeding from your heart,
facing the weight of an evil dominion of darkness in a suffocating world, you were brave
enough to issue a prophetic voice’ (LK Lo, 2002: 149).

Breakthrough contributed to the Golden Jubilee Incident by leveraging the events to
call for a reform of civil society itself. An official statement from Breakthrough Publications
was issued on 16 June 1978 after the school had been sealed. Jointly signed by eight
Christian fellowships, the statement argued that the crux of the Golden Jubilee Incident was
‘the worth of human beings and their dignity.’ These evangelical organizations then issued
a ‘positive proposal’ to ‘put their focus on the Golden Jubilee students themselves’
(Christian Organizations Joint Statement, 1978: 19). The proposal focused on developing a
rational public sphere and a civil conversation between all parties, a point elaborated in an
article ironically titled ‘A Statement on Our “Statement”,’ where Josephine So castigated
public opinion for framing the students as leftist ‘troublemakers.’ Instead, So argued that
the public needed to form an objective opinion, based on biblical principles drawn from an
evangelical hermeneutic, that humans are made in the image of God, which means that

handover to Chinese sovereignty pushed it to become more vocal and participatory in Hong Kong’s political
contestations.
‘everyone, regardless of rich or poor, big or small, is important and valuable in God’s eye’ and that ‘the term “human rights” promoted by democracy is based on this.’ In other words, Josephine So used the Golden Jubilee Incident as a golden opportunity to argue that a democratic public sphere based on civility and a respect for rights needed to be constructed in Hong Kong, and it would be a civil society in which evangelicals would be key constructive players.

Indeed, Josephine So contended that the Golden Jubilee Incident revealed that Hong Kong civil society’s undemocratic nature needed to be reformed. The Education Department had violated the human rights of the students and the teachers by sealing the school without consulting them, for ‘any political means taken to deal with educational issues is against the principle of education.’ So too, that Sister Leung had been dismissed on embezzlement charges meant that if indeed the Catholic Church—and by extension, any other Christian church, Protestant or Catholic—‘has attempted to cover the facts,’ that would make the ‘despicable crime of embezzlement’ even ‘more despicable,’ for it would show that the church colluded in the corruption of Hong Kong’s civil society (So, 1978: 20).

For the sake of the striking students, Josephine So contended that secular civil society needed itself to be reformed in order to prevent young people from adopting more radical means of socialist protest. This in turn meant that if the established church was complicit in legitimizing an unjust social order, then religious institutions also needed to be restructured.

Indeed, the Golden Jubilee Incident served as a catalyst for restructuring church-state relations in Hong Kong, a moment when evangelicals, especially those associated with the Breakthrough Youth Movement, harnessed their distance from the state to critique the
failings of the church-state establishment. The situation itself was finally resolved when the government opened a secular school, the Ng Yuk Secondary School, to which the majority of Golden Jubilee students and teachers went (Morris and Sweeting, 1993: 209-211). For evangelicals, the incident revealed the tension of having state and church in a contractual relationship, for their mutual reinforcement colonized the public sphere and precluded democratic conversation. However, that evangelicals were concerned with creating a secular public suggests that it should be conceptualized as a public religion operating from below, advocating civil society reforms. These evangelical Christian activists thus often bypassed churches to make direct interventions to shape Hong Kong’s civil society, challenging undemocratic colonial hierarchies with alternative views of how to save China as a nation and how to redeem Hong Kong’s public sphere.

4.5.3 Proposing a new public: Protestant clergy activism in Chai Wan

Following the Golden Jubilee Incident, Protestant critiques of colonial state policy in the 1980s led them to contribute an alternate proposal of how a democratic civil society should operate (Leung and Chan, 2003). As Tinming Ko (2000: 31) notes, Protestant clergy associated with the ecumenical Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC) initiated a consultation on ‘the Mission of the Church in Hong Kong for the 1980s,’ focusing on missions to those in poverty, the church’s participation in public policymaking, mainland China concerns, student ministries, and social values. Many of these pastors were in turn leading congregations in Chai Wan, the eastern-most side of Hong Kong Island that was a heavy industrial zone and the site of the earliest public housing in Hong Kong (Castells et al., 1991). In 1974, the Rev. Chu Yiu Ming became pastor at Chai Wan Baptist Church; in
1978, the Rev. Lo Lung Kwong was appointed pastor of Chai Wan Methodist Church. As Chu Yiu Ming argued, to pastor Chai Wan Baptist Church was to become part of the Chai Wan community:

You ask why do we Christians basically get involved like this? It’s because in the Bible, it’s very much emphasized that the church is for the people, and our local church here is with the local people. This is a very important point. If not, whether or not our church is in Chai Wan, it’s meaningless. My church is in Chai Wan to be for the Chai Wan people and to be with them. Only then can this Gospel, this Bible’s teaching, the strength of the Gospel be developed. (Chu Yiu Ming, personal communication, 3 April 2012).

While these churches were familiar with community charity work, Lo, Chu, and other clergy in Chai Wan discovered in the early 1980s that some issues were matters of government policy that perpetuated class-based disadvantage for their congregational members. As Castells et al. (1991) note, public housing had already been started for factory workers in Chai Wan, a brilliant governing tactic on the part of the 1970s MacLehose government to boost the economy with state intervention while appearing to concede to market forces. But for local pastors, these moves were socially unjust, for the colonial government had isolated Chai Wan’s factory labourers in terms of transportation and medical services. When Protestant clergy openly demonstrated for social justice, their protests relied on a separation of church and state to propose an alternative democratic public sphere to the authoritarian colonial one.

When Protestant clergy in Hong Kong protested colonial policies that disadvantaged labourers in Chai Wan, they recast the factory workers they pastored as members of a democratic civil society, not as colonized subjects in a colonial division of labour (Ko, 2000). These themes appear in these clergy’s first activist engagement: opposing a bus fare hike in 1982. As the bus line only extended to Shaukeiwan without an Eastern Corridor
route to Chai Wan, Lo Lung Kwong remembers the frustrating commute from Yau Ma Tei in Kowloon to the easternmost part of Hong Kong Island, as transportation on the island favoured its wealthier western areas like Repulse Bay and Stanley. Lo recalled that he first had to make a stop at Shaukeiwan, increasing both his commute time and his bus fare:

At that time, I was very angry. I was reflecting on the tram: why should the poor people have to pay more in terms of time, in terms of money? Right? And we had to change cars too. And then, in less than a year of taking that car, the bus fare increased. So I was like, ‘How dare they! If they increase it again, I will oppose it.’ Then one year, another increase. (Lo Lung Kwong, personal communication, 29 March 2012).

In Lo’s reflections, the ‘poor people’ were part of Hong Kong society regardless of whether they were acknowledged at a policy level; that they had to pay more suggests that the injustice lay in the views of the poor never having been considered in the realm of business and political transactions by the colonial state. Indeed, around this time, Lo’s pastoral thoughts centered on what he called the ‘grassroots people,’ workers who composed the bottom of the Hong Kong economy. To this end, he had successfully lobbied the China Graduate School of Theology to launch the ‘Grassroots Evangelist Educational Training,’ a program that accepted educationally disadvantaged workers directly into graduate seminary work in order to train them to pastor their grassroots communities. However, poverty work was not confined to the church; at the decadal Hong Kong Christian Council mission conference, Lo argued that the conference theme ‘the Gospel for the poor’ should motivate Protestants to contest public policies that disadvantaged Hong Kong’s grassroots populations:

I raised my hand. I said, ‘We say, “Gospel for the poor.” But now, they increase the fare. The ones who will be the most impacted are the poor people. And so I said, what position do we have? And they were like, ‘Oh.’ The bishop was there, the president was there, and I was less than 30 years old at the time, 1980, 32 years ago. And they knew me, and they said, ‘Oh, OK, you proposed it, then you deal with it!’
And we will support you to deal with the bus fare increase.’ Well, anyway, I got my mandate.

Lo Lung Kwong was joined by the Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee’s (HKCIC) Lau Chin Sek and theologian Raymond Fung Wai Man, as well as the HKCC General Secretary at the time, the Rev. Kwok Nai Wung. Convening a press conference, Kwok served as chair while Lo read the press release. Lo recalls that this was ‘the first time that Hong Kong churches participated in a Hong Kong society-wide movement,’ which included both mainline and evangelical institutions as diverse as ‘the Alliance Bible Seminary’s student association, the Baptist seminary’s student association, our Chung Chi College, Alliance Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Labour Party, the leftists, Breakthrough (because of Josephine So).’

In short, mainline and evangelical Protestants in Hong Kong now formed coalitions to propose a new social order that took the poor into account. These activities were the beginning of a disentangling of the church establishment from the colonial government: ‘Scared those people to death because they saw the pastors come out as the spokespeople, holding public meetings in the church.’ Lo followed the bus fare protest with a demonstration against electricity bill hikes. Lo’s reflections explicitly revolved around the ‘public contract’:

‘Who regulates the public utilities? Even the public utilities are using a money profit-making operational principle. This is a service. This exposed many problems for people to discuss in forums...We were a pressure group movement. A Catholic priest [Fr. Kwan Kin Tong] and I were central to this, opposing the bus fare increase, opposing the electric utilities fee increase, exposed these secret agreements between the bus companies and this government, this profit agreement, assuring them that they would have profit. And there was also the district issue, like the bus route plan.’
As Leung and Chan (2003) suggest, what was unraveling in these protests was the collusion of church and colonial state in their establishmentarian politics. With Chai Wan clergy exposing colonial government corruption and its alliance with business interests, the church’s advocacy for labour rights opposed more fundamentally the establishment’s profit paradigm. Protestant clergy like Lo Lung Kwong and Chu Yiu Ming thus advocated for a new social framework based on a welfare state serving the least of its governed populations, the Chai Wan workers. In short, activist Protestant churches in Hong Kong sought to reshape the secular public sphere outside of their congregational spaces into a new democratic order.

When Protestant clergy acted for the construction of an Eastern Hospital, they also framed the issue as one of workers’ rights premised on their democratic dignity. Focusing on Chai Wan labour rights, Chu Yiu Ming noted that when factory workers in Chai Wan were injured, they would have had to travel over 10 kilometres to Wan Chai on the west side of the island to be rehabilitated at Queen Mary Hospital. The activism again exposed parts of the colonial government’s inaction as a problem of internal policy ineffectiveness, if not corruption: ‘I discovered that the local community things can be done locally here, but this is a policy problem.’ The issue, Chu realized, was that while a government report had been filed in the 1950s arguing that an Eastern Hospital would be needed by 1972, the project had not yet been approved during the time of their protest in the 1980s:

And so we did some research and found that 1972 had already been the deadline for the government to build the hospital because residents were already moving east, so that Wan Chai had fewer and fewer people, but the medical services favoured the western side of the island. And so, we and the residents, meaning the church with the residents—at that time, there were several churches with the residents lobbying for the hospital.
The churches that rallied for the cause included both mainline and evangelical churches in Chai Wan, including the Baptist church, the Alliance church, the China Gospel Church, and the Wesleyan church. Lo Lung Kwong also remembers that the hospital activism also leveraged the power of British parliamentarians who were in conversation with pastors about ‘the 1997 issue’ of handing Hong Kong back to Chinese sovereignty: ‘we even invited them to the groundbreaking, because the colonial government saw that the entire Eastern District’s people signed their names.’ Paralleling the exposure of church-state corruption in the Golden Jubilee Incident, the activism of Chai Wan clergy untangled the church from the colonial government in a way that forced the state to consider the welfare of Chinese residents and workers in Hong Kong. In turn, this separation of church from the state became a means to the ends of proposing the creation of a new democratic public sphere, one that included the state, but that also worked for policies favouring those at the social and economic bottom of Hong Kong society.

While some have argued simplistically that the growth of Cantonese evangelical congregations in North America was an importation of homeland religion and politics (Ibbitson and Friesen, 2010; Shih, 2010), this section on Hong Kong has problematized this facile transnational thesis. Instead, because a discussion of evangelical revivalism has been largely missing from the historiography of church-state relations in Hong Kong (see Leung and Chan, 2003; Kwong, 2008), it has been difficult to account for how Protestants shifted from collaboration with the colonial government to becoming a prophetic, pro-democratic voice. Taking seriously the role of Chinese popular revival movements, the rise of evangelical institutions in the 1950s, and the return of overseas evangelical students in the 1970s, this section has argued that Breakthrough’s engagement with the Golden Jubilee
Incident was a pivotal moment in the awakening of a post-colonial Protestant social consciousness in 1978, leading to the activism of Chai Wan pastors in the 1980s who proposed a new democratic public sphere in Hong Kong. These new movements were thus far from anti-secular. Instead, these evangelical public theologies sought to create a more just secular public sphere, practising a public religion from below that uses religion as a base from which to advocate for a new social order. That new secularity, however, had to be one separated from the colonial establishment, which was seen by evangelicals as the arch-purveyor of injustice. To that end, Hong Kong evangelicals attempted to separate the church from this establishment. As we shall see in what follows, this hermeneutic may well provide the key for reading the ‘conservative’ contributions of evangelicals from Hong Kong to the North American sites.

4.6 Reframing ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ grounded theologies: congregational theologies and the ‘establishment’

The central contention of this chapter has been that while ‘conservative’ Cantonese Protestants have come to dominate the theological landscapes of overseas Chinese congregational networks in these three Pacific Rim cities, their ‘conservatism’ should be theorized as a socio-spatial differentiation of church from state, for what they want to ‘conserve’ is the purity of congregational space. To this end, they opposed church collusion with what they might term the ‘establishment.’ However, the ‘establishment’ was different in San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong, making it difficult to prejudge the politics generated from these ‘conservative’ theologies. While revivalist evangelicals contested the church’s interest in legitimizing a colonial establishment in Hong Kong, the ‘establishment’
in San Francisco was comprised of mainline denominational churches in ecumenical
dialogue about how to leverage public funding for community organizations and
progressive social justice activism. This in turn was different in Vancouver, where a
Chinatown establishment sought to use churches functionally as community centres to
assert a Chinese identity politics in the face of white Anglo-Canadian marginalization.

These empirical inconsistencies across the three sites make it difficult to use words
like ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive,’ especially if these terms are framed temporally.
Indeed, ‘conservatism’ is a contested term when applied to evangelicals especially, because
the broad range of evangelicals engaging civil society and political deliberations have
sometimes positioned them on the side of egalitarian activism, such as when evangelicals
led slavery abolitionist movements in the Atlantic region, advocated for women’s suffrage
at Seneca Falls, and argued for global nuclear disarmament in the Cold War era (Wallis,
1999; Hunter, 2010; Ley and Tse, 2013). However, because evangelicals emphasize a
personal, individual faith in Jesus Christ, Emerson and Smith (2000) argue that
conservative ideologies of individual responsibility often uncritically proliferate among
evangelical Christians (see also Miller, 1999; Alumkal, 2003), though Martha Pally (2009)
contends that this individualism is giving way to a more altruistic, socially engaged,
progressive, and egalitarian evangelicalism among younger generations that is re-
discovering evangelical communitarian traditions that transcend its individualism (see
Elisha 2009; Merritt 2012; RH Evans 2010, 2012). Nevertheless, within Asian American
religious communities, some suggest that latent political conservative ideologies hamper
their role in social justice advocacy (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2008; Wong and Iwamura, 2007;
Han, 2010).
The trouble with all of these accounts of ‘conservatism’ and its presumed binary opposite, ‘progressivism,’ is that these terms are often understood temporally, as if ‘conservatism’ meant the uncritical preservation of an *ancien régime* while ‘progressivism’ referred to the incremental construction of an egalitarian society. As Butler (2008) observes, a key battleground between these two terms has been on the terrain of sexual politics, pitting a supposedly secular ‘progressive’ sphere championing human rights and sexual liberation against more purportedly ‘conservative’ immigrant groups with traditional family values. For Butler, these clashes reveal the hidden temporalities inherent in terms like ‘progressive’—and by extension, ‘conservative’—for they suggest that liberation is a project that makes progress over linear time. Adverse views see ‘conservatism’ as working against the clock of liberation, preserving hierarchies that cannot be rationally justified and due more to lingering prejudices, superstitions, and malevolent impulses reproducing structures that preserve an unequal status quo. As Asian American studies pioneer Sucheng Chan (2005: 197) warns, these neoconservatives, who have become smart enough to accept “diversity” as an imperative, [will] develop more and more sophisticated methods to seduce some of us into joining their camp while simultaneously doing everything in their power to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

In temporal terms, then, following this conventional understanding, ‘progress’ implies the constant construction of liberating spaces of social and economic equality while ‘conservatism’ suggests a regressive resistance to such ideals for the sake of preserving intermediary communitarian structures such as families, guilds, and churches.

However, if ‘conservatism’ and ‘progressivism’ are conceived as spatial metaphors, they can be used to refer to ways in which Cantonese Protestants understand the relationship between their congregations and civil society. ‘Conservatism’ might be
reframed to denote the preservation of a congregational space’s independence from external establishment structures, opposing entanglement with state practices, denominational networks, civil society, and local community institutions. By contrast, ‘progressivism’ might refer to a congregation’s openness to collaboration, if not collusion, with institutions outside of its autonomous governance. While ecumenical social justice institutions in San Francisco, Chinatown community functionalism in Vancouver, and colonial state collusion in Hong Kong might seem like groups that are too ideologically disparate to fit under the term ‘progressive,’ the common thread that runs throughout all three is that these establishments were entangled with a public sphere outside of church congregations. What is being ‘conserved’ in ‘conservatism’ is congregational space; the ‘progress’ being made in ‘progressive’ congregations is the forward entry of religion into civil society. This view of ‘conservatism’ in turn sheds light on why evangelicals in the North American sites contested the liberal mainline over congregational space. Challenging the collaboration of the Hong Kong church with the colonial state through practices of piety and evangelism, the public engagements of mainline Protestants in Chinatowns in Vancouver and San Francisco would also have seemed to tie the church to the state. Congregational space had to be disentangled yet again from the state’s purview through practices of piety, evangelical doctrines that emphasized believers’ baptism, acts of charity, and proselytization. These grounded theologies suggest that ‘conservatism’ is best understood as a spatial imagination governing the boundary between the public and the private. ‘Conservative’ geographies attempt to defend this boundary by emphasizing the primacy of the private and intimate spheres and resisting invasion from the public sphere.
Leaving behind the temporal notion that ‘conservatism’ must preserve an *ancien régime* while ‘progressivism’ must work toward social egalitarianism, both ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ congregations can be framed as spatial elements of a secular age (Taylor, 2007). After all, positing a rupture between sacred and profane spaces tacitly reinforces the secularization thesis, whether that split is termed ‘progressive’ or ‘conservative.’ As Milbank (2006: 250) provocatively suggests, ‘The division for political and liberation theology is therefore clear: insofar as salvation is “religious,” it is formal, transcendental, and private; insofar as it is “social,” it is secular.’ In other words, while it appears that ‘progressive’ congregations engage civil society more openly, that many of my ‘progressive’ interviewees spoke of their neglect of congregational life, evangelism, and formal worship suggests that these officially religious activities were conceptualized as secondary, sometimes irrelevant, to the political work of building a civil society outside the church. Though Cloke and Beaumont (2013) applaud these activities as post-secular *rapprochements* between faith and society,

are they not in fact describing the grounding of secular theologies in faith-based organizations? After all, to portray de facto interfaith mixing in religious spaces for *secular* causes is to bracket the transcendent and elevate an immanent sphere of action, precisely the grounding of a secular theology. (Tse, 2013a: 12)

Indeed, even as ‘progressives’ saw bridge-building outside the church as a means by which leverage their impact on civil society, San Francisco mainline pastor Rev. James Chuck performed a self-critique of his own ministry and ministry partners in the 1970s:

They [mainline Protestants] spent a lot of staff time and effort doing that, sometimes at the expense of the growth of their congregation. So what happened during the Anti-Poverty period is that mainline people spent their energy out in the community while the newer churches and the evangelical groups are busy gathering disciples, asking people to follow Jesus! Actually, you have to be doing both. So I think that at some point, I think the mainline churches had forgotten how to reach out to people.
In this sense, ‘progressive’ Cantonese Protestant grounded theologies were secular insofar as they took as *a priori* a division between the privately religious and publicly secular and sought to transcend that by bringing their congregations into secular activism and entanglement with external structures.

However, on the same token, the difference that ‘conservative’ congregations posit between their spaces of worship and civil society are but another variant of secularization, for this also depends on a differentiation of spaces. Presupposing civil society to be non-religious, ‘conservative’ congregations saw social transformation as conducted through individual conversion. Portraying civil society and state governance as ineffective means to achieve this sort of social change, attempts to re-structure mainline congregations and launch independent evangelical organizations were strategies that reinforced secularization by framing their new institutions as private. While the North American Cantonese Protestant churches eschewed public political work in favour of individual evangelism, Hong Kong evangelicals viewed corruption in the public sphere also as the work of individuals, which in turn meant that the public sphere needed to be reformed via evangelical dissociation from the establishment and critiques of the powerful persons who enacted socially unjust policies. In other words, the differentiation of spheres was precisely an evangelical strategy by which to reconstitute the public sphere through tactics of individual transformation, a grounded theology that in turn framed ‘progressives’ as misguided and ineffective in their focus on social structures.42 By the *secular*, then, I do not

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42 I realize that in Anglo-American evangelicalism writ large, evangelicals have spoken increasingly of the need to address structural sin through social action. While evangelicals as prominent as John Stott have argued that structural sins are very real causes of social injustice, the Cantonese evangelicals with whom I spoke often saw sin in individualistic terms in contrast to their ‘progressive’ nemeses. Their increasing awareness of ‘structural sin’ in policies supporting sexual liberalization will be the discussion in chapter 5.
refer to the absence or withdrawal of religion from public life, but the re-orientation of
theologies vis-à-vis the workings of a secular public.

These distinctions become foregrounded when members of conservative Cantonese
Protestant churches engage in political activism in the public sphere. While they have been
framed as preserving an *ancien régime*, their involvement in what is perceived to be
politically reactionary activism in fact reinforces the secularization thesis. Indeed, the
contestations over congregational space that resulted in the current conservative
dominance among Cantonese Protestant congregations did not necessarily have a unified
public agenda. Instead, when conservative Cantonese Protestants protest progressive
projects in the public sphere, build extra-congregational spaces for social service delivery,
and attempt to advance democracy for marginalised Chinese populations, they do so while
continuing to posit a strict separation between the church and the world. These
differentiations reinforce the secularization thesis, which means that they have had to
leverage ethnicity as a secularizing strategy when they make their political interventions
outside of congregational space. To the extent that this spatial dynamic fails to be
understood by those who interpret them, contest them, or even resonate with their politics,
the naïve hermeneutics that attribute their politics to essentialized notions of ethnicity,
transnational social fields, and unitary theological conventions will abound. The
alternative this chapter has proposed is to explore the development of these spatial
differentiations historically, seeing ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ Cantonese Protestant
congregations in contestation over the past 50 years in how they ground Protestant
theologies in civil society.
4.7 Conclusion: theological spaces, ethnic geographies, secular differences

The cultural geographies of mainline and evangelical Cantonese Protestantism in San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong are primarily undergirded by grounded theologies. Filling a knowledge gap in the historiography of Cantonese Protestantism in the Pacific region, this chapter is foundational for the rest of my argument because it has differentiated among strands of theology and ethnicity within Cantonese Protestant geographies. I have demonstrated in this chapter that mainline Protestants and evangelicals had fundamentally different spatial imaginations of how their church congregations should relate to civil society and the state. While ethnic Chineseness has often been used to justify divisions between these ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ theological strands, this chapter has demonstrated that grounded theologies are shaped more by how congregational spaces are positioned vis-à-vis an ‘establishment,’ be it the state, civil society, denominational structures, or local community institutions. In turn, ethnicities are often secularizing explanations for why factions within congregations contest each other in ways that lead to church splits and restructuring.

Moving forward, these spatial differentiations will be used to interpret conservative Cantonese Protestant engagements with civil society. When they advocate traditional family values over against the construction of non-heteronormative families and sites that liberalize what they see as moral vices, their interest is in conserving the private sphere that is at the heart of their grounded theologies. When their own construction of congregations and extra-congregational para-church organizations meets the reality of urban planning and public policy, their collaborating efforts with civil society should be read as strategies through which they can sustain the integrity of their private religious and
familial sites. When they engage in democratic political activities, their impulse to work for a rational public sphere stems from an instinct to preserve the differentiation of spheres. In all of these practices, these conservative Cantonese Protestants may putatively challenge the absence of religion in the public sphere, but their grounded theological orientations are in fact unintentionally directed toward preserving processes of secularization. The methods by which this is accomplished often leverage ethnicity as a secularizing strategy, a translation tactic that is most apparently seen in their activism concerning traditional family values, to which we turn in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: *Mai Sun* [close to the body]: Cantonese evangelical family values as public defences of private spheres

5.1 **Introduction: family values and secularizing strategies**

This chapter demonstrates that the public protests of ‘conservative’ Cantonese evangelicals in favour of traditional family values are more secular than have been previously assumed. Following the grounded theologies that differentiate congregational spaces from civil society (see chapter 4), ‘conservative’ Cantonese evangelicals conceptualized the secular public sphere as existing *outside* of their own churches, which meant that it had to be engaged through universal, secularized forms of reasons (see Habermas, 2006). For Cantonese evangelicals, this approach has been marked by their invocation of a secular ‘Chineseness’ that is constructed as an ethnic solidarity attempting to include non-Christian Chinese populations into their activism while preserving their theological convictions.43 That Chineseness, this chapter argues, is characterized by an

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43 I realize that I will be faulted for not making an argument derived from feminist and queer studies here. Suffice it to say that my views are complementary to the work done there, but because this literature does not directly impinge on my argument, I will simply need to state my regrets for omitting a more lengthy discussion in the interest of space. As I understand it, feminist and queer studies indeed interrogate private and public boundaries as constructed primarily by white heteronormative men, seeking to empower women, especially minority and disadvantaged ones, to exercise their agency also in spatial construction. To this end, they have sometimes been perceived by social conservatives as ‘anti-family,’ an accusation that should be nuanced to say that feminists and queer scholars like Judith Stacey (1990) have called for an examination of non-traditional kinship structures in the political economic context of neoliberalism. Accordingly, Janet Jakobsen’s (1997) account of working feminist alliances did not oppose the *family, per se*; it opposed the neoliberal structures of privatization that made it difficult for non-heteronormative populations to sustain a livelihood in North America. However, since Saba Mahmood’s (2005) feminist account of nonliberal religious subjects in the Egyptian women’s mosque movement and Jasbir Puar’s (2007) complaint that gay rights movement have produced ‘homonationalist’ alliances with the neoliberal state to justify human rights abuses against ‘Muslim terrorists,’ a new feminist and queer studies literature has emerged seeking radical equality for those who might identify as social conservatives for religious reasons and sexual minorities seeking economic equality. As this has been the turn in the literature itself, I will simply state that I am sympathetic, and that my reading of Cantonese evangelicals as leveraging their constructed version of *ethnicity* (as
ideology (and practice) that holds that all ethnic Chinese persons belong to traditional heteronormative families that share their economic wealth within the household (Tu, 1997; Ong, 1999; Ang, 2001; Ma and Cartier, 2003). Contending that irrational ‘progressive’ forces were attempting to dismantle their private ‘Chinese’ families, Cantonese evangelicals have mobilized in their various civil societies to re-conceptualize a public sphere that works in their own interests, one that defends their private freedoms to be universally ‘Chinese’ first, under which a theologically ‘Christian’ identity is subsumed.

This chapter explores how ‘Chineseness’ is used in the various sites as a universal, secular solution that attempts to fix ‘irrational’ public spheres to serve private interests. In the San Francisco Bay Area, Cantonese evangelicals promoted themselves as conservative ‘model minority’ Asian American families protesting irrationality in American civil society that allegedly racialized them and attempted to co-opt the educational system to disadvantage them and their children. In Metro Vancouver, Cantonese evangelicals promoted their ‘Chinese’ family values over against the ‘ridiculousness’ of a contemporary Canadian human rights discourse that has been putatively taken to the extreme of encouraging criminality at the expense of public safety. In Hong Kong, Cantonese evangelicals understood their actions as forming a rational democratic public sphere, attempting to develop a model Hong Kong Chineseness in the face of a putatively irrational East Asian ‘sex-culture’ revolution. This chapter reinforces this dissertation’s overall thesis by showing that the strategies used to oppose these ‘irrational’ sites are often secular, positing a difference between conservative Cantonese Protestant religious congregations opposed to their gender or sexuality) for socially conservative politics should be taken as complementary to this literature.
and their work as private citizens in protesting sites that are putatively hostile to their traditional families.

5.2 San Francisco: defending against encroachments to the moral minority

On 21 January 2010, Dr. Hak-Shing William Tam, a chemical engineer turned Cantonese evangelical and traditional family values activist, testified in *Perry et al. v. Schwarzenegger*, 704 F.Supp.2d 921 (N.D. Cal., 2010). In this district court case, two gay and lesbian couples sued California state officials to strike down Proposition 8, a 2008 state ballot initiative filed by five private citizens organized by ProtectMarriage.com to amend the state constitution with the words: ‘Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.’ Calling Tam as an adverse witness, the plaintiffs’ celebrity attorney, David Boies, asked Tam about the claim on his website, 1man1woman.net, that ‘homosexuals are twelve times more likely to be pedophiles.’ Tam replied that the source for this social scientific claim was ‘the Internet’ (*Perry* 2010b: 22). Boies also revealed that Tam had used theocratic language in his private communications to Chinese churches that he had mobilized for Proposition 8, for Tam was the secretary of a Chinese Christian initiative called the America, Return to God Prayer Movement. Writing to a group of churches via private e-mail, Tam had stated that the states were likely to ‘fall into Satan’s hand’ if Proposition 8 failed (*Perry* 2010b: 1928). As Tam concluded his trial testimony, he said to Boies: ‘I felt like a naughty boy being put in front of a classroom and being mocked at’ (*Perry* 2010b: 2003) for imposing his private theological views onto a secular public sphere.
Rejecting the sentiment that conservative Cantonese Protestant activists in the Bay Area like Bill Tam should be ‘put in front of a classroom and mocked at,’ this section explores how Cantonese evangelicals’ conflations of theologically-derived values and Asian American identity are in fact secularizing strategies, seeking to broaden the impact of church-based beliefs to a larger Chinese American, if not pan-Asian, engagement with the Bay Area’s public forum (see Espiritu, 1992; Jeung, 2005). Claiming in the Perry case to be a ‘paranoid Chinese parent’ counseling other Asian American parents, Tam invoked the ‘model minority’ narrative, a postulate that unlike other racialized American groups, Asian Americans have worked against their disadvantage not through militant anti-racist protests, but by quietly and apolitically practising an individual work ethic and remaining committed to familial collectivities (M Tuan, 1999; Palumbo-Liu, 2001; Hattori, 2006; Bascara, 2007). Situated as the archetypal stereotype against which Asian American studies is positioned (see S Chan, 1991; Nakanishi, 1995/2009; Takaki, 1997; M Tuan, 1999), Asian Americanists have more recently noted that Asian Americans themselves often invoke the trope of the model minority as a form of cultural capital leveraged to fit into an American nationalist agenda (Hattori, 1999; Bascara, 2007). Indeed, by saying that sexual liberalization would tear Asian American families apart, Tam was insinuating that opposing the model minority was itself a racist agenda, a strategy that attempted to exclude Asian Americans from contributing to the American national project. In these scenarios, Cantonese evangelicals in the Bay Area engaged the public sphere by contesting what they believed to be the secular public sphere’s marginalization of their views as both ‘Chinese American’ and ‘Christians,’ leveraging their ethnicities as a strategy to universalize their message beyond those of their theological co-practitioners.
In this section, I explore these slippages between ‘evangelical Christian’ and ‘Cantonese Chinese’ in the multifaceted traditional family values activism of Bay Area Cantonese evangelicals. I begin first with a recitation of how Cantonese evangelicals became known for their work in traditional family values, particularly as they revolve around sexuality. Following an analysis of Bill Tam’s trial strategies in which he attempted to downplay his theocratic language, I will then argue (admittedly giving Tam the benefit of the doubt) that attempts to situate Cantonese evangelicals as acting on behalf of churches is a spatial red herring. What must instead be seen is that individuals who attend Cantonese evangelical congregations are themselves caught in a secular Cantonese counterpublic promoted by a vibrant Cantonese media (a point to be even further developed in chapter 7). Following this approach, I conclude this section with examples of how those who happen to be Cantonese evangelicals have engaged the secular issue of school district rezoning as part of a Bay Area Cantonese ‘model minority’ that is discursively shaped by a secular Cantonese-language media, not the church.

5.2.1 From Project 10 to Proposition 8: invoking race, fighting for religious liberty

In San Francisco, the origins of Cantonese evangelical traditional family values activism can be traced to a concerned parental effort in 1990 to oppose Project 10, a proposal to launch LGBTQ+ counseling centres in the San Francisco Unified School District’s public schools. As an effort to stall gay and lesbian high school dropout rates in the 1980s by child psychologist Virginia Uribe in Los Angeles (Uribe, 1994a, 1994b), Project 10 was successfully implemented in Southern California in 1989 despite the vehement opposition of Rev. Louis Sheldon’s Traditional Values Coalition. When Project 10
became an initiative in San Francisco’s public schools, a conservative grassroots coalition that included Chinese Americans opposed it on the grounds that, as the National Association for Research and Therapy on Homosexuality’s (NARTH) Dr. Joseph Nicolosi (1993) had it, counseling centres would channel teens with same-sex desires into a politically ‘gay’ identity by activist counselors.

Chinese American evangelicals in this conservative coalition reported that their opposition to Project 10 garnered a backlash from sexual identity activists who demeaned them along lines of both race and religion. Testifying with three non-Chinese citizens against the initiative and supported by a media campaign against the issue in Chinese newspapers and the English-language Channel 7 News, Dr. Bill Tam recalled that half an hour before the Project 10 hearing, an AIDS advocacy group, ACT UP, had already filled the hall, reportedly shouting slurs against both Asian Americans (‘Go back to China’) and Christians (‘God is Gay’ and ‘Jesus Is Gay’), while holding signs that showed ‘two naked boys, one behind another, sucking his thumb.’ ‘At that moment,’ Tam recalled in a Traditional Family Coalition newsletter, ‘I realized that the gay activists are aiming at our young children. I saw the danger if we did not fight for our children’ (Tam 2008: 1). While Project 10 was ultimately given a very small budget and centralized at the school district’s headquarters as a political concession to both sides of the debate, Tam’s experience framed his longstanding opposition to what he perceived as the emergence of irrational chaos in the public sphere. This irrationality in turn was putatively prejudiced against evangelical Christians while also racializing Chinese Americans, threatening to divide traditional families by indoctrinating their children with sexual political ideologies contrary to his conception of ideal Chinese evangelical families.
Working in the culture war trenches with Anglo-American Christians, Cantonese evangelicals founded the Chinese Family Alliance (CFA), an organization that disseminated materials from inter-racial, inter-religious conservative coalitions to the Chinese media. Motivated by the need to combat what they perceived as racist and anti-religious elements in the public sphere, the materials that they spread discouraged the passage of domestic partnership legislation at the state level in the 1990s while supporting Proposition 22 in 2000, the implementation of a ‘Defense of Marriage Act’ in California’s family code. Accordingly, the Chinese Family Alliance became seen as part of what feminist scholar Janet Jakobsen (1998) calls a ‘working alliance’ of the religious right, with Jakobsen citing its chairperson and Bible church pastor Raymond Kwong’s appearance in the Traditional Values Coalition’s documentary *Gay Rights, Special Rights* as pitting racialized populations against sexual minorities (see Jakobsen, 1998: 133). Jakobsen’s portrayal is correct, for part of the CFA’s message was that Asian Americans were a model minority championing values that led to individual success, paradigms under attack by radical sexual activists. One book-banning case supported by CFA members provides a case in point: as a member of the CFA, Bill Tam recalled fighting to have a book about male chauvinism banned from the San Francisco school district’s social studies curriculum: ‘It talks about some African tribes, they sewed up the vagina of the girls until they get married, then the husband get to open for sex. That was a lesbian teacher. They used that book to teach how bad men are.’ While book-banning was part of the Traditional Values Coalition’s strategy, what was unique about this scenario was that Tam appeared as a representative of the Asian

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44 In 1994, the Traditional Values Coalition had been at the forefront of California organizations to ban Alice Walker’s short story ‘Roselily’ from the new state examinations because its religious views were not orthodox and because it questioned the validity of the institution of marriage (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 1994).
American model minority: ‘One of them [school board members] said, You Asian parents, you are so overprotective, one of those ladies said. You are, yeah, you are too overprotective, this is the real world.’ Tam did not contest the portrayal of Chinese Americans as a ‘model minority’; indeed, he affirmed it:

> Look at the Asian students, Chinese students. We have the least teen pregnancies. We have the least sexual transmitted diseases. We have the least tardiness. We have the least problems of any kind. But we are the best in our grades, and that’s because we are overprotecting them. You want us to learn your way? No way! (Hak-Shing William Tam, personal communication, 16 June 2011).

While these events resonated with the activities of the Traditional Values Coalition due to its associations through the CFA, they afforded Tam a new way to articulate his concerns via race. Being framed in the public square as an overprotective Asian American parent, Tam identified this name-calling as a seminal moment in which he took on the persona of a model minority race representative.

These skirmishes gave rise to the legal battles between the City of San Francisco and the State of California regarding same-sex marriage. In 2004, San Francisco’s newly elected mayor, Gavin Newsom, directed his city clerk Nancy Alfaro to issue gender-neutral marriage licences in defiance of the California family code. As one Cantonese evangelical pastor remembered it, Cantonese evangelicals first met with Chinese American city politicians like Mabel Teng to try to dissuade Newsom from this decision: ‘So we had a good interaction, so everybody had a chance to speak out, to speak our mind, so she heard us. But at the end, she did not rule to our favour.’ In the ensuing weeks, 4,013 marriages were performed at San Francisco City Hall, including by Asian American officials such as Mabel
Teng (then, the assessor-recorder), Donna Kotake (a marriage commissioner), and Richard Ow (another marriage commissioner).45

Cantonese evangelicals responded with ‘Traditional Family Day’ on the afternoon of 25 April 2004. The CFA organized some 200 pastors in the Bay Area Chinese Evangelical Ministerial Fellowship to oppose same-sex marriage. Arguing that the Asian American ‘silent majority’ would keep quiet no longer, Raymond Kwong convened the Bay Area Chinese Christians for Traditional Marriage. Before debating same-sex marriage supporters at Lowell High School in San Francisco, Kwong articulated in an interview with The Christian Post his desire to mobilize churches:

I think the key is pastors and churches—not politicians. They must teach the congregation the correct worldview. We have been so effectively neutralized. Pastors think they can’t do anything about it because same-sex marriage is a political issue. They must be the salt and light...I’m here because I want to prevent High Schools from going from bad to worse. It makes me really sad. I’m here being the salt and the light. (Phan 2004).

Despite motivations to push congregations to oppose Newsom, Kwong’s remarks betrayed frustration with conservative pastors who construed these activities as interventions into a secular public sphere and thus inappropriate for church participation. Bill Tam also echoed Kwong’s discontent:

I talked to a couple of friends and they said, ‘Wow, this is huge, we Christians have to do something.’ So I called up pastors. They said: ‘No.’ I said, ‘Hey, what should we do?’ One pastor said: ‘I don’t know. Call up Pastor Y.’ Call Pastor Y, and he said: ‘I don’t know what to do; call Pastor W.’ [laughs] Call Pastor W? ‘I’m very busy! Call Pastor Z!’

45 These same-sex marriages were all annulled in the sweeping California Supreme Court decision Lockyer v. City and County of San Francisco, 33 Cal.4th 1055 (2004), which ruled that Newsom had exceeded his constitutional duties as an elected official to interpret the constitution. This case did not rule on the merits of same-sex marriage. In re Marriage cases, 43 Cal.4th 757 (2008), ruled that there was a constitutional right to same-sex marriage prior to the passage of the Proposition 8 ‘one man, one woman’ amendment in 2008.
Finally, Tam spoke with the Rev. Thomas Wang, the founder of CCM and CCCOWE who had since become the International Director of Billy Graham’s Lausanne Movement in the mid-1980s before founding the Great Commission Center International (GCCI) in 1989 (see chapter 4). Tam reported that Wang said: ‘Yeah, of course, I read about it, of course we have to do something about it, or else we should not call ourselves Christians.’ Indeed, in my interview with Thomas Wang, he recalled: ‘I was one of the, if not the, instigator for the open-air rally in 19th Street, San Francisco...The first time in history, the Chinese Christians came out publicly for some public purpose like that, never happened before’ (Thomas Wang, personal communication, 5 July 2011). Chinese radio host David Pang quickly invited Tam and Wang onto his secular talk show on 1450 FM KTSD and Tri-Star Radio KVSF; he recalled: ‘We directly influenced it because we personally, I know Bill Tam on the one man, one woman activism on 19th Avenue with Rev. Wang, we directly participated, we called people to come out’ (David Pang, personal communication, 7 Dec. 2012).

With Wang’s support, explicit Chinese Christian theocratic discourses were introduced into the public forum alongside the putative axes of discrimination experienced by Cantonese evangelicals. With sponsorship from the Bay Area Ministerial Prayer Fellowship, the San Francisco Bay Area Christians for the Traditional Family, the Great Commission Center International, and David Pang’s Chinese radio show, 7000 Cantonese evangelicals from 174 churches were bussed in throughout the city and from the suburbs wearing red T-shirts that read ‘One Man, One Woman’ in both English and Chinese and holding up signs promoting traditional marriage. At Larsen Park, Wang made theological remarks to the Cantonese evangelical crowd:

We’re not here today to antagonize or to hate people, we’re here with true love and true concern...God created one man and one woman – Adam and Eve. They became
husband and wife and the first human family began...We believe any deviation from it will bring disastrous results. (Torassa 2004: B1).

Following this speech, the crowd poured into the Sunset District’s main throughway, 19th Avenue between Quintara Street and Holloway Avenue, calling on drivers to honk if they were supportive to their cause.46

Having generated historic momentum among Cantonese evangelicals while leveraging GCCI’s global evangelical connections, Thomas Wang’s new movement took on national—and to some extent, transnational—proportions. In October 2004, Wang organized a march at Washington DC’s National Mall: ‘Slogans like “America Must Repent,” “the People Must Repent,” and “The Church Must Repent,” filled the air with T-shirts proclaiming “Marriage = one man + one woman.” The square echoed with shouts of “Amen”’ (Levi, 2010: 424). As a multicultural gathering of some 100,000 Christians, this March on Washington was joined by other Cantonese evangelical para-church organizations in the Bay Area, who, according to one staff worker, ‘helped organize brothers and sisters to go to the demonstration or to oppose [homosexuality]...In the San Francisco Bay Area, they mobilized lots of people and organized them to fly on the plane to Washington DC to protest.’ Because Wang had been a key organizer of the 2004 marches, he became the de facto chair of the new movement, running it as an evangelical mission to America through GCCI.

46 This event was recorded by the photographic and videographic recording services of a pastor who ran a small organization in the suburbs that broadcast biblical teaching to China. This pastor also expressed his support for Wang in theocratic terms: ‘You ask why we support opposing homosexuality? Because this is bearing witness to the mark of blood. So we support it. So why is homosexuality wrong? Because it conflicts with the Bible. We are a people redeemed by blood, we must be sanctified, we must be holy, those who believe must not be yoked to unbelievers.’ Because of the sensitivity of his China work, this pastor’s name will remain anonymous in this thesis.
By 2006, Thomas Wang’s traditional family movement had a name with an explicitly theocratic bent: the America Return to God Prayer Movement. Supplementing his prayer rallies, Wang edited a collection of English-language articles in the anthology America, Return to God, printing pieces written by evangelical pastors and Republican spokespersons like David Barton, James Dobson, Carl Henry, Erwin Lutzer, and Tim LaHaye that decried the encroaching secularity of America as a totalitarian plot by ‘master planners of the other side’ to ‘achieve the downfall of America—by steadily weakening her spiritual roots and moral fibers’ and to ‘re-shape and re-constitute America into an atheistic and pagan country’ (T Wang, 2006: 126). Invoking a Chinese Christian positionality, Wang wrote:

As Chinese Christians, we come to stand with America in a time like this. We love America. We cannot forget all the missionaries the American churches have sent to our people during the past 200 years...Nor can we forget how her sons and daughters came over and helped us during the Second World War...America helped the world. Yet the world scorns her. It’s fashionable today to put America down. But we choose to be different. We choose to go against the tide. We wish to raise up our voice, and express our love and concern to this generation by respectfully reminding her of her God-ordained beginning, her noble Christian past, her struggles, her lurking and scheming enemies, and her need for spiritual restoration by returning to the “faith of her fathers”— faith in her Creator and Savior Jesus Christ. (T Wang 2006: 38).

500,000 copies of this first edition were sent to politicians, universities, professionals, and churches selected from a United States Postal Service directory. Bill Tam (2006a) also authored Church, Stand Up as Salt and Light, a second publication aimed at Chinese churches to mobilize them into family values activism. While acknowledging that many were doing a ‘wonderful job being the “light” of the world sharing the saving grace of the gospel and the righteousness of God,’ their political apathy meant that their charity work was insufficient:
However, not many are doing the “salt” part, which is to slow down the moral decay. The endless conflict between good and evil has deteriorated the society to a point where the standard of human decency has been degraded to that of animals. The purpose of this course is to help you and your church to do the “salt” part effectively, by bringing about a re-awakening of Christians, and reviving the moral values of our generation and of the generations to come. (Tam, 2006a: ii)

Because GCCI had offices also in Hong Kong, these publications were printed there and then shipped back over to America. As a GCCI staff member in Hong Kong recalled: ‘It was cheaper, a money issue. The most important should be the money issue, not because they feared that the other side [America] wouldn't want someone to print it, not a politics issue...We printed it ourselves...In America, we found all the articles and printed them here.’ Mobilizing his networks as an international evangelist, Wang’s intervention into Cantonese evangelical traditional family values activism elevated it beyond a vocal minority into the forefront of both Cantonese evangelical concerns and shaped the perceptions of a secular public sphere that these Cantonese evangelicals had a primarily theocratic agenda (Wong and Iwamura, 2007; Noll and Harlow, 2007).

These ideologies became crystallized into political action by the Traditional Family Coalition (TFC), a sister organization to GCCI headed by Bill Tam that is housed adjacent to its offices. TFC attempted to make secular arguments against sexually liberal legislation on behalf of Chinese Americans. It first crystallized what it meant by Chinese culture by opposing the sexual politics of Taiwanese film director Ang Lee in his films, Brokeback Mountain (2005) and Lust, Caution (2007). Objecting to the ‘selfish and animal-like behaviors of the main characters’ that has ‘broken’ the ‘honorable and pure man-to-man friendship’ in the first film (Tam, 2006b: 1), TFC especially condemned the second film, Lust, Caution, in a press release for using pornographic Chinese images as ‘comfort women' to seduce Western audiences:
Now sixty-five years later, we have a renowned Chinese movie director, An [sic] Lee, ordering the Chinese actor and actress to strip and perform explicit sex on the big screen to entertain the western audiences, begging for a foreign film award. Such pimping of Chinese movie stars to the western audience is even worse than the “comfort women” case during the Japanese invasion. Like the comfort women, the movie should bring humiliation and rage to any conscientious Chinese. To add insult to the injury, this movie depicts the events happening at the same years when “comfort women” were exploited by the Japanese. Some Chinese movie critics call him a “national pride” for winning foreign film awards. To me, Ang Lee uses a national shame to further his personal career ambition. He is simply a shameless modern-day traitor to the Chinese culture. (Tam 2007)

These essentialist views of Chineseness—that is, one shaped by traditional family values that can be ‘betrayed’ by portrayals of Chinese people in sexually explicit movie scenes—were then imported into the TFC’s Asian American activism against same-sex marriage. Pending the In re Marriage Cases, 43 Cal.4th 757, in 2008 that would strike down California’s Defense of Marriage Act, the California Family Council (CFC) and its umbrella institution, Tony Perkins’s Family Research Council, formed an organization called ProtectMarriage.com to amend the California state constitution to recognize only marriage between one man and one woman, thus rendering whatever the court decided moot. According to Tam’s key informant interview with me, ProtectMarriage.com in turn approached TFC as early as 2005 to collect signatures at the grassroots level, attempting to place an initiative on the ballot for the 2006 elections. Unsuccessful the first time in reaching the required 807,615 signatures, they tried again in 2007, successfully placing

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47 It should be clear that this is TFC’s interpretation of Ang Lee’s (2007) Lust, Caution, not my own. The plot of the film explores the limits of Chinese political theatre, as the main character played by Tang Wei is a university theatre actress who is drawn into anti-Japanese espionage work during the Second World War by a theatre troupe’s idealistic leader (played by Wang Leehom). It is in this context that her sexual escapades with the film’s main antagonist (played by Tony Leung) become especially poignant, for they blur the lines of her two roles of acting as the antagonist’s lover while being an anti-Japanese spy. The film itself can be read as ambivalent about these scenes.

48 As a point of clarification, former Louisiana Republican state representative Tony Perkins is the current president of the Family Research Council. The Family Research Council was itself originally founded in 1981 by socially conservative family psychologist and political commentator Dr. James Dobson as the political arm of his non-profit organization, Focus on the Family. The organizations have been administratively separate since 1992.
Proposition 8 on the November 2008 election ballot. Tam organized this campaign’s Asian Pacific Islander initiative, collecting some 20,000 (2.48% of the required) Asian American ballot signatures (Perry, 2010b: 1899-1910; 1977). During this time, the California Supreme Court’s In re Marriage Cases decision struck down the family code’s restriction of marriage to opposite-sex couples, opening the door to some 18,000 same-sex marriages performed in California between May and November 2008.

Between July and November 2008, TFC organized public debates and ‘Yes on 8’ rallies in the Bay Area whose use of public space heavily mirrored the 2004 demonstration on 19th Avenue and combined the rhetoric of the Asian American model minority with that of religious liberty activists. At ProtectMarriage.com’s request, Tam himself took part in several public debates about Proposition 8, including two on the radio, one televised on New American Media, one on Cantonese-language KTSF Channel 26 News, and some that were reported in Chinese newspapers Sing Tao and Ming Pao.49 In these public appearances, Tam emphasized both that Chinese churches derived their traditional family values from the Bible (thus making an argument about religious freedom) and that Asian American parents ‘did not want their kids fantasizing about whether to marry John or Jane’ (thus contending for the model minority) (Perry, 2010b). Admittedly, as Tam also confessed to the San Jose Mercury News, there were multiple views of both ‘Christian’ and ‘Asian American.’ As Tam explained it, because the ‘No on 8’ campaigners ‘have very cleverly portrayed homosexuals as a kind of minority’ and gay marriage ‘as a civil rights issue,’ he was aware that it would be difficult to ‘convince Asian-Americans that gay marriage will encourage more children to experiment with the gay lifestyle and that the

49 The information here is readily available from Bill Tam’s deposition in Perry v. Schwarzenegger, Exhibit PX2542.
lifestyle comes with all kinds of disease’ (McLaughlin 2008: B1). In other words, Tam diagnosed the situation as one in which progressive activists had construed Asian American identity in pro-LGBTQ+ ways. His job was to reconstruct it to signify a conservative model minority.

Organizing two Asian American ‘Yes on 8’ demonstrations, then, Tam attempted to re-constitute the Asian American religious conversation about Proposition 8 in the Bay Area. One rally took place in San Francisco Chinatown’s Portsmouth Square on October 12, where the San Francisco Salvation Army’s Major Thomas Mui, who was then chair of San Francisco’s historic Chinese Christian Union (CCU), threw the support of the CCU behind this rally, a decision that divided this mainline Protestant ministerial fellowship. As one disaffected progressive clergy member whose church was located across the street from the demonstration recalled, he was ‘very uncomfortable because it was a unilateral decision, and so I came back and talked to my council, and we decided not to show our support in any way.’ By contrast, the Rev. Franco Kwan, an Episcopal priest seen at the front of the rally, explained to me that he felt that he had to support this activism as a CCU leader despite the fact that, as he told me, the San Francisco Episcopal bishop often led at the front of the annual Gay Pride Parade. Ambivalent about his stance on ‘homosexuality’ because of the lack of clarity in the biblical passages supporting and opposing it, Kwan realized as a Chinese pastor that he had to care for his own people as Chinese community members prior to towing his denomination’s party line:

50 Indeed, as the National Asian American Survey led by Karthick Ramakrishnan, Janelle Wong, Taeku Lee, and Jane Junn at the University of Southern California noted in the same article, a marked 57 percent of Asian Americans opposed Proposition 8 in October 2008, a surprise to many who would have assumed that this community would be more conservative on sexuality issues (McLaughlin 2008; Wong et al. 2011).
When our church members go out, they are harassed by members of other churches. They say: “Oh, you Episcopalians, you have a homosexual bishop! And homosexual priests! Do you really believe in Jesus? Do you really believe in the Bible?” These issues cause my church members really not to be able to withstand it. And to our evangelistic ministry, it has definitely a huge impact.

Taking on CCU leadership shortly after Mui, Kwan said, ‘I still support Proposition 8, because even though I am in the middle, I tend to the right because in the traditional morality, I think like this. This is my position. I always tell my bishop this’ (Franco Kwan, personal communication, 7 July 2011). For Kwan, then, an essential Chineseness trumped his theological ambivalence about the matter.

Mmirroring the 2004 events, the Asian American ‘Yes on 8’ rallies featured buses that were rented for some 5000 suburban Cantonese evangelicals to commute to the rally sites. In San Francisco Chinatown, they stood in Portsmouth Square wearing red T-shirts that read ‘1 man + 1 woman,’ while holding ‘Yes on 8’ placards, chanting ‘Yes on 8,’ singing hymns like ‘Amazing Grace’ and ‘How Great Thou Art,’ and giving speeches about traditional families in Cantonese and Mandarin. These addresses mirrored Bill Tam’s pronouncements on the radio and television debates; one Cantonese pastor gave a secular psychological speech alleging that ‘children of homosexual parents, in their growing process, they will either not know a male figure called father or a female figure called mother’ (Outlook Video, 2008). While this rally took place, their views of ‘Asian American’ and ‘Christian’ were in turn countered by a No-on-8 counter-protest that surrounded them, organized by progressive Asian American groups such as API Equality, the Network for Religion and Justice, Pine United Methodist Church, and Buena Vista United Methodist Church, who chanted ‘Equality for All,’ ‘No on 8,’ and ‘God loves everyone!’ (Network for Religion and Justice, 2008). Following this demonstration, TFC organized a second rally at
Cupertino’s Memorial Park on October 19, for which buses were also provided for Cantonese evangelicals, some of whom had also attended the Chinatown demonstration. Held in English, Mandarin, and Korean, this rally presumed a more diverse crowd, though many Cantonese evangelicals attended. Five thousand demonstrators gathered at Memorial Park where they sang Christian hymns and heard English-language speeches from the Family Research Council’s Tony Perkins and ProtectMarriage.com’s Ron Prentice as well as Mandarin- and Korean-language addresses from Silicon Valley pastors. Following this gathering, the demonstrators reprised their 19th Avenue Sunset demonstration activities by proceeding down Stevens Creek Parkway calling for passing drivers to honk in support (CounterCounterCulture, 2008).

Though Proposition 8 narrowly passed on 8 November 2008 (52.3% yes, 47.7% no), the voting results map indicate that despite Tam’s activism, Asian Americans across California had been split on the initiative (51% no, 49% yes) (Jeung 2008), that Asian American religious communities in Southern California had voted 78% yes (Asian Pacific American Legal Center, 2008: 20), and that the six Bay Area counties had in fact overwhelmingly voted no on the initiative (see Figure 5.1). These divided results confirmed Tam’s earlier analysis in the San Jose Mercury News that both progressive and conservative versions of ‘Asian American’ ethnicities were vying for the chance to construct what ethnicity meant within Asian American communities, rebutting the arguments from either side that their understanding of ‘Asian American’ vis-à-vis family values was definitive and essential. Indeed, they demonstrate the point that this section has been making so far: the ‘model minority’ as the definitive meaning of Chineseness is in fact as constructed as its progressive and inclusive Asian American ideological counterpart. What
was at stake in the move from Project 10 to Proposition 8 was in fact the meaning of what it meant to be Chinese American, a universal proposition that could in turn be used to defend more narrowly conceived conservative or progressive religious liberties.

![Figure 5.1: Proposition 8 Vote by Bay Area County (California Secretary of State, 2008)](image)

### 5.2.2 Cantonese evangelical churches in a secular Cantonese counterpublic: interrogating the religious model minority

While the *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* case embarrassed Chinese American evangelicals as it ruled against Proposition 8, the question remains open as to whether Cantonese evangelicals themselves were in fact imposing private theological beliefs on the public sphere or whether they were attempting acts of secular translation into the model minority discourse. Indeed, this issue remained one of debate as I entered into the field. While the *Perry* case established that Tam *intended* to mobilize churches, it was ambiguous whether churches themselves had actually been mobilized. Indeed, the churches themselves were divided on this point. At one large, prominent Cantonese evangelical congregation in the South Bay, two pastors who were on staff during the Proposition 8 campaign gave vastly
contradictory answers about the church’s involvement. One pastor said that his pastoral presence at the rallies implied that the church as an institution supported the measure: ‘In my thinking, if I am the pastor of a church, then even if it is individual, I am at the same time representing the church to go.’ He explained that because ‘personally, my position comes from the Bible,’ he was under obligation to protect the private interests of his church, ‘so if the government wants to legislate it [same-sex marriage], I can express my opinion that it should be this way,’ for it would affect the way that he would teach pre-marital counseling courses and how he determined the church’s rental policy for weddings. However, by contrast, another staff worker who was at the same Silicon Valley church suggested that this emphasis on private space led that church not to take an official stand on Proposition 8:

Still it is not from the leadership level. I would even think during this time...that the leadership would not try to do anything too confrontational, up in the front line, even they feel that something ought to be done, they will do it at a more personal level. They will try to be safe, try to be more conservative. That has been always their kind of tactic.

Instead, framing it as a ‘biblical teaching,’ this staff member argued that the church might hint at its own position in unofficial ways, encouraging members to consider privately what they thought about the issue without commenting on the legislation itself. Indeed, as this minister revealed, the red T-shirts worn by the protesters, ‘actually it’s kind of created or designed by people in the church, but it’s not really like a church event.’ In this second interview, then, institutional involvement had to be ‘conservative’ whatever its official stance, that is, the ‘conservatism’ at work here operated with a covert strategic separation of official institutional backing and the engagement of individual members with the public

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51 Because neither one of these pastors was the senior pastor, neither of them speaks directly for the congregation, which in turn must be kept anonymous.
sphere, including those who had created the red ‘one man, one woman’ T-shirts worn by thousands at the rallies. While these two perspectives differ on the surface, they converge on how the church’s space was conceptualized: as a private site for religious practice that was being threatened by an encroaching public sphere.

That churches had hired buses to facilitate their members’ transportation to the 2004 and 2008 rallies was another prime source of debate over the extent to which churches as institutions had been involved. While it might be tempting to follow Wong and Iwamura’s (2007) and Han’s (2010) suggestions that conservative congregations are ideological breeding sites for socially conservative politics, both lay persons and pastors gave predominantly secular reasons for their public engagement. When a member of a focus group in Fremont said off-hand that her church had been bussed to the rallies, another participant replied:

Your churches went to the protest and bussed elderly people? I’m surprised... We really don’t know whether they were using their church’s names, though. I mean, you see the numerical strength there, but you just don’t know... To tell you the truth, in the first instance, our pastor disagreed with [going to the protest]. It’s not that he disagreed; he hoped he didn’t have to go. You know pastors, they don’t show their cards, they don’t do anything. We pressured him three times. We said: if you don’t go, no problem, we will join other churches. At this stage, he talked with the elders, and the elders had more of a heart to do it... He went with us. He stayed in the car; he didn’t want to go out. I mean, it’s still good. He drove. He’s willing to support our movement, but didn’t want to get involved. When it ended, he even took us out to dinner!

In this case, the respondent says that his pastor did not want to get involved in order to preserve his own neutrality. However, that he was pushed by his church members with the threat of ‘joining other churches’ suggests that other congregations had been mobilized, putting the pressure on him to join because he was part of this larger Chinese church circle. Similarly, Pastor Liu Tong, the senior pastor at the huge River of Life Christian Center in
Santa Clara, told me that their church had refused to officially endorse the Proposition 8 activism, which was ‘a very courageous move, let me tell you, because all the Chinese churches are criticizing us’ (Liu Tong, personal communication, 27 June 2011).\textsuperscript{52} However, River of Life’s case again illustrates the difficulty of Chinese churches having been perceived to be mobilized during the Proposition 8 campaign, for during the Perry case, Liu Tong was interviewed by \textit{The New York Times} on their position on same-sex marriage (Shih, 2010). The journalists inferred from their traditional family stance that they automatically supported Proposition 8: ‘That’s why we wrote a letter to them! That, hey, you know, we’re really not happy about this article.’ Liu’s case highlights the difficulty of having a nuanced position during these political campaigns, for while his church’s official stance was well-known and criticized within Chinese church circles, that his congregation exclusively supported opposite-sex marriage caused them to be framed in the public sphere as officially supportive of Proposition 8, again causing them to feel like their privacy had yet again been disrespected.

In turn, my research participants rejected the notion that congregations were top-down authoritarian structures where pastors telling congregations to protest would lead to automatic mobilization. As Jeff, a mid-thirties male participant in my Silicon Valley focus group, answered my question about whether pastors had mobilized their churches, he said:

\begin{quote}
Let’s think about it in a simpler way. When the pastor calls on people to serve, how many people really will go and respond? Like this is a simple response, taking on
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{52} River of Life Christian Center (ROLCC) is a predominantly Mandarin-speaking congregation. However, of their 2000 members, Pastor Liu Tong noted that there were six Cantonese-language fellowship groups and a Cantonese retreat, in addition to the fact that he himself could speak fluent Cantonese. While ROLCC is not a Cantonese-speaking evangelical congregation by any stretch of the imagination, it holds significant influence among Chinese Christians in the Bay Area, both Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking, because of its size, the fluidity of its membership, and Pastor Liu’s regular appearances at prime time on Chinese-language commercial slots on KTSF Channel 26.
our consensus: if once the pastor says something and everyone is so united to do it, God’s kingdom would flourish so much more! [group laughter]

That Jeff appeals to ‘service’ suggests that congregation members saw public activism as part of internal congregational volunteering. However, he also highlighted that this volunteerism was, in a word, voluntary, stemming from individual agency, not pastoral coercion. Instead, as voluntary subjects within congregations discussed these social developments, it was their common points of conversation that facilitated mobilization when events like Traditional Family Day on 19th Avenue in 2004 and the Proposition 8 rallies in 2008 were promoted. This framework in turn meant that hiring busses was a simple matter of convenience. At the Silicon Valley focus group, Mrs. Ng expressed that she would have gone regardless of whether transportation was provided. Saying that it was ‘very positive’ for her pastor to take a stand as an individual citizen, she noted that she had reflected as an American citizen on the issues because she had heard about them first on television, not at church:

If your reflective ability is strong enough, tell you the truth, even if the church had not organized a whole bus to tell us to go, I would think about going along with some of my church fellowship members because I don’t even know the place. ‘And even if you don’t know the place,’ they said, ‘we’ll give you a ride there.’

In other words, Mrs. Ng’s reflections were initially shaped less by the church and more by her personal understanding of current issues disseminated to her from the secular media. Having formed an opinion that converged with the sentiments of those in her church, she found it convenient that—with the pressure of fellow church members—buses were rented that facilitated her individual political expression in public space.

In turn, slippages between ‘evangelical Christian’ and its more universalizing stand-in, the ‘Asian American model minority,’ illustrate how secular the theological orientations
in Bay Area Cantonese evangelical activism were. One Fremont focus group member spoke about how her husband, who was not an evangelical, supported Proposition 8: ‘My husband doesn’t always care because he is a non-believer, but he thought we should support Proposition 8. Maybe it’s because of his conscience.’ Another participant, Mrs. Lee, commented, ‘It’s because we are Christian and Chinese. It’s hard to accept homosexuality, and as a Christian, it’s not right, and we do not want our second generation to be like this, against the natural.’ In other words, one did not have to be an evangelical to understand the universal implications that the failure of Proposition 8 might have; one simply had to be Chinese. Likewise, in a document from Bill Tam’s deposition, Tam discusses opposition to some Asian American council members in San Jose who voted against ‘Internet porn filters in San Jose Libraries’ despite ‘a lot of pressure from the Christian community’ (emphasis mine): ‘God arranged me to sit next to one of the Asian councilman, Kensen Chu. I told him I was for installing porn filters in libraries and asked him why he voted it down. He was shocked and looked very tense’ (Tam, 2009: 1). Again, Tam slips between ‘Christian’ and ‘Asian American.’ On the one hand, he tells his Cantonese evangelical readers that he had mobilized evangelicals to pressure their secular politicians on the issue of pornographic filters. However, that he calls out Kensen Chu as an Asian suggests that regardless of Chu’s religious beliefs, his ‘no’ vote signified that he as an Asian American had even betrayed his own secular ‘Asian’ family values, never mind the voices of private religious citizens.

These examples suggest that if Cantonese churches were ever officially involved in traditional sexuality activism, they were part of a larger secular Cantonese-speaking discussion in the Bay Area. In other words, secular translations into Chinese ‘model minority’ universality were not cloaking mechanisms for a theologically-motivated socially
conservative agenda. They were instead attempts to broaden a particular kind of Asian American influence on a secular public sphere. Traditional sexuality activism was not limited to the space of the church, but was part of a larger discussion happening primarily via Cantonese radio. On the day following the Proposition 8 elections, financial advisor and Christian organization leader Lam Sau Wing commented on his secular radio show, *MoneyRadio*, that Barack Obama’s presidential election was ‘disappointing,’ but the passage of Proposition 8 was cause for ‘celebration.’ Arguing that Obama’s benefit ‘rice-distributing’ platform would soon cause him to ‘bow his head’ to the ‘realistic circumstances’ of the neoliberal economy, Lam followed by saying, ‘We want to thank the listeners who heard our program and went out to vote Yes on Proposition 8 and those who advertised and campaigned for it.’ Taking responsibility for promoting Proposition 8 on his show, Lam expressed relief that though California went for Obama, it gave him ‘cause for hope’ to see that California would stop homosexuals from ‘dismantling our one man, one woman marriage’ (SW Lam, 2008). Mirroring this claim, Cantonese radio host David Pang suggested that he had been dismissed from his post on the secular radio after 2008 ostensibly because of budget cuts, but also because he had promoted Proposition 8 on his show. So too, Bill Tam told me that he also had a secular Cantonese radio show called ‘Conscience for a Minute and a Half’ that aired during rush hour that addressed parenting issues and politics:

So with that, I’m trying to reshape how people think. It doesn’t matter they are Christian or non-Christian—as long as they are...listening to the radio, I put it at the rush hour when they get out of work, turn on the radio, and then there’s me talking about certain things.

In other words, there was a concerted effort in the secular Cantonese media to advertise Proposition 8 for Cantonese voters. While some may decry evangelical participation in the
media airwaves, focus group members in Fremont were quick to note that there was also a purely secular radio host on AM 1450, Yeung Kwong, who opposed Obama with a small-government agenda:

**Mr. Lee:** There is a very influential Cantonese radio host on AM 1450, Yeung Kwong. He opposes Obama. He puts his show online. His opposition to Obama makes a lot of sense. We doubt he is a Christian.

**Mr. Wong:** The way he talks, he doesn’t look like a Christian. He uses very fierce language.

However, as a female participant at another Fremont focus group remarked, ‘Because I listen to him on the radio. You have to listen to him, there’s no choice, because at 2:15 PM, there’s only Cantonese news...he speaks Cantonese on the radio. The tone isn’t very good, though, because it’s vulgar and provocative.’ In other words, Yeung Kwong was not considered a Christian because of his lack of civility. However, because his was the only Cantonese show on the radio between 2 and 4 PM, this opportunity gave him a virtual monopoly to influence Cantonese listeners with *secular* conservative values. That radio hosts like Lam Sau Wing, David Pang, and Bill Tam (who were Christians), as well as Yeung Kwong (a secular person), were promoting similar ideologies suggested that both were making an impact on a Cantonese counterpublic unbounded by religion. Indeed, recalling the earlier discussion on the 2004 and 2008 rallies, radio host David Pang emphasized to me that when he invited Bill Tam and Thomas Wang onto his show, they all knew that the program was a *secular* one, appealing to a broad Cantonese audience rather than a theologically sectarian one. In other words, it was this Chinese American conversation that influenced discussions within evangelical congregations, making the claim that churches as institutions were mobilized difficult to substantiate, for it would be just as valid to say that Chinese Americans as individuals were mobilized by their counterpublic media. That some
of these individuals gathered in churches meant simply that gathering with fellow congregational members for political activism was an act of convenience.

5.2.3 Cantonese counterpublic activism: school district rezoning

Within the ‘model minority’ construction of Chinese American identity, education became a key word as individual Cantonese Protestants opposed school district rezoning in their capacity as private citizens. During my ethnographic fieldwork period, I sat in on a general meeting at a large church in the South Bay. Its pastor announced the planting of a second church campus in Pleasanton in an effort to reach Contra Costa County cities like Danville, San Ramon, and Pleasanton, where, as the pastor observed, Chinese American communities, especially Cantonese-speakers, were growing because of the high performances of their school districts. As many of my interviewees and focus group members noted, new Chinese Americans and their churches tended to congregate in school districts with higher Academic Performance Index (API) scores, which in turn made the property values of those neighbourhoods higher (see chapter 6).

While these church planting and private residential strategies may seem apolitical, these sites of residence became politicized whenever school district lines were redrawn, often to implement racial desegregation.53 One such conflict occurred from 1999 to 2001

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53 I take this as purely coincidental, but it is remarkable to note that a key plank of Proposition 8’s defendant-intervenors’ appeals case as argued by their attorney, Charles Cooper, in the Ninth Circuit in Perry v. Brown (2011) and in their request for writ of certiorari to the United States Supreme Court in Hollingsworth v. Perry (2013) relies on Crawford v. Board of Education (1982). In this case, the United States Supreme Court found that while the Los Angeles Unified School District was right to prepare a desegregation plan, it was constitutional for concerned parents to pass Amendment 1 in 1979 to prevent mandatory pupil reassignment and cross-district bussing. Cooper used the arguments in Crawford to show that while Proposition 8 took away the rights of same-sex couples to marry as was allowed in the California Supreme Court’s In re Marriage cases (2008), there was legal precedent for citizens being able to take away rights that had previously been given if they deemed that they exceeded the equal protection clause in the United States Constitution’s
in Fremont, where the school board deliberated over whether to redraw district lines directing students who attended the over-crowded Weibel Elementary School away from the high-achieving Mission San Jose High School. Forming the Fremont School Alliance, predominantly Asian American parents packed the school board’s public hearings to recommend alternate proposals to prevent their students from being funneled into the less prestigious Irvington High School while devaluing the ‘premium price’ (as one parent said) that they had paid for their houses and dissuading other ‘successful people’ from buying in the area (Koury, 1999: 1B; see Banducci, 1999). The conflict escalated in 2000 as the school district looked in earnest at these proposals, culminating in a stay-home protest by students at various Fremont elementary schools (Hull, 2000a), three lawsuits that delayed the school district changes until 2001 (Akizuki, 2000b), and a grassroots coalition that petitioned for the Mission San Jose District to secede from the Fremont Unified School District, an effort that was ultimately struck down by the California Board of Education (Akizuki, 2000a; Hull, 2000b, 2000c, 2001). Indeed, debates about racism, segregation, and property prices haunted the whole conflict between the Asian American parents and the various educational boards they contested, as the Alameda County Board of Education and the California Board of Education argued that the Mission San Jose District secession plan would segregate the 60 percent of Asians living in the area, an allegation vigorously rebutted by the parents’ lawyer who argued that what was in fact allegedly racist was the sentiment that the new district would be invalid because of its potentially high concentration of wealthy Asian Americans (Hull, 2000d). In short, concerned Asian

Fourteenth Amendment. It was thus fascinating to see that out of what seemed to be pure coincidence, concerned Cantonese evangelicals framed their misgivings about same-sex marriage in a broader educational framework that included protesting against anti-segregation redistricting actions.
American parents in Fremont interpreted proposals to desegregate the schools and mitigate overcrowding as racist policies themselves. In turn, the Weibel-Mission San Jose affair was not an isolated incident in the city; in the Ardenwood neighbourhood, focus group members told me that they had protested school district rezoning because (as in the Weibel incident) they interpreted it as racism that adversely affected their property prices. Mr. and Mrs. Lim recalled that as their youngest daughter was transitioning into middle school, a school redistricting initiative diverted her to a school that was further from their residence and with a lower achievement score. Mrs. Lim then joined in a petition campaign that was ultimately unsuccessful, noting that the neighbours who organized it were predominantly Chinese because, in her words, ‘the house prices never went up.’ Although those with whom I spoke about both the Weibel and Patterson incidents acknowledged that this had little to do with faith, one respondent at the Silicon Valley focus group articulated an interesting observation about these cases:

> But when we talk about the rezoning of district lines, it looks on the surface that it has nothing to do with matters of faith. But let me assume them to be malevolent here. If they are rezoning the district lines to exclude some Asian...then actually there is something not good happening here.

In other words, this respondent was saying that my inquiries into whether they ever protested anything along lines of faith could be redirected into answers about whether they mobilized against policies they interpreted to be anti-Asian. Invoking again the elision between Christianity and Chineseness, this response suggests not only that racism was conceptualized as an infringement on Asian American property rights, but that fighting for race was in the same category as asserting religious liberties.

In the San Francisco Unified School District, the primary mobilizers in the protests against school desegregation in San Francisco were precisely the same activists as in the
Proposition 8 campaign. Paralleling the Fremont cases, the San Francisco Unified School District announced in 1999 that it would introduce a lottery system in which students would be assigned schools in the city that were different from their place of residence, bussing the students across school districts to mix racially-segregated neighbourhoods. This measure was met with vehement opposition by concerned parents, who in turn were organized by the interfaith Bay Area Organization, Cantonese radio host David Pang, and Bill Tam. The CCU’s Rev. Franco Kwan was a key player in the Bay Area Organization, an interfaith social concern network that organized for immigrant rights and employment opportunities. Kwan saw working for Chinese property rights over against school district rezoning as integral to migrant justice issues, for, as Kwan said, ‘The school district, because of the issue of economics, we help them to fight, the Chinese who like the schools, we will pay a lot of money to buy a school close to that house.’ Summoning the Bay Area Organization’s energies, Kwan argued that while he understood the logic of racial desegregation, the policy was unjust toward Asian American parents who had worked to buy expensive properties and pay property taxes precisely to support their school district:

We think it’s not very good. We say that their ideal is very good, but it makes it so that the children, well, we work so hard to buy a house there, and now they have to take a bus for over an hour to go to school, so why do I have to spend so much money to live there? Because each house, they have to pay their tax to support the school. So if you pay the money for the school and your own kids can’t go to the school, what use is that?

While Kwan organized interfaith religious leaders against this initiative, radio host David Pang used his secular Cantonese radio show to rally support behind Bill Tam, who was protesting this measure as a concerned parent. As Pang recalled, it was this school redistricting issue that first put him in touch with Tam prior to their collaborative work on sexuality issues:
Actually, I knew his organization for many, many years, because in the past, we collaborated a lot, because he started out at the neighbourhood school level when the children needed to bus to school, to make sure that not all of the school districts were only populated by Chinese, we helped him to go against this thing. So it became that when there were changes in the curriculum, the gay issue, and all the rest of those things, whenever he needs to be interviewed and all of those issues to let more people know.

For Pang, the connection between school redistricting and the sexuality issues were clear: they were about Chinese American concerns about the quality of the schools. Indeed, as both Kwan and Pang observed, the Chinese Americans for whom they spoke with both religious and secular voices elevated education as their primary rubric for activism.

Change the educational system, one might say, and there would be concerned Chinese American parents deriding the changes as racist.

Educational quality in turn became tied to sexuality issues because the latter were seen as ideological distractions from education in the hard sciences. Indeed, one could say that the introduction of the sexuality issues was a shift as severe as redrawing the school's district lines, for it drew the purpose of education away from math and science learning toward ideological indoctrination. Speaking of research that he conducted after the Project 10 activism, Bill Tam decried how ‘education is just a way of training the future generation how to think, and actually, the liberal agenda is in the education system.’ Qualifying his critique of American education as ‘not in English, reading’ (i.e. those standards were high), Tam remarked on ‘how poor the US students are performing academically compared with international standards. We are always at the bottom in science and math...we are way at the bottom, with all that spending.’ Observing that his children ‘were already in a very good school in San Francisco, Cedar is one of the tops,’ he complained about how government spending on education had only led to a form of liberal education that he
called ‘propaganda,’ a curriculum that both he and his fellow immigrant parental friends found less than desirable:

They go so slow, you know, they just treat the kids like they are done, repeating teaching addition, subtraction, first grade, second grade, third grade, still in addition and subtraction, whereas I came from Hong Kong—we would have gone to fractions and, you know, they are still doing that, and then I said, wow, what is this? And then I have some Russian friends who immigrate from Russia: they say, what are they doing here in this country? [laughs] In Russia they would have gone far ahead, then I realized, boy, this is so lousy, you know, the education, but then they give you all kinds of things, the social engineering things, and a lot of money is wasted. I found out how they waste money, and lots of corruptions.

Within this framework, sexuality was only a catalyst for further activism by concerned parents. Re-reading Tam’s actions in the book-banning case as well as his opposition to same-sex marriage, what was framing his activities was the perception that Chinese American families valued the quality of hard scientific education in rigorous schools for which they paid an exorbitant price for housing in particular areas. These math and science curricula, he suggested, should be vastly more highly valued than the soft knowledge of the liberal arts, particularly as they were literally paying for the quality of their children’s education. To add sexuality to this educational equation was thus to undermine completely the quality of these schools, setting off concerned parental firestorms equivalent to the activism that opposed school re-districting.

Indeed, concerned parental opposition to sexuality education as devaluing the quality of schools was exactly what happened in their campaigns against Senate Bill 48 (SB-48), the ‘Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act’ in 2010. Introduced in the California state senate to mandate the inclusion of disability and LGBTQ+ contributions in public social science curricula, SB-48 catalyzed grassroots challenges against its purported introduction of propaganda elements into schools. While Tam (2011)
posted a petition to stop SB-48 on the TFC website because it would ‘give praise to homosexuals’ contributions but not mention its disadvantages,’ a number of local activities were also undertaken by Cantonese evangelicals. First, prior to SB-48 at the state level, some Cantonese evangelicals told me that municipal school boards had already been experimenting with curriculum changes since 2009, such as Curriculum 9 in Alameda. I spoke with a Cantonese evangelical pastor whose wife, an Alameda social worker, opposed the curriculum changes. Joining an intercultural concerned parental coalition organized by the socially conservative, non-Chinese Pacific Justice Institute, this social worker served as a school board campaign manager to an African American candidate, privately praying with a multicultural group of Christians while making a secular case against LGBTQ+ indoctrination in public schools. These activities were not limited to Alameda; in another city, Fremont, focus group members said that they regularly monitored school libraries to make sure LGBTQ+ materials were hidden from their children, even while the state required that they be accessible: ‘It is as if you are ready to be audited,’ one mother said, ‘you have to have that. It’s the wisdom of the librarian to hide it so that no kid can have access to it. I heard that. You have to have that, but you don’t have to show them.’ Another member of that group clarified the issue, ‘My point is that they are in fact not ready; I mean, it’s OK from a sex education standpoint, because whether or not we oppose, these people will be like that. But the kids are not yet mature enough to process this information.’ When SB-48 came about, these parents circulated petitions both in Chinese churches (as seen by many key informants and focus group members in various churches) and at Chinese public events, such as at the Oakland Chinatown’s Chinese New Year Celebration in 2011 where some Cantonese evangelicals had a booth to collect Chinese signatures. As East Bay focus
group members recalled, they targeted Chinese Americans attending the fair ‘because it was a Chinese fair,’ though they recalled, ‘There were two white people yelling at us saying, “No fair!”’, again performing a slippage among their various roles as evangelicals, as concerned parents, and as Chinese Americans. Because the overall campaign failed to collect 500,000 signatures—indeed, the Cantonese evangelicals at the Chinatown fair said that they only collected 100—SB-48 was signed into law in the summer of 2011.\textsuperscript{54}

I have thus attempted to demonstrate in this section that the ideologies and public practices of Cantonese evangelicals in the Bay Area were often secular, despite their theocratic language. Compounding this secularity was often a re-interpretation of the term ‘Asian American’ as referring to a model minority whose traditional values were not only under siege by progressive forces of irrationality, but who were actively being victimized as a racialized group into a position of precarious insecurity as their children were the primary targets. Compared with the opposition to school district rezoning, the demonstrations and political action against same-sex marriage can be read as this self-described victimized group pushing back on what they deemed as the race-based erosion

\textsuperscript{54} I would be remiss if I did not at least mention the activism of Cantonese evangelicals (including Bill Tam) against a medical cannabis dispensary in San Francisco’s Sunset District in 2011, a neighbourhood whose population was 49\% Asian American (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Organized by District 4 Supervisor Carmen Chu, the activism opposed the entry of Greg Schoepp’s Bay Area Compassion Health Center on Taraval Street next to the Chinese Gospel Church. Second-generation Chinese American and Cantonese-speaking evangelist pastor, the Rev. Johnson Chiu, offered his premises at Hope Evangelical Free Church (an English-speaking, but ‘90 percent’ Cantonese church) helped to organize the neighbourhood to attend public hearings at San Francisco City Hall, eventually resulting in a second hearing denying Schoepp’s conditional use permit. According to statements at the public hearing, Sunset’s Chinese Americans opposed the dispensary on the grounds that it was close to schools and transit areas with youth and elderly persons, generating 3,257 individual signatures, letters, and emails to Chu’s office from Sunset alone in opposition to the MCD (2,228 from District 4 and 728 from Inner Sunset) that contrasted the paltry 417 signatures of support for the MCD (300 of whom were not from the Sunset). As Johnson Chiu noted, the denial of the permit was seen as a broad victory for Sunset’s Asian Americans, an effort that was aided in large part by the Chinese churches in the neighbourhood (Johnson Chiu, personal communication, 15 Jun. 2011). This further case would extend my argument into Bill Tam’s interest in public safety issues, a point that is too complex to develop fully because it would also have to explore his collaboration with Carmen Chu’s office.
of their private spheres. Some, but not all, Cantonese congregations became drawn into this activism as part of their broader involvement in a Cantonese counterpublic, though the involvement of churches as institutions varied from congregation to congregation. Their activities may have deployed theocratic language, but their intention was to protect their private spheres from the invasion of irrational forces from the public sphere. To this end, ‘Christian’ was often collapsed with ‘Chineseness,’ not as a ploy to defend the church but as a way of universalizing the conversation to more effectively mobilize a silent majority defined by race, not necessarily religion. This appeal to a collective ethnicity in turn suggests that these efforts should be read as secular, enhancing the power of Chinese Americans to defend themselves against the putative marginalization of a racializing secular public sphere.

5.3 Vancouver: secular frustrations with the ‘ridiculousness’ of human rights

As I began my field work in April 2011, an email circulated among Cantonese-speaking evangelicals in Vancouver regarding a new sexual orientation bill. Introduced by openly gay Burnaby-Douglas MP Bill Siksay, Bill C-389 proposed to amend the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to ensure equality for bisexual and transgendered persons. The email stated in both its Chinese and English versions, ‘If you are concerned not only about economic, tax, health care and other social services but also about where different political parties stand on moral issues; then please read on for your reference.’ Referencing C-389, it dubbed the proposed constitutional amendment the ‘Bathroom Bill’ (or in stricter Canadian translation, the ‘Washroom Bill’), alleging that it ‘would potentially allow men who say they are women to use women’s washrooms and vice versa, increasing public
safety risk in public facilities.’ The ‘Washroom Bill’ became the talk of Cantonese evangelicals throughout my Vancouver fieldwork and the subject of pastor-led prayer meetings and peer-to-peer conversation opposing what they saw as its ludicrousness. To be sure, the language of the ‘Washroom Bill’ was not limited to Cantonese evangelicals, but was widely proliferated among conservative circles in Canada, including the socially conservative youth movement 4MyCanada (McDonald, 2010). However, within Cantonese evangelical circles, it highlighted for many that ‘Western’ Canadian society’s constitutional fixation on ‘human rights’ was descending into nihilism, bolstering in turn the ideological merits of a universally ‘Chinese’ traditional family system that remained part of a rational sexual majority. It was this familial system, my research participants contended, that was under threat of invasion by an overly progressive ‘Western’ public sphere. I thus contend in this section that a majority of them became frustrated by human rights legislative moves that included—but were not limited to—sexuality in the 1990s and 2000s, pitting their rational Chineseness in contrast to these what they termed ‘irrational’ human rights maneuvers.

Charting the geography of that frustration, this section demonstrates that the seemingly united Cantonese evangelical opposition to these ‘human rights’ initiatives was often beset by internal Chinese Canadian evangelical fractures. It first follows the ambivalent attempts of mainline Cantonese Protestant pastors, the Canadian Alliance for Social Justice and Family Values Association (CASJAFVA), and the Christian Social Concern Fellowship (CSCF) to mobilize Cantonese evangelicals as churchgoing religious practitioners and private citizens for traditional family values activism. While there have

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55 In 2013, the bill was logged as C-279 and was introduced by the NDP MP for Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca (BC), Randall Garrison. It has passed its third reading and has come onto the Senate floor.
been notable achievements in mobilizing thousands of Cantonese evangelicals to protest, each of these organizations has in turn been labeled overly secular, frustrating their attempts to definitively shape the conversation. However, to be called secular by Cantonese evangelicals does not assume that the Cantonese evangelicals themselves always operated with self-consciously theological motives. Indeed, many articulated to me the same tropes that the traditional family values organizations had pushed—that human rights had been taken to a ‘ridiculous’ extreme—but that they felt that church spaces were inappropriate sites in which to conduct secular activism. Instead, they preferred to express their concerns as secular, private citizens, sometimes even joining CASJAFVA and CSCF in public demonstrations as individual concerned parents (not as Christians). These secularizing tendencies in turn shaped how Cantonese evangelicals saw everything they opposed through the secular lenses of human rights being taken to extremes, including within the same category the liberalization of drug policy on the one hand and the ecclesial fractures of the Anglican Communion in the local Diocese of New Westminster on the other. In other words, the irony in Vancouver is that while the geography of frustration hinges on the consistent inability for Cantonese evangelicals to be mobilized by any given family values organization, it was not because Cantonese evangelicals understood themselves to be theologically constituted. Instead, it was because they saw themselves as individual citizens reading the world, viewing deviations from their familial norms as an overreach of a human rights discourse that would be detrimental to public safety and private freedoms.
5.3.1 Mobilizing apathetic evangelicals? Secular Cantonese family values
organizations

This Cantonese evangelical opposition to the recognition of sexual orientation rights had an ignominious start, for there was little support within Cantonese evangelical communities to intervene in the public square in the early 1990s. Conservative mainline clergy such as the Lutheran pastor Rev. Lo Sek Wai and Anglican priest Rev. Stephen Leung, as well as evangelicals like Ambassador for Christ’s Benny Chin, Chinese Family for Christ’s Stanley Ng, and Chinese Christians in Action’s (CCIA) Bill Chu, attempted to forestall the proposal of Bill C-41 in 1994 and 1995, an act to amend Canada’s criminal code to impose harsher penalties on crimes motivated by animus for a victim’s sexual orientation. As they had broadly supported the successful candidacy of Liberal MP Raymond Chan on the basis of a human rights platform (see chapter 7), they enlisted his help in organizing roundtable discussions with Cantonese evangelical clergy. As the Rev. Edward Lee remembers, there were about seven clergy present, most of them trained at Regent College, pressing Chan to answer the question, ‘How do you know?’ in relation to whether it was possible to determine whether crimes were committed out of animus for sexual orientation and whether that ambiguity justified increasing punitive measures on such hate crimes (Edward Lee, personal communication, 24 May 2011). These pastors also wrote columns supporting traditional family values in the Chinese daily newspaper Ming Pao, arguing that as Chinese Christian clergy, they were concerned for the ongoing secular well-being of Canadian civil society if it embarked on this social experiment. In his key informant interview, Lo Sek Wai explained that they had deployed a classic public-private division in these articles:
We are not saying that those who have homosexual behaviour are criminals, we are not saying that—this is their personal life. But we say that there are many, many hidden costs, social costs, there, that we warn the people that once the traditional view of marriage and family is changed, the Canadian society will collapse. I would say—we did use the word ‘collapse.’

However, even as these clergy attempted to make their voices heard in public discourse, Lo recalled that other pastors and their congregations often rebuffed their efforts as irrelevant to their congregational work of evangelism and teaching the Bible (see chapter 4). In turn, Raymond Chan voted in favour of C-41, saying in the parliamentary discussion on the bill:

I have worked hard to correct the spread of misinformation by explaining to religious communities Bill C-41 will not prevent churches and religious instructors from talking about their beliefs regarding the morality of homosexuality. The bill is not creating any new hate crimes or expanding hate provisions in law. (Chan, 1995).

Rejecting also the claim that 'by not defining the term sexual orientation, Bill C-41 will open legal loopholes that will legitimize the actions of paedophiles,’ Chan in turn rejected the claims of the roundtables that the mainline clergy had organized, the beginning (according to many) of his long political downfall (see chapter 7).

By 1997, more Cantonese evangelicals in Vancouver began to feel that these new sexual politics were associated with an overly progressive government. 1996 saw the passage of Bill C-33, an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination along lines of sexual orientation. In that same year, the successful British Columbian provincial election of the left-leaning New Democratic Party (NDP) signaled to Cantonese migrants from Hong Kong that the government would take pro-union stances that would less-than-favourable to business (see Skelton, 2004; Ley, 2010). In particular, there was some concern that the coincidence of the passage of the federal bills on sexuality with the rise of the provincial NDP would lead to the erosion of traditional family values. For example, the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) passed a
resolution 'to eliminate homophobia and heterosexism’ within the British Columbian public school system, which coincided with a decision by the Young New Democrats’ Gay and Lesbian Policy Issue Committee to urge the provincial government to develop an action plan which ‘involves the necessary curricular changes to promote the education of issues surrounding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered youth.’ Meanwhile, parental concerns were raised when Surrey kindergarten teacher James Chamberlain advocated that the Surrey School Board approve three children books featuring two ‘moms’ and two ‘dads’ as normative. Karen Chan, a writer for the Chinese Christian newspaper Truth Monthly with her column Caring About All Things, told me that when these events occurred, she wrote to ‘principals, the BCTF, educational boards, school boards,’ after which she launched a petition campaign among Chinese Christian leaders throughout the Lower Mainland through her large personal network, leveraging influential pastoral connections to the Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Ministerial Fellowship (VCEMF) as well as other concerned citizens from the secular arena. Within a month and a half, she had collected some 2,000 signatures. She also joined a rally organized by the Citizens’ Research Institute on 7 June to decry the passage of the sexual orientation bill at Vancouver’s Downtown’s Robson Square, an event that was also joined by Bill Chu’s Chinese Christians in Action (CCIA). The event turned violent as the concerned parent demonstrators

Indeed, Truth Monthly became a politically conservative forum of sorts following the passage of the C-41 and C-33 sexual orientation bills, as its contributors paid attention to the left-leaning British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) in 1996 and 1997. The events also coincided with a lawsuit that Langley’s Trinity Western University (TWU) filed against BCTF’s guild, the British Columbia College of Teachers, when they were denied accreditation because a ‘covenant’ that all faculty, students, and staff signed prohibited homosexual practices. A legal battle that began in the mid-1990s and continued until 2001, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of TWU because it held that BCCT had improperly conducted itself as more of a human rights tribunal than a professional guild. While Cantonese evangelicals were not party to the suit, the events were actively reported in Truth Monthly and informed the views of Cantonese evangelicals at the Robson Square Rally and in its ensuing events that education was an important culture war battleground.
(according to Karen Chan, ’Ming Pao said that we had 1500 people’) were surrounded by about a hundred ‘homosexuals’ (likely a mixed crowd with allies) who shouted and threw sand at them, while, as Bill Chu alleged in an August press conference, the police stood by and did nothing (Torobin, 1997). Following this event, Chu also approached the VCEMF to ask for their renewed support, a request that was denied: ‘Bill Chu, you worry too much!’ the pastors told him: ‘And so I said, “You know, I couldn’t do anything,” and you know what? Pretty soon it become law and then they throw up their hands and say, oh, they are oppressing the Christians! [laughs] The same group!’ (Bill Chu, personal communication, 20 May 2011).

Foregoing religious support from the ministerial fellowship, Cantonese evangelical family values activism developed instead along secular lines, focusing on contesting the state’s intrusion into the private sphere. Having watched the standoff following the June 7 rally on television, lawyer K-John Cheung lamented the chaos that was happening ‘here...in a democratic country in North America,’ as, ‘we are looking at freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, what happened to those?’ (K-John Cheung, personal communication, 26 May 2011). In response, Cheung joined Karen Chan to convene the Canadian Alliance for Social Justice and Family Values Association (CASJAFVA) in October 1997, a secular organization predominantly composed of Cantonese evangelical lay members, with only two pastors attending in support, Pentecostal pastor Anthony Yeung and Christ Church of China’s first evangelical pastor-turned Mennonite church planter Rev. David Poon.

CASJAFVA framed their concerns under the secular ideological banner of preserving ‘parental rights,’ that is, the sovereign rights of parents to raise and educate their own
children apart from state interference, preferring instead traditional families often modeled on Chinese Canadians. Outlining their concerns in ninety web quarterlies that were published between Autumn 1997 and Summer 2012, CASJAFVA mounted a concerted English- and Chinese-language campaign against versions of the Canadian state that allegedly interfered with families. In February 1998, they organized an ‘I Love Canada’ event covered by a variety of media outlets, including Truth Monthly, featuring Karen Chan, K-John Cheung, and political commentator Thomas Leung Insing talking about how the Chinese community could become more involved in national politics, especially by exercising their parental rights. Within this framework, they continued to protest against the introduction of sexuality education into British Columbian curricula at a widely publicized protest in front of the Surrey School Board offices in March 1998 on the grounds that the unclear definition of ‘sexual orientation’ could in time make room for the entry of many forms of alternate sexualities besides homosexuality, including pedophilia and bestiality. In 2002, CASJAFVA also organized a protest against the British Columbia College of Teachers (BCCT) for the dismissal of Chris Kempling, a public high school teacher who had written his critical views of homosexuality to various media outlets. Expanding their protest beyond charges that Kempling’s freedom of speech had been violated, CASJAFVA contended that these personal violations were due to the teachers’ union, the BCTF, controlling the guild association, the BCCT. In 2003, CASJAFVA also successfully collected 12,000 petitions for Conservative MP Vic Toews that opposed same-sex marriage, following up their petition with a downtown rally attended by 10,000 demonstrators (CASJAFVA 2012).
CASJAFVA broadened their interventions beyond sexuality, working in the legal arena against what Cheung perceived as the state’s policing of private familial affairs through its foster child program. Attributing these injustices to the corruption of an NDP government, they began a forum in July 1998 surrounding the case of a Vietnamese Chinese migrant, Mrs. Leung, who faced a custody challenge when her five-year-old daughter showed up to school with bruises on her arm because she had been playing with her two brothers and had fallen from a bed. CASJAFVA staged a protest when the children’s ministry removed her child, demonstrating outside of NDP Premier Glen Clark’s office and leveraging the help of the Chinese media, successfully appealing her case after two years. In 2009, CASJAFVA also took on the case of a non-Chinese family, the Baynes, whose children were taken from them by child services after their daughter was hospitalized after an accident while playing with her brothers. Galvanizing Cantonese evangelical support through email drives, CASJAFVA mounted a concerted Chinese- and English-language campaign to return the children to the Baynes under the rubric of parental rights unjustly infringed upon by an overly zealous state. In short, that CASJAFVA’s agenda of ‘parental rights’ enveloped more of these foster care cases indicates that their concerns lay beyond sexuality. Instead, their activism revolved around defending the private sphere from the intrusion of the state.

However, CASJAFVA was secular and this in turn led to asymmetrical relations between the organization and Chinese churches. One pastor said: ‘Maybe for me, I think it’s a bit radical to some extent... I think they go to another extreme...like a pressure group people, like we feel they are a bit perceived as a radical, as a “fundamentalist,” they attack people openly.’ So too, a younger respondent also active in various socially conservative
movements said that she ‘purposely’ did not want to be associated with CASJAFVA because she remembered ‘seeing one newsletter that—it was making fun of gay people—and I was really upset because if gay people saw this, they would be so turned off by this and they would say more things about how Christians bash us, how Christians don’t like us,’ recalling that a pastor at her church echoed her feelings and stopped the newsletter’s distribution at the church. In other words, these respondents felt that the introduction of these secular tropes of contestation into the church would radically re-orient the church into a hostile space. Moreover, as some in a Coquitlam focus group argued, this secularity had strayed into interfaith waters. For example, Mr. Chan noted that CASJAFVA had become ‘very broad,’ evidenced in a recent fundraising dinner where the auction featured Buddhist statues on sale. Invoking the separation of Christianity from other religions, Mr. Chan said that he could not ‘touch’ the Buddhist statues for fear of sacral defilement, adding that while ‘their motivations are very good, but when you’re open to all, you include all kinds of different kinds of things. If your goal is very focused, and you’re open to all, then it’s no good.’ For Mr. Chan, CASJAFVA’s secularity and broad alliances had made the organization lose its mandate to fight for Cantonese evangelical concerns, having included too many disparate religious elements in a classic expression of what Taylor (2007) calls the self-fashioned mélange of new religious subjectivities in a secular age. In short, my respondents evaluated CASJAFVA’s secularity as having caused it to become both openly hostile to their opponents and to embrace a position of religious pluralism, ironically threatening to re-orient the very private familial and religious operations that they sought to defend.
As a result, the passage of the Civil Marriage Act (Bill C-250) in Canadian Parliament in 2005 to reinterpret marriage in Canada as gender-neutral provoked these activists to complain that it was precisely the apathy of Cantonese evangelical churches that partially led to this turn of events (see chapter 7). The legalization of same-sex marriage in turn led to the formation of the Christian Social Concern Fellowship (CSCF) by influential Cantonese evangelical leaders and pastors. Citing concern that Chinese evangelicals had not been involved in the prior activism as theological actors, CSCF sought to educate Chinese churches about pressing social issues, raising concerns that the state was increasingly behaving as an ideological police against their private family and church systems. As the Chinese Christian Mission’s (CCM) Angela Kan explained, CSCF was different from CASJAFVA because it attempted to mobilize pastors to have a stand, not just individual Christians (Angela Kan, personal communication, 2 May 2011). The Rev. Wayne Lo, a CSCF advisor who became the executive director in 2008, explained that it was after the failure of conservative activism against hate crime bills and same-sex marriage that CSCF was ‘endorsed and facilitated by the VCEMF to stand out, to let CSCF to stand out and to voice out on behalf of Christians’ (Wayne Lo, personal communication, 13 May 2011). In turn, CSCF was independent of the VCEMF, conceptualized more as an autonomous think-tank to raise current issues to the consciousness of Cantonese evangelical pastors. In turn, the Rev. Edwin Kong, CCM’s former chief executive officer, told me that CSCF was also independent of Cantonese evangelical faith-based organizations, even though CCM was ‘instrumental’ in its founding, as the initial events were held on CCM premises: ‘We deliberately do not want CCM to take it over and so that it won’t be owned by an organization. It’s easier for people to partake of things.’
Independent of both the ministerial fellowship and already-existing Christian organizations, CSCF used its autonomy to explore a variety of political topics in an attempt to educate Cantonese evangelicals as to how they might participate in democratic politics. Because of this need to permeate society, CSCF tackled political issues of a wider scope than sexuality issues. As its former administrative secretary Elaine Chun recalled, the initial meetings began after C-250 was passed, but quickly took on a variety of social issues, such as ‘tax issues, there was some Chinese Canadian history, and also we would encourage Chinese Christians to become elected officials, we would pray for Canada on every July 1, to pray for the nation and the Parliament.’ According to Chun, CSCF also invited speakers from Hong Kong to talk about participation in politics and created voting guides for Christians to compare the various parties’ platforms: ‘We compare their positions to the other ones—we never tell you who to vote for, but we tell you to compare, be made aware, make your choice, and then you study it. So we wanted to cultivate that atmosphere’ (Elaine Chun, personal communication, 3 May 2011). In other words, CSCF’s goal was to educate what they perceived as politically apathetic Cantonese evangelicals (especially their pastors) by demonstrating to them that their democratic voices could work in their own interest. New Testament scholar and CSCF participant Dr. Archie Hui gave a theological defence of these activities. Arguing that the twenty-first century situation was different from the merging of state and religion in the Old Testament (‘close to the Catholic,’ Hui said) as well as the totalitarian Roman Empire in the New Testament (‘like the Communists’), CSCF’s mandate was to articulate a position ‘in the middle of the two,’ for the different situation meant that ‘we must not live in either the Old Testament or in the New Testament’: ‘We must live in this democratic system, and the Bible’s principles are
about how we can influence this world, so if we can participate in politics, then why don’t we participate?’ (Archie Hui, personal communication, 12 May 2011). These comments demonstrate that the CSCF did not attempt a theocratic takeover of Canadian society, despite its emphasis on biblical values. Instead, it wanted to articulate to Cantonese evangelicals how they should re-think their theology in a more spatially ‘progressive’ way, that is, that Cantonese evangelicals should assert their theological values more clearly and regularly in the secular public sphere.

But for all of its emphasis on evangelical theology, CSCF’s ‘progressive’ theological re-imagination of Cantonese evangelical congregational theology closely imitated the rhetoric of CASJAFVA’s secular, anti-statist, pro-privacy positions over against human rights gone too far. In this framework, the sexuality issues again fell under a broader suspicion of human rights that allegedly threatened private freedoms. Taught at the CSCF’s Sunday schools by youth ministry Ambassadors for Christ’s Alan Yu, the specific lesson on sexuality focuses on correcting a public misperception of the right to marriage statement in the United Nations’ Declaration of Human Rights’s Article 16. Yu emphasized that there had to be a ‘boundary line’ between what was and was not marriage, or else ‘if you can remove the line from gender discrimination, then by the same argument, you can remove age discrimination, and you can remove number discrimination. It’s the same argument, you can remove these things.’ Repeating the arguments that the Cantonese mainline pastors and CASJAFVA had previously made, Yu asserted that this would be a slippery slope to ‘pedophilia’: ‘Then over ten years, then I accept pedophilia: then we move the line again? Then what will the society become? Then why do you need marriage? Maybe you don’t need marriage. This is the homosexual activists’ community agenda, I think, to go into
marriage to destroy marriage’ (Alan Yu, personal communication, 27 May 2011). Within this framework, then, it was the ‘homosexual activists’ who then unfairly discriminated against Christians, such as those fired from their professions (like Chris Kempling) because they did not acknowledge the validity of same-sex couples.

In turn, these allegations of privacy invasion need to be taken within the broader scope of CSCF’s engagements, for Yu’s single lesson was packaged within some sixteen classes in a full Sunday school course guest-taught at various churches. Wayne Lo forwarded to me a list of topics covered by the CSCF:

- Separation of Church & State;
- Participating in Politics;
- BC School Education;
- Drugs & Gangs;
- Abortion & Sex Ethics;
- Social Involvement with compassion;
- Euthanasia & Assisted Suicide;
- Witnessing God in the Public [Religious Freedom];
- Parental Rights in Canada;
- Marijuana and Gender Spectrum.  

As a pastor in Vancouver read out some of the names of CSCF speakers who guest-taught Sunday school at his church in 2008, it also became apparent that the CSCF membership contained viable political candidates for the Conservative Party and their ideology of privatization, such as Ronald Leung (who spoke on whether Christians could participate in politics; he became a Candidate for MP in Burnaby-Douglas in 2011), Alice Wong (on education in BC; she was a longtime candidate, first in Vancouver-Kingsway in 1999, then in Richmond in 2004, 2008, and 2011, victorious in the last two campaigns), Wong’s husband Enoch Wong (on separation of church and state; he has been deeply involved also in Thomas Leung’s Cultural Research Regeneration Society), and Ruth Ho (on euthanasia; but she was also a Conservative Party activist as a member of Real Women of Canada). As conservative politicians, these ‘social concern’ issues thus focused on the state’s violation of

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57 I am grateful to the Rev. Wayne Lo for this list, which he sent on 21 May 2012.
private freedoms in areas of sexuality, religion, family, education, and health.58

This message of evangelical political participation in order to push back on government overreach was in turn perceived by church members as secular, hampering the efforts of the CSCF. As one CSCF member related, she ‘encountered many difficulties’ because ‘many churches told us that they would not take sides, or that these things, if they prayed about it, it’s enough; God would exercise his sovereignty from his throne...What they do not see is that the whole environment will influence each person, influence even our children.’ Mirroring the complaints of CASJAFVA, much of the ire of the CSCF was directed toward the spatially conservative theologies of Cantonese evangelical pastors whose perceived apathy was allowing the government to invade their private spheres and indoctrinate their children; indeed, CSCF itself was originally founded to combat this complacency that had allegedly led to the passage of same-sex marriage in Canada.

Another CSCF member blamed the strict secular-religious divide to which many Cantonese evangelicals held: ‘That is the teaching—this is secular, this is worldly. Funbit waising [separated as holy]. I don’t know—separated holiness means that you’re still in the world, but not of the world, you’re still the salt and light of the world...and they label people doing social gospel.’ Another respondent blamed the apathy on a ‘retirement mentality,’ which in turn referred to what Ley and Kobayashi (2005) call ‘circular migration’ between Hong Kong and Vancouver (see also Ley, 2010):

Well, I mean, I think the main issue is that they are not rooted in either place. They come here for the sake of their children, but then half of their heart is just in Hong Kong. They go back to Hong Kong once or twice a year, and not for selfish reason,

58 Lest I be remiss, CSCF also had a poverty agenda, a charity approach in which they handed out brown bag lunches in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and encouraged members to volunteer at the Chinese Salvation Army in Vancouver. We will discuss this more thoroughly in chapter 6. I should also note that the information that I have here about Ruth Ho is publicly accessible, as my interview request with her was denied.
because they have these middle-aged, old-aged parents over in Hong Kong, they have to go and take care of them, so they have to fly back and forth whereas their children have a career in Hong Kong, so they keep flying back and forth.

Still another explained that Hong Kong Christians had what the Comaroffs (1991) called a ‘colonized consciousness,’ for they practiced a conservative ‘colonial’ politics that gave them little agency to transform temporal structures, which led to a politically apathetic theology: ‘Most of the Christians from Hong Kong, their theological thinking says that when the Lord comes again, the Lord will judge. Jesus Christ will judge all of the wicked. So we better wait. We do not need to do anything, just let God do his job.’ Faced with accusations of secularization coupled with what it perceived as general Cantonese evangelical apathy, CSCF has met increasingly sporadically.

Labeled as overly secular, mobilizing organizations like CASAJFVA and CSCF articulated a sentiment of frustration around mobilizing Cantonese evangelicals, claiming, as some respondents did, that Vancouver's Chinese population had too much of a ‘retirement mentality’ that made them politically apathetic. However, as what follows will demonstrate, the reality was much more complex, for while individual Cantonese evangelicals sympathised with their message, they sought to participate in ways that bracketed their churches as private theological spaces irrelevant to secular political activism. Indeed, this analysis disrupts the one given by the mobilizing organizations that depicts lay Cantonese evangelicals as misguidedly complacent. Paralleling the analysis in San Francisco, it suggests instead that the agency of Cantonese evangelicals needs to be examined by looking at how lay people understand themselves.
5.3.2 ‘Ridiculous’: Cantonese evangelicals as secular concerned parents in sacred churches

This narrative of frustration told by the conservative Cantonese mainline, CASJAFVA, and CSCF should not be taken to assume that Cantonese evangelical laypersons were actually politically apathetic. Instead, it suggests that the laity thought that these activities were secular and should thus be engaged in secular ways. This proposition can be illustrated by the following discussion of the 2011 ‘Washroom Bill’ C-389 and its 2013 version, C-279. At a focus group in Richmond, I asked participants what they thought of the Washroom Bill, which provoked Mrs. Tam to respond, ‘Ridiculous,’ for they interpreted it as saying that one could go to washrooms based on whether ‘you feel male or female,’ again articulating the notion that human rights had been taken to a ‘ridiculous’ extreme. With these sentiments in mind, one might expect that they would have been readily mobilized as church members for CASJAFVA and CSCF. Though these focus group members received emails from these groups, they told me that they were taken aback when members from these mobilizing organizations attempted to coerce other church attendees to join their organizations, as well as the Conservative Party more generally. Mrs. Chin recalled that ‘once upon a time, there were some people in the church who told us to participate.’ Speaking to church friends between Sunday school and the main worship service time, a member of CASJAFVA and CSCF ‘called on us to join the Conservative Party.’ However, while some joined, Mrs. Chin refused, as did the church’s pastors: ‘They said to join, but I did not. So there’s a little bit. Like pastors will not directly participate, but they allow them to call on you. And then those fellowship leaders ask whether Mrs. Wong found you, did she find you?’ Recalling the frustrated sentiments that these mobilizing groups expressed
earlier, Mrs. Chin and her pastors would have been labeled precisely as politically apathetic Cantonese evangelicals with exalted views of church sacrality, a Hong Kong-Vancouver retirement mentality, and a consciousness colonized out of her agency. As can be shown from what follows, this analysis is problematic at best.

Instead of giving apathetic answers, the Cantonese evangelicals with whom I spoke lamented how the media were in collusion with the (putatively Western nihilistic) left, silencing their voices as they attempted to curb the excesses of human rights. They alleged that news reports about CASJAFVA-organized traditional family values protests in 2002 and 2003 highlighted the media’s bias against their sexual majoritarianism. They told me that while media correctly said that they were against homosexuality, it also misreported their *numbers* as lower than the number of protesters on their side who had shown up at the events, undermining their claim to represent the rights of the majority over against the usurping claims of a minority that had convinced the state at various levels to collude with its special interests. One woman, anonymized here as Mandy, recalled that counter-protesters attempted to get into the family values demonstration and ‘tried to cause some trouble by lying down and pretend that he was hurt or injured.’ Emphasizing that the family values demonstrators greatly outnumbered the counter-protesters, Mandy recalled ‘very clearly afterwards’ her disappointment in the news report, including the Chinese media that she had previously thought would be more sympathetic to her Chinese family values:

> [They] actually blew up the number of participants on the other side, and that was so vivid, so clear because we were there, we knew how many we were, and we knew how many they were. They were small, but a very loud group, but the media made a very unproportional blow-up. Both the English as well as the Chinese media, and that was a little surprising to us because we thought that the Chinese media may be a little bit more conservative, if not sympathetic to the church. That was very clear.
Because my husband, being very quiet, seldom took part in things like this, but he went that time, and that was one thing he mentioned again and again, about the blowing up of the participants on the other side.

So too, in the Richmond focus group, the media bias was not portrayed as misrepresenting their values qualitatively, but in the amount of time the family values demonstrators had on screen as opposed to their minority opponents. Indeed, the same Mrs. Chin who was labeled as apathetic was present at those demonstrations, sharing afterward in the Cantonese evangelical frustration with the media: ‘How many thousands did we have? Ten thousand? How many thousands? In any case, they in fact filmed those few people.’ In Coquitlam, Mr. Chan also spoke about his frustration with the media at the same protests, to the wide acclamation of the group: ‘So you go to the protest and you watch the news, and it’s two different things. On the news, you saw maybe a few people waving, but there, it was like thousands of people, all lined up.’ These Cantonese evangelicals were thus not critical of the media because it had inaccurately represented their qualitative position as opposing alterations to sexual structures in Canadian civil society. Instead, they were worried that at a quantitative level, they themselves were being framed as a minority when they were in fact a numerical majority. The media representation, they argued, had a qualitative impact on how effective their voice could be in the democratic process. That they conceptualized themselves as a majority despite their Chineseness and Christianity was clear also in Thomas Leung’s classic radio comments about how same-sex marriage would infringe on their majority rights; he repeated them me in our interview:

We think that homosexuals have human rights, no doubt about that. But same-sex marriage is a different thing: you have to change the majority of people’s lifestyles to suit a minority’s orientation. We think this is wrong. I always raise this example: some Chinese people like to eat dog meat. Eating dog meat is my orientation, I was born with the enjoyment of eating dog, appetite satisfaction, it’s my right to eat dog. So I’ll push a dog-eating human rights. Won’t Western people be scared off?... But if
I continue on this, because I am a dog-eating minority, I will be discriminated against, so what I need to do now is that all people, all restaurants need to serve dog, or else you discriminate against me...But no, I require that every restaurant serve dog, and what’s more, the educational system needs to teach that eating dog is normal...and what’s wrong with it is that the desires of a few are forcing it on the majority. (Thomas Leung, personal communication, 31 October 2012).

Critiquing human rights as a Western idea gone awry, Leung argued that Chinese Canadians formed a sexual majority, using their minority status and the cultural tropes associated with dog-eating to make his point about the contrast between sexual minorities and Chinese Canadians. For Leung, sexual minorities were imposing their wishes on the majority, forcing the majority to support and promote their practices. Framed in this way, the accusation that the media gave equal attention to the majority protesters against same-sex marriage and the minority counter-protesters was a cry of affront that the media was colluding with the minority against the majority, explicitly lobbying for human rights where it should not.

Cantonese evangelicals then positioned their Chinese familial systems in opposition to the extension of human rights to the point of putatively ludicrous attempts by the state to create a social safety net after having created criminals for which to care. As many noted, public spending had come to take the place of traditional families in social welfare. Karen Chan herself told me that poverty could be alleviated through traditional families:

Once you take apart the family, how expensive will it be? The two of you live apart, and then you're poor. You get one job, just an ordinary job, it’s $3000, and you’re already poor. Would you say that one family is to save money, or two? The poverty is there. And the children, without the love of the family, the social cost will be a big issue.

In other words, Chan made the larger case—again, beyond sexuality—that the dissolution of the family system made economic lives difficult so that a dependence on the state would be cultivated. While citing British evangelist John Stott’s (1999) Human Rights and Human
Wrongs, Chan made a secular argument for ‘social action,’ advocating for ‘closed’ traditional families in which children could be sheltered from anti-family ideological propaganda for the family’s long-term economic well-being. These sentiments did not revolve around the construction of evangelical families, per se; they were instead conceptualized as Chinese ones that would aid, as Ong (1999) would put it, in shared wealth accumulation.

In turn, Cantonese evangelicals argued that the roots of criminality and poverty lay in these human rights discourses being taken to extremes. In Richmond, Mr. Ping expressed explicitly that Chinese families would be the solution to the proliferation of ‘criminals’ in (Western) Canadian society:

If you have a good family, you will not have these kinds of people emerging. If our Western and Eastern differences are true, the Western values are very individualistic: if you are young and you grow up, you must leave. But in the East, there are many who have family concepts. If you have a family, you have a support. If you are in the family and you don’t go outside, then how will you become homeless?

Claiming (as Thomas Leung did) that Western individualism was undergoing a decline into ‘nihilism,’ Cantonese evangelicals argued that what was happening was that the state was spending too much money fixing the economic problem of poverty and the social crisis of criminality with which it never should have had to deal if it had stayed with traditional family values. A pastor in Coquitlam thus expressed his puzzlement that young people like his daughter would vote for the NDP, not because of Christian values, but because of Chinese ones framed around economic issues:

Actually, it’s very simple, the values of the Conservative Party don’t want you to inject drugs, it’s pro-family—it has a position on drugs, on morals, so it may not be close to Christian values, but it’s closer to Asian values on the family: you work hard, you don’t just sit there waiting for money, you save money, so it’s very close to our

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59 As a key informant, Mr. Ping chose to be anonymous. This is his pseudonym.
Chinese values—I won’t say it’s for Filipinos—but for Chinese, yes. If we have ten dollars, we use seven or eight bucks. Western people will use twelve dollars.

The moral positions of traditional family values were thus intimately tied to questions of the secular political economy. Arguing that the discourse of human rights was leading to wasteful government spending, many Cantonese evangelicals contended that traditional family values were antidotes to both crime and the state-sponsored welfare that would be needed to rehabilitate Canadian society from emerging criminal elements, which did not only include perceived sexual deviation, but also homelessness and drug addiction. Indeed, as Mr. Ping forcefully concluded our interview section on human rights, he said that the Canadian human rights discourse had been co-opted by criminals for their own protection. Referring to human rights, he said: ‘I mean, if you’re a bad person, you use a knife to kill people; a good person uses a knife to chop vegetables...[human rights are] neutral...Human rights is all for criminals now, not ordinary people. Which ordinary person needs to use human rights? Only criminals use it!’ In other words, Mr. Ping went as far to say that if Canadian society could adopt Chinese traditional family values, then it could do away with its putatively corrupted human rights discourse altogether.

In turn, this majoritarian conversation about what were perceived as human rights extremes were often framed as secular, non-church discussions among the laity, not impositions from their pastors. Most of my participants vigorously rejected the notion that their pastors and churches taught them how to vote or addressed issues of sexuality; when I asked focus groups whether their pastors informed their political choices, they always responded unanimously, ‘No, no, no!’ Instead, they conceptualized the church as a site where members discussed abstract moral values, sometimes vaguely referencing Scripture to support their points. Indeed, following the congregational ontologies discussed in
chapter 4, they maintained that their congregations remained spatially separate from the world even while its individual members might be involved in politics. At the Burnaby focus group, Mrs. Yang said that within the church, individual members often ‘talk about values,’ explaining that her friends ‘always look at the different parties and politicians coming out, and like children, we ask, Hey, are they good or cunning?’ suggesting that while she thought that she and her individual church friends were doing their best to understand the political issues, they were often less-than-informed. On the same token, as Mrs. Yang began to talk about the church, she expressed that it could potentially be a site where parents could teach their children broader horizons from the sexuality propaganda promoted in schools, although this was not currently the case: ‘I don’t think it’s the church that says this...when you talk about the church’s education, in the church, I think it’s not so good because we are not very united about voting or teaching. I don’t think it’s the church that does this.’ This discussion led into a conversation about how their church had in fact failed to address anything political; it was only that ‘the church reminds us to go vote’ and that the church should maintain neutrality in order to keep peace within its potentially politically diverse congregation. These lines of conversation were similar in the other focus groups. In Richmond, the conversation began with a statement that the church ‘overall tries to maintain its neutrality, don’t want to make the society concerned, but at a certain position, it might get too close,’ to which another respondent replied, ‘I have been here for more than a decade. The church never says that you must vote for the Conservative Party or any other party.’ Instead, they said that Cantonese evangelicals had to ‘choose based on their own values, whatever is fair’; in terms of pastoral leadership, one participant remembered,
I once heard my pastor say, ‘You read your Bible, then whatever position is close to the biblical principles, then you pick that one. If you don’t know which party to choose, then I will not tell you here which party to choose, but if you read your Bible, you can observe the different positions.’

Though one pastor in Chinatown told me that this was indeed code for, ‘We prefer the Conservatives for the moral and biblical values,’ the focus group members read these statements as demonstrations of pastoral neutrality at best and apathy at worst. In turn, these laity interpreted this focus on abstract values as a way to keep the church focused on being a religious space, not one that entered into the public sphere.

When I asked pastors to respond to these lay statements that the church did not provide any teaching on politics, they replied that it was in fact the role of the lay people to make their pastors aware of their secular concerns. Answering criticism that pastors were apathetic, one Vancouver pastor stated that it was in fact the role of the laity to keep attuned to the secular world:

This is really not fair. This is not fair, because the Bible says that pastors should pray and do ministry. This is not to say that pastors only pray and minister, but the role of the pastor is to be a prophet, a visionary, seeing from the spiritual angle how to look at circumstances. But the pastor needs to have many hands and feet to see what these circumstances are. So I feel that it’s a partnership, from God’s perspective, it’s a partnership; you cannot lose one person, and you cannot say that one person can do it all.

Others spoke of the need to keep the peace in the church, expressing Christian values in the most putatively apolitical language possible to prevent the church from being tied to a particular political party. One conservative mainline clergyman invoked German theologian Karl Barth to say, ‘I’ll remain neutral. Politically speaking, the church and the state are separated in that I don’t belong to any political party, but I criticize the government as a prophetic voice, if they fall away from God, no matter what parties, then I keep my views, helping the government to walk in a righteous and just way.’ So too, an
evangelical pastor in Vancouver told me that because his congregation was politically diverse, political speech within the church could be divisive: ‘I do not preach at the pulpit [about politics] because there are other parties in our church. Our church is quite politically oriented, with many parties, Liberal is there, not so much NDP, but Liberals and Conservatives are both very strong, very strong.’ Still another pastor informed me that although his preference was Conservative because they opposed the ‘Washroom Bill,’ being tied to a party would cause unnecessary church-state conflict: ‘We think that we don’t want to initiate any conflict with any political parties many times at a church level, and many Chinese churches don’t take a very clear stand, unless it opposes the Bible or on homosexuality, but we never want to cause conflict with any political parties.’ Instead, as these pastors agreed, one had to examine how individual Cantonese evangelicals themselves stressed their family system, not the church, as the site for alternative education removed from the ‘ridiculous’ human rights of the state. While the laity kept pastors out of their political conversations, pastors also attempted to keep their political views private, only selectively responding to the most urgent issues brought up by their own lay people in order to preserve the sacrality of their congregational spaces.

Sometimes, these individual reflections on the family led church members in their capacity as secular Chinese concerned parents to protest against school curriculum changes. Following the language of opposition to the Washroom Bill, CSCF’s co-chair, Charter Lau, helped to organize a concerned parent protest against the Burnaby School District’s introduction of anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexist elements into its curriculum. Titled Policy 5.45, the Burnaby School Board proposed the measure in 2011 ‘to ensure that all members of the school community work together in an atmosphere of respect and safety
regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity,’ enshrining the place of ‘lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, queer, or those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTQ+)’ in the social studies curriculum and educational policy. Joining with other concerned parents, Cantonese evangelicals argued that parents had not been informed about these ideological changes and that these measures enshrined indoctrinating propaganda, not educational basics, into school curricula. These efforts launched a slate of candidacies to the Burnaby School Board known as Burnaby Parents’ Voice, an advocacy group that attempted to place its members on Burnaby’s school board to replace the existing members. They were also paralleled across Metro Vancouver, with similar activities held in Metro Vancouver with the Non-Partisan Association’s Ken Denike and Sophia Woo, and in Richmond with the Richmond Independent ‘Team of Electors’ (RITE) slate of Kenny Chiu and Jonathan Ho for school board and school trustee Chak Au Kwong for city council, all running on platforms of parents’ rights and non-ideological curricula. While these candidacies were successful in Richmond and Vancouver, Burnaby Parents’ Voice was defeated in Burnaby, its demise attributed to death threats launched at supporters of 5.45 (Moreau, 2011a) and derogatory comments about Muslims put on CSCF’s website by Wayne Lo that were tied to Charter Lau (Moreau, 2011b).

Concerned Cantonese evangelical parents across Metro Vancouver who attended the ‘Stop 5.45’ protests and supported Burnaby Parents’ Voice said that while they opposed 5.45 on ideological grounds, they felt that they were treated with hostility by what they perceived as an increasingly irrational public sphere. In Burnaby, one pastor said that he told his congregation that they would need to be ‘wise as serpents and innocent as doves,’
encouraging his congregation ‘to start a protest, a peaceful protest’ without saying ‘that homosexuality is wrong.’ Instead, following the ‘parental rights’ ideology, he argued: ‘Like we can’t oppose the measure, but we can say that parents should have a voice, you can’t just teach our youth without notifying us.’ Another Vancouver pastor readily admitted to me that the 5.45 activism was a matter of individuals from his congregation crossing city lines to protest, with himself as their encourager: ‘So we tell them if you don’t want to go protest, you can sign a petition. But this is very individual, very individual...I will make an announcement to raise the awareness that we are collecting signatures. That’s the most that we’ve ever done, it’s this thing.’ For my Burnaby focus group participants, though, neither these pastoral actions nor the activities of Charter Lau qualified them to be Chinese Christian representatives. Indeed, when I brought this up as a possibility at a focus group in Burnaby, participants scoffed at the idea. While many supported the actions of Burnaby Parents’ Voice, they argued that Lau did not emerge from the community; as Mr. Mak put it: ‘We didn’t push him out. He came out by himself. We don’t have an organized group to push anyone out because we remain a pot of scattered sand, I can tell you that.’ Framing this as a secular Chinese issue, the discussion contrasted the traditional values of Burnaby’s Chinese community and ‘Westerners.’ In this context, some argued that Lau at least represented the Chinese sentiment but received a low reception with the ‘Western’ mainstream, a view that was vigorously rebutted by Mr. Yip, who said, ‘In Burnaby, on Parents’ Voice, we are very clear about our values. But he was unable to articulate our values clearly. In the mainstream, they think that we are a nuisance, but if you look at the Chinese polls, 80% should have gone to him. So why doesn’t the mainstream buy us?’ In other words, Mr. Yip resented the notion of having to acknowledge Lau as a leader, for he
had failed in his efforts to represent an ethnic Chinese Canadian population in Burnaby (much less Cantonese evangelicals) to a non-Chinese audience. The consensus, then, was that while Lau had been outspoken about his opposition to 5.45, being vocal was not the same as representativeness. The Cantonese evangelicals at this Burnaby focus group, at least, were still without a political leader.

In short, the picture that emerged from the laity was not that they were politically apathetic, but that they were leaderless at the same time that they acknowledged neither the direction of their pastors in congregational mobilization nor the putative leadership of groups like CASAJFVA or CSCF. While concerned about the same issues for which the family values organizations attempted to mobilize them, lay Cantonese evangelicals insisted that whatever actions they took were purely secular, withstanding a human rights agenda that had overreached itself to the point of ‘ridiculousness.’ As I shall show next, this lack of leadership in turn meant that Cantonese evangelicals seldom allowed themselves to be mobilized for traditional family values, per se. Instead, they contested policies that appeared to be detrimental to their families of their own accord and on purely secular terms.

5.3.3 Secular framing: reading all progressivism as illegitimate extensions of ‘human rights’

Paralleling San Francisco, then, these protests against human rights claims in sexuality issues fall into the same categories as other demonstrations against local perceptions of extremes that would allegedly cause more crime. One key example was the perception that the state was increasingly permissive toward illicit drugs at a
neighbourhood level. The problem, as many stated, was that progressive sites such as halfway houses in suburban neighbourhoods and safe injection sites on the Downtown Eastside would encourage the criminal usage of drugs, create a need for government spending to mitigate these criminal activities, and develop a vicious cycle of criminality. Instead, they argued that drug policy needed to focus on private services that could help with rehabilitation. Pioneered by a church plant called Open Door Ministries, Baptist pastor Kenneth Lo contended that government spending was often wastefully funneled into competitive NGOs that budgeted the monies for staff salaries, not to do the hard work of rehabilitation. Instead, he argued that his private funding allowed him to focus precisely on drug rehabilitation in his ministry, one that had a ‘90 percent’ success rate compared to the government’s ‘three to ten percent’ because his organization was not subjected to the competition for government funding. As he explained, ‘you know how many people will be unemployed’ if drug rehabilitation actually worked, for public institutions were (as he explained) dependent on public funding for the personal livelihood of their staff. In contrast, the methods that Kenneth Lo used were at his own expense, spending hours of his own time in bubble tea parlours with young men associated with gangs and talking about public reason with them. The results, he argued, changed these young people from their ‘zombie’ state to increasingly rational citizens, leading them on a more effective path to quit their drug use than the gradual harm-reduction ones prescribed by the state (Kenneth Lo, personal communication, 2 May 2011).

Following Kenneth Lo’s logic, Cantonese evangelicals did not support drug policies that they argued would increase crime in their own neighbourhoods. Fearing that their own second generation in particular would be drawn into this cycle, they opposed these
‘extreme human rights’ sites. One place that drew their criticism was inSite, a controversial safe-injection site for heroin users in the Downtown Eastside that drew commentary in Chinese Christian newspapers like *Truth Monthly* and *Herald Monthly*. Indeed, according to the Rev. Abraham Lau, members of the Christ Church of China joined a Chinatown-wide protest of the site when it opened. Yet the reason that they were mobilized was not theological, but, as Lau put it, ‘I believe that it’s really thinking for our own interests,’ for ‘we stand up because I believe that it affects us Chinese people’ due to its proximity to the church (Abraham Lau, personal communication, 5 May 2011). That this was a church joining a protest should not be taken to mean that the reasons were theological: instead of appealing to Christian theologies of bodily integrity, Lau spoke about how the site ‘affects us Chinese people,’ invoking the language of private ethnic and neighbourhood interests as his public form of reasoning.

As the opposition to the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS)-supported Turning Point halfway house on Richmond’s Ash Street revealed, these protests often took place for banal secular reasons with little relation to the church. Mr. and Mrs. Leong opposed Turning Point’s Ash Street proposal because their friend’s house was located there. Admitting that the ‘origin point’ of their opposition was ‘not some kind of social compassion,’ they told me that their activism was a classic case of ‘Not In My Backyard’ (NIMBY) politics: ‘We feared, we don’t want those kinds of neighbours, and it will affect our housing prices, our district’s housing prices, so there is a little bit of discrimination, well, maybe not as strong as discrimination, but we don’t want these kinds of people next to us.’ So too, participants at the Richmond focus group opposed the measure because it was near their residence. Mrs. Yang pointed out that the proposal was
'too close to the school, so it doesn’t protect the kids because the kids will play there unawares and pick up these things’ and that it was ‘too close to the liquor store,’ so the petition simply asked Turning Point to find another site. Indeed, even though another woman, Mrs. Chin, did not live in the neighbourhood, she gathered concerned parents in Steveston to oppose Turning Point ‘because if it can happen on Ash, it can happen in Steveston; it sets a precedent!’ That precedent, in turn, was that these sites that threatened private familial lives would be brought into proximity by moving their neighbourhoods. While SUCCESS’s Thomas Tam spoke in turn about the difficulties of supporting the halfway house amidst such Cantonese evangelical acrimony--‘Should a Christian support halfway house?’ he asked, ‘So we just want to get a simple answer, a yes and no answer, and when we do that, we find that it’s very easy to get into conflict easily’—my findings show that these neighbourhood protests were motivated by secular concerns altogether (Thomas Tam, personal communication, 26 July 2011). The reasoning behind opposing these sites was not an explicitly theological one, but based on this-worldly reasoning: Cantonese evangelicals protested that drug sites cause more crime and fail to rehabilitate drug users, again ushering in a vicious cycle of criminal activities. In other words, progressive drug sites were an extreme form of human rights compassion that might lead to the invasion of private interests.

This secular rhetoric of extreme human rights encroaching on private freedoms finally became imposed on a religious denominational conflict: Cantonese evangelicals read the Anglican Communion’s crisis in the local Diocese of New Westminster as an imposition of human rights onto conservative Chinese Anglican parishes. In the early 2000s, nine conservative Anglican parishes departed from the Diocese of New Westminster’s diocesan
jurisdiction and sought alternate episcopal governance from provinces in the Global South. Widely publicized as a crisis catalyzed by disagreements about sexuality (Sadgrove et al. 2008; Valentine et al. 2010), Chinese Anglican churches were among the leaders of the decision to depart the Diocese of New Westminster. When I asked Cantonese-speaking Anglican clergy in Vancouver about these splits, they emphasized that their conflicts took place within an ecclesial context. One priest was emphatic that the diocesan split was due to ‘an internal doctrinal debate or an issue’ and ‘not because we don’t like homosexuals,’ for ‘church unity has been broken because we don’t hold the same faith anymore,’ such as on how the Christian Gospel was defined or who Jesus Christ was. In light of these core theological differences, the Rt. Rev. Silas Ng, a bishop in the charismatic Anglican Coalition in Canada (ACiC), told me that their coalition had started with over ten conservative clergy in 2000 when the Anglican synod in Vancouver first passed the ‘same-sex motion.’ As a practitioner of charismatic Christianity, Ng told me that he and his parishioners received several mystical ‘words from God,’ such as ‘Exodus’ and ‘walk out,’ which led him to lead the conservative churches to walk out of the Anglican synod in 2002, forming the Anglican Church in New Westminster (ACiNW) (Silas Ng, personal communication, 26 Oct. 2011). Two groups eventually emerged from that group, with charismatic practitioners opting to join an alternate province in Rwanda in 2004 through the Anglican Mission in the Americas (AMiA) and who eventually consecrated Ng as their local ACiC bishop. Another more evangelical group that included the large evangelical parish, St. John’s Shaughnessy, pursued an ‘inside strategy’ of staying as dissident members within the Anglican Church of Canada, eventually breaking communion and forming the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC) in 2009. Interestingly enough, as Ng became bishop in the ACiC, ANiC also ordained
a Cantonese-speaking bishop, the Rt. Rev. Stephen Leung, who also reasoned that he had not in fact split from the Anglican Communion: ‘Today in the Global South, the majority can’t take this view of the bishop, so in the large Anglican Communion, I have never left!’ Instead, he explained that he had simply broken communion with his local diocese because the bishop ‘separates salvation from social ethics’ (Stephen Leung, personal communication, 5 May 2011). In short, the consensus here was that while the triggering point for the impaired communion was Bishop Michael Ingham’s actions around sexuality, the breakaway had more to do with whether differences with the bishop over core theological issues necessitated a split; it was not over how the Anglican Church engaged corresponding events in the secular public sphere regarding sexuality.

However, non-Anglican Cantonese evangelicals in Vancouver discussed these intra-ecclesial Anglican debates as symptomatic of the erosion of religious freedom more generally, with the bishop framed as a secular, progressive, public human rights extremist who had infiltrated the church and had deprived the conservative parishes of their religious freedom. In Karen Chan’s (2002) analysis of the 2002 synod walkout in Truth Monthly, the bishop had co-opted terms like ‘love’ and ‘unity’ to make his case against the walk-out, while he himself was following secular trends in decriminalizing homosexuality, following ‘poll results’ over ‘biblical truth.’ Moreover, she argued that the church had been infiltrated:

Those who were familiar with the arguments have already run into the church, and the bishop caught it quickly. This implies that the church follows the trends of the world in its operations, as not following the trends of the people is ignorant, decades behind the times!...Under the banner of human rights and anti-discrimination, they can justify their being contrary to the Bible! (K Chan, 2002).
In this analysis, the Anglican crisis was not an internal doctrinal dispute, as portrayed by the clergy with whom I spoke; it was a devious secular infiltration by the ‘world,’ framing the bishop as a secular human rights defender quashing the religious freedom of his congregations to follow the Bible. Similarly, when I asked the Coquitlam focus group what they thought of same-sex marriage, Mr. Wong said right away that he would leave his church if they were to approve of these unions, which prompted Mr. Yee to compare this statement to the Anglican Church: 'Well, you look at New Westminster, it’s already like that, with Bishop Ingham...that guy, you know, he was so devastated how the church split up. Michael Ingham,’ suggesting in this admittedly odd turn of phrase that these decisions often led to the shattering of church unity. As CASJAFVA’s K-John Cheung put it to me pointedly, the Anglican Communion crisis, as well as shifts on theologies of sexuality in the United Church and denominations like the Metropolitan Community Church founded on LGBTQ+ inclusion, illustrated that ‘unless you are willing to do that [change theology to bless same-sex marriage], if you want to be faithful to be a Christian, then sooner or later, never, never put yourself under the idea that if you confine yourself to the four walls of the church, you will be immune from the attack of the politically correct forces.’ In short, Cheung’s assessment of these mainline denominational situations cast the liberals as secular politically correct deniers of conservative ‘religious freedom.’ Transforming from an in-house theological dispute, the Anglican Communion crisis became interpreted as an example of how secular human rights agendas would impinge on the private sphere.

To summarize the scenario in Vancouver, then, Cantonese evangelicals have slowly developed a campaign that decries the excesses of a national Canadian human rights discourse as it has putatively invaded their private familial lives. Developing these
campaigns have been slowed, however, by contentions among Cantonese evangelicals about how much their congregations should become involved in secular political activities. Accordingly, while mainline Cantonese clergy in 1994, CCIA in 1997, CASJAFVA from the mid-1990s to 2012, and CSCF since 2005 have each attempted to draw Cantonese evangelicals into greater public involvement to push back against the excesses of human rights, these groups were each in turn tainted by their engagement in secular political activities. This is not to say, however, that Cantonese evangelicals themselves did not ground secular theologies in their everyday lives. Even as they framed their congregations as sacred sites that should not be politically co-opted, they themselves engaged at a secular level with secular reasoning in issues that mattered to them. For them, the excesses of human rights would lead to greater criminal actions at neighbourhood levels, leading them to oppose sexual orientation bills, gender-neutral marriage, and progressive drug sites at the neighbourhood level for generally secular reasons. These secular frameworks were in turn imported into the church, where they alleged that the fractures of the Anglican Communion in the Diocese of New Westminster were due to the overabundance of secular human rights impinging on private congregational freedoms of religious practice. In short, while the organizations attempting to politicize Cantonese evangelicals each expressed frustrations about mobilization, the slogan of opposing the invasiveness of human rights emerged from among the Cantonese evangelical laity themselves, demonstrating that they themselves were more secular than at first glance.
5.4 Hong Kong: debating East Asian ‘sex-culture’ for rational democratic pluralization

It is in light of the activities in San Francisco and Vancouver that we move finally to an examination of traditional family values politics in Hong Kong. In the preceding analysis of traditional family values politics in San Francisco and Vancouver, I demonstrated that the concerns of Cantonese evangelicals tended to be directed to and expressed at local developments in perceived social and sexual liberalization that were only valid up to the level of the nation-state. While I showed that conservative constructions of ethnic Chinese were deployed against perceived racism against the model minority in San Francisco and the perception that human rights agendas had been taken to extremes in Vancouver, in no way did I insinuate that they borrowed these tactics of leveraging ethnicity from transnational connections in Hong Kong, putatively importing their homeland politics for North American purposes (see Ibbitson and Friesen, 2010).

This section deconstructs the notion of homeland politics altogether by showing that traditional family activists in Hong Kong itself—precisely the ‘homeland’ from which Cantonese evangelicals in San Francisco and Vancouver migrated—have themselves been confronting what they have termed an East Asian revolution in ‘sex-culture.’ In this sense, Hong Kong should not be conceptualized as an origin point for traditional family values activism in the San Francisco and Vancouver sites. It is instead its own parallel case, for Cantonese evangelical activists in Hong Kong used family values to propagate their privatized conceptions of the public sphere. While Cantonese evangelicals in San Francisco appealed to an American race discourse and pushed back against a human rights agenda in Vancouver, Cantonese evangelical activists in Hong Kong explained their activities as
contributing to a sort of democratic resistance to an anti-democratic Beijing regime that controlled the Tung Chee Hwa Administration from 1997 to 2005, the Donald Tsang Administration from 2005 to 2012, and the Leung Chun-Ying Administration from 2012 onward.

This section on Hong Kong is thus structured to highlight the context of traditional family values activism in the Special Administrative Region within the city’s political context. Beginning with an exploration of the rationalist, democratic origins of the Society for Truth and Light (STL) and the Hong Kong Sex-Culture Society (HKSCS), I demonstrate that these organizations sought to construct a rational democratic sphere with stringent media standards and sexual decency in the wake of what they perceived to be an East Asian revolution in ‘sex-culture,’ that is, the reinvention of sexual norms in the Asia-Pacific region. I then follow the various conflicts that these rational, secular, and constructive Cantonese evangelical replies have engendered in contestations around the Sexual Orientation Discrimination Ordinance (SODO) in 2005, Radio Television Hong Kong’s (RTHK) Gay Lovers documentary in 2006, and the Domestic Violence Ordinance (DVO) in 2007 and 2008. In each of these cases, I show that the animus between these rationalist Cantonese evangelical organizations and their opponents has gradually become more pronounced, although it should be qualified that there are in fact two ruptures, one intra-ecclesial and one secular. The secular animosity with gay rights activists led to the Islamophobic labeling of these organizations as the ‘moral Taliban,’ but within Christian circles, there arose allegations that STL and HKSCS constituted a nefarious ‘religious right’ that had betrayed the Christian faith by colluding with the powerful (see Cheung, 2009; Lau and Kung, 2010; WCA Wong, 2013). Refuting these claims through focus groups that urge a
reading of these activities as having limited scope within Hong Kong, I argue that STL and HKSCS must be taken at face value for attempting to construct a model of democracy that respects institutional autonomy. The question about the polarization that they cause, I contend, cannot be answered as long as they are understood as a nefarious ‘religious right’ bent on effecting a theocratic takeover of the region. Instead, they must be evaluated for the rationalist version of democracy that they promote, for that is the most appropriate political context in which they should be understood.

5.4.1 The Society for Light and Truth (STL) and the Hong Kong Sex-Culture Society (HKSCS): advancing media ethics and rational public decency

In the early 2000s, some evangelsicals in Hong Kong became known for their socially conservative advocacy of traditional family values in opposition to what they saw as the liberalization of sexual norms and the proliferation of non-heteronormative sexualities in the Special Administrative Region. Granted, as seen in chapter 4, evangelical activists in the 1970s had formed the Breakthrough Youth Movement to oppose the pervasiveness of pornographic material in Hong Kong’s youth culture (Yam 2009), and mainline Protestant clergy advocating for labour rights in the 1980s had also opposed pornography and the decriminalization of homosexuality (Ko 2000). However, the difference in the 2000s was that this moral activism became coupled with the mandate to turn Hong Kong into a democratic site vis-à-vis the market socialism of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). In this democratic context, Cantonese evangelicals saw the need to address ethical issues in media journalism and sexual liberalization. Hong Kong Baptist University’s Professor Kwan Kai Man, a rationalist philosopher who was one of STL’s original board members,
told me that after finishing his doctorate in the philosophy of religion at Oxford, he
returned to Hong Kong in 1993 and taught two courses for the Fellowship of Evangelical
Students on pornography and human rights. These classes formed working groups within
the organization, which generated concern that ‘these kinds of moral problems seem to get
worse and worse’ and that their ad hoc groups would not be sufficient to address public
policy issues adequately (Kwan Kai Man, personal communication, 23 March 2012).60

These concern groups developed into the board for a new organization, the Society
for Truth and Light (STL), in May 1997, an organization dedicated to the upholding of
media and journalism ethics, both in terms of content standards and eliminating
pornographic elements from the mainstream media. STL decried the ways in which Hong
Kong journalists often exaggerated news stories and violated privacy rights, infringing on
the public-private boundaries necessary for a vibrant public sphere. In particular, STL
called for a boycott of the tabloid newspaper, Apple Daily, in 1998 in a case in which a Hong
Kong man, Chan Kin Hong, claimed that his wife and children had committed suicide after
he started visiting prostitutes. Apple then posted a photograph of Chan with two
prostitutes on its front page, revealing later that the image had been staged by the
newspaper and was not in fact an example of investigative journalism. According to its
current director, Choi Chi Sum, STL’s boycott, coupled with an anti-media corruption public
demonstration related to the Chan Kin Hong incident, propelled the Society to prominence
in Hong Kong’s public sphere. Another incident that followed revolved around the
proposed liberalizing revision of the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance so
that it would no longer regulate pornographic and violent content in the media. As an act

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60 I had two interviews with Professor Kwan Kai Man, one on 21 March 2012 and 2 April 2012. I am very
grateful to Kwan for his generosity with his time and resources.
of protest, STL hired Choi Chi Sum—himself an outspoken journalist about media ethics—as its director. Choi told me that he exemplified ‘close thinking’ with the values of the Society in its respect for privacy and its call for the media to use higher ethical standards to promote substantive journalism in the Special Administrative Region (Choi Chi Sum, personal communication, 26 March 2012).

By 2000, these media issues expanded to a debate about *sex-culture*. Kwan Kai Man told me that while the topic had long been one of his concerns since the anti-pornography ‘concern group’ he had started with the Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES), the widespread secular social debate about ‘sex-culture’ began around 2000 during an ‘intrusion of prostitutes’ into the working-class district of Sham Shui Po, which was protested by the residents there: ‘This is the sort of beginning of this debate [on sex-culture] because in the past, there are those liberals, but they will not strongly condemn those against prostitution.’ The primary antagonist in this debate was Dr. Ng Man-lun, a psychiatrist at Hong Kong University who was given the ignominious label ‘Dr. Sex’ as he was described as an ‘arch-sexual liberal’ who was ‘quite radical and does not think that incest or bestiality are a problem.’ Kwan argued that this local debate about an East Asian sexual revolution spurred the emergence of ‘sex-culture’ issues that required Christians to ‘contribute to the improvement of social mores because of a seeming apparent crisis in morality.’ While stating that ‘we do not exaggerate to say that every young person is a rapist, but there are these kinds of indecent assaults,’ Kwan emphasized that his case against sexual liberalization was based on ‘facts’:

Because many people think that we are promoting a sort of irrational moral panic—that is a common allegation of the liberals against us—but I just want to show you that we have not imposed our Christian morality on the society, but you can see that
in these news, I think beginning with 2000 and in those few years, there are lots of cases about some sexual crimes which are really horrifying.

He then showed me his archives of ‘sexual crimes’ reported throughout East Asia, with newspaper clippings from 2000 to 2004 drawn from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China that described serial rapists, incest, indecent thoughts, father-and-son gang rapes, teachers playing games with sexual connotations, pimping, the usage of peeping video cameras, and young boys engaging in oral sex rape.\footnote{Indeed, I would like to express my deep appreciation for the extended hours that Kwan Kai Man spent with me, poring through his archives and explaining to me his rationalist position.} ‘I think this is horrifying,’ Kwan said repeatedly. In other words, Kwan argued that the secular events surrounding sexuality since 2000 signified nothing short of an East Asian sexual revolution that threatened to destabilize prospects for common human flourishing in the region.

Because of his horror at this ‘sex-culture’ revolution, Kwan felt that he was forced to part ways with sexual minority activists advocating for sexual liberalization. Speaking about the Equal Opportunity Commission’s (EOC) Sexual Orientation Funding Scheme that had been set up in the 1990s to reduce sexual orientation discrimination through education, Kwan said that Cantonese evangelicals associated with STL protested projects that the EOC had funded in 2000, for ‘the fund was not used to educate people not to discriminate homosexuals, but it seemed to positively encourage a homosexual lifestyle. And we think that has crossed the line; that is not the original purpose of the education fund to reduce discrimination.’ Not only did these statements against the EOC provoke a rebuke from the EOC’s Anna Wu Hung-yuk, but they caused a rupture in the Christian democracy movement between those associated with STL and feminist theologian Rose Wu Lo Sai, who exercised her leadership of both the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI) and
the Hong Kong Women’s Christian Council (HKWCC) to form a Christian component to an emerging *tongzhi* (homosexual) movement.\(^6\)

Indeed, at this early phase, the major parties that were to contest each other over sexual orientation discrimination had been formed: those associated with STL, the *tongzhi* movement (which also had a Christian component), and the state (which was accused by both sides of being in collusion with the other). In turn, the evangelicals associated with STL argued that their position was a secular one aimed at encouraging the growth of a rational, pluralistic, and even ‘liberal’ society, for they had arrived at their conclusions via secular thought patterns. As Kwan Kai Man pointed out to me, he himself had been initially supportive of these emerging sexuality movements, but had been convinced otherwise by what he construed as their flouting of ‘public reason’:

> Because previously I was kind of supportive of this ordinance, but when I look deeper and deeper, I think honestly, I can speak with integrity, I do not only base my opposition upon my Christian belief, but as a scholar, as a person in the modern society who is concerned about a real pluralistic society and respecting the rights of different people, I honestly do not think that is a very good law. I have written a long article about 10,000 words about the SODO [sexual orientation discrimination ordinance]...I try to throw doubt using academic reason, public reason, I do not base it on the Scriptures, I query whether this law is a just law or really a feasible law. That was really my first endeavour.

In that article—which became the fourth chapter of his book *Human Rights and Homosexuality* (2000)—Kwan considered that the ambiguous definition of ‘sexual orientation’ could include acceptance of the very sexual crimes constitutive of the East Asian sexual revolution and could lead to widespread disease as well as reverse

\(^6\) I will discuss Rose Wu's work more thoroughly in chapter 6 where I talk about the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI) and in chapter 7 where I discuss democracy movements, but note well that Wu's queer activism did not begin in the 2000s but in the 1990s, as she initiated a lesbian movement while she served as chaplain of the Chinese University of Hong Kong’s Chung Chi College as well as a queer movement that met at the Anglican Church’s St. John’s Cathedral.
discrimination for heterosexual families (see Kwan, 2000). Arguing that including sexual orientation would lead to a detrimental broadening of human rights in Hong Kong, Kwan began actively working to undermine the tongzhi cause, understanding it as one of the elements in an overly liberated East Asian sexual revolution that could undercut public reasoning and democratic deliberation.

Conceptualizing the emergence of this liberal ‘sex-culture’ as the birth of irrationality into the public sphere, groups like STL and the Hong Kong Sex-Culture Society (HKSCS) advocated a rational discussion about family values and public decency. Indeed, they felt that they needed to provide reasonable counter-arguments to the demands that tongzhi activists had raised since the 1990s about discrimination and equal legal recognition for those of non-heteronormative sexual orientations. In order to address sex-culture more pointedly, Kwan Kai Man convened HKSCS in 2001 as a separate institutional entity from STL, founding it as an autonomous think tank to research these liberalizing trends and to push back on them with rational arguments for traditional family values. Initiating a set of four study groups initially housed in STL’s offices, HKSCS tackled questions of what the ‘homosexual movement’ was in relation to biblical sexual ethics, the problem of homosexuality, the issue of marriage, and the nature of family.

In 2003, Matthew Mak joined as HKSCS’s project director, also citing the emergence of irrationality in the public sphere as his primary motivation. The specific case that propelled Mak’s involvement in sex-culture activism revolved around an event in August

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63 The actual history of sexual activism in Hong Kong predates 2000. Since the 1970s, sexual minorities in Hong Kong have lobbied against the ‘buggery’ laws imported from the United Kingdom that criminalized homosexual activity in Hong Kong. In 1991, the colonial government decriminalized homosexuality. Sexual activists followed by pushing for an anti-discrimination policy as the EOC was founded in 1996. By 2000, the new Special Administrative Region government started a committee on sexual orientation, which led into the subsequent clashes between the family values organizations and the tongzhi sexual minority movement in Hong Kong (see D Wong 2004).
2003 when eight sexual minority activists interrupted a Sunday mass at the Catholic Diocese’s St. Joseph’s Cathedral in Central. The most notable act of sacrilege took place when two women kissed in the middle of the church, as they protested the reporting of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s (2003: 11) clarifying statement that ‘respect for homosexual persons cannot lead in any way to approval of homosexual behaviour or to legal recognition of homosexual unions’ in the Diocese’s newsletter.\(^{64}\)

Though Mak was an evangelical, he felt that the act of sacrilege perpetrated at the Cathedral evidenced the tongzhi movement’s disregard for the rights and freedoms of their socially conservative opponents. For Mak, their interruption of the mass did not only illegitimately divide Catholic social teaching’s emphasis on both social justice and traditional marriage (a conceptualization that, as he said, ‘we evangelicals can really accept’). It illustrated (as Mak contended) the social disintegration that would arise in Hong Kong if tongzhi activists were to have their way. Speaking of tongzhi demands for an anti-discrimination ordinance since 2000, Mak said that when HKSCS researched North America and Europe, they found that these purportedly anti-discrimination policies in fact ‘are targeting groups who disagree with homosexuality, using policy and law to take them apart’:

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\(^{64}\) The Hong Kong Catholic Diocese took a markedly different approach. While first issuing a statement that the Diocese ‘vehemently object[s] to such cruel action infringing the rights of our followers’ (China Daily 2003), Jackie Hung at the Diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission told me that her office’s active role in advocating for the human rights of sex workers and sexual minorities convinced Bishop Joseph Zen Zi-ken he should dialogue with these tongzhi activists.\(^{64}\) At a meeting arranged between the Diocese and the tongzhi movement, Zen explained to the activists, ‘We have our doctrine, but whatever we could do to help you, we did,’ such as supporting the colonial government’s decriminalization of homosexuality in 1991 and supporting an equal opportunity law against discrimination for employment and property ownership. In short, the Catholic Diocese pursued a path of conciliation and conversation with the tongzhi movement, not conceding to their demands for same-sex marriage or theological revisionism but contending that the Catholic Church has long stood in solidarity with their movement for basic human dignity in spite of its official teachings.
When a group or a band of people very much agree with homosexuality, the law has no relation to them. But once you use your faith, your very traditional values, your Chinese traditional values, your religion, even Buddhism, all feel that they don’t accept homosexuality, then the law becomes, like we always say here, like a knife above your head. (Matthew Mak, personal communication, 23 March 2012).

Comparing gay rights legislation to the anti-sedition constitutional clause Article 23 ‘that is stripping away the freedoms of those who oppose homosexuality, their social freedoms and their freedoms to assembly’ (see chapter 7 for a further discussion), Mak accused the tongzhi activists of taking to public policy to strip away the basic freedoms of their opponents. This framing, coupled with the above statements from Kwan Kai Man and Choi Chi Sum, reveals that these evangelicals themselves framed their conflict with the tongzhi movement as a secular one. While informed by theological values regarding marital norms and a more conservative understanding of human rights, the issue was that tongzhi advocates were pressing for a more irrational public sphere, one inimical to the rational democratic one that they were trying to promote.

5.4.2 Opposing the Sexual Orientation Discrimination Ordinance (SODO): social conservatives and the exercise of democracy

These latent conflicts between the tongzhi movement and the traditional family activists over the recognition of sexual orientation in human rights and democratic movements climaxed in the clash of socially conservative actors with the Hong Kong government over the Sexual Orientation Discrimination Ordinance (SODO) from 2004 to 2006. In December 2004, the Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs, Stephen Fisher, announced a public consultation to investigate public opinion about homosexuality, indicating that the Panel for Home Affairs would propose SODO as a law if not more than
70 to 80 percent of Hongkongers opposed legislating anti-discrimination on the axis of sexual orientation. Though mainline Protestant denominations such as the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, and the Christ Church of China broadly supported the legislation despite their internal ambivalence about homosexuality (Cribb 2004), the traditional family activist groups that had emerged from within evangelical circles understood the Hong Kong government as in collusion with the tongzhi movement against the sexual majority of Hong Kong and thus contributing to the undermining of human rights by unduly broadening the term. Refuting claims that the government had no preference as to whether or not to pass SODO, Kwan Kai Man told me that Fisher had shown his cards: ‘But that is just wrong. From an interview, Stephen Fisher has pretty much said that, “The presumption is to go ahead, unless there is massive opposition.” Now we feel quite shocked and we feel quite pessimistic.’ Matthew Mak also recalled ‘feeling very shocked,’ comparing Fisher’s actions again to Article 23: ‘I mean, Hong Kong doesn’t have a constitution where it says that you have to legislate this kind of law, even if it’s not like Article 23, it’s similar, and it was not until the government could not withstand the protest of its citizens that it gave up.’ Choi Chi Sum agreed about the possibilities for undemocratic actions to be conducted if SODO were to pass. Though he asserted that his organization ‘never told people to oppose homosexuals, and we have very sincere communication with the heads of homosexual groups; we will not think that, oh, they are homosexuals so that we do not talk to them or use an attitude of enmity,’ he opposed their policy ‘demands’ because it would force private organizations to hire sexual minorities even if their stated position was against these non-heteronormative sexual practices:

In the experience of many foreign countries, if we openly say that we do not support homosexuality or our organization—our organization will not hire homosexuals.
But we do not think that this is discrimination; we think this is a question of our position, because we also will not hire an open practitioner of Buddhism either.

In short, these groups felt that the Hong Kong government was in collusion with *tongzhi* groups, attempting to force them to give up their freedoms to operate as private institutions disapproving of homosexual practice.

In response to this public consultation, STL and the HKSCS formed the Hong Kong Alliance for Family to put forward their own version of democracy by mobilizing opposition to SODO during the entirety of Fisher’s consultation in 2005. While the government allowed both *tongzhi* activists and family values groups to assess the terms of its public opinion survey questionnaire and to discuss the terms of the policy, Matthew Mak noted that because the government already had a position, they also had to take two grassroots political steps. First, as Kwan Kai Man told me, the Sex-Culture Society called on ‘church members and the citizens’ to engage in a ‘one person, one letter’ campaign because, as Mak put it bluntly, ‘the government wants to hear the public opinion.’ This initiative generated 50,000 individual letters opposing SODO. Second, the Hong Kong Alliance for the Family (‘in fact,’ Mak noted, ‘it [the Alliance] was a Christian institution, and we were a member of it’) mobilized a petition campaign to oppose SODO, which was published in the major Chinese newspaper, *Ming Pao*, in April and was signed by 300 Christian organizations and 9800 individuals. Mak argued outright, ‘Since 1989, this was the largest newspaper announcement that was ever put out,’ paralleling anti-SODO work again to pro-democratic activism, this time emanating from the Tiananmen Incident (see chapter 7).

Reflecting the family values organizations’ understanding that the government was biased against them, they also conducted their own exercises in public opinion. HKSCS hired Hong Kong University’s Social Sciences Research Centre to conduct a survey
independent from the government, which again found that the majority of Hongkongers opposed SODO. Claiming to have ‘taken part in almost all of the major skirmishes and battles’ on SODO while joining with STL to maximize this social impact, Kwan Kai Man also wrote articles and advertisements for newspapers and spoke widely in churches, in social organizations, on the radio, and in high schools ‘to educate people about the possible impact of SODO.’ Within the Christian community, HKSCS also convened a debate with feminist and queer theologian Rose Wu Lo Sai entitled ‘Let’s Not Talk Past Each Other, But to Each Other’ at Mong Kok Baptist Church on 25 April, whose proceedings and subsequent reflections were published in the Christian Times’s Two Sides of the Rainbow (Christian Times, 2005).

This SODO activism even crept into that year’s July 1 Demonstration, as STL allegedly called for a boycott of the democratic protest because the Civil Human Rights Front and the Catholic Diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission (HKJP) had arranged for a gay rights group to head the front of the protest. As I spoke with Choi Chi Sum, however, he nuanced his actions in the boycott: ‘It doesn’t matter who leads the protest, as long as whoever is leading it is carrying the overarching flag that demands universal suffrage.’ However, posing a hypothetical situation, he said that he had told journalists, ‘If the tongzhi group leads and waves a flag demanding SODO, then I will oppose it, because that will mean

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65 According to HKJP’s Jackie Hung, Bishop Zen himself had endorsed the Justice and Peace Commission’s decision to have the tongzhi group lead the protest, despite the complaints of conservative Catholics who were presumably more in line with the Diocese’s Marriage Advisory Council, whose official position opposed SODO. Arguing that she had decided to put the gay rights group in the front because ‘my base is that we are all equal, that we are all the same,’ she recalled that STL ‘boycotted’ them on the one hand, while conservative Catholics complained to Bishop Zen. However, Zen listened to Jackie Hung’s explanation that ‘the demonstration’s main theme is still universal suffrage, and that we are talking about electing the Chief Executive, electing the Legislative Council, we’re not talking about homosexuality, but we feel that in this movement, they have their contribution.’ According to Hung, Zen then endorsed her decision.
that the entire group supports SODO.’ What followed, he said, was ‘a big thing,’ for
journalists misreported him as saying to boycott the demonstration, which resulted in
‘much fewer people at the demonstration’ (a claim echoed by the HKJP’s Jackie Hung). That
even a misunderstanding could produce this result, however, indicated that the few
selected organizations under the umbrella of the Hong Kong Alliance for Family had the
wide-ranging effects of mobilizing public opinion against SODO. These activities in turn
demonstrated to the Hong Kong government that Hong Kong citizens were not yet ready
for SODO. By early 2006, the government weighed these expressions of public opinion as
having polarized the city, shelving the law until further notice.

Refuting Talibanization: Gay Lovers and the emergence of animus

Following SODO, these ‘conservative’ organizations continued to militate against
what it saw as government and media collusion with forces that would sow the seeds of
destruction in Hong Kong’s public sphere. In 2006, STL and HKSCS attacked a television
documentary titled Gay Lovers (Cantonese Tongzhi Luenyan), which aired on RTHK on 9
July 2006. They denounced the film as an example of media bias toward homosexuality (BS
Chan 2007). In the film, a lesbian couple and gay activist, Joseph Cho Man Kit
(affectionately known as ‘Little Cho,’ or ‘Siu Cho’), expressed their aspirations to have a
public policy that eliminated discrimination for them and enabled them to get married.
Following their media ethics tack, the family values organizations alleged to the
Broadcasting Authority that the documentary had interviewed gays and lesbians about
SODO and gay marriage without mentioning that there was an opposition, which (for them)
demonstrated that the media was colluding with a gay rights movement and compromising
its independence. When the Broadcasting Authority sanctioned RTHK for not complying with its set media standards, ‘Siu Cho’ appealed the entire matter for judicial review to the High Court in the widely publicized case, Cho Man Kit v. Broadcasting Authority, HCAL69/2007 (2008), in which the Authority’s sanctions were reversed on the grounds that tongzhi activists had freedom of speech to express their aspirations in a moderate way.

Playing into Puar’s (2007) critique of ‘homonationalist’ efforts to tout gay rights activism as a standard for human rights while using Islamophobic language, progressive activists in Hong Kong demonized their conservative opponents in the aftermath of the Gay Lovers incident with the orientalizing tropes of Islamic fundamentalists secretly co-opting a democratic civil society into a theocracy. After the sanctions were laid on Gay Lovers, sexual minority activists began to attribute every public contestation around sexuality and the media to STL, regardless of whether STL was actually involved in the activism or not. One example in which STL was implicated without cause was when the Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance enforcement group confiscated a newsletter for a column allegedly containing pornographic material at the Chinese University of Hong Kong’s Chung Chi College in 2007. While these organizations had given comments to journalists about the situation, Kwan Kai Man told me that in this particular situation, STL was unfairly framed, for in their press comments, they had advocated against a ‘legal solution’ to the issue:

There is a rumour that the Society for Light and Truth—STL—who deliberately filed the complaint against the CU Magazine. But that was a rumour. The people who did it complained were not related to us—if you ask me who it was, I forgot their names—so they were not related to us, but at the time, people seem to think that all the things are through the evil source of the STL. All the conservative actions.
Indeed, Kwan related that in response to this situation, an Internet character called 'Oh My God' sent the Bible to the tribunal 'because it contains stories about incest, say, Lot and his daughters...they said: "You should declare the Bible is an indecent article. According to the law of Hong Kong, you need to wrap it up in a plastic bag!" Another example was when the Broadcasting Authority sanctioned yet another film, An Autumn’s Tale, for its vulgar language. While this too was attributed to the actions of STL—an allegation seemingly confirmed when the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting directly invited Choi Chi Sum to its public hearing on the film—STL had not in fact been the formal complainant.

However, interpreting these events through the lens of the Gay Lovers case, progressive activists labeled Kwan Kai Man and the Truth-Light Society as the ‘moral Taliban,’ ‘moral fundamentalists,’ and ‘moral terrorists,’ alleging that STL was a ‘black hand’ behind conservative government activities. In response, HKSCS held a seminar called, ‘Who Is the Moral Taliban?’ As Kwan Kai Man told me, the Talibanization that he experienced stuck after the 2005 SODO activism ‘because I am right in the open to oppose that, and there is no other scholars doing this, so it seems that I have a particular role to do that, so people target me for criticism.’ Asked how he felt, however, he related disappointment in the irrationality of Hong Kong’s public sphere:

Well, of course, I think psychologically I felt depression, and of course, if the people debate with me reasonably, I think I am happy to do that, and I think that’s not a problem for me because I am a philosopher; I am familiar with debates. But as a scholar, I am accustomed to polite exchanges and mutual respect, but I found out to my astonishment that in fact intellectually I knew about that, but I find that when you debate an issue in society, and your position is not popular, and the issue is controversial, your position or some simple statement can push the button on other people and they just react violently, and some people curse at me and call me names—don’t need to repeat them—and sometimes I was discouraged, I felt depressed and unhappy, but I think I get used to that.
Following the earlier explanations of why these organizations had opposed SODO in the first place, Kwan expressed that the very effects of the broadening of human rights against which he had cautioned had come to roost in the Hong Kong public sphere. Setting the record straight in a seminar addressing his being labeled the ‘moral Taliban,’ Kwan argued that he was in fact arguing for a liberal society with open secularism where a multiplicity of positions could find overlapping consensus and that these political maneuvers by gay rights groups were the ones distorting the liberal democratic deliberative process (Christian Times, 2007). In other words, it was by opposing SODO with such force that these evangelicals saw themselves as revealing precisely how corrupt and irrational the public sphere itself had become. Now operating under the direct animus of sexual minorities, these organizations argued that these activities demonstrated unequivocally that sex-culture distorted how rational public conduct should take place through irrational behavior and the manipulation of the political system for their own agenda.

5.4.3 Contesting the 'Religious Right': the Domestic Violence Ordinance (DVO) and its aftermath

With a more pronounced tone of animus between the two parties, these skirmishes culminated in yet another major post-SODO conflict over the place of sexual minorities in attempts to amend the Domestic Violence Ordinance (DVO) from 2007 to 2009. In December 2007, the Hong Kong Legislative Council announced plans to revise the 1986 DVO to streamline the process for minors and the elderly to apply for injunctions against domestic abusers. However, as a Bills Committee was formed in May 2008, Legislative
Council members from various political parties expressed that the bill should be gender-neutral in coverage, expanding its scope to same-sex couples. While the Labour and Services Bureau countered that Hong Kong did not even recognize same-sex domestic partnerships (much less marriage), these members argued that same-sex couples should be entitled to equal protection under the law as stated by Basic Law’s Article 25 compelled the Bills Committee. These policy conversations led the Bureau to place same-sex couples in the amended version of the bill (Labour and Welfare Bureau, 2008).

As the bill specified the ‘family’ in Chinese (Cantonese gahting boulik tiulai 家庭暴力條例), STL, HKSCS, and the Hong Kong Alliance for Family became concerned that tongzhi activists were trying to include same-sex couples into part of the provisions, thus suggesting that they were legitimate ‘families.’ Matthew Mak noted that their objection did not come from a Christian theological position, but that the original DVO was a colonial acknowledgement that in cases where marriages were conducted according to old Qing dynasty customs and did not include a marriage certificate, victims of domestic violence could still seek legal injunctions against their abusers. Mak observed that the Legislative Council appeared split on this issue when they approached public hearings in December 2008 and January 2009. On the one hand, he explained,

Thank God in 2008, there were some new pro-family members that had been recently appointed into the Legislative Council...who told the government that they did not agree with this, because we hear a lot of citizen voices telling us that they do not agree with these revisions, because they are wondering if our marriage system will continue to change.

Yet at the public hearing, Mak told me that the ‘panel’s chairman was very pro-gay,’ saying that he would only accept the voices of organizations, not individual citizens. ‘This is so arbitrary!’ Mak protested. ‘Which Legislative Council member would do such a thing? And
this chairman, he’s so-called ‘pro-democracy’! So we said, “Hey, are you really pro-democracy or not?” As a result, Mak recalled that over 100 organizations applied to speak on their opposition to the inclusion of same-sex couples in the DVO, including many evangelical churches and Roman Catholics. As one initial hearing spilled into a second one because of the volume of applicants, STL and HKSCS crystallized three demands for the Legislative Council to consider: 1) that the word ‘family’ be struck from the bill to avoid the characterization of the bill as including ‘all kinds of families,’ 2) that references to ‘marriage’ should be struck from the bill to avoid any argument for same-sex marriage, and 3) that all domestic living arrangements, including same-sex couples but also extending to roommates, be added to the bill to advance a fully pluralistic agenda. While adopting the first two demands, the Legislative Council rejected the third as antithetical to the purpose of the DVO, which was not meant to cover all domestic arrangements as some could be legally covered under the more general criminal code. As Choi Chi Sum told me: ‘Eventually, they changed it to Family and Cohabitation Violence Ordinance, so we packed up. They said that it was both about families and cohabitation, not the marriage and arrangements equivalent to marriage, so we packed up. We accept the law.’ Like the other cases, then, STL and HKSCS sought purely secular positions on which to oppose laws that they held would lead to discrimination against traditional families. Their interest in these cases was to encourage the formation of a pluralistic, democratic society, one that did not

66 It is important to note here that the Catholics themselves were divided here. While the Marriage Advisory Committee likely attended the meeting to express socially conservative voices, the Justice and Peace Commission supported the amendments. As Jackie Hung told me, the Catholic Diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission argued to Joseph Cardinal Zen that ‘if only because of the wording, someone was badly injured and the law does not protect them, then the Catholic Diocese has a huge sin on its hands.’
acknowledge same-sex partnerships legally because they feared that it would break apart traditional familial arrangements.

While evangelicals at STL and HKSCS had up till then made a secular case against SODO and the same-sex partnerships in the DVO, evangelical mega-church pastors irrupted into the public sphere pressing a case based explicitly on their evangelical theology, generating an unflattering portrait of Cantonese evangelicals as having formed a nefarious ‘Religious Right’ to set up a theocracy in Hong Kong. At a Sunday service on the week prior to the DVO public hearing, the Rev. Patrick So, himself on the advisory board of HKSCS, called his 10,000-strong congregation Yan Fook Evangelical Free Church to protest the DVO on the grounds that homosexuals that the church had tried to help were now rejecting Christ’s substitutionary atonement and trying to lead Hong Kong society into an era of sexual ‘cohabitation’ in which they would change sex into ‘just eating sandwiches.’ As Matthew Mak recalled, this protest was itself a pivotal moment in evangelical activism, arguably demonstrating a level of public opinion to the Legislative Council that Hong Kong was not ready for same-sex couples’ legal recognition, for ‘it made the Legislative Council members shocked, because every day there are some people protesting there, and it’s always the same people coming and going, but that day, all those people were those that they had never seen before. They did not protest very often.’ Successful as the evangelical protest was in pressuring the Legislative Council to revise the DVO for their demands, this action in turn sparked outrage among tongzhi activists, who launched a protest at the church the week afterward on 15 February 2009 with the theme ‘Protecting Civil Rights from the Religious Right,’ chanting, ‘Patrick So, shut up! STL, eat bananas! Choi Chi Sum, shameless!’ (Pak Yiu Yick 2009). This demonstration alleged that a nefarious ‘Religious
Right’ had arisen in Hong Kong, linking the rationalist positions of STL and Choi Chi Sum with the theocratic articulations of Patrick So. As Yan Fook’s social concern department pastor, the Rev. Jayson Tam, remembers, this event led to a structural clarification within the operations of the church. Emphasizing that the church thought the protest at Yan Fook was ‘OK, no problem, because we all have freedom’ and that they had simply ‘added security’ to keep the peace between those coming to worship and those protesting outside, Tam recalled that Yan Fook’s leadership realized that these issues needed to be ‘handled with care’: ‘We thought that we should [respond to the issues], but it should not be one person; it should be a whole team of people, and the agenda, we should have someone study it, and how to express it, maybe it’s not every time that we need the senior pastor to express it. We can find a spokesperson to say it’ (Jayson Tam, personal communication, 16 April 2012). Kwan Kai Man was more blunt in his assessment, arguing that Rev. So had gone off the rationalist message that he had been constructing for STL and HKSCS for some time and that this had caused some restructuring in the church and in their collaborative efforts:

So after he came back, he had to do a lot of explaining as well. And the way he wrote his speech—I had no way to know about that when he said that on the spot. So what could we do? I couldn’t do anything, so I think people lump us together and say, ‘You are Religious Right,’ because we do share some goals with Rev. So and in some work—that is correct, but as I explained to you, this is a loose coalition, and at every step, we need to explain if we should join, so we can only be responsible for what we actually do and what we actually believe in. We cannot be responsible for what others do and say.

Traditional family values activists advocating a rational case became quickly lumped with the theocratic messages, while also being pinned to activities for which they had no responsibility.
However, what was most significant about the DVO activism was that it launched intra-Christian debates about the rise of a ‘religious right,’ putting STL and HKSCS on the defensive against the allegation that they had skillfully constructed a theocratic network to take over Hong Kong’s civil society. Indeed, portrayals of an emerging right also abounded in Hong Kong through authors who published with the ignominiously named Dirty Press, a radical publishing house that put out books attempting to establish alternate public rationalities around sexuality. In 2009, Daniel Cheung, a Master of Philosophy student of Kwan Kai Man, published *Too Bright* (Cantonese *Lunchun Mingkwongseh*). Advertised as an insider’s exposé of STL as an anti-democratic institution, the book alleged that STL’s networking of various institutions had constructed an elaborate network in Hong Kong that undemocratically controlled the voting patterns of certain conservative politicians in the Legislative Council. Cheung’s book spawned a sequel anthology called *Religious Right* in 2010, edited by Lingnan University cultural studies scholar Lau Wing Sang and Chung Chi Divinity School theologian Kung Lap Yan. Arguing that the church’s influence during the colonial period paralleled the rise of an American religious right in the 1970s, they contended that a conservative religious right networked by STL was trying to remain in power by pushing their moral agenda onto Hong Kong’s secular civil society. Opposing these efforts on the grounds of liberation, feminist, and post-liberal theologies that emphasized the church’s vocation to side with the marginalized and to refrain from embracing secular state power, this *Religious Right* collection painted STL and the mega-churches involved in the DVO activism as part of a uniform effort to advance the interests of churches in secular society.
5.4.4 Claiming autonomy: family values and the institutional practice of democracy

However, for all of this escalating contestation between the ‘religious right,’ tongzhi activists, and an emerging Christian ‘left,’ STL and HKCS advanced a picture of themselves in a loose coalition that prized institutional autonomy, responding that the allegations that a unified ‘religious right’ existed were overly imaginative. They first said that Daniel Cheung had ‘too much of an imagination’; as Kwan Kai Man remembered, Cheung was in fact his philosophy student, but ‘I think our relationship turned sour because he was really dissatisfied with the way we handled these issues, so he writes a lot of things before publishing the book in November.’ Choi Chi Sum remembered meeting with Cheung in his office prior to the publication of Too Bright. Arguing that many of the younger generation in Hong Kong ‘is very influenced by Foucault, this protesting attitude,’ Choi reduced Cheung’s book to a personal dispute between himself and Cheung, for Cheung had asked during that meeting ‘that whatever statements we put out, could we send it to him and he will read it for us first before publishing.’ When Choi responded that he was the ‘general secretary’ and accountable only to his board, Cheung placed a transcript of the private conversation on his blog. Choi thus reduced the entire affair to a power struggle with a distant individual: ‘I think he thinks that we don’t listen to his suggestions, but I think he’s mistaking his own role…If he has good suggestions, he can give it to us, but there’s no way I’m going to let him approve it.’

67 This reading of the work of Michel Foucault is Choi Chi Sum’s, not mine. As Foucault argued in his debate with critical linguist Noam Chomsky, he would be concerned if indeed protesters elevated their notion of ‘ideal justice’ in their democratic demonstrations (Foucault and Chomsky, 1979). Despite Foucault’s (1975) trenchant analysis of the ‘microphysics of power’ in Discipline and Punish, that those associated with the emerging Christian ‘left’ have clear notions of justice suggests that they would in fact be working at cross purposes to Foucault’s project.
Framing their opponents as delusional and overly motivated by power, these family values organizations published their own response with Alliance Seminary Press, challenging the portrayal of their organizations as a religious right, especially as a parallel situation to America; indeed, liberation theologian Kung Lap Yan admitted to me in his interview that this point was a fair critique (Kung Lap Yan, personal communication, 22 March 2012). Calling the conspiracies a conjecture, this response argued that their organizations and churches had very little collusion with the government, as they ‘lobbied all of the parties’ and often worked ‘against the government’ in the SODO and DVO activism. Indeed, Choi Chi Sum mocked the account: ‘It's like that organization goes out and talks, and that church talks, and that person talks, and then they put it together like one picture, like the ‘religious right’ really has this power, a lot of close relationships with through the phenomenal lens of STL. I really think that this has no correlation to reality.’ Arguing that ‘they really do not understand the situation of Hong Kong churches,’ he pressed the point with a rhetorical question: ‘Do you think an organization can influence a congregation’s pastor to do something?’ He then said that his board was multidenominational and independent of any external governance, which meant, ‘What real ability do we have to tell Rev. So to do anything? He’s a huge church’s congregational pastor. And on the flip side, Rev. So also does not have the capability of telling me what to do.’ Instead, Choi emphasized that STL had to be ‘politically neutral’ because in order to be effective in their lobbying about gambling, SODO, and the Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance, they had to lobby every party and not be tied down to one. In this way, Choi rejected both government collusion and the embeddedness of churches with STL, arguing for a view of internal pluralization and partisan neutrality.
Incredibly defensive as these assertions might seem, these claims to autonomy were supported by my focus groups with smaller churches in Tuen Mun, Sha Tin, North Point, and Mong Kok, where participants argued that gay rights were more of a North American and European issue. Indeed, what was surprising was that despite the increasingly heated confrontations among the ‘religious right,’ secular tongzhi activists, and an emerging Christian ‘left,’ some of my focus group members had not even heard of STL and only vaguely remembered hearing about the furor around SODO and DVO. In the Tuen Mun focus group where members were mostly middle-class and in their early thirties, Mrs. Ng said that she had ‘never heard of these organizations’ like STL and HKSCS, while Mr. Chan (who had also not heard of them) said, ‘I will first inquire as to whether they have a biblical basis for their action, if they have a Bible verse, are these organizations centered on this? Then, based on the Bible, I will support them, but I will not be part of their movement.’ In other words, while Mrs. Ng and Mr. Chan would hypothetically give their moral support had they even heard of STL and HKSCS, they would neither have protested as Yan Fook’s congregation members did at Government House, nor would they have actively participated in STL’s campaigns against SODO, gambling, or the DVO. By ‘support,’ then, these focus group members were vowing their mental support. In turn, their tepid support of STL’s campaigns when I told them about them suggests that their attitudes toward sexuality were independent of STL’s influence on both them and their congregations. They were not listening to STL, but rather, they adhered to a conservative interpretation of biblical teaching. Moreover, that they had not been mobilized by STL suggests that STL’s reach did not encompass every evangelical church in Hong Kong, especially not those in the New Territories where Tuen Mun was located.
Other focus group members emphasized to me that this relative apathy was because their churches tended to be relatively apolitical, though they hypothetically disapproved of homosexual practices based on biblical teaching. At the Sha Tin focus groups, group members told me that they personally believed that homosexuality was wrong, but that they had not actively participated in STL’s campaigns. Mr. Lam only recalled hearing about STL when he was watching the news; while he did not ‘conduct a very deep investigation,’ he simply reflected at home that while ordinary Hong Kong citizens might not think that it matters, Christians theoretically opposed what he understood to be the ‘legalization of homosexuality’ because of ‘the Bible, so we have a standard, and our standard does not fall.’ However, asked if they supported these activities, Mr. Lee said,

We would only secretly support it. If we could circulate a petition in the church (we did not), I would accept this action because it [homosexuality] conflicts with our faith. But we would not use our church’s name. We might say that the Ma On Shan Citizens sign our names. So I could accept this action, but it will depend on the church’s leaders.

Mirroring the Tuen Mun group, those in Sha Tin (as well as other very similar statements that I found in North Point and Mong Kok) suggested that their support was only hypothetical, and that the raging intra-Christian and secular debate about STL was not within their consciousness. This ignorance of STL’s work was indeed consonant with Choi Chi Sum’s own assessment of his organization: ‘If you think we are that influential, you have overestimated the Society for Truth and Light.’

These responses indicate that the transnational influences of the San Francisco and Vancouver sites have also been tentative at best, for the situation around family values

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68 Because homosexuality was decriminalized in 1991, Mr. Lam was likely referring to the SODO, the Gay Lovers, or the DVO episodes in STL’s activism.
69 Ma On Shan is in the Sha Tin hills.
contestations in Hong Kong have been particular to the Special Administrative Region’s unique political situation. When I asked Choi Chi Sum whether he had worked with North American organizations, he said that it was only through ‘mutual connections,’ especially through Hongkongers who had migrated to Canada and America returning to visit them: ‘But if you ask about close day-to-day operations, we don’t have that.’ Speaking, for example, on Proposition 8 in California, Choi said, ‘We heard about it, but we don’t do anything about it, and they don’t tell us what to do in Hong Kong, and we have no mission or donations from outside.’ However, some pastors such as the Rev. Lo Sek Wai and the Rev. Peter Ho who were ‘friendly’ with STL sat on the board of Wang’s GCCI Hong Kong office, though local GCCI Hong Kong office workers emphasized to me that their organization tended not to be active in Hong Kong, but rather supportive of the American activities by printing their materials in Hong Kong. So too, when Kwan Kai Man told me that HKSCS had toured various family values associations like Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council and that he had shared ‘one lunch’ with Vancouver’s CSCF’s Rev. Wayne Lo, he emphasized that these liaisons were strictly one-off visitations. Though their materials subsequently copied from the CSCF’s assertions that Vancouver’s BCTF had fired teacher Chris Kempling for opposing homosexuality in the media or that BCCT had not approved of TWU’s accreditation on the grounds of their covenant of Christian practice that excluded homosexuality, these organizations suggested that their borrowing of this material was not through a personal relationship with those in my Vancouver or San Francisco sites, but through the free exchange of information available in public. Maintaining his line on institutional autonomy, Choi Chi Sum went as far as to say that despite learning from other locations, STL routinely declined opening offices in Macao and
Taiwan: ‘STL is very local. We are concerned about very local things. Some people ask me, ‘Hey, would it be good to start an office in Macao?’ I say no…social concern is a very local thing to do.’ Emphasizing their institutional autonomy even at a transnational level, Choi and Kwan painted a radically different picture of the ‘religious right’ than the one that portrayed them. While they were seen as part of a transnational, theocratic movement to take over Hong Kong society, they insisted that they were making rationalist arguments for democratic pluralization in Hong Kong, loosely affiliating with each other’s institutions when convenient and addressing local issues while only borrowing information from transnational comparative sites when needed.

In short, the activism of traditional family values activists in Hong Kong has attempted to mobilize Hong Kong citizens for democratic activities, a goal that has been only partially successful among the citizenry at best and sometimes without the full cooperation of churches who sometimes rebrand the campaigns as theocratic activities. However, their remarkable success in obstructing SODO, championing the Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance, and making their voices heard on DVO have led to widespread speculation that they are a unified ‘religious right,’ if not an insidious ‘moral Taliban.’ Upon closer inspection, though, traditional family values activists in Hong Kong rely on a notion of public academic reason that is unparalleled in North America, contending that their obstruction to these bills comes from a commitment precisely to democratic deliberation and the pluralization of society. Their understanding of institutional autonomy plays directly into this spatial understanding of Hong Kong democracy, stressing individual independence in organizational decision-making. Yet their actions have also contributed to widespread ideological polarization both in terms of their interactions with tongzhi
activists in civil society and with emerging progressive voices in Hong Kong's churches. That their reasoning is moreover secular suggests that these organizations must be understood as contributing a secularizing influence in Hong Kong's Protestant scene even as they contest sexual liberalization.

5.5 Conclusion: critique and cohabitation with Cantonese Protestants

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that while Cantonese evangelicals advancing traditional family values in the public sphere have been mostly characterized as issuing theologically motivated homophobic remarks, to stop the conversation at homophobia fails to capture the complete picture of how these politics should be understood. The larger question that needs to be asked of traditional family values politics among Cantonese evangelicals is: how is the relationship among church, state, and civil society being conceived, and how does that imagination inform the networks and activities that constitute traditional family values politics? What we have seen in this chapter is that rarely is the church ever deployed as an institution in these evangelical politics, for, as I made clear in chapter 4, Cantonese evangelical congregational imaginaries are 'conservative': they insist on a disentanglement of church space from state governance. Indeed, even while meetings may be held occasionally in church buildings, the church as an institution may not be as involved as its individual members who participate in their capacity as secular citizens who only happen to be 'Chinese' and "Christian." Moreover, the breadth of traditional family values politics is not limited to the questions of sexual orientation and same-sex marriage. Instead, they are more comprehensive, examining issues that impinge on school redistricting, drug policy, and neighbourhood politics.
There are those who may fault me for not engaging in a sustained critique of these secularizing strategies employed by conservative Cantonese Protestants. Allow me to appeal to Judith Butler (2008, 2012) for defence. Butler draws from Hannah Arendt’s (1963/2006) exposition of the banality of evil as a systematic uncritical subscription to ideologies that shape ‘a policy of not wanting to share the earth’ with any number of people. While this Arendtian sentiment might seem on its face to condemn Cantonese Protestants who do not wish to co-exist with their more progressive neighbours, Butler (2008) also questions implicit chronologies in secular sexual progressivism as uncritically reinforcing a univocal notion of what it means to be progressive, when it involves excluding conservative religious migrants from that sense of time. On this note, a truly trenchant critique may be one that pushes people of all ideologies toward new forms of cohabitation.70 A critical analysis, in other words, must not lead to further forms of exclusion and hostility, but must instead generate new possibilities for coexistence and cohabitation.

The way forward, then, is to examine how conservative Cantonese Protestants imagine the secular public sphere in relation to their private lifeworlds. In an odd resonance with another strand of Butler’s (2012) work, many Cantonese evangelicals expressed fear that the formation of new progressive sites and social relations would dispossess them of their ‘Chinese’ traditional family values, ideologies that were in turn grounded not only in scriptural texts, but in secular practices of being migrant minorities facing the world together as integral family units while invoking essentialist conceptions of culture. As Butler would have it, mutual identification with histories of dispossession could

70 By cohabitation, of course, I am manifestly not referring to forms of sexual copulation, but rather taking Butler’s political sense of shared community life. I will return to this point in chapter 8.
lead to affective bonds that strengthen possibilities for coexistence. If the Cantonese evangelicals studied in this chapter highlighted their own possible dispossession instead of their majoritarian position, one wonders what interesting bonds of solidarity could be formed. The work that needs to be done is to help us all re-imagine democracy neither as a tyranny of majority rule, nor a space of competing reasons, but as a system in which previously dispossessed populations make space for each other to co-exist. It is to the difficulties of making that happen in a secular age that this thesis now turns, considering why it is inappropriate to speak of ‘post-secularization’ for Cantonese Protestants.
Chapter 6: Braking post-secularism: re-structuring and contesting Cantonese evangelical FBOs in secular civil societies

6.1 Introduction: braking post-secular geographies with Cantonese evangelical FBOs

Although Cantonese evangelicals have espoused 'conservative' theologies that posited a strict differentiation between the ‘church’ and the ‘world’ since the 1950s and 1960s (see chapter 4), their traditional family values politics in the 1990s and 2000s indicate that many have come to believe that they should engage social issues, even if that engagement is meant to defend the independence of their private spheres from perceived progressive public encroachment (see chapter 5). Building on these attempts to bridge the spatial division between the church and the world, this chapter demonstrates that Cantonese evangelical faith-based organizations (FBOs) do not signal the optimistic arrival of a post-secular age in which religious social services provide a social safety net in the absence of the welfare state. Instead, as I shall show in this chapter, Cantonese evangelical FBOs have become embroiled in constant contestation over how to relate to the secular public sphere in the San Francisco Bay Area, Metro Vancouver, and Hong Kong SAR. These challenges did not focus on whether to engage civil society, but rather on how their organizations should be structured in order to interact with secular policies and political apparatuses. These efforts in turn reinforced the existence of a secular space outside of the church’s theological purview in the process.

Engaging the purportedly ‘post-secular’ studies in human geography (Beaumont, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Beaumont and Dias, 2008; Baker and Beaumont, 2011), this chapter
puts the brakes on the celebration of FBOs as agents of the post-secular because the constant contestations among FBOs around how to relate to the secular state and civil society suggest that the real challenge lies in how they articulate themselves as secular to the apparatuses of the ‘world.’ Following the scepticism of some geographers regarding post-secularism (see Kong, 2010; Ley, 2011; Olson et al., 2013; Wilford, 2012; Howe, 2008, 2009; Hackworth, 2012; Bramadat, 2013), my discontent with the FBO literature stems from its overly optimistic view that FBOs are private organizations that provide a sort of heterotopic mixing space for a variety of religious actors. That this occurs in some FBOs does not automatically make them post-secular. As this literature draws heavily from Habermas’s (2006) proposal for communicative action between religious and secular citizens, this chapter suggests that Habermas himself fails to observe that so-called ‘post-secular’ sites are in fact part of civic geographies organized by state regimes. This political arrangement means that FBOs never truly fall outside the purview of the state’s governance and must always somehow exist in tension with secular state agendas, either collaborating with them or contesting them. Indeed, Habermas’s (2006: 10-11) mandate for religious actors to ‘translate’ their religious narratives as they communicate in the public sphere suggests that he is interested in reinforcing the secularity of the public sphere, not to signal the advent of ‘post-secular’ civil societies. As I have argued elsewhere,

When postsecular geographers argue that faith-based organizations fill a service gap in neoliberal cities while allowing persons of varying faith traditions to mingle while pursuing common social causes...are they not in fact describing the grounding of secular theologies in faith based organizations? After all, to portray de facto interfaith mixing in religious spaces for secular causes is to bracket the transcendent and elevate an immanent sphere of action, precisely the grounding of a secular theology. (Tse, 2013a: 12).

In other words, what is being celebrated as ‘post-secular’ at present requires a critical
reappraisal, for FBOs do not often signal a post-secular age at an empirical level. More often than not, they reinforce the ideological existence of a secular civil society that exists outside of the church (see also Habermas and Taylor, 2011).

Following the constructions of Chineseness explored in the previous two chapters, this chapter argues that some Cantonese evangelical FBOs in democratic civil societies address secular state agendas by re-structuring their organizational frameworks in ways that facilitate liaisons with the secular state and civil societies, generating debates among Cantonese evangelicals regarding how FBOs should in fact relate to a secular public sphere.\(^7\) To facilitate a comparison among the three sites, this chapter’s sections are all structured in two general parts. First, they observe how FBOs in each particular metropolis have re-structured their organizational frameworks in ways that facilitate their engagements with various governments. They then explore how these structural changes were both generated from contestations, while also provoking new ones. In the Bay Area, Cantonese evangelical churches and FBOs restructured themselves along business models, facilitating their later articulation of themselves as contributing to local economic vitality. Stemming from organizational scandals in the 1990s, these efforts attempted to avoid further institutional crises; they also provoked two ironic effects, first by facilitating their property purchases as they were able to show the secular state that they contributed to municipal economic vitality, and second, by provoking questions among some Cantonese evangelical laity as to whether their new business-oriented community focus should limit

\(^7\) I recognize that some will object that a Third Sector of non-governmental organizations should not be considered part of a state regime. However, the findings here suggest that Hackworth (2012) is right when he observes that even institutions that deny connection with the state are beholden to state governance and interests. Moreover, they also imply that it is only in dealing with the state that some organizations realize that secular restructuring is either necessary or has proven convenient.
them to activities within Cantonese-speaking circles. In Vancouver, Cantonese evangelical FBOs re-structured themselves in exactly the opposite direction: instead of fitting within state agendas, they competed with them by attempting to become social work agencies independent of state funding. However, these efforts were fraught with debate over how the ‘public good’ should be defined and resulted in differing interpretations of what Cantonese evangelical engagements with a secular civil society meant. In Hong Kong, some evangelicals restructured their FBOs to facilitate their entry into state decision-making bodies to influence the government from within; these actions were located in a larger field of contestation in which their opponents argued that it was incumbent on Christians to protest policy frameworks that marginalized the economically disadvantaged from a position located outside the state apparatus. While each of these sites’ secular state agendas differed, what was common to each site was that each approach might be located within debates about how to establish religious agendas on immanent space. This chapter thus speaks back to the geographical literature on post-secularism, demonstrating that secularization processes cannot be as easily dismissed as previously imagined because the language and practice of faith is often translated into secular purposes when these FBOs engage the civil societies in which they find themselves.

6.2 From private institutions to economic integration: Cantonese FBOs and congregations in the Bay Area

When Crosspoint Church of Silicon Valley attempted to purchase new property in 2008 for their expanding Cantonese-speaking congregation in Milpitas, CA, its skirmish with the City of Milpitas’s urban economic plan provides a prime example of how
Cantonese evangelical FBOs engaged as business operations with local governments. First, they realized that they must be able to articulate their private operations in ways that interface with the agendas of the neoliberal state. Second, they learned that they were perfectly capable of doing just that, for the internal restructuring of Cantonese evangelical FBOs in the 1980s and 1990s along business models facilitated their later articulations to municipal governments that they were core components of the economic and social vitality of Bay Area cities. By business model, I mean that these FBOs were reconceptualized as profit-generating businesses that could use their proceeds to finance the services that they provided.

Beginning with Crosspoint Church’s efforts to obtain their new property vis-à-vis Milpitas’s suburban economic plan, this section on Cantonese evangelical FBOs and congregations in the San Francisco Bay Area demonstrates that even provisions of social services by FBOs are politically fraught with ‘secular’ economic agendas. The irony is that these secularizing tendencies were not simply the impositions of state agendas onto evangelical FBO operations. Contrasting two churches’ private Christian schools and their interactions with urban planning policy, I contend that there was a gradual shift from the private congregational models of the 1970s toward an ability to articulate how churches and schools would be economically beneficial to municipal communities. This organizational re-structuring developed largely under the influence of Cantonese evangelical entrepreneur Kenneth Yeung’s Chinese health food company, Prince of Peace Enterprises. Influenced by Yeung as well as by the retired Chief Executive Officer of the United Commercial Bank, Lam Sau Wing, some Cantonese evangelical congregations and FBOs reinvented themselves from being private theological spaces and became self-
sustaining businesses. They were motivated to do so because they had sustained a series of sexual scandals and leadership crises in the 1990s and 2000s and wanted to implement business leadership models to avoid these problems in the future. What I will suggest, then, is that due to these changes in organizational frameworks, Cantonese evangelicals found themselves well-positioned by the 2000s to work with local governments to form public-private partnerships in exchange for private property. Nevertheless, these successes were contested by challenges revolving around whether Cantonese evangelicals needed to remain in Cantonese organizations if they were to pursue these new agendas. These emerging questions demonstrate that these evangelical attempts to use business models to form secular public-private partnerships were fraught with the possibility that the very secularizing strategy that they used—invoking their ‘Chineseness’—was itself becoming irrelevant in Cantonese evangelical engagements with the secular civil society of the Bay Area.

6.2.1 Crosspoint Church of Silicon Valley: demonstrating economic integration

Both of this section’s major themes—the internal re-structuring of Cantonese evangelical FBOs and churches toward a marketing model and the push by the secular state toward an all-encompassing economic agenda—can be readily detected in the challenges that Crosspoint Church faced when it sought to purchase property in Milpitas, CA in 2008. Crosspoint Church began in 1999 as a unique Cantonese evangelical test run of a new market-oriented congregational model. My two key informants for the church, former staff members Andrew Au (personal communication, 17 July 2011) and the Rev. Andy Ching (personal communication, 11 Dec. 2012), told me that the uniqueness of Crosspoint Church
in 1999 lay in how its founding pastor, the Rev. Abraham Chiu, employed marketing strategies drawn from Southern Californian megachurch pastor Rick Warren’s (1995) *Purpose-Driven Church* (see Wilford 2012).\(^{72}\) Chiu directed his church plant’s core group to conduct a social analysis that would determine the best geographical location to plant a Cantonese-speaking evangelical congregation, preferably (as Ching recalled) ‘on a main street, especially near a freeway exit where you do not have to turn more than three times to get in.’ Chiu’s church members generated a report that found that there had been a boom in Cantonese-speaking information technology workers from Hong Kong in the Silicon Valley in the 1990s. The report argued that due to these economic trends, a concentration of Cantonese Chinese migrants resided in North San Jose and South Fremont because they could afford the housing that came with these two cities’ reputable school districts.\(^{73}\)

Crosspoint Church decided to pick the midpoint between Fremont and San Jose in Milpitas. This choice, both Au and Ching noted, coincided with Milpitas City Council’s support for the erection of the $35-million net-worth Milpitas Square Plaza in 1995 and 1996 at the intersection of Highways 237 and 880, a prescient move on the part of the city that, as Asian American newspaper *AsianWeek* reported, caused an economic boom in Milpitas as middle-class Asian Americans in the South Bay flocked to its over twenty Asian restaurants, Asian shops, acupuncture clinic, and Asian supermarket, Ranch 99 Market (Wu and Eljera, 1998). As Crosspoint Church determined that Milpitas would be the ideal site for its congregation in 1999, it then organized Christmas community interaction booths in

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\(^{72}\) Crosspoint Church of Silicon Valley and Saddleback Church are in fact denominationally connected, for both congregations are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

\(^{73}\) While I did not have access to this report, my key informants, Andrew Au and Andy Ching, agreed on this point.
front of Ranch 99 Market that handed out free souvenirs and door-prize supermarket gift certificates (Crosspoint, 1999). The church also organized preview services featuring Chinese Christian Herald Crusade’s (CCHC) Lam Sau Wing and Chinese entrepreneur Kenneth Yeung speaking about ‘personal success’ at the Crowne Plaza Hotel across the street from Milpitas Square (Crosspoint, 2000). Launching its services in 1999, Crosspoint Church quickly outgrew its temporary meeting space in the hotel and eventually rented an industrial site on a main Milpitas throughway, Calaveras Boulevard, where the Cantonese congregation continued to grow to about 400 churchgoers per Sunday.

While integrating its congregation within the new economic trends circulating through Milpitas, Crosspoint Church’s tension with Milpitas’s economic plan began in 2007 when the church decided to expand to a larger lot in another site zoned for heavy industrial use. Writing to his congregation members on the church’s weblog in June and July 2007, Chiu (2007, 15 June) expressed that the church would need ‘at least 2 million in hand to secure an adequate loan for our purchase.’ Before securing these funds, Chiu and Andy Ching (his then-newly hired small-group pastor)74 met with Milpitas City Hall officials, where they immediately encountered resistance to their purchase from the vice mayor, despite the support of the Filipino-Chinese mayor, Jose Esteves, on whom they thought they could depend because, as Ching noted, he had a ‘similar race to us.’ As Ching recalled from that meeting, the political situation was that the vice mayor had more supporters on

74 Because Crosspoint Church of Silicon Valley borrowed heavily from Rick Warren’s models, one of the integral elements of congregational life is meeting in home groups. As Wilford (2012) argues, these ‘small groups’ constitute the spatial centre of Warren’s Saddleback model, configuring a post-suburban fragmentation of space into a purpose-driven one centralized in suburban homes. The Rev. Andy Ching played the role of pastoring these small groups at Crosspoint Church while he was also Crosspoint Church’s primary contact with Milpitas City Hall as the planning application for the new building was being contested from 2007 to 2008. Indeed, it is Ching’s signature that is on the planning application.
the City Council than the mayor. According to Ching, the vice mayor was pushing an economic agenda:

The vice mayor had an economic plan—it was very obvious—and so he did not welcome churches to come in. And then before in 2007 when we first applied, when we first had informal conversations—we went through the mayor to see the City Manager, the planners’ boss, it’s the highest in the planning department; besides the other officials, he’s the highest one...it’s very contradictory: when the mayor was present and brought us to see him, it was like he had no problem, not much of an opinion, like it’s nothing. But when we saw him and really had something—in fact, we only had a list of places and were just showing him what sites we were interested in—when we really concretely wanted to apply, he was very discouraging. He said to us: the city government’s direction in that site, as we wanted a heavy industrial site; he said that that place, we will not zone it for churches anymore.

It turned out that the very area that they were looking to buy had itself been the subject of controversy with a Korean church whose purchase of two 400,000 square-feet industrial buildings for church use led to a protracted five-year battle with the planning commission’s economic plan and caused the city to vow to write into law an ordinance against churches in heavy industrial areas. ‘But that was just to scare us,’ Ching concluded, as he recalled that the city began to actively take steps to persuade Crosspoint Church to buy a parcel of land in northern Milpitas that had been previously used as a garbage landfill for which (as Ching knew, as he was a vocationally trained chemical engineer), ‘the problem is that if we try to build a foundation there, it would be very costly, and it was a bad location.’

Because the city was using these strategies to achieve a desired economic outcome, Crosspoint Church turned their congregational energies toward demonstrating that they were an integral part to Milpitas’s secular economic growth and social kaleidoscope in 2008, reaching beyond their congregation’s needs and services for Chinese Americans toward Milpitas’s overall economic good. Andy Ching told me that these efforts required a multi-pronged political strategy: ‘If we were not building a church,’ he said, ‘we would
never have guessed that there were so many things that I have to consider!’ To work around the problem of not having enough congregation members who could affect the municipal voting process—out of 400 members, only ten lived in Milpitas—Crosspoint Church began to build insider connections within Milpitas City Hall and community rapport with local residents and businesses. A local non-Chinese pastor suggested that they consult a member of his congregation who functioned as a ‘City Hall Rat,’ someone (as Ching explained) that ‘people don’t like, but people will leak information to him, but not a high-level lobbyist.’ From the local networks generated from these insider connections, Ching learned also to go to the Rotary Club because ‘all the key people are there, and you can give them your business card,’ gaining connections there to various politicians with whom they interacted over the application. He also launched a petition campaign for the church, generating some 1700 individual letters from residents, business owners, and community workers (including a letter from the boss of a development agency, as well as one from the former mayor) that emphasized, ‘They have been here for 8 years serving the Chinese people and the City of Milpitas at Large. Granting the church the use permit would enhance their ability to serve hard working people in our community.’ Ching also hired an architect with experience negotiating with City Hall, while also launching a prayer walk around the proposed project site where church members confessed personal sin and prayed for ‘God’s will’ over the project that would be used to ‘serve’ and ‘glorify God’ (Crosspoint, 2007). Finally, the church hired an independent firm to conduct an environmental assessment to refute a report in which the city’s consultant claimed that toxic gases from nearby heavy industrial sites would subject the building to undue risk; as the 11 June 2008 public hearing report from the city planners stated, ‘The Risk Assessment identifies three facilities
that store and uses toxic gases and that upon an accidental release could impact the project site’ (Milpitas Planning Commission, 2008: 4). Referencing the figures appended to the report, Ching argued that the maps were biased against the church:

But my assessment is that it is not fair, because we are adjacent to Kaiser Hospital; we are back to back. In the middle, we share a parking lot. So if we faced a really dangerous situation from these gases, they would blow into our parking lot, and then blow over to our side and never to the Kaiser side? You get my meaning? The parking lot is in the middle, but it [the gases] would only concern us; it would never concern Kaiser. So it’s very clear that they were targeting us.

Ching said that Crosspoint Church’s environmental report revealed that the city’s consultants had neglected the reality that if the toxic gases were in fact released, it would have a devastating impact on the entire City of Milpitas, not just the one church. In short, Crosspoint Church embarked on a concerted campaign to refute City Hall’s perception of the church as not contributing to the economic vitality of the city. The ability to mount this multi-pronged effort demonstrates that the church’s organizational structure was able to facilitate these public engagements with some re-tooling of the congregation’s operational focus.75

This campaign to re-orient the city’s perceptions ultimately succeeded in changing the City of Milpitas’s mind about granting the conditional use permit. On 11 June 2008, the city called a public hearing about the application, which, according to the report, was meant to be a formality through which the Planning Commission would deny the church’s application for a conditional use permit. However, the community support for the church was augmented by the copious testimonies of 32 congregational and local community residents testifying in person about Crosspoint Church’s contribution to the City of Milpitas. They cited the church’s emotional care for those suffering psychological distress, outreach

75 I am grateful to the Rev. Andy Ching for supplying the documents recommended in this paragraph.
to international students, practical advice for how to parent children, and integration into Milpitas’s economy, as it brought churchgoers from outside the city to support local businesses. Imposing safety provisos and explaining that ‘just because staff recommended denial on the project they were not discriminating against the church,’ the Planning Commission overrode its staff’s recommendation to reject the proposal and approved the church’s conditional use permit (Milpitas Planning Commision, 2008b: 10). In 2011, Crosspoint Church also opened a community gym at which Mayor Esteves confirmed to the public that the church had been granted the final conditional use permit for a church to use Milpitas’s industrial land, and that this exception had been made because the church had demonstrated its social and economic contributions to Milpitas’s civic and market vitality (Nijwahan 2011). In short, this multi-pronged strategy indicates that Crosspoint Church could not simply rely on appeals to its own private interests to obtain a building site. Instead, its agenda had to be beholden to the interests of the city’s economic plan, demonstrating that they had to contribute to public goods defined by the secular state before they could purchase property for their growing congregation. The real question to ask, then, is: *how typical was Crosspoint Church’s experience with having to meet a municipal government’s economic demands by utilizing secular political strategies?*

### 6.2.2 Private Christian education: shifting interactions between FBOs and municipal governments

The origins of property ownership among churches can arguably be traced back to Cantonese evangelical and fundamentalist efforts in San Francisco and Oakland to provide alternative private education as a form of Chinese American community outreach. In this
subsection, I will trace the stories of two churches, one of either side of the San Francisco Bay, as they attempted to purchase property for their churches and their schools: Cornerstone Community Church (later, Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church and its school, Cornerstone Christian Academy) in San Francisco and Bay Area Chinese Bible Church (BACBC) and its school, Chinese Christian Schools, on the East Bay (which originated in Oakland, moved to San Leandro, and eventually went to Alameda). Their interactions with planning departments provide a remarkable contrast, for a comparison of these two stories of property acquisition over time reveals a gradual shift in planning policy to force Chinese churches to articulate to the city what secular contributions they had to offer to the city’s economic and social vitality.

In the late 1970s, the Rev. Chanson Lau at Cornerstone Community Church became known as the ‘real estate pastor’ (Cantonese, deichan moksze) due to his property purchases and interactions with the San Francisco City Hall’s planning department as early as 1975. I found out about Lau’s nickname on the first Sunday that I began research in San Francisco when he preached at Cornerstone Church, recounting how other Bay Area pastors had criticized him for being ‘worldly’ while he understood his property acquisitions as acts of faith. Lau planted Cornerstone Community Church in 1975 with about 120 mostly English-speaking young adult members drawn from the Cantonese evangelical flagship, Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church; it later developed a large Cantonese-speaking congregation. Initially renting on Lawton Street in San Francisco’s Sunset District, Lau attempted to purchase a two-lot storefront on the same road that cost $300,000 and required $50,000 down payment, a hefty sum to which Lau contributed a significant part of

76 The school name, Chinese Christian Schools, is in the plural.
his personal savings. Failing to raise adequate funds from his fledgling congregation, the church’s real estate agent walked out of the negotiations in frustration, but the owner’s agent told the church that the owner himself would finance the church at no interest, a win-win tradeoff because the church obtained both properties and the owner did not need to pay that year’s property tax. Moreover, the city at the time had no policy about where churches could settle: ‘It was very easy,’ Lau said. ‘We only register the church as the owner with a board of trustees, and then they gave us the non-profit status’ (Chanson Lau, personal communication, 13 Nov. 2012). In short, the 1970s was a time in San Francisco when the buying of church property was a matter of private interest to be negotiated between two private parties without the city’s intervention.

The church began a private school, Cornerstone Christian Academy, simply to put those private lots to use during the weekday daytime hours. Beginning with a preschool and a staff of three teachers, one cook, and one child (Lau’s) with only $1200 monthly to go among all of them, Lau recalls that word spread until they grew within two to three years into a school providing eleven hours of service for forty children at the rate of $80 each. As the storefronts began to outgrow their maximum occupancy at fifty children, the owner of a bar on the corner lot asked if they wanted her property for $450,000, which they took for their first grade classroom; a dancing school and a business also closed across the street, which they bought for their second grade. Feeling that these properties scattered throughout Lawson Street comprised a ‘dodgy school’ (Cantonese yeigai hokhau), Lau eventually happened upon a third property that was a historic movie theatre, moving both the school and the entire Cantonese congregation there (which by that time had also grown to a sizeable amount). In all of these purchases as well, these private properties were
simply exchanged between private parties with little state interference.

Indeed, though Cornerstone Church's more recent purchases caused the church to experience the difficulties of needing to interface with urban planning policy, Chanson Lau’s understanding of even these events suggest that he did not need to delineate the precise economic contributions of the church to the city. Lau recalled that his search for new property in the late 1990s raised some difficulties between himself and the planning department over commercial zoning. Yet in his account, he never entertains the premise that his church has to demonstrate that it fit into a commercially zoned area:

One time, there’s a Lucky’s store closing down, and the whole place is about ten acres, so I went to the City Hall, and I talked to the city planning department head, and I said that I heard that Lucky’s is selling, but I want to make sure that we can use it as a church. Would you zone it to us for church use? So that department head said that, ‘Oh, Mr. Lau, you go up to the wall there, and you look at the map. You tell me where you want to buy, and I tell you whether we can zone you for a non-profit.’ So I went up there, and I looked at the map, and I pointed to that Lucky’s store, that ten acres. I said, ‘Right here, right here.’ And he said, ‘OK, Mr. Lau, if I give you that ten acres to be a church, you look around. Where are the residents around here, what other areas they can go shopping? OK? Even if you have the money to buy up that ten acres, I cannot zone it for you as a church because it has to be a marketplace.’ So that is why the reason now in San Francisco, all this city planning department, they have the responsibility which part they can zone it for non-profit or for business.

These comments do not reveal that the church actually had to fit into an economic policy; instead, the planner rejected Lau’s proposal for the sake of neighbourhood commercial amenities, and Lau accepted the decision. So too, Lau’s purchase of Simpson Bible College on Silver Avenue (incidentally, Lau’s alma mater) met with obstacles from the city planning department, yet these too did not demand that he understand his church as a business. After negotiations with the institution, the church settled on a $4.35 million purchase with a $1.7 million down payment, leading Cornerstone to sell the theatre property to another church and to move its congregations and school to this new location. After each of these
private deals, however, the San Francisco Bay Area experienced the 1989 ‘Loma Prieta’
earthquake, a 7.1 Richter scale quake that led to the dramatic collapse of the Bay Bridge,
the Cyprus Street Viaduct, and a number of historic buildings in San Francisco. When
planners ordered Cornerstone’s new building to be retrofitted for an earthquake, the
church spent another $10 million over the next three years, retrofitting the wings of the
buildings for classrooms and built a new cafeteria, while Lau also purchased a closing
Catholic high school on nearby Cambridge Avenue, which they obtained with relative ease
because the planning department wished for it to remain within the confines of non-profit
organization zoning. In both of these latter purchases, however, Lau did not have to
demonstrate that he would fit into the community’s needs. Instead, he accepted the city's
evaluation of his church as a non-profit organization that needed to fit within the structure
of zoning bylaws. He did not have to prove that Cornerstone Church fit into an overarching
economic policy.

By contrast, the Bay Area Chinese Bible Church’s (BACBC) purchase of property in
the City of Alameda in 2002 sparked a city-wide discussion over whether the church would
contribute to the social and economic needs of the community, or if it would be a nuisance.
Though this site was across the San Francisco Bay in a different municipality, BACBC is an
apt comparison to Cornerstone because it is the other church in the Bay Area with an
equivalent educational institution, Chinese Christian Schools (CCS).77 Renting their
properties from the 1970s until 2002, BACBC and CCS started out in apartment buildings
for its school on East 29th Avenue in Oakland (as related in chapter 4) until the entire

77 I should note, however, that my inquiries to both Lau at Cornerstone and BACBC staff such as Pastor Steve
Quen, Pastor John Fong, and Superintendent Robin Hom yielded the answer that Cornerstone and CCS had
‘zero’ connections.
operation moved into facilities rented to them by the San Leandro Unified School District in the mid-1980s.

As the church and the school wanted to purchase property of their own, their search for new premises in the City of Alameda in 2002 drove them to articulate how their property purchase would benefit the Alameda community. Located near Oakland International Airport, BACBC’s current property on North Loop Road was owned by property tycoon Ron Cowan, who subsequently sold his properties in exchange for a new direct road to be built from the airport to his properties called Ron Cowan Parkway in 2005. While the private negotiations between Cowan and the church’s real estate agents (themselves church members) were successful, local neighbourhood activists challenged the project at Alameda City Hall. First, the church’s contribution to the social vitality of the city was challenged by an LGBTQ+ group, the Lavender Group, to which Pastor Steve Quen had to explain that ‘we have a mutual respect for our views, but we have not been for quite a few years anti-gay in the pulpit...I differed on your interpretation of Scripture, and this is our position—I’m not going to back off—but we’re not going to be marching down Park Street or whatever and condemning you guys.’ Second, Quen remembers that though the property was eventually rezoned for BACBC, city planners ‘forced’ them to negotiate with five outspoken neighbours in a ‘back room,’ from whom he discovered that there were biases against their Chineseness (as Alameda, Quen said, was a predominantly ‘white’ community), their status as a ‘megachurch’ (their congregation was some three times larger than the largest one in Alameda), and their hygienic ‘cleanness’ because of the level of children’s activity around their property.

These issues came to a head when the neighbourhood activists appealed their case
against the school’s building plans in a special Alameda City Council meeting on 20 April 2002, alleging that the school’s presence would cause traffic and noise disruptions to the neighbourhood and thus disrupt the City of Alameda’s community plans. The school’s superintendent, former attorney Robin Hom, acted as the school’s liaison with City Hall, responding first to questions about transit: while the city objected to the high volume of car traffic from students commuting from outside of Alameda (according to the traffic report, 1,920 daily trips, 587 in the morning, with 52 of them by bus), Hom insisted that students could come by Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to Fruitvale, where they could take the bus; moreover, some 400 students took a school bus from the original San Leandro rental campus to the new Alameda premises (Alameda City Council, 2002: 4, 6). In addition, the council asked whether the school’s activities could be restricted, to limit loud noise at their baseball field and from their sizeable student numbers. Hom responded that the field needed to be used for outdoor activities for the school’s baseball team and church youth ministries, conceding that noise would be controlled on the site in the evenings. He also maintained that while the city wanted to cap their numbers at 500, the school was expanding out of its San Leandro site, making its number 1100. The motion was finally carried, approving the school building when the council was satisfied that CCS and BACBC would not cause the community disruptions that the neighbours anticipated.78

Following its move to Alameda, the church then sought to demonstrate to their neighbourhood that they would not simply avoid being a nuisance, but that they would be a contribution to the community. Quen sought consultation from Fremont Community Church’s Rev. Sherman Williams, a socially engaged pastor whose coalition of faith leaders

78 I am grateful to Lara Weiseger, the City Clerk for the City of Alameda, for these meeting minutes.
in Fremont, CityServe, had acquired its own office in Fremont City Hall (see Eck, 2001). According to Quen, BACBC led a Love Alameda Day, voluntarily cleaning up public properties in the city while also framing CCS’s vision as a ‘community outreach’ as an educational institution in the ‘top few percentiles in academics’ to ‘go into the community where the church can’t go.’ In short, with the building of the new property, the church began to articulate its secular public contributions in addition to its private activities, demonstrating to the City of Alameda that its physical presence in the city was not a private, self-serving one, but one that its members gave back to the community.

This comparison has demonstrated that the private exchange of properties that Cornerstone Church was able to effect in the 1970s and 1980s was not possible by 2002 when BACBC sought new property in Alameda. Although one might take into account the reality that each municipal government’s agendas are different, these trends that culminated in Crosspoint Church’s skirmishes with Milpitas in 2008 suggest that there was a shift in the way that churches and FBOs had to understand themselves as private entities in order to fit into municipal agendas. These changes, I contend, were not solely impositions by the state onto churches. They were shifts in the ways that church congregations conceptualized themselves as private spaces, particularly as institutions run as businesses. We will see in the next section that this model served as a standard of leadership ethics that would avoid earlier scandals of organizational chaos and moral failure.
6.2.3 Prince of Peace: the entry of Cantonese evangelicals into the public ‘marketplace’

In what follows, I demonstrate that businessman Kenneth Yeung’s (2011) conceptualization of the ‘marketplace’ as a ‘synthesis of business, education, and government’ has become a significant influence on Cantonese evangelical FBO re-structuring.79 While an examination of shifts in urban planning philosophy is outside the research scope of this project, these observations about FBOs provide a view from below, demonstrating from interviews with Cantonese evangelicals who interacted with the secular state that influential FBOs and churches in the Bay Area themselves were restructured according to business ideologies prior to the planning application dramas I have recounted. As I shall show, these structural shifts themselves arose from a series of internal organizational scandals in the 1990s and 2000s, pushing Cantonese evangelical FBOs to adjust their structures in ways that they thought would on the one hand guard against further organizational mishaps while on the other hand maximize their social and political impact. These adjusted structures, I shall show, conceptualized the Cantonese evangelical FBO itself as a self-sustaining business.80

Kenneth Yeung began Prince of Peace Enterprises in the early 1980s with a business model that idealized ethical Christian practices as a means toward higher profits, personal successes, economic self-sustainability, and the maximum impact of social work initiatives. Encouraged by Cumberland Church’s senior pastor Ernest Chan to venture into secular business territory, Yeung combined his training as a social worker at the University of

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79 This framework is taken from a PowerPoint presentation that Yeung gave to the Chinese Christian Leaders’ Summit organized by Bill Tam in 2011.
80 I am grateful to Maisie Chan, Kenneth Yeung’s secretary, for her assistance with the documents that I reference here, as well as for setting up my interviews with Kenneth Yeung.
Hawai‘i, his knowledge of traditional Chinese herbal medicine, and his business organizational acumen to build a Chinese health food company in his garage. According to Prince of Peace Enterprise’s introduction booklet, the company began with the sale of Chinese diet tea in the early 1980s. It also became a distributor of international products to an American market through Californian drug stores and supermarkets, including the pain-relieving Tiger Balm from Singapore, the Swiss Ricola cough drops, Ferrero Rocher chocolates from Italy, Delacre cookies from France, St. Honore Moon Cakes from Hong Kong, and Almond Rocha from the United States; in 2005, these products were augmented by Canada’s Golden Bonbon candies and America’s Jelly Belly jelly beans. Using these imports to build a profit-generating base, Prince of Peace joined the Ginseng Board of Wisconsin in the 1990s, growing American-sourced ginseng and extracting its essences in China to create various teas and health food products, including ginseng root, ginseng candies, premium biscuits, and health supplements. With an annual turnover of some $40 million, Prince of Peace Enterprises’s 72,000 square-foot headquarters is located in Hayward, with branches in Los Angeles, New York, Hong Kong, Macau, various sites in China, and Kuala Lumpur, with subsidiary companies like Global Marketing Associates and New Jamaican Gold supplying the processed products for the company’s sales. This business network has received the endorsement of retired Chinese American tennis player, Michael Chang, as well as allowing Yeung’s entry into the upper echelons of influence within national governments, both as an Eagles’ Club Member in the United States’s Republican Party and as an overseas representative of the PRC’s Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).
Framed firmly within political economic shifts toward neoliberalism in both America and China, Yeung’s guiding philosophy is that private business is the most effective venue by which to influence politics. When I asked Yeung about the economic policy context in which Prince of Peace originated, he told me, ‘I don’t believe in big government,’ citing his negative experience with Barack Obama’s 2008 stimulus plan. He talked about how more inspection workers had been hired at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) who had little experience of his Chinese moon cakes that had preserved eggs enclosed in the baked goods. Yeung said that these workers argued without precedent that these products should have been refrigerated, leading to a costly legal battle and a scientific study that delayed the product’s sale before the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival and resulted in a major loss of profits. Pining for the deregulation framework central to Reaganomics, Yeung contended that ‘smaller business just cannot survive’ in the policy context of Obama’s putative roll-back of the neoliberal state: ‘It’s because government has become an extra burden to the business, too many regulations. It’s because of this that they ran out of business.’ At the same time, Yeung celebrated Prince of Peace’s entry into Chinese markets:

I would say that China since Deng Xiaoping is the first step to open up China and it has been business that really helped push the reform changes in China, and all these years it’s still business that leads the government to make changes and open up a lot of things. Even though the government still oversees everything, but they know that if they can improve the business or the company, that’s how they can make China strong. Chinese in general, they are solely interested in business.

Indeed, these reflections on both American and Chinese market reforms led Yeung to believe that ‘in reality a lot of people have much bigger political impact because they are

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81 ‘Reaganomics’ is short for President Ronald Reagan’s economic policy in the 1980s to deregulate businesses and banks so that their profits would generate more consumption, leading to a higher national rate of economic growth.
successful in business. They already have the connections with different activist groups. It's the business people behind the scenes impacting a lot of the changes in policies.’

Because of this, Yeung believed that the most effective political impact came from private business people in a neoliberal era, leading to the ability to conduct ‘a bigger scale’ of social work: ‘See, if I had been a social worker all these years, even, say, I become an executive director of an organization, go into China, still what’s the big deal? Why should the whole government pay attention to me?’

Yeung then argued that Christians, especially those in the Chinese church, needed to live ‘ethically’ in the ‘marketplace’ synthesis of ‘business, education, and government.’

Acknowledging the corruption of many business people, Yeung argued that Christians involved in the business sector should use their political effectiveness for God’s glory, committing to the motto, ‘Pressing towards the mark – for the reward of a higher calling.’

What this meant, as Yeung reflected, was that personal family morality and ethical business practices were both important, as they shaped one’s reputation in the business world:

If I’m in business, if I don’t have good morals, especially Chinese going so often to China, I could have a girlfriend there or something. Then I end up hurting my business because I’m distracted or a lot of things that people would suspect, Are you a legitimate Christian? You may cheat your wife; you may cheat me!

That Yeung highlighted personal ethics on which individual reputations were staked was poignant in the context of Cantonese evangelicalism in the Bay Area, for several high-profile organizational crises and sexual scandals shook Cantonese evangelical congregations and FBOs in the Bay Area in the 1990s and 2000s.\(^82\) Indeed, conversations that I had during my fieldwork in the Bay Area suggested that acrimonious internal

\(^{82}\) While many of these FBO leaders went on record for their organizations to describe their internal divisions and even gave permission for some organizations to be named, I will anonymize them for the sake of protecting their privacy, unless information about them is already on the public record (as it is for BACBC).
divisions in churches and FBOs were commonly discussed among lay people. When I told Cantonese evangelical friends and respondents that I was working on a project on their public engagements, one interview response that was corroborated by a number of informal conversations went:

Whenever we do things it’s small scale, because our theology is small-scale, because our theology emphasizes unity, not structural unity or organizational unity, but spiritual unity. I think this has good points, but it will be different from the Catholic, Mormons, Anglicans, or any other large denomination will do things much quicker.83

In contrast to these institutions, some Cantonese evangelical FBO staff members candidly discussed their internal organizational crises. For example, one large missions agency experienced what one respondent there called the ‘great earthquake’ in 1995, when two staff members attempted to make everything ‘subservient to foreign missions’ by shutting down the organization’s various local missions and publication departments. These actions resulted in the resignation of the entire board and the dismissal of the entire staff, as well as an institutional split in which the staff members who were more radical about ‘foreign missions’ broke off to start another organization while the original organization underwent a painful re-structuring process. This crisis was not an isolated incident: another high-profile organization had originally worked with staff split between two institutional headquarter locations, only to experience what a staff member called ‘chaos’ when staff from these two sites disagreed.

83 Note well that this was a Cantonese evangelical perception. Counter-examples to this claim include reports demanding the reform of the Vatican Curia in the Roman Catholic Church, the current theological crisis over the founding of Mormonism, and the Anglican Communion’s realignment over sexuality and religious pluralism.
These crises in leadership were exacerbated by a series of internal church scandals in the 1990s. While several of these ‘earthquakes’ shook the Bay Area’s Cantonese evangelical congregations, one particularly well-publicized and publicly documented case concerned BACBC in 1994 and 1995, when the founder of its school, Pastor Louis Lightfoot, was found to have acted improperly with minors in the church. After Lightfoot fled to Kentucky from a criminal investigation, Pastor Steve Quen determined that the root cause was that the church had been overly structured around Lightfoot’s magnetic personality. Under Quen, BACBC restructured the balance of power so that the leadership operated under a model of shared responsibility and business accountability. Enlisting the help of the very Cantonese evangelicals who led these internal restructuring efforts, BACBC pursued a path of healing for its people as well as an organizational shuffle, re-constituting itself with a teamwork model that enabled it to have multiple staff from the church negotiate with Alameda to purchase their property, not just a dominant senior pastor.

Taking note of these scandals, family values activist Bill Tam has in turn organized ‘leadership summits’ for Cantonese evangelicals in 2011 and 2012. Concerned that not enough young Cantonese evangelicals were going into pastoral ministry and were thus

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84 There were other anonymous cases of sexual misconduct scandals within Cantonese evangelical congregations and FBOs in the 1990s for which I have received documentation, but as these are not public, I will not discuss them in depth. Indeed, one of these cases happened at the congregation in which I was raised as a child and was handled by my father on behalf of the pastoral staff (see chapter 3); my father was in turn helped by a senior leader at another influential church that had experienced the same ordeal in the early 1990s. Moreover, a key informant also passed me a confidential report of a woman who was sexually harassed by a prominent evangelist who served as the board member of an influential FBO; he told me that when he confronted this organization, they referred him to their lawyers, which reinforces the privacy of the case. I will say, however, that BACBC’s case of leadership re-structuring as a result of these scandals can be taken as a typical case, especially when these cases become more high profile within Chinese church circles in the Bay Area. For a more extensive study, see my father’s Doctor of Ministry dissertation at Western Seminary on pastoral sexual misconduct in Chinese churches (P Tse 2001).

85 Because BACBC’s current senior pastor, Steve Quen, has been extremely public about the Louis Lightfoot scandal at BACBC and how it propelled him to his current position in leadership (to the point of sometimes including it on his official biographies), I am less hesitant to reveal this church’s name in this thesis. Indeed, Quen often tells this story as an illustration of how difficult situations can be vehicles for divine redemption.
unable to ‘pick up the baton’ in the Chinese church, Tam argued that the key problem was organizational leadership being too concentrated in one senior leader; as he said in our interview, ‘I want Christian leaders now to think big and have a higher capacity of accepting challenges, new leaders, new ideas, so that we can advance. The reason why this church is that big is because we have team leadership. We don’t have one leader and call all the shots, everybody admiring you. It’s not the way to go.’ Tam’s critique of the centralization of leadership was in turn based on these various scandals I have just discussed, and he invited prominent Cantonese evangelicals to speak on business accountability and restructuring at these summits, including family psychologist Dr. Melvin Wong, financial advisor Lam Sau Wing, evangelical writer Cecilia Yau, and Prince of Peace’s Kenneth Yeung. To encourage the decentralization of leadership, Tam released a set of twelve DVDs from his 2011 and 2012 summits for Cantonese evangelicals focused on how to develop Chinese church leaders with integrity and team working capabilities.

Moving from these problems in Cantonese evangelical leadership, Yeung contended that Chinese churches needed to refocus on their mission, grooming members in their congregations with business vocations to enter into the ‘marketplace’ so that they could be more effective in Christian evangelism. In his presentation at Tam’s summit, Yeung called on the Chinese church to encourage their ‘highly educated professionals,’ especially those who tended to shy away from the business world, to enter into business, for they could in turn channel their ‘financial resources to support various ministries and charities.’ An example that Yeung gave was his contribution to Showers of Blessings Ministries, a weekly Cantonese evangelical television series originally from Toronto that Yeung brought to the Bay Area to air on the multicultural television station, KTSF Channel 26. A relatively
apolitical program now broadcast nation-wide via satellite, Showers of Blessings featured thirty-minute documentaries of conversion stories, journeying from non-Christian lives filled with ‘struggles and disappointments’ to existences based on Christian hope. As Yeung argued, this too was a ‘Christian ethical goal program even if people will not right away become Christians; by watching it, they will at least have a better understanding of Christianity and know that faith can apply to life. So they want to see more people with genuine love and care, ethics, and how these people handle problems and life.’ That is to say, Yeung’s support for Showers of Blessing fitted within his ethical business model, for by spreading this good news, he was impacting the marketplace by helping Showers of Blessings viewers reconceptualize their everyday ethics. Yeung’s influence was corroborated by one Cantonese evangelical lay person who said, ‘I think more inspiring is probably that Prince of Peace guy…because as I understand it, Prince of Peace inspires us to think since we are in this position, how can I serve God? So I look up to Prince of Peace.’

In turn, Yeung’s model has influenced the very structures of Cantonese evangelical congregations and FBOs by directing them to experiment with operational models that could be more economically self-sustaining. Indeed, Yeung’s emphasis on being part of a secular vocation influenced one pastor in San Jose, the Rev. Abraham Poon, to transform his congregational structure. In the 1970s, Poon had already met Yeung because they happened to sit next to each other on the airplane ride from Hong Kong to Calgary when they both initially migrated to North America. By the 1990s, Poon had himself become a prominent Cantonese evangelical pastor through his work at the San Jose Christian Alliance Church (SJCAC), known throughout the Bay Area as a charismatic pastor able to interact in
Mandarin-speaking circles as well. As Poon reflected on Yeung’s influence, he emphasized that all Christians, including church pastors, needed to adopt a business model for their personal vocations. He modeled these convictions in 2005 when SJCAC took on Living Stones Village (LSV) as a project, acquiring an orphanage in the PRC’s Guangxi Province previously financially and ethically mismanaged by American missionaries and turning it into a ‘self-sustaining’ orphanage. Buying up eighty acres of land, LSV’s orphanage turned into a plan for an entire village composed of a business strip of twenty stores, a local bilingual school with community arts courses, and a church, the proceeds of which would feed back into the orphanage’s operations. When the project came under threat from obstructive Chinese officials, Kenneth Yeung, himself a CPPCC overseas representative who had connections with the PRC regime, intervened:

I took Abey and his wife to Beijing and I said, ‘These are my good friends, they want to help.’ And the official pick up the phone and call down to Guangxi, “What’s going on?” “Oh, they are taking the construction people’s money jobs.” “Are you kidding me? If they were to do that, they wouldn’t go to Guangxi la! They’d come to Beijing la!” So the next day, we have another meeting with them…You can see the difference that business people do, because I know the government and they trust me, so I can be the bridge, when they got into trouble, I can help them, so that’s why I wanted to make the best use of my position now as the CPPCC representative. And I have these high-level officials trusting me.

Directly influenced by Yeung’s business-as-social-work model, Poon relied on Yeung’s internal political connections, which were also wrought by Yeung’s business ventures, to come to the aid when the LSV project stalled. Indeed, that Yeung calls Poon ‘Abey’ also

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86 Poon’s influence has largely been channeled through the charismatic movement. In the 1990s, he became involved with praise-and-worship music, as he has provided charismatic ‘spiritual cover’ — a prayerful pastoral form of leadership — since 1999 for the Taiwanese American praise-and-worship group, Stream of Praise, because its founder, the Rev. Sandy Yu, was married in his church. Stream of Praise is a collective based in Southern California whose worship music has been influential throughout Chinese churches and often comprised the Mandarin Chinese songs of the Cantonese congregations that I visited throughout my fieldwork. In addition, SJCAC was reputed to be the originating church for Pastor Liu Tong’s charismatic, Mandarin-speaking megachurch, River of Life Christian Center in Santa Clara in 1998.
indicates the depth of their personal friendship. In this sense, Yeung served as a key influence on Poon’s philosophical outlook on ministry and social work, as well as Poon’s political enabler within China.

This philosophy of self-sustenance in turn fed back into the church itself, a model that may initially seem unusual until compared with other congregations in the Bay Area. Poon called together a symposium called ‘Vision 2020’ to ‘bring the church into the community,’ inviting Kenneth Yeung (who had to decline for scheduling reasons), Vincent Leung, and other business leaders to create a space for ‘Christian businesses.’ This conference led Poon to remodel his own church itself as a business; as Poon explained, ‘I think the days for full time ministers is over; it should be believers, and I think everybody should have a full-time job.’ Following Yeung’s formulation of business that could sustain social services at a large scale, Poon remodeled his own church’s structure after LSV to incorporate a ‘for-profit’ preschool and Chinese school. In turn, Poon took his full-time job as sustaining the church’s finances and expanding the work of LSV to Hong Kong and Toronto offices where he could raise money to work both in China and in local communities.87

Indeed, other churches in the Bay Area were also shifting to these models in the 2000s as well. Recalling this section’s earlier analysis, Crosspoint Church of Silicon Valley had also conceptualized itself as a business-like organization, conducting marketing research, holding financial seminars featuring Kenneth Yeung and Lam Sau Wing, and

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87 The Rev. Abraham Poon also cited Nigerian pastor, Sunday Adelaja, and his book *Church Shift* (2008) as the influence for this vocational shift among pastors. I should note, however, that these musings can also be found in German Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s (1947) *Letters and Papers from Prison* in his thoughts on ‘religionless Christianity.’
framing their property purchases as business deals. Superintendent Robin Hom at CCS had a similar conceptualization:

The school is a ministry of the church, and so there’s one corporate entity, we are under the church’s leadership; so the Sunday school is a ministry of the church, the day school is a ministry of the church, the youth group is a ministry of the church, etc. etc. etc. Obviously, we are a little bit different because we have some business aspects because we have paying customers and because of our size, what we do has an impact on the church, but from a regular organizational structure, that’s where we fall in.

In short, that SJCAC as a congregation was becoming more business-like was not unusual during the late 1990s, but consistent with trends in the Bay Area among Cantonese evangelicals. Though Yeung was not a direct influence in each of these cases, his thesis that a business model could maximize the impact of a Christian ethic in the world became the model for Cantonese evangelical congregation and FBO re-structuring, pulling one’s own financial weight in the city, guarding against organizational fracture, and using profits to enhance evangelistic social work initiatives.

Similarly, in terms of Cantonese evangelical FBOs, Yeung’s business model provided a gradual re-orientation of the Chinese Christian Herald Crusades (CCHC) to an economically self-sustaining organization that provides social services. In 1989, Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church’s mission pastor, Susanna Sham (née Lau)\textsuperscript{88} began making concerted efforts in San Francisco’s Chinatown to formulate a local evangelical ‘holistic’ mission based on her doctoral studies at Fuller Theological Seminary.\textsuperscript{89} Sham’s efforts attracted the Chinese Christian Herald Crusades (CCHC), to

\textsuperscript{88} Susanna Sham goes by either name.

\textsuperscript{89} Sham elaborates in a ministry development paper for a course during her studies at the neo-evangelical Fuller Theological Seminary in 1992 that the church should be a space that served new Chinese migrants through a ‘holistic’ theology. One example she gave was Cumberland Church’s English class. In the 1980s, then, the church rented out the whole building to City College before it moved to Filbert Street. When City College developed their property on Filbert Street, the church mobilized college students to begin a separate
work on Cumberland Church’s premises. Originally started in New York City by the Rev. Lo Bak Cheung, CCHC became a Chinese Christian social work agency with the help of social-work-trained Episcopal priest Rev. Franco Kwan (now in San Francisco leading the CCU, with no relations to the San Francisco CCHC). It also launched a newspaper called Herald Monthly that printed articles related to evangelical living as well as advertisements for Chinese Christian businesses and services. In the late 1980s, the CCHC directors sought to expand New York’s CCHC headquarters and to distribute their newspaper to the San Francisco Bay Area. Finding Susanna Sham and then-senior pastor Rev. Lawrence Fung, CCHC requested to have the newspaper distributed at Cumberland Church because of the Chinese school there. Sham then organized a distribution effort that spanned several Cantonese evangelical congregations in the city, distributing Herald Monthly through their fellowship centre and gathering a core group of people interested in localizing the New York newspaper’s contents to San Francisco, including radio host David Pang and family values activist Bill Tam. These efforts led to a succession of property rentals from various

English tutoring class. This initiative subsequently became a Saturday English class for adult immigrants, who, as Lau explained, positioned their English class at the end of the week to make Cumberland a node in a migrant network circulating around Chinatown through the week for English classes. These courses developed into a ‘friendship club’ within the English class to become acquainted with her students’ personal lives. Due to the need for theological follow-up, the friendship club launched Lau into a pastoral ministry of sorts when the friendship club became a Saturday night worship service in its own right in the early 2000s, running in the evenings with about 40 to 60 people weekly. It also connected Lau to a network of secular and mainline Protestant Chinatown social services organizations that served the Chinese migrants coming to the friendship club, what Sham (Lau, 1992: 20) called the ‘Chinatown Program Network,’ conceiving of the church as the ‘fish pond’ where there should be a channel for the fish to flow into the pond from the ocean which is the community (Lau, 1992: 20). A key example was Lau’s connection to the Presbyterian Church’s Cameron House and its counseling, employment, and drug rehabilitation departments. Moreover, because evangelicals who knew Lau worked as social workers at mainline Protestant places like Cameron House as well as secular agencies like the Mental Health Services, Self-Help for the Elderly, On Lok Lifeways, the Chinese Newcomers Service Center, and the Chinese Union, she was able to maintain close relationships with them (Susanna Sham, personal communication, 1 July 2011).
Cantonese evangelical churches, first in Chinatown in a copy shop, then at a church near Balboa Park, and then finally at a former Chinese gift shop next to Sunset Baptist Church.

As CCHC’s operations expanded, the organization sought to engage in what Yeung (2011) called the ‘marketplace’ within San Francisco’s Chinese American counterpublic, adding radio programs to their newspaper distribution. In 1998, Lam Sau Wing took early retirement at the age of forty-five from being the Chief Executive Officer of United Commercial Bank. Joining the planning committee, Lam suggested that the resources of the already-existing committee, which at that time included radio host David Pang and concerned parent activist Bill Tam, could be put toward expanding the nascent radio work it had started in 1994. Acquiring property in Oakland, the radio ministry took off with David Pang as its producer. As Pang observed, this radio program was different from his secular show:

> At first we thought there were some things on my radio show that we thought that we could not say, because at the end of the day, I was a working staff there. So with the money that we got separately, we bought a slot for CCHC to broadcast, and it runs from Mondays to Fridays, and it is called *Conversations at Eight O’Clock Sharp*.

Unlike Pang’s secular show, CCHC’s show ran with an explicitly Christian program that tackled various topics every day: health on Mondays, family on Tuesdays, finances on Wednesdays, and social issues on Thursdays. Interestingly, these themes were exactly the same ones covered on the ‘everyday life’ issues on Pang’s secular show, suggesting that the CCHC show was an attempt to make explicit the implicit evangelical values in Pang’s secular show.

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90 Lam Sau Wing amicably declined being interviewed for simple scheduling purposes. As a result, my knowledge of his work is drawn from his *MoneyRadio* website, public documents, and interviews with his colleagues, Susanna Sham, David Pang, and Ernest Lam.
As CCHC re-structured its organizational practices under Lam Sau Wing’s executive directorship, the model for its social services, radio ministry, and newspaper distribution became increasingly aligned with a business model akin to the one that Yeung described: a financially self-sustaining organization. In the mid- to late-2000s, CCHC redirected all of its energies into the CCHC Oakland office, closing the San Francisco one to concentrate on providing social services to Oakland’s Chinatown. With Lam Sau Wing at the helm, CCHC established a more permanent place in 2010 on a new property in Oakland’s Chinatown on 8th Avenue. Speaking in a Spring 2011 promotional video, Lam attributed these property purchases to divine guidance:

Even though CCHC has been in the Bay Area for the last almost twenty years, it has always been renting properties, not purchasing property. I had this very deep feeling in my heart that God will gift a place for us. Last March when we signed the contract, we could never have imagined this because we did not even have $500,000 to buy it. But we knew that this was the place that God had gifted to us, so we knew that God would take care of it, so with faith, we signed the contract and then we began to fundraise.

By 19 November 2010, the doors of CCHC opened with Lam thankfully praying, ‘Seven months ago, we did not imagine it would go so smoothly that we could use cash to buy this place.’ These permanent facilities have afforded CCHC a site from which to build their Herald Music ministry, their radio show, their tutorial programs, their local evangelism training courses, and a cancer care outreach in which lay ministers are trained to visit cancer patients throughout the Bay Area. All of these ministries require only about a $700,000 annual budget due to the heavy flow of volunteers (CCHC SF, 2011a). However, the business elements of this ministry can be seen in a Hong Kong-style Chinese bakery adjacent to the new CCHC premises. Lam also recalled in a promotional video that the arrival of Hong Kong pastry chef Chu Chun Wing prompted the launch of a bread-baking
ministry where thirty-one CCHC volunteers were trained. Lam Sau Wing then developed this training program into the Bread of Life Bakery, purchasing and renovating the neighbouring property as an outlet for Hong Kong style buns and ‘world class’ egg tarts. This bakery has expanded into venues in San Francisco Chinatown’s Portsmouth Square and in the heavily Chinese American populated Richmond District (CCHC SF, 2011b).

Functioning both as an outreach and as a self-sustaining business, Lam thus put Yeung’s business model into practice, structuring CCHC as a non-profit that uses the bakery’s proceeds to support its own services.

It is these re-structuring efforts—both along self-sustaining business lines and in the wake of organizational scandal—that re-orientated the internal structure of many Cantonese evangelical FBOs and congregations, especially as they have recovered from organizational scandal and fracture. However, these changes have seldom been self-consciously theological in any Christian sense; instead, drawing from Kenneth Yeung’s business models, they promote a secular marketplace synthesis among business, education, and the government. These congregations and FBOs have especially been encouraged to be financially self-sustaining while being governed by a leadership ethic of business-style teamwork. These methods in turn paralleled shifts in urban planning philosophies that required these FBOs and congregations to articulate what public good they played in community economic well-being. Because these restructuring efforts have forced these organizations to focus their institutional arrangements, many were later able to comment on their worth to cities in secular language, demonstrating that they made public contributions through their private operations.
6.2.4 Transcending ‘Cantonese’: a first-generation ‘silent exodus’

However, these business-oriented efforts to serve Bay Area communities have provoked a fresh crisis: *why must these organizations remain ‘Cantonese’ and cater exclusively to ‘evangelicals’?* Indeed, some of the Cantonese evangelicals that I interviewed had departed from Cantonese evangelical congregations and were attending Anglo-American churches; indeed, in one focus group that I conducted among six Cantonese evangelicals in Fremont, not one of them attended a Cantonese evangelical congregation; at another group in Fremont, one couple had also left the Chinese church to go to an Anglo-American one. Moreover, one of my key informants who had been an influential member of his Cantonese congregation had left for a multicultural church in his own neighbourhood; another was in the process of leaving his church to explore the possibility of going to a non-Chinese one. While Asian American evangelical discussion focuses on a ‘silent exodus’ of *second-generation* Asian American evangelicals toward pan-ethnic Asian American churches (Carjaval, 1994; Lee, 1996; Kwon et al., 2002), my findings in the Bay Area suggests that some of my respondents were joining a *first-generation* Cantonese evangelical exodus.

Indeed, some respondents talked about the greater effectiveness of joining with American evangelical congregations to provide for local community needs instead of staying within Cantonese-speaking churches and FBOs. One example was the migration of some Cantonese evangelicals to Fremont Community Church (FCC), where its senior pastor, Sherman Williams, had started a public-private partnership called CityServe, a ‘catalyst for prayer, evangelism, and community ministries’ with a distinctively evangelical theological statement; since the 2000s, it has had an office in Fremont’s City Hall. Indeed, some
Cantonese evangelicals who had come into contact with FCC described the church as a ‘community church’ interested in ‘local community service,’ not the politics that Cantonese evangelicals had been fighting vis-à-vis sexuality issues or even immigrant rights. For some, CityServe was also a mixing space for Cantonese evangelicals where they discovered surprises about each other past the stereotypes: one second-generation Asian American pastor remembered distinctively meeting a first-generation Chinese pastor at a CityServe function who set her at ease when she discovered that he supported women’s equal roles in ministry. Fremont’s CityServe was not the only intersecting point for Cantonese evangelicals in the Bay Area. In Silicon Valley, Cantonese evangelicals talked about their congregation being involved in CityTeam, a coalition of American evangelical churches that their Chinese church had joined. As part of a charity effort, this congregation packaged food items for community distribution every three weeks and back-to-school supplies for every beginning of the school year. Still another key informant told me that he had even departed from his Cantonese congregation, which he described as ‘very insulated’ even though it was reputed for serving its secular neighbours. This interviewee joined a neighbourhood church located three blocks away from his home because he was impressed at their broad community outreach to their neighbours, including starting an AIDS support group instead of supporting Proposition 8. Similarly, Pastor Liu Tong told me that the River of Life Christian Center had more connections with local non-Chinese Silicon Valley organizations than Cantonese- or Mandarin-speaking ones: ‘I think we are probably is the only one in this—we are serving this area called 95054. We are working with the Santa
Clara city, and we are, I think, the only food pantry. We also do a lot of tax return, helping the tax season. So kind of involve in the different kind of community.91

That Cantonese evangelical FBOs in the Bay Area were manifestly not post-secular institutions due to their internal business restructuring and their articulation of themselves as contributing to public secular interests suggests that these secular forces had an ironic effect: they led some to question whether it was effective for their community service if they stayed within Cantonese evangelical circles. Indeed, some have questioned whether this shift toward secular engagement means that the ‘Cantonese’ circle itself should be transcended. While some started Cantonese evangelical FBOs, others joined non-Cantonese public-private partnerships, effectively embarking on a ‘silent exodus’ that has often been rhetorically reserved for the English-speaking second generation. Still others oriented their churches toward non-Cantonese networks, implementing novel social service agendas apart from intra-Chinese community needs. But in all of these diverse situations, the agenda that pushed all of them to think more strongly about social services was the secular push for them to be restructured according to business standards to maintain an effective service agenda. These shifts demonstrated a marked change from a Cantonese evangelical spatial emphasis on congregational insularity and missionary movements outside of Bay Area localities. Instead, many congregations and FBOs spoke of new aspirations, attempting to model organizational leadership based on business models while demonstrating to neoliberal cities that they played a vital economic role in sustaining

91 While most of my interviewees saw these shifts as politically progressive, it should be noted that the Silicon Valley’s CityTeam was featured by conservative journalist Marvin Olasky (1993) in The Tragedy of American Compassion as an example of how churches could take over social services from the welfare state in order to facilitate the dismantling of the welfare state in favour of individual responsibility. As Hackworth (2012) notes, this anti-statist rhetoric is part and parcel of a ‘religious neoliberalism’ that views the church as positioned against the welfare state because it alleges that the state’s agendas will obstruct its charity work.
the city’s political economies. That these agendas are in turn set by business standards and municipal governments suggests in turn that these re-structuring efforts embrace yet another form of secularization. In this sense, these FBOs and congregations are not agents of the post-secular. While Beaumont and Baker (2011) might argue that these are religious interventions into the secular public sphere, that these FBOs framed their activities within the framework set by municipal governments suggests that these were not uniquely religious interventions into secular space. Instead, they framed themselves in secular terms, setting the brakes on post-secular celebration by validating secular modes of governance.

6.3 Competing with the secular: Cantonese evangelicals and social work in Metro Vancouver

If Cantonese evangelicals in the San Francisco Bay Area found their business restructuring complementary to the state’s economic agendas, their counterparts in Metro Vancouver moved in a different direction: they restructured their FBOs as social service agencies through which they could establish a Cantonese evangelical social voice in Vancouver’s civil society. Indeed, Vancouver’s Cantonese evangelicals articulated their role as filling service gaps left by publicly funded secular social service institutions,

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92 I am manifestly not arguing that Vancouver’s Cantonese evangelicals were not involved in business ventures. While these business ventures were mostly secular, financial advising agencies like Primerica hired many Cantonese evangelicals. Moreover, Primerica agent Stephen Cheung started Cantonese-speaking business networking breakfasts called the Christian Business Community (C-B-C) in which businesspersons could share about spiritual, business, and social issues. Finally, City in Focus Ministries, an evangelical ministry headed by Tom Cooper in downtown Vancouver, focuses on the integration of faith and professional life, and second-generation Cantonese-speaking evangelicals such as Bill Wong and Joycelin Ng have been involved in its activities. However, the narrative that I will tell in this section focuses on the re-orientations of certain influential Cantonese FBOs as they sought to engage ‘social concern’ issues by building credibility through social work.
especially the celebrated United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS). Often articulated as a comparison between the secularity of SUCCESS versus the Christian agenda of Cantonese FBOs in their explicit mission to evangelize Metro Vancouver, these shifts in fact marked a gradual development of a theological understanding of ‘evangelism’ from intra-congregational activity toward what some Cantonese evangelicals, including the Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Ministerial Fellowship (VCEMF), understood as ‘social work’ under the rubric of ‘Christian social concern.’ By social work, what these Cantonese evangelicals meant was that they provided services to new migrants in an effort to help them integrate into Canadian society.

Cantonese evangelicals derived this model of social service from a debate between two approaches to ethnic Chinese Christian engagements with secular civil society. One perspective was advanced by Cantonese evangelical activist Bill Chu, who radically protested what he deemed the Canadian state's colonial policy against First Nations and Chinese Canadian communities in work with Chinese Christians in Action (CCIA) and the Canadians for Reconciliation Society (CFRS). While Chu's approach did not draw large support from Cantonese evangelicals, radio commentator and popular scholar Thomas Leung Insing’s Cultural Regeneration Research Society (CRRS) advanced another perspective that met with more acclaim. Leung constructed a distinctive Chinese identity that contributed to nation-building in both the PRC and Canada, emphasizing a nexus among personal mysticism, human dignity, and private freedoms. Within this framework, some evangelicals found it possible at times to cooperate with Chu's protest against the state, particularly when Chu led Faith Communities Called to Solidarity with the Poor’s (FCCSP) interfaith and intercultural coalition objecting to the secular city's demand (later
rescinded) for Tenth Avenue Alliance Church to obtain a social services permit for its work on homelessness. Interpreting these secular moves as the state’s marginalization of religion, Cantonese evangelicals performed a privatizing twist on Chu’s protest against the state, alleging that private evangelical FBOs needed to offer social services in order to gain a more prominent social and political voice in Vancouver’s civil society.


When SUCCESS attempted in 1973 to fill a service gap left by both the welfare state and the Chinatown clan associations for serving needy Hong Kong Chinese immigrants (see WC Ng 2003), its board discovered that its services were not viable without public funding. David Lam, a Christian real estate businessman and Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, was one of SUCCESS's earliest major supporters; as his biographer notes, ‘He donated to it almost from the beginning’ (R Roy 1996: 174). However, while writing in memory of Lilian To (the late CEO of SUCCESS from 1987 to 2005), Lam recalled an early moment in SUCCESS’s history in which ‘the then chairperson solemnly announced that the financial situation of SUCCESS was very grave. As it was, it had never been worse,’ at which point Lilian To ‘started to cry...for all those new immigrants who needed the helping hand of SUCCESS,’ prompting both Lam and the chairperson to weep as well. Lam then gathered a sum that ‘was in fact larger than all my savings’ as a donation pledge to SUCCESS. These were financial means for which he thanked the God of his evangelical faith: ‘Miraculously, I made enough money to donate to SUCCESS and the Chinese Cultural Centre in the end. And what I earned after that far exceeded what I could imagine. I knew it was all for God’s
bounty’ (SUCCESS, 2005: 10). To transcend their severe financial constraints, SUCCESS hired Hong Kong social worker and evangelical Protestant, Angela Kan, in 1977 as an executive director whose pioneering work garnered secular state funding for the organization. Under Kan, SUCCESS’s fundraising succeeded in expanding its services, joining United Way, obtaining funding from the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) in 1979, providing services to Vietnamese boat refugees under the auspices of the Vietnamese Refugees Assistance Association, and attaching itself to the Vancouver Foundation in 1985-6 to ensure permanent funding (Guo, 2004: 9). In 1987, Lilian To, herself also an evangelical Protestant, was hired as Kan’s replacement following Kan’s departure to become Citizenship Court Judge for the British Columbia/Yukon Region. To’s succession was lauded in the Chinatown News as a development that would start ‘preventive and counseling programs to help immigrants make adjustments in Canadian society,’ including ‘marital and peer counseling, family education, citizenship awareness and seniors visiting seniors,’ as well as a ‘street youth centre’ and an anti-racist component (SUCCESS, 2005: 61). In short, under To’s leadership, SUCCESS developed into a multi-faceted service organization dedicated to the integral care of new migrants to Canada, particularly (but not exclusively) Hong Kong Chinese. Because the new programs that To introduced were so synchronized with her own agenda for holistic services to new migrants, SUCCESS’s founding chair Maggie Ip acknowledged in her reflection on To’s work: ‘Many who knew both Lilian and SUCCESS often said, “SUCCESS and Lilian are one and the same, they are inseparable”’ (SUCCESS, 2005: 62).

Despite the influence of Cantonese evangelicals on SUCCESS’s operations, SUCCESS was conceptualized from the beginning as a secular organization helping a broader
Cantonese—and in time, generally migrant—population. As Thomas Tam, a former CEO of SUCCESS from 2010 to 2012 told me in an interview:

SUCCESS is not a partisan or religious organization. It’s a social service organization. So we are very careful not to give the public the impression that we are affiliated with any certain religion or any political party. We enjoy very much about that neutrality. That’s the prerequisite for inclusiveness. Otherwise, people say you’re very - you’re kind of Liberal or NDP or Christian or whatever! So then, we may exclude other people.

Tam emphasized to me that there was a diversity of religions, ethnicities, and partisan loyalties represented in both the staff and the clientele of SUCCESS. However, he also explained that there were merits for the perception that many of the social workers at SUCCESS were Christian: ‘That’s also the special demographic of Hong Kong social workers.’ Because of this, many social workers from Hong Kong were in turn hired in Canada:

So there was a great need for social workers, not only in SUCCESS but even in government departments, ministries. So at that time, social workers from Hong Kong were in high demand. And we got 10 points in the immigration process. There’s a point scale. So social worker among the professions gets a higher score. So it’s very easy to come here.

This dynamic of social workers from Hong Kong being able to help an emerging Cantonese-speaking transnational Hongkonger population in Vancouver led to the rapid growth of SUCCESS as a social service centre, contributing to what Ley (2010: 279) observes was an integral part of participation in Canadian civil society, defined as ‘a sense of interest and agency in the civil society around the place of residence.’ Indeed, Ley notes that broader cross-sections of Chinese Canadians, including the more prosperous ones, contributed to SUCCESS’s force of some 5,000 volunteer personnel while launching Chinese Canadian political careers, including four of its own former board members as well as federal Conservative MP Wai Young in the Vancouver-South district (see chapter 7).
However, as expansive as SUCCESS’s service activities were, its secularity led Cantonese evangelicals, including some who had been on staff with SUCCESS (including Angela Kan), to start Cantonese evangelical social services through which they could explicitly evangelize, contrasting SUCCESS’s hushed approach to religion (Eder 2006; see also Bramadat 2013). The key organization in this vein was the Chinese Christian Mission (CCM) Canada. As the name of an organization, CCM Canada might sound like a purely evangelistic operation. Indeed, as long-time board member Stanley Ng recalled,93 CCM’s first CEO was the Rev. Daniel Chan, an Evangelical Free Church pastor who emphasized missionary work and who brought Ng on board to manage the Rev. Lui Memorial Fund to support overseas theological students studying in Vancouver. As Ng emphasized, CCM’s full Chinese name in Cantonese—zhongguok singtou boudouwui (中國信徒報道會)—implied a strict emphasis on ‘evangelism, to evangelize, so mainly, that was their core ministry,’ especially in its outreach to Chinese restaurant workers in the British Columbian interior and in sending missionaries overseas (Stanley Ng, personal communication, 13 June 2012).

CCM Canada’s mission statement changed in the late 1990s toward one that read: ‘Bringing the church into the world, and bringing the world into the church.’ In 1998 and 1999, the Rev. Edwin Kong, himself a CCM board member, took a sabbatical from his senior pastor position at Vancouver Chinatown’s Christ Church of China. Lamenting the ineffectiveness of his pastoral ministry to reach out to the local Chinatown community due

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93 Stanley Ng is in fact a major player in Cantonese evangelical circles, having also started out protesting the Tiananmen Incident in 1989. In the 1990s, he was known as the Vancouver face of Chinese Family for Christ, a Cantonese evangelical family counseling agency. Recently, he has been influenced by the work of Henri Nouwen, a Catholic priest who gave up a life in academia to serve the disabled in the L’Arche Community. Since reading Nouwen, Ng has developed an interest in spiritual direction and is pursuing training on that front.
to a theological differentiation between the ‘church’ and the ‘world’ (see chapter 4), Kong spent his time away from the church reflecting on ‘how the church should go into the community and how SUCCESS has inspired me.’ As part of the board, Kong learned that there was available space at Burnaby’s Crystal Mall in an area that had been previously zoned for an unsuccessful community centre. As the building of the community centre was unsuccessful and the economic intake of the mall was initially slow, Kong, his church’s architect Kingsley Lo, and CCM’s lawyer William Lim proposed to the City of Burnaby in October 1999 that the community centre be rezoned for CCM as a ‘House of Worship,’ even though the original zoning did not allow for a church (Burnaby City Council, 1999a). When this application caused some neighbourhood consternation alleging that a church would depreciate property values because its vacancy during the weekdays would drive business away from Crystal Mall, Kong defended the proposal in a letter leading up to a November public hearing. He argued that CCM was a ‘non-traditional church’ that ‘will hold worship services during the week instead of the usual Sundays’ and would ‘also run many programs that will seek to meet the spiritual and social needs of the general population in the Lower Mainland,’ including a ‘seniors center, a youth center, women center, counseling service, etc.’ that would be ‘readily accessible to the public by transits, by vehicle, or walking distance.’ Kong contended that most planning models ‘push churches to the edge of cities to expand,’ so CCM’s proposal to build its facilities in a mall represented innovative ‘21st Century city planning’ that ‘will set a precedent model for other N.A. cities’ (Burnaby City

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94 Indeed, the land on which Crystal Mall stood was purchased by Crystal Square Development Corporation in 1996 and rezoned by the City of Burnaby ‘for a major mixed-use development over a site encompassing 85% of the overall block’ of previously public lands. Its facilities included ‘a two-storey podium which accommodates a market, retail stores, restaurants, a food fair, a three cinema complex, office uses, hotel service facilities, and an adult community facility’ (Burnaby City Council, 1996: 168, emphasis mine).
Council, 1999b). At the November public hearing, the applicants presented 47 individual letters in support of the application (as opposed to three opposed), a supportive petition with a total of 578 individual signatures (as opposed to one opposed with ten signatures), and 15 Burnaby residents, Crystal Mall shopkeepers, and CCM representatives who came in person to speak in favour of the project. Burnaby City Council approved the church rezoning for CCM Canada’s centre at Crystal Mall in 2000 (City of Burnaby 1999c).

CCM Canada’s re-orientation in the late 1990s and early 2000s marked a shift in the meaning of ‘evangelism’ among Cantonese evangelicals in Metro Vancouver. Indeed, when Kong hired former SUCCESS head Angela Kan to become CCM’s executive director, Kong used CCM as a platform to re-think evangelism theologically, bringing in the Hong Kong mainline grassroots ministry pioneer, the Rev. Lo Lung Kwong, to speak on how the church could practice ‘social concern’ in the secular public sphere more effectively. Shifting Kong’s understanding of evangelism from a model of ‘proselytizing, turning the world off’ (as Kong articulated it), Lo argued that evangelism and social service could be theologically understood as a ‘union,’ not using one for the other but combining both to bring the church to a world disaffected by Christian proselytizing attempts. As a result, Kong and Kan re-conceptualized CCM ‘to do what the community needs’ as a form of ‘local mission,’ encompassing areas as diverse as starting emergency social services distributing earthquake kits provided by local city halls, a youth ministry to train young leaders, a women’s group, a dance club, a children’s day camp, activities for the elderly, art clubs, a

95 ‘N.A.’ means North American.
96 I am grateful to Therese Nielsen, the Administrative Assistant at the City of Burnaby’s Planning Department, for her assistance in locating the documents reference here.
cancer care and brain injury support group, a counseling centre, and various other ‘interest groups.’ Rebutting criticism for a seeming lack of focus, Kong argued:

You go to the Bay, they have everything. You go to Superstore, they have everything. We should be sensitive to the need of the society and tap the resources from the Christian community, according to the needs...whatever resources we can tap, then we offer, and we do our best. We do not necessarily do better than SUCCESS; many times I believe SUCCESS does a better job than we, but we do our best, according to the Scriptures: God gives us fifty, we do fifty; God gives us a hundred, we do one hundred. If God gives SUCCESS one hundred, they have to answer to God for that. If God gives me fifty, I have to do my fifty.

Referencing Jesus' parable of the talents in which the master gives his servants money to invest according to each one's ability, Kong contended that CCM’s diverse array of services was an outflow of the ability of Cantonese evangelical communities, whereas SUCCESS, though a secular institution, was also answerable to God for how it administered its gifts. However, there were contrasts between CCM and SUCCESS, for Kan described the work of CCM as contributing to the ‘ultimate’ good of its participants, while SUCCESS merely helped with temporal social needs:

I always say, ‘Oh, what difference do we have with SUCCESS?’ SUCCESS: oh, you know, finding employment? Find SUCCESS la. Don't know English? Find SUCCESS. If CCM can say, ‘Oh, you have needs, if you are lonely, you're sick, find CCM, someone will help you, someone will care for you’—that’s what we want to do, so we interact with this society, and another service is counseling.

Kan then explained that in difficult cases of cancer care, end of life counseling, and domestic violence, counselors at SUCCESS ‘can't' evangelize because of SUCCESS's secularity: ‘Because of professional ethics, I cannot say, I'm a Christian; do you want me to

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97 The story in the Gospels (Matthew 25.14-30; Luke 19.11-27) is a parable that Jesus tells regarding a master who had servants to whom he gave ‘talents,’ that is, ancient Palestinian currency, to invest, giving five to one servant, two to another, and one to the last. The story goes that the one who had five made five more talents, the one who had two had two more talents, but the last hid his in the ground and did not invest it. Jesus says that the master commends the first two but casts the last one out for his laziness. Here, Kong interprets this parable as a mandate to invest the ‘talents’ that God is giving him, positing that SUCCESS is like the first servant who has the most talents and he is like the second servant who has less but is still investing.
pray for you?" Contrasting SUCCESS, Kan said that CCM would be able to tell a client that

‘Christian teaching’s biggest message is forgiveness’:

I mean, each of us have many baggage, maybe you hurt other people or other people hurt you, but ultimately how can you forgive? If you use a human approach, you can never forgive unless you got forgiven from God; you can use God’s love, the cross’s great love to absolve others; this is why I said ultimately: we discover that we have a lot of parents-children relationships, broken for many decades that they have a cold war at that time, or husband and wife, all those, like infidelity and things.

These personal relationships manifested what Kong and Kan meant by ‘evangelism’ in its newer social work sense: contrasting secular social service agencies, FBOs like CCM were able to encourage their counselors, social workers, staff, and volunteers to build personal relationships with clients and to discuss spiritual matters that went beyond temporal social services. It was ‘evangelism’ because it was still possible to discuss spiritual matters while attending to immanent needs.

Mmiroring Kan’s critique of SUCCESS’s secular counseling service, a new narrative emerged suggesting that Cantonese evangelical FBOs could take over gaps left by publicly-funded secular social service agencies, especially SUCCESS. Indeed, some Cantonese evangelicals observed that SUCCESS sometimes failed to obtain public funding for some of its former services, allowing Christian organizations better suited for evangelism to take over. As one CCM staff member told me, SUCCESS’s dependence on public funding meant that its department for home ‘visitation’ (founded under Lilian To) had been cut, as well as its ‘cancer care department,’ so ‘in fact, their volunteers called us and said that they had been trained and then wanted to come with us for visitation.’ There was a similar narrative at another Cantonese evangelical student ministry, Ambassadors for Christ (AFC), where a Alan Yu said, ‘We do academic consultation, because SUCCESS does not have a department like that,’ that is, a service that advised new Canadian students and helped them advance in
their schooling. Indeed, Yu noted that if SUCCESS had a settlement case involving students, AFC was the go-to organization to which SUCCESS referred these families: ‘If I remember rightly,’ he said, ‘we are the only non-profit organization that does this.’

In other words, these organizations framed themselves as complementary to SUCCESS, describing SUCCESS as beholden to the secular public agendas of its state funding, whereas the privately funded evangelical organizations said that they had more theological freedom to determine what was on their agenda. These sentiments were also corroborated by my focus groups. Following Kong’s and Kan’s acknowledgement of the critique that CCM Canada’s services were overly secular, a standard question that I repeatedly asked concerned whether SUCCESS and CCM Canada were conducting the same services. Each time I asked this question, I received a decisively negative answer. At the Burnaby focus group, Mrs. Au told me that she had volunteered at both organizations. She asserted that the organizations were ‘completely different,’ for as SUCCESS ‘helps immigrants to get to know Canada, find work, and learn English in Canada,’ CCM was for evangelism. She said that this dynamic was apparent in their ‘funding,’ for ‘CCM is independent toward its audience,’ whereas ‘SUCCESS takes all the funding.’ Accordingly, those at the Richmond focus group noted that whereas SUCCESS emphasized social services, volunteers at CCM Canada emphasized ‘better bonding because we have a better religious background, so people come to our services and have care and friendship, which is different from SUCCESS.’ As Mrs. Lim noted, ‘People at SUCCESS keep working without smiling and being nice. People at CCM are nice with the love of the Lord.’

These attempts to do social work through the church and FBOs fell under the rubric of ‘social concern,’ that is, these activities were seen as means by which Cantonese
evangelicals could develop a voice to engage debates in Canadian civil society. Recalling chapter 5, the Christian Social Concern Fellowship (CSCF) met initially on CCM Canada’s Crystal Mall premises. Their stated goal was to recover a Chinese Christian political voice after the passage of gender-neutral marriage in Canada (see chapter 5). Alleging that these legislative acts were successful in part because of the apathy of Chinese Christians toward politics and civil society, CSCF was in many ways an extension of CCM’s mandate to care for the local community in order to gain a social voice. Dr. Archie Hui argued that ‘you cannot just only do so-called “evangelism,” but you must care for the society.’ Indeed, CSCF joined Vancouver’s ‘Cold Front Program’ to hand out brown-bag lunches to those in need in the city. In 2011 and 2012, these activities expanded to hosting traditional Chinese and classical musical services and serving meals during Christmas at a Richmond church in collaboration with the local Salvation Army Corps (Fan, 2012).

In turn, these grounded theological shifts in FBOs also manifested themselves in the concurrent re-orientations of several church congregations. Edwin Kong cited the North Shore Pacific Grace Church’s community centre as a direct inspiration for the work of CCM:

I see more churches are willing to get involved; in fact, a couple of churches that I know actually set up a service centre on their own—Pacific Grace Church on 1st Ave has set one up. North Shore Pacific Grace Church actually bought an office and turned it into a community centre, not big, but they have one. Some churches are beefing up their outreach right now toward social services, but whether they will adopt Rev. Lo [Lung Kwong]’s objective, or whether they just go back to the old objective (“I just want to get you to come to my church”) remains to be seen.

Indeed, the Rev. Abraham Lau, who founded the North Shore community centre,98 clarified: ‘I began a centre to hope to serve this society. Our ultimate goal was still evangelism; that was what we wanted to do. Some people there didn’t know what was going on, but the

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98 The Rev. Abraham Lau is currently senior pastor at Vancouver Chinatown’s Christ Church of China.
leaders, we want to build up the church.’ In other words, Lau admitted that social services run by churches often operated on a different model from CCM, as their evangelism was directed toward church growth. Yet there were similarities as well, for Lau also suggests that this motivation may not have been directly communicated to the community centre’s clients.

So too, Angela Kan’s home congregation, Lord’s Grace Church in Vancouver’s historically countercultural Kitsilano neighbourhood, experienced a similar shift under the leadership of the Rev. Paul Chan, who became senior pastor there in 2000. Chan was trained as an urban missiologist at Eastern Baptist Seminary and had served as a former associate pastor at the urban mission bastion First Baptist Church in Vancouver’s downtown, where (as he told me) he had been the first chair of the urban mission consultation with 120 ministry practitioners in 1999. His ‘Senior Pastor’s Dream’ called the church to be ‘committed geographically’ to Kitsilano, even though, as his deacon board chair Walter Wong noted at the time, it was not a predominantly Chinese neighbourhood. Chan and Wong began a ‘community witnessing department’ in the Chinese congregation, changing the name of the church from the ‘Chinese Christian Chapel’ to Lord’s Grace Church to emphasize its multi-ethnic concerns for the neighbourhood. This department mobilized their Cantonese congregation to host neighbourhood dinners and movie nights for their non-Chinese neighbours, setting up a large screen in the church in 2010 for neighbourhood broadcasts of Vancouver’s Winter Olympics. As Walter Wong (now a pastor at Lord’s Grace

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99 It is important to clarify that Lord’s Grace Church and CCM are institutionally separate, even though the Rev. Paul Chan is currently General Secretary of CCM International and Angela Kan is executive director of CCM Canada. This paragraph focuses on the parallel shifts that CCM Canada underwent during the same time as Lord’s Grace Church’s shift to ministry to the Kitsilano neighbourhood. While influences can certainly be detected between the two institutions, they must be regarded as institutionally separate.
Church himself) said, their community witness department itself bore witness that ‘in the kingdom of God there is no Chinese, no Chinese.’ Instead, according to ‘the theology of place,’ he argued that ‘our primary responsibility is to our neighbours’ (Walter Wong, personal communication, 29 April 2012). In other words, Wong suggested that because the demographic makeup of Kitsilano was not predominantly Chinese, to be a Chinese church would obstruct its ability to bring the Christian Gospel into the community.

However, for the Rev. Edward Lee at the Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Free Church (VCEFC), the presence of Chinese migrants in his church’s new neighbourhood on Rupert Street and Broadway meant that the church’s ministry had to focus on local Chinese people. After purchasing a former gas station and erecting a new building on the lot, the church discovered (according to Lee) that their congregation experienced a ‘25 percent growth’ because the area’s ‘demographic distribution of the community’ had ‘quite a few Chinese, Cantonese-speaking, Mandarin-speaking, from China, from Hong Kong, and then we said, “Maybe it’s God who planted us there.” We didn’t know.’ As a result, VCEFC has started a Mandarin-speaking ministry and augmented its English-speaking ministry to draw more local community members into their congregation. While VCEFC may contrast with Lord’s Grace Church by focusing on the Chinese population, their objectives converged on the point of neighbourhood ministry, that their primary obligation was to minister to the local areas in which their churches found themselves. Mirroring Ley and Beattie’s (2003) and Ley’s (2008) analysis of German churches in Vancouver’s south side, some congregations re-oriented themselves from a focus on their internal congregational dynamics and saw themselves as part of a larger local mission to their local Vancouver neighbourhoods, seeking to serve their local communities as good neighbours.
In turn, the Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Ministerial Fellowship (VCEMF) was also re-oriented from its former apathy toward social issues (see chapters 4 and 5), informing pastors about how they and their congregations could make a difference in civil society. Indeed, under the leadership of the Rev. James Ip and the Rev. Wayne Lo, the VCEMF took on distinctively social engagement initiatives from 2010 to 2012. Ip told me that the VCEMF historically followed the conventions of the ‘old pastors’ by caring for fellow Chinese clergy’s ‘spiritual health.’ However, Ip cited Jesus’ command to be ‘salt and light’ and a ‘city on a hill’ (Matt. 5:13-16), arguing that the VCEMF needed to extend that care toward ‘social concern.’ Ip thus attempted to involve pastors in public engagement, albeit conscious that he could not explicitly politicize them or tell them how to vote. Aside for the sexuality issues noted in chapter 5, another example of the VCEMF’s civic engagement was their prayer campaign for the One Match Stem Cell/Marrow Network on 26 March 2011, which was acknowledged (as Ip showed me) by the organization giving the VCEMF a plaque (James Ip, personal communication, 2 June 2012).

Ip also attempted to mobilize young people for social concern activities. As the Rev. Anson Ann (personal communication, 25 Apr. 2012) and AFC’s Alan Yu also told me, the VCEMF also sponsored the revitalization of Cantonese evangelical youth ministries in Metro Vancouver through the Church Revival Youth (CRY) Network, a university ministry that gathered Cantonese-speaking UBC and Simon Fraser University (SFU) students to pray for the breakdown of ‘spiritual strongholds’ of emotional, moral, psychological, and spiritual ‘bondage’ on university campuses so that the city could be ‘healed’ (see also CRY, 100)

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100 In 2012, the Rev. James Ip resigned from the VCEMF as well as the church he served, Richmond Chinese Alliance Church, and returned to Hong Kong.
As Yu noted, ‘We see we’re not just praying for local churches, but we’re praying for the larger society, for universities, the campuses, for the city’s welfare, because our vision is much larger than one or two churches, it’s about Greater Vancouver, and we want to see God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.’ One ‘stronghold’ against which Ip mobilized the CRY Network was the city’s proposal that Edgewater Casino be expanded in Vancouver’s downtown area. As a member of the Vancouver Not Vegas coalition, Ip said that he was the only pastoral representative of the Chinese Christian community at the city’s public hearing, a strategic move because he was a former urban planner in Hong Kong. He argued that the building of a casino would spread crime and corrupt the morals of youth, producing an inverse effect to the raising of money to form a state-sponsored safety net. Observing that CRY had done ‘prayer walks’ to bless university campuses in Vancouver, Ip also tapped the network to lead a prayer walk around City Hall to pray against the casino building while he was speaking at the public hearing. Alan Yu contended that the CRY Network’s youth prayer walk was ‘very important’ to the overall Vancouver Not Vegas activism, despite the admittedly low turnout by the young people:

> Because every month we have a student prayer meeting, and that week, we had wanted to go to another campus to do a prayer walk, but exactly that day, City Hall had a public hearing, so Rev. Ip said, “Hey, why don’t you come to City Hall to have your prayer walk, since it happens that there’s a public hearing there?” That day, they could express their opinions, so I said OK, and so we moved our prayer walk that day to City Hall and walked at City Hall. But the turnout was not very high—usually, we have about 40 people—but it was April, and it was the first week of exams, so that day, there were only nine people. But that’s OK; I mean, we did think about, Hey, there’s exams, would we be better off cancelling? But no problem, if there’s no one, then there’s just no one. But we had nine.

This CRY Network is not to be confused with charismatic activist Faytene Kryskow’s TheCry (see McDonald, 2010). While similar in their approaches to supernatural powers, they are institutionally different. The CRY Network focuses on bringing prayer revivals to university students on campus and is supported by the Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Ministerial Fellowship. TheCRY mobilizes students for political activism at the federal level. There may be some membership crossover, but they are two separate organizations.
While these Cantonese evangelicals did not take total credit for the overturning of the casino motion as a result of their prayer walk, these were moments that they noted were part of their participation in civil society, led by the pastoral fellowship to break down the ‘spiritual strongholds’ in Vancouver’s civil society. These political activities were in turn conceptualized as forms of social service to a broader civil society, stemming crime while contributing spiritual revitalization to the common Canadian good.

Based on these Cantonese evangelical social concern activities, Cantonese evangelicals within these FBOs and pastoral networks argued that they had successfully integrated into Canadian civil society. In a piece discussing how Chinese Christians adopted the ‘common habits of Western society’ while integrating Buddhist traditions whenever they celebrated Chinese New Year, Vancouver Sun’s religion and diversity journalist Douglas Todd quoted Langara College instructor Li Yu as saying, ‘The Chinese churches strengthen people’s original identity, not their Canadian identity. Whether that is good or not depends on how you see it’ (Todd, 2011a: C1; see also Li, 2010). The VCEMF’s James Ip and Wayne Lo wrote a scathing response that was printed on Todd’s blog The Search, noting that many members of Chinese churches ‘participate actively in conferences and seminars together with their counterparts of mainstream churches,’ serve as ‘dedicated volunteers’ in Canadian civil society and state institutions, ‘watch and follow NHL hockey games on a regular basis,’ cheered for the Canadian teams during the 2010 Winter Olympics, celebrate Christmas ‘like mainstream citizens celebrate that season,

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102 Li Yu (2010) made these comments based on a chapter he had contributed to DeVries et al’s (2010) Asian Religions in British Columbia. He had argued there that Christianity could be conceptualized as a ‘Chinese religion’ because of the high numbers of Chinese Christian practitioners. While I am sympathetic to Li’s observation that Chinese Christians are a significant population that has transformed the practice of Christianity in Vancouver, I depart from his analysis as his ‘Chineseness’ is overly essentialist and does not take into account that ‘Chineseness’ is always a concept under construction.
buying gifts, decorating their homes, donating to charity organizations and sharing with the less fortunate,’ and have transcended their English-language barriers by developing ‘personal friendships with Canadians of other ethnic groups through sports, cooking, gardening, parenting, charity, and political activities.’ Disputing their portrayal as ‘mono-cultural,’ they argued that Chinese Christians in Vancouver ‘accept the fact that Canada is already a multicultural society and that they will do their part for the well-being of the society in their different capacities in it’ (Todd, 2011b). In other words, they contended that they were already integrated into civil society, for they conducted social services that gave them a civic voice; they were not creating an ethnic ghetto.

With these shifts in the practice of evangelism within the ministerial fellowship, the question is: what paved the way for these internal shifts regarding the understanding of evangelism from internal congregational piety to civically-engaged forms of social work? While some may argue cynically that this desire for a social voice originates from Cantonese evangelicals seeking to force their heteronormative, traditional family values onto secular civil societies (see chapter 5), a closer analysis of this discourse reveals that this suspicion of the state and this narrative of religious competition with secular state funding precedes their traditional sexuality activism. It is to that analysis that this section turns next.

6.3.2 Contested activism: evangelicals in competition for a secular voice

The view that Cantonese evangelicals should serve their local civil society in order to gain a political voice was born from a coalition of evangelicals who were involved in the
Tiananmen protests in Vancouver (see chapter 7),\textsuperscript{103} such as New Life Chinese Lutheran Church’s Rev. Lo Sek Wai, Chinese Family for Christ’s Stanley Ng, Ambassadors for Christ’s Benny Chin, The Church of the Good Shepherd’s Rev. Stephen Leung, and the Chinese Christian Winter Conference’s Bill Chu.\textsuperscript{104} Known as Chinese Christians in Action (CCIA), this coalition attempted to frame a Chinese Canadian vision of the common good to which Cantonese evangelicals could contribute. However, as CCIA entered into reconciliation work with First Nations communities, its activities became seen as overly radical and thus irrelevant to Cantonese evangelical interests. An opposing view of Chineseness then emerged, formulated as a vision of public engagement based on advocating for private ‘Chinese’ interests. These two visions led to two varying interpretations of their joint participation in Faith Communities in Solidarity with the Poor in 2007 and 2008, an interfaith coalition led by CCIA’s Bill Chu to protest the City of Vancouver’s requirement that Tenth Avenue Alliance Church, a large, internally diverse church along both racial and class lines, register a social services permit for their ministry to the homeless in the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood. Using this case study as the final plank in this section’s argument, this section finally demonstrates the use of social work to contribute a voice for social concern was beholden to competing Cantonese evangelical visions of Chinese Canadian public engagements with Vancouver’s civil society.

\textsuperscript{103} Because the Tiananmen events were formative for the formal engagements of Cantonese evangelicals in democratic politics, the drawn-out discussion of these events is better situated in chapter 7.

\textsuperscript{104} As a point of clarification, most of these individuals are no longer attached to these institutions. In 1997, the Rev. Lo Sek Wai left Vancouver to pastor City One Baptist Church in Hong Kong’s Sha Tin area and became a prominent voice among evangelicals combatting sexual liberalization and Christian heresies from the PRC; he retired in 2013. So too, Stanley Ng has recently left his post with the Chinese Family for Christ and is now pursuing training in spiritual direction, having been influenced by the work of L’Arche director Henri Nouwen. Bill Chu is no longer part of the Winter Conference’s planning committee and has since refashioned himself as an anti-colonization activist with Chinese Christians in Action and Canadians for Reconciliation Society. The late Benny Chin passed away on 3 January 2010.
In the early 1990s, CCIA’s stated objective was to change the consciousness of newly migrated Chinese Canadians, mostly from Hong Kong, toward a democratic public consciousness founded on the common good, turning their attention away from self-interested, family-centered economic concerns. CCIA’s major intervention into ‘Chinese culture’ in Vancouver lay in their Chinese New Year celebrations at Oakridge Mall in the 1990s. Lo Sek Wai told me that after CCIA was registered as a charitable organization, it sought to transform Chinese Canadian consciousness with a democratic agenda. While Lo initially proposed a Chinese New Year event in New Life Chinese Lutheran Church’s basement, his friend and collaborator Stanley Ng contacted the management of Oakridge Mall because it was a space that could hold more people; as Lo recalled, ‘We were welcomed by Oakridge Mall, because we create traffic to the mall during Chinese New Year, and our event is not commercial—we only sell Chinese crafts, paintings, and posters—so the management welcomed us.’ Unaware that the Chinatown Merchants’ Association had also set up a parade at the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) (see Griffin, 1992), CCIA set up a show stage for song and dance performing groups, a lion dance, and craft booths, and they were supported by public appearances by David Lam and Angela Kan. Unique to their exhibition was the objective to change the Chinese New Year moniker from gung hei fat choi (Cantonese, congratulations, make lots of money) to ping on hei lok (Cantonese, peace and happiness).

While the event may have seemed to be a religiously exclusive retort to Buddhist practices, CCIA’s agenda was to reformulate ‘Chinese culture’ for post-colonial democratic solidarity. Bill Chu recalled in his key informant interview: ‘I said that if Christianity don’t do anything about that, then the people will just keep worshipping the idols year after year.
So we need to do something.’ His interview in the *Vancouver Sun* during these events clarified that he thought that ‘the old greeting grew out of millennia of political oppression in China...[when] the Chinese channeled their energy into making money’ because they could not effect political change (Griffin, 1992). Given a new democratic context, however, Chu contended that this economically self-interested greeting should be replaced by one that invoked the common good, a point that he reiterated in a profile by Douglas Todd (1997) to the chagrin of SUCCESS’s Mason Loh, who argued that there was nothing wrong with making money. CCIA’s Christian alternative was not so much based on intolerance for interfaith work, but rather an attempt to change what they saw as a Chinese culture in Vancouver steeped in self-interest.\(^{105}\) Stanley Ng corroborated such frustration by referencing Bill Chu as a ‘lone ranger’ and ‘a man of principle, just like an old tree that never bends,’ lamenting that he saw the targets of Chu’s critique in his private work as an automobile insurance agent that in ‘most of the Chinese churches’ parking lots, when I look at their licence plates, they all really like “138,” “888,”’ that is, numbers corresponding to ‘prosperity’ in popular Cantonese parlance, whereas ‘if I give you “4,” then they will be very afraid,’ because that is the number corresponding to ‘death.’ This change in ‘Chinese culture’ around Chinese New Year was not simply an affront to folk practices, then.

Instead, Chu held that it was these traditions that maintained a colonizing iron cage of economism among Chinese Canadians. In a post-colonial context, Chu contended that these ‘Chinese’ energies could be channeled toward democratic movements that focused on a common good beyond self-interest, for they no longer had to be subject to oppressive movements that stifled altruism. ‘So I think Bill Chu is very right,’ Ng concluded, ‘because of

\(^{105}\) Indeed, Bill Chu’s later coalition, Faith Communities in Solidarity with the Poor, was precisely an interfaith coalition.
our culture and history, that as we are oppressed for so many years, we only care about whether we have food to eat; don’t talk too much about that freedom and democracy stuff.’

In the mid-1990s, these post-colonial emphases on democracy and the common good became re-oriented via the efforts of newer Cantonese evangelical activists with a vision of ‘Chinese culture’ as an ancient tradition that celebrated private familial freedoms. Bill Chu attributes this shift to his departure for Libya in 1995 for work-related reasons; he described this move as precipitating a personnel fragmentation within CCIA, making space for the new groups. As I discussed in chapter 5, one of these newer organizations was the Canadian Alliance for Social Justice and Family Values Association (CASJAFVA), whose convener, lawyer K-John Cheung, expressed to me directly that the organization appealed to its members’ ‘self-interest’:

You know, motivations, human beings being what they are, they are primarily motivated by self-interest, that’s number one...So therefore, in order to motivate people, the self-interest is number one, therefore education, poisoning the kids and the younger generation, this is the primary motivational aspect for the parents.

In other words, Cheung advocated that parents retake the public education system from the ‘poison’ of certain ideological positions on sexuality and public policy, invoking self-interest as their reason for intervening. One of Cheung’s earliest partners (though the connection no longer exists at present) was another member of the Rev. Lo Sek Wai’s New Life Chinese Lutheran Church, Dr. Thomas Leung Insing and his Cultural Regeneration Research Society (CRRS). Brought to Canada by David Lam originally to teach Chinese studies at Regent College, an evangelical graduate school, Leung left academia in 1993, using Lam’s funding to start CRRS to conduct academic dialogue between Chinese and Canadian scholars on ‘Chinese culture’ and launching an academic journal titled *Cultural China*. 
Citing the years of ‘cultural trauma’ in China due to ‘foreign colonization,’ the ‘civil wars,’ and ‘the Cultural Revolution,’ Leung argued, ‘I feel that we have to remind China of its great cultural values again. But with these cultural values, if we add some Christian values, it will add some modern meaning to it, or even post-modern ones,’ including the ‘total equality of human beings, dignity, and respect to persons,’ especially respect for ‘those who are do not have value.’ The blending of China’s ‘spiritual culture’ with modernity in turn brought Leung into close proximity with the PRC government. As CRRS gathered Chinese Christian private donations ($20,000) to start schools for village children, the PRC government asked him to serve as the Canadian liaison to develop anti-corruption and good governance models, at which point Leung registered CRRS to become the first Chinese NGO in Canada. In time, the Canada-China political connections that Leung developed brought him into the inner echelon of the Chinese state to speak about human rights and freedom of religion in China, culminating eventually in his appointment to the Overseas Chinese Relations Board, the Tibet Cultural and Economic Development Committee, and the Chinese People’s Party Consultative Conference (CPPCC). In turn, Leung also established his presence in North America as a radio commentator, using his insider knowledge of China to inform Cantonese speakers about what their attitudes toward China should be.

While mirroring Bill Chu in his appeal to the trauma of Western colonization, Leung’s conception of Chineseness linked mystical practice and ‘spiritual culture’ to political harmony and economic prosperity. Mirroring his assertion that his majoritarian argument against same-sex marriage ‘is a secular argument, not a religious argument’ (see
chapter 5), he contended that there was a secular state theory ‘that Chinese people always agree with’:

We Chinese, not Christian—the Chinese—feel that drug addiction and prostitution offends against human dignity. If the government pushes these things, then it is an evil government. We Chinese feel that if you work hard, you should not need to pay taxes for the people who are doing these things. This is a Chinese value.

In other words, Leung theorized ‘Chineseness’ as an understanding of the state in which individual families should not be units of revenue for governments to make up for policies that unraveled the moral fabric. Contrasting CCIA’s vision of the common good, this theory of civil society held that the social order is composed of family units each working for their own familial economic good, facilitated by a state that upholds ‘human dignity’ through policies encouraging individual welfare. Mirroring the neo-conservative positions held by the Moral Majority and the Tea Party movements in the United States (see Hackworth, 2012), these families in turn had no obligation to care for those outside of their individual units, especially if these problems were encouraged by state policy.

Instead, Leung argued that Chinese families had an obligation to help with nation-building in the PRC. Acknowledging in his interview with me that ‘China has lots of space to reform’ but ‘the doors of China open slowly,’ Leung (2008: 9) argued in a human rights paper submitted in 2008 to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and then-British Columbian MP Stockwell Day that China was a ‘child’ in terms of human rights but ‘an old man’ in its spiritual culture:

A wounded nation needs healing instead of criticism that can bring more injuries to them. We need to help China develop human rights according to their own culture. Friendly advice and encouragement instead of hostile criticism is the only way to help this nation advance and reach the international standard of human rights. China is a five thousand year old civilization. Just as an old man needs to be respected, an old culture needs to be respected first.
Eschewing a confrontational tone, he argued that Canadians, including Chinese Christians, should help the Chinese state and its developing civil society. Indeed, CRRS mobilized Cantonese FBOs for humanitarian work in China: one example was a project launched by Leung’s daughter Esther Leung-Kong in 2008 that was called Project Shine, which linked Chinese Canadian young people recruited by CCM Canada through CRRS to the Guangxi region to teach English. Indeed, with these inter-FBO partnerships as well as through Leung’s radio analyses of Chinese state politics, Cantonese evangelicals came to understand ‘Chineseness’ through CRRS lenses, endeavouring to help the Chinese state instead of criticizing it for human rights abuses while contending for the integrity of their own individual family units.

While Leung developed a pro-state stance that became the dominant form of Chineseness espoused by Cantonese evangelicals, Bill Chu challenged these approaches by opposing the nation-building projects of both the Chinese and Canadian states because he saw them both as colonizing apparatuses. Indeed, one long-standing interest of Chu’s since the late 1980s was to work for indigenous First Nations justice. Chu (1996: A2) recalled in a Vancouver Sun opinion-editorial that this interest began when he bought dinner for a First Nations man who had approached him for money in Vancouver’s Chinatown. When Chu attempted to share the Christian Gospel with him, the man ‘said, “You are one of them!” and marched out without finishing his food,’ puzzling Chu as to what this man meant by ‘them.’ Following the events of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 where news images of tanks brutalizing democratic student protesters became the iconic image of Chinese state-sponsored violence, Chu noted similarities between Tiananmen in 1989 and the Oka Crisis in Canada in 1990, a territorial dispute in which the Mohawk people blockaded their sacred
grounds against the Quebec town of Oka’s golf expansion plan, leading to a showdown between the First Nations band and Canadian troops deployed to force an end to the stalemate (see Kobayashi and Ray, 2000). These military scenes provoked a similar reaction for Chu: ‘The scene looked rather similar to that of a year before as Canadian army and tanks swarmed around the out-numbered Indians. As I looked on, I was convinced we could not just be concerned about those crushed in Tiananmen and ignore others about to be crushed.’ Noting that there was a concurrent British Columbia blockade on Duffy Lake Road set up by the Lil’wat Nation at Mount Currie to assert their sovereign territorial rights, Chu visited the roadblock, where the indigenous band educated him about the ‘long-standing and institutionalized injustice toward the First Nations, part of which was caused by the churches’ role in the residential school system.’ Receiving a mandate from CCIA’s core membership in the early 1990s prior to his trip to Libya, Chu embarked on a mission of solidarity with the First Nations, beginning in 1991 by standing with Lil’wat leaders opposing logging in their territories on the basis of Hong Kong Chinese people sharing the historical experience of having been colonized by the British (Todd 1991).

However, Chu told me that by the mid-1990s, he no longer had the majority support of Cantonese evangelicals: ‘The initial CCIA group got—what’s the best word to say it?—they split up into two groups, they split by themselves, and there was an outside body that said, why don’t we form another group and drag a bunch of people into that?’ Chu’s lack of support was corroborated by my focus groups: while many had heard of CRRS—indeed, some even knew Thomas Leung Insing personally—not one of my focus group members in Burnaby, Coquitlam, or Richmond could tell me who Bill Chu was. However, my key informants at the various Cantonese evangelical FBOs named in this thesis had all
interacted with Chu, but they all said that Chu’s work lay to their ideological left, which meant that they would ‘pick and choose’ from the issues with which they resonated without supporting Chu’s overall framework. Chu suggested that this lack of support was due to these Cantonese evangelicals’ privatized mentalities, for they did not include such radical forms of justice within their framework of the public good. Openly criticizing the Chinese church for failing to attend to this marginalized population, his explanation of Cantonese evangelical apathy mirrored CRRS’s explanation of ‘Chinese’ values as focused on familial economic success with no obligation to care for those whom they perceived had put themselves in an economically marginalized predicament. He told me:

And yet we don’t feel any shame about it, we actually say, Oh, those guys are lazy, those guys don’t want any job, they get put on welfare. But they don’t realize those are the results of government policies, and why we don’t know that is, number one, we don’t want to be incarnational, we don’t want to bring ourselves down to earth, we think we are on the pedestal somewhere, so all these people just want to do their thing in the nice church in the nice mall, but they don’t want to go into the dark and dirty reserve. But Christ, what did Christ do? Christ went into the worst places and mixed up with the wrong guys in our terms.

Indeed, as a former organizer of the Chinese Christian Winter Conference, Chu described himself as an evangelical living out the Christian Gospel: he appealed to the fifth section of the 1974 Lausanne Covenant, the document that emerged from an international meeting of evangelicals about what ‘evangelism meant. Chu interpreted its appeal to the ‘intrinsic dignity’ of every human being and its mandate that ‘social concern’ go hand in hand with evangelism as his theological justification for his radical politics. As Chu put it in his key informant interview,

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106 As I noted in chapter 4, the Lausanne Conference and its Covenant in 1974, called by evangelist Dr. Billy Graham, formed the basis of an evangelical missiology that saw evangelism and social services as complementary. The Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelization (CCCOWE), known better as the
The embodiment of Christ is the purpose of the church. If we are not trying to embody Christ, then how can people be attracted to Christ? Again, getting back to Lausanne, I see that if we don’t even have the manifestation of the good news we are talking about, how can we buy that product? It’s like you keep saying, I got the best product in the world, but you cannot show me that product, you cannot live out that product, how can you buy something like that?

Specially, Chu told me that this alternative view of public engagement was based on the ‘cultural mandate,’ that is, a Reformed Protestant understanding of the command from God in Genesis 1.28 to ‘be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.’ Contending that this biblical injunction should be interpreted as a call to ‘care for all of creation,’ Chu argued that forms of public engagement based on self-interest should not be considered ‘Christian.’

Chu’s evangelical public theology was put to work when he organized the Multicultural Coalition Against Gambling Expansion in the late 1990s. Working from 1997 to 2002 to stop the casino building, Chu attempted to mobilize multiple parties in Richmond, including Cantonese evangelicals, to join a coalition that organized Richmond residents (including, but not exclusively Cantonese evangelicals) for citizens’ mass rallies outside of city hall, collected petition signatures, and spoke negatively at public hearings about building River Rock Casino in Richmond. During this coalition-building effort, Chu became frustrated at what he perceived as a general apathy toward ‘public justice.’ Instead of seeking the public good, Chu said that many anti-casino demonstrators, including some

'Chinese Lausanne,' was also launched from this conference, with the Rev. Thomas Wang as its first director and the Rev. Chan Hay Him as his immediate successor (see Nagata, 2006; Han, 2010).

107 I understand that there are many interpretations of the ‘cultural mandate.’ As Lynn White (1961) has argued, a dominant interpretation of this command has led to environmental exploitation in the West. However, this is not the only interpretation, for United Methodist theologian Walter Brueggemann’s (1982) Genesis commentary argues precisely that this creation care mandate signifies a command to exercise pastoral care toward the cultivation of creation. While I am sure that my post-humanist colleagues would remain unhappy with the anthropocentrism that is latent in such a political ecological claim, Brueggemann’s approach would still mean the opposite of ecological destruction.
Cantonese evangelicals, tended to frame their concerns in terms of the interests of the private church: 'We seem to think that if justice is about what is good for Christians, values that are good for Christians, we should somehow get the government to do it. Now they have this narrow agenda.' Seeking to broaden his coalition's horizons on public justice, Chu's emails about the fight against River Rock Casino explicitly instruct his participants not to come armed with private opinions, but with empirical reasoning oriented toward the public good:

Presentations on the 28th should be focused on real stories of gamblers, facts and threats (somewhat a play of words since someone reminded me later that we need to take the high road and not sink to the level of our adversary. Also note being abusive to all councillors is unproductive and your otherwise good points may not be received in the heat of the moment)...Wherever possible, we should back up our claims in our presentation by sources or references since some councillors ascribed our statements as "personal opinions".

That Chu was frustrated enough to send out these explicit instructions in turn suggest that his activists, some of whom were Cantonese evangelicals, had been uncivil and unaware of how to frame public issues.

Indeed, this view of public engagement led Chu to contend that both First Nations communities and Chinese Canadians were historical victims of the Canadian state's colonial policies, which meant that the two communities should join in solidarity for First Nations’ sovereign rights. Following his holistic evangelical mandate, Chu's return to CCIA in 1996 spurred a concerted effort to lobby governments at all levels for First Nations territorial rights, especially for the Lil'wat Nation. Since 1996, CCIA organized groups of CCIA and Mount Currie Lil'wat students to celebrate Chinese New Year together (Vancouver Sun, 1998: B1). In 2001, Chu also launched the Canadians for Reconciliation Society (CFRS); as he told the Vancouver Sun, the group is 'a peaceful, non-partisan, grassroots movement
committed to developing a new relationship with aboriginal people, one that signifies a
depth apology for past injustice, a willingness to honour truth now and a resolve to embrace
each other in the new millennium’ (Hume, 2007). To achieve this reconciliation, Chu
adopted a multi-pronged approach. First, he built from his 1996 Chinese New Year
celebrations to develop an annual event, Dances with Dragons, featuring a Dragon Dance
with the Chinese students while leading a joint Hoobiyyee celebration, a Nisga’a New Year
festival. Second, he lobbied for the enshrinement of Chinese Canadian and indigenous
histories in British Columbian curriculum. From 2009 to 2010, Chu fought for the redress
of historic wrongs done to Chinese Canadians, lobbying New Westminster’s city council in
particular to recognize a Chinese Canadian cemetery within its city limits and to apologize
for past instances of racism, which it did in October 2010. This work also paralleled Chu’s
previous activism as head of the B.C. Coalition of Chinese Head Tax Payers, Their Spouses,
and Descendants in 2005 and 2006, a group joined by Chinese Canadian NDP politician
Gabriel Yiu that was part of a broader coalition that successfully pressured Prime Minister
Stephen Harper to apologize to Chinese head tax payers in January 2006 (see chapter 7).
Third, Chu called on the Canadian government to recognize First Nations land claims,
joining the Lil’wat struggle for native territorial sovereignty. For example, when a certain
Williams’s family’s reservation house burned down, Chu issued a press release explaining
why they would only accept private donations: ‘As Indigenous folks like the Williams does
not wish to be registered as Canadians or received anything from Canada (their oppressor),
they pay their medical, including the $25,000 for the delivery of their two grand children’
(CCIA, 2010). Recruiting Cantonese evangelicals to bring supplies to Mount Currie for
underprivileged Lil’wat band members, Chu used each trip to explain the struggles of the
First Nations to his participants. Indeed, when I accompanied Chu to Mount Currie along with one Cantonese evangelical and one white missionary woman, Chu told us that our charitable deliveries of household supplies would include a visit to an indigenous activist who had erected a camp on Lil’wat sacred territory that was under the threat of government sale to private developers for a golf course. In other words, Chu’s CFRS conducted charitable services as a way to raise public awareness about Canadian state colonialism directed to both Chinese Canadians and indigenous communities.

Indeed, both Leung’s and Chu’s approaches can be said to be ‘post-colonial’ in the sense that they argued against the colonizing tendencies of Western nation-states on Chinese populations. However, their two conceptions of post-colonialism led to very different activities. On one hand, Leung became integrated with the Chinese state and successfully garnered the support of most Cantonese evangelicals for his mystical conception of ‘Chinese culture.’ On the other hand, Chu led a marginalized FBO to protest the Canadian state in the name of First Nations and Chinese Canadian solidarity. These two post-colonialisms made for unlikely solidarities among Cantonese evangelicals because both strands saw ‘social concern’ as a mandate for Cantonese evangelicals through which they could speak to the state. While their motivations were different, this common ground afforded both groups some opportunities to work together. A key case study revolves around Bill Chu’s work with Faith Communities Called to Solidarity with the Poor (FCCSP) in 2007-2008, a coalition of religious leaders who challenged Vancouver City Hall’s demand for Tenth Avenue Alliance Church (hereafter, ‘Tenth Church’) to obtain a social services
permit for their ministry to the hungry and the homeless, known as the Out of the Cold ministry (see Tse, 2012a).\textsuperscript{108}

While the Cantonese evangelical involvement in Tenth Church’s activism may seem marginal to events that revolved around local contestations between Tenth Church and City Hall, some Cantonese evangelicals played a prominent role both in influencing the church and in leading its activism. Indeed, while Tenth Church was not a Cantonese evangelical congregation, its multicultural and social justice work was generally known among Cantonese evangelicals. After having attended sessions on urban mission hosted by First Baptist Church’s then-pastor Rev. Paul Chan (who later became pastor at Lord’s Grace Church) in 1999,\textsuperscript{109} Tenth Church’s senior pastor, Ken Shigematsu, sent one of his pastors, Don Cowie, to learn how to do homeless ministry from another multicultural church that had a veteran poverty service, Grandview Calvary Baptist Church (where Bill Chu attended at the time).\textsuperscript{110} In the early 2000s, Cowie initiated Tenth’s own congregational response to

\textsuperscript{108} Hereafter, I will refer to ‘Tenth Avenue Alliance Church’ by its current official name ‘Tenth Church.’ Tenth Church is itself an interesting congregation in the context of a study of Cantonese Protestantism, for paralleling the ‘silent exodus’ literature I previously reviewed in the San Francisco case (Carjaval, 1994; H Lee, 1996; Alumkal, 2003; Jeung, 2005, 2007), Tenth Church is one of the sites regularly cited as a place where young people departing Chinese and Korean Canadian congregations in Vancouver attend as an alternative Asian Canadian church (Yuen, 2011). Indeed, its senior pastor, the Rev. Ken Shigematsu, was hired as an Asian Canadian to foster diversity in what had originally been a historic Anglo-Canadian church; moreover, as a direct parallel to the ‘silent exodus’ phenomenon in Southern California, Shigematsu had been the Rev. Dave Gibbons’s co-pastor at the intentionally Asian American church, Newsong, in Irvine, CA, when it had first been planted out of a Korean American church and has been used consistently as a key case study in Asian American ‘silent exodus’ churches (Tse, 2011b; see Carjaval, 1994; H Lee, 1996; Gibbons, 2009; Tran, 2010a, 2010b). However, interesting as the diversity within Tenth Church may be with its parallels to my California case study, what I want to focus on here is the work of Cantonese evangelicals, especially Bill Chu, in contesting the demand from Vancouver City Hall to make Tenth Church obtain a social services permit.

\textsuperscript{109} I learned this detail from the Rev. Paul Chan (personal communication, 2 Jun. 2012).

\textsuperscript{110} Grandview Calvary Baptist Church has itself become a model for multicultural and socially engaged evangelical ministry in Vancouver. As its senior pastor, Tim Dickau (2005), writes in his published Doctor of Ministry thesis, \textit{Plunging into the Kingdom Way}, Grandview Calvary Baptist Church has developed a multicultural ministry to local ethnic groups, among them African Canadians and Spanish-speaking neighbours, as well as a homeless ministry and a community gardening program. Some members of the social justice group, Streams of Justice, also attend this congregation. Indeed, that Bill Chu was the lead coalition builder in Faith Communities in Solidarity with the Poor highlights his prominent role as a member
homelessness and hunger in Mount Pleasant. While this service ran smoothly because those using the services lined up in the alley behind the church, Tenth Church embarked on a building project in 2006 in which they wanted to demolish a structurally unsound part of their building to make a new wing. Their application to the city led to two developments. First, in contrast to the homelessness department that had taught Tenth how to run Out of the Cold, the social services department required the church to apply for a social services permit to feed the hungry. Second, as the church circulated a letter to their neighbours noting that social service users would temporarily line up in front of the church, some neighbours complained, writing to the city what the church deemed to be unfounded allegations that drug use and crime had increased in the neighbourhood. When the talks broke down between the church and about a hundred angry neighbours at a community meeting in August 2007, Bill Chu came into contact with Mardi Dolfo-Smith, the executive pastor at Tenth Church, to talk about the possibility of a wider sense of multi-ethnic, interfaith solidarity for religious freedom. Noting the advice of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) that the Supreme Court of Canada had ruled in favour of a religious freedom case involving property in Montreal, Tenth Church authorized Bill Chu to represent the church in public activism for its religious freedom to use its property in ways that accorded with its theology, which saw feeding the poor as integral to evangelical practice. In turn, Bill Chu wrote a theological statement for Faith Communities of Grandview Calvary Baptist Church and of Streams of Justice, as well as his work among Cantonese evangelicals.

111 I obtained much of this insider information in interviews with Ken Shigematsu (personal communication, 1 Sept. 2011) and Mardi Dolfo-Smith (personal communication, 5 Dec. 2012). Dolfo-Smith served as executive pastor at Tenth Church from 2007 to 2012.

112 This case was the much publicized Syndicat Northcrest v. Amsellem, [2004] 2 SCR 551, 2004 SCC 47, in which Orthodox Jews in Montreal sued for their freedom to set up sikkoth (booths) despite their apartment strata’s policy that no external structures could be set up on their property (see Maclure and Taylor, 2011).
Called to Solidarity with the Poor (FCCSP), posting the document on the weblog of another influential non-Chinese FBO, Streams of Justice, whose founder Dave Diewert advocated against what he saw as colonial policies at work in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside based on his reading of the prophetic literature in the Hebrew Scriptures. Chu’s statement advanced ‘the social vocation of the church’ in both English and Chinese, arguing that Tenth Church saw its theological mission as in tune with the Christian vocation to ‘welcome into our midst those who are economically excluded and socially marginalized.’  The policy implication of this theological framework was that if the city forced Tenth Church to separate their religious worship from their social services, it would be changing its theology:

The church is also legally mandated to work for the relief of poverty, which would include both addressing the immediate effects of poverty (providing food and shelter) and working to change economic structures and political policies that create and perpetuate poverty. Undertaking the work of mercy and justice, then, does not require special permission from the governing authorities. From the standpoint of its theology, history and legal status, any definition of the church that reduces its identity and practice to mere doctrinal adherence or religious worship would force it into a state of unfaithfulness to its own vocation. (Faith Communities Called to Solidarity with the Poor, 2007: 3).

Building solidarity with other religious communities who argued that their theologies mandated them to serve the poor, Bill Chu’s FCCSP released a spate of press releases and held press conferences throughout 2007 and 2008 (see Coggins, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a; Todd, 2008). This pressure forced the City of Vancouver to back down from its position, persuading Mayor Sam Sullivan to grant permission for the church to continue with its building project without the social services permit in May 2008 (see Coggins, 2008b). For its part, the church filed a Good Neighbour Agreement with its Mount Pleasant neighbours in April 2009, promising to communicate policies to the church’s guests so that the
homeless programs would not become a neighbourhood nuisance.

The Cantonese evangelicals whom Chu pulled into FCCSP articulated their involvement as a way to demonstrate that they could still collaborate with someone as politically left of centre as Chu. Indeed, Mardi Dolfo-Smith remembered that a Cantonese evangelical organization had contacted her about whether they were allowed to feed the poor as a matter of urban policy, though she was unable to describe exactly what the Cantonese evangelicals’ motivations were in joining the coalition. As I discussed it with Cantonese evangelical leaders, it became clear that some CSCF members leveraged this collaborative work to show that in some situations, its members could work with Bill Chu, despite his associations with social democratic politics, radical indigenous movements, and Streams of Justice. In other words, the Tenth Church situation was reframed in terms of Cantonese evangelical politics. CSCF’s Wayne Lo recalled:

One time, the Tenth Avenue Alliance, that one, the expansion to make a dining hall to accommodate to feeding the poor, the City needed them to get a special licence, Bill Chu found me, found a bunch of pastors to voice out against City Hall’s position. Eventually, City Hall dropped their requirement. So eventually, we’re so-called succeeded in that petition. At that time, I helped Bill Chu to voice out on behalf of the Chinese churches. On some issues, I’m with him. If I think it’s righteous, I go along with him, but if I think that I don’t need to necessarily—if Christians can see it both ways, then I will not be with him.

For Lo, the ‘righteousness’ of Chu’s activism in this case lay in how the state needed to learn to respect the private freedoms of religious institutions and to incorporate their public voices into its policy framework. However, while emphasizing that he and Chu did ‘exchange their ideas,’ he said that Chu was ‘aligned more with the NDP than the Liberals; he’s even more left, more left’ and was ‘critical of most Christians,’ suggesting that he could not go along with Chu’s framework of anti-colonial politics. Instead, New Testament scholar Archie Hui articulated the applicability of the Tenth Church situation to Cantonese
evangelicals as one in which if Cantonese evangelicals continued not to participate in politics, their private voices would be automatically marginalized in the public sphere:

On the Tenth Avenue Alliance Church situation, the government doesn’t allow you to help poor people, tells you to get a permit. Well, this is a policy, this is politics, so it affects you in what you can do. If you don’t get involved, you will be marginalized by the government so that you cannot do anything.

In other words, what was important about the Tenth Church events for Cantonese evangelicals was that it managed to bring together ideologically diverse factions in Cantonese evangelical circles to oppose the overreach of the regulatory power of the state over private institutions. While Chu was interested in seeking a broader public good for religious institutions serving the poor, Cantonese evangelicals re-interpreted Chu's activism in terms of their private ‘Chineseness': they were mandated to protect their private Cantonese evangelical institutions from social marginalization. In short, Cantonese evangelicals conceptualized their contributions of social action and services as a means to the end of gaining a social voice.

This discussion on Vancouver’s Cantonese evangelicals has demonstrated that in contrast to the Bay Area’s premium on FBO business restructuring as a way of fitting into urban economic planning policy, FBOs in Vancouver restructured themselves as social service agencies competing for a public voice. This section began with an exploration into CCM Canada’s re-orientation into a sort of complemenary institution for SUCCESS. Demonstrating that CCM Canada’s new organizational framework lay firmly within the context of theological shifts among Vancouver’s Cantonese evangelicals about the meaning of ‘evangelism,’ this section then argued that the larger context for these shifts come from CCIA’s attempt to re-orient Chinese Canadian culture altogether. Originally, CCIA’s agenda was to transform a Chinese culture based on financial self-interest into one focused on
democratic concern for the public good. However, the introduction of this notion led to competition over definitions of the ‘public sphere’ and the ‘common good’. Contrasting Thomas Leung Insing’s pro-state work with CRRS with the anti-colonial politics of Bill Chu’s CCIA and CFRS, this section then suggested that the emphasis on the public voice of private institutions through social work has been heavily influenced by Leung at the expense of Chu’s attempt to form Chinese Canadian and First Nations solidarities. These efforts then resulted in two different interpretations of FCCSP’s coalitional opposition to the city requiring Tenth Church to obtain a social services permit for Out of the Cold. In this activism, Chu emphasized that the Christian Gospel demanded hospitality toward the marginalized in the Gospel; however, the Cantonese evangelicals who saw ‘Chineseness’ as a focus on the private sphere used social concern as a means by which to gain a social voice to protect their own social arrangements. These conflicting approaches to civil society suggest that approaches to the secular state were contested among Vancouver’s Cantonese evangelicals.

6.4 Breakthrough or the Narrow Road? Debating collaboration with the state in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the major debates about the post-secular also revolved around social service agencies in a post-1997 context. While evangelicals have conventionally shied away from entanglement with the state (see chapter 4), a new consensus emerged among some Cantonese evangelicals in Hong Kong after the handover to Chinese sovereignty that they should attempt to influence the Hong Kong state from within the government apparatus. Much of this shift was accomplished through the re-orientation of
Breakthrough Youth Ministries from a small, privately-funded youth ministry and magazine publication into a large organization that ran pilot projects for the Hong Kong Government’s youth services department. As I shall show, this change took place during Breakthrough’s building expansion onto public land, through which it came into contact with the colonial British state in the 1990s and the Special Administrative Region’s regime after 1997. These shifts, I argue, led some individual evangelicals, such as Breakthrough’s Dr. Philemon Choi and the Family Development Foundation’s Shirley Loo, to enter state committees to influence the establishment from within.

However, as I shall show, this internal approach to the PRC state has been challenged for its close proximity with a regime that has been framed as politically, economically, and socially unjust. Indeed, progressive Christian activists linked to the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI) have criticized the anti-democratic nature of the state, framing those who cooperate with it as overly pacified and linked to a regime that marginalizes the ‘grassroots’ and perpetuates structures of inequality. However, the involvement of HKCI widens the net of actors in which Breakthrough must be placed, for HKCI is an ecumenical FBO, that is, an interdenominational institution composed of mainline Protestant denominations seeking common ground and labeled by evangelicals as theologically liberal. In Hong Kong, the mainline ecumenical establishment is institutionally housed in the Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC). There, some activist clergy who wanted to advance a democratic future for Hong Kong in anticipation of 1997 joined with evangelicals who shared their concerns and started organizations such as the Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement (HKCRM), the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI), and the Christian Times newspaper. As these ecumenical FBOs developed beyond
the 1997 handover, however, they were subjected to critique in the same vein as Breakthrough. In particular, one vocal group has been Narrow Road Church, an activist church led by a group of divinity students from the Chinese University of Hong Kong’s (CUHK) Chung Chi Divinity School. They argue that Christians in Hong Kong must recover the ‘Christian spirit’ of protesting unjust powers instead of collaborating with them. As I shall show, then, the major debate is not over whether Cantonese evangelicals should be involved in social action. Broadly mirroring the debates between Bill Chu and Thomas Leung Insing in Vancouver, the contention is instead over the modus operandi of such engagement, over whether it should be framed as ‘pro-government,’ that is, attempting to internally influence already-existing state regimes that derive their power from the PRC apparatus, or ‘anti-government,’ that is, stemming from grassroots movements that protest the PRC state regime for its perpetuation of structures of inequality.\(^{113}\) That no agreement is forthcoming suggests that there is no unified post-secular voice emerging in Hong Kong either.

### 6.4.1 Breakthrough Youth Village: evangelical rapprochements with the state

Breakthrough Youth Village is situated near the top of the Sha Tin hills in Hong Kong. As discussed in chapter 4, Breakthrough Youth Ministries originally began from the offices of the Fellowship of Evangelical Students through the efforts of young Cantonese evangelical returnees and graduate students in Hong Kong, such as Josephine So Yan Pui, Ruth Chan Wai Ming, Sookit Li, Shirley Loo, and Dr. Philemon Choi. With the death of

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\(^{113}\) Indeed, Thomas Leung Insing was a known figure in Hong Kong, whereas Bill Chu was only personal friends with some of my contacts in Hong Kong. The radical progressives attacked Leung’s positions as ‘pro-government’ as well.
Josephine So in 1981, Philemon Choi emerged as the organization’s leader, consciously deciding in 1984 to stay in Hong Kong despite the impending 1997 handover of the territory to Chinese sovereignty, purchasing property on Kowloon’s Jordan Street for a counseling centre at that time. In the early 1990s, they sought to expand their property for a more fully-functional service centre, again to clarify that they would not leave Hong Kong.

As Breakthrough Youth Village’s architect Freeman Chan put it,

> The reason why the Youth Village was even undertaken was as a symbol, as a sign, at a time of growing unease and fear in Hong Kong about 1997—it was Dr. Choi who believed prophetically (because he already had that prophetic insight in the mid-80s, 84, when the Jordan Centre was purchased and built)—to put a line in the sand that we will not cross. That line is: we will not leave Hong Kong. That is a statement to Hong Kong, and the Youth Village was that: it was a statement, it is what we believe, and we are willing to put our investment where our mouth is; we believe in this, we are not going to abscond to Canada, and that is what some people were recommending, you know, *have you started preparing your plan B to relocate Breakthrough to Toronto?* It was Christians who were saying this, Chinese Christians, Cantonese-speaking Christians who were ensconced in Canada.¹¹⁴ (Freeman Chan, personal communication, 16 Mar. 2012).

*Breakazine* editor Pakkin Leung put it in even starker theological terms, invoking German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s decision to return to Germany and work against the Nazi regime: ‘I think they were fairly influenced by Bonhoeffer, that if you leave, then you will never get to say anything ever again, because if there’s suffering to be had, you didn’t even stay behind to suffer’ (Pakkin Leung, personal communication, 2 Apr. 2012).¹¹⁵ This decision led to a reconceptualization of Breakthrough’s work as a research-and-development institution for cultural renewal in which pilot projects for government

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¹¹⁴ This interview with Freeman Chan was conducted in English, as he is in fact a second-generation Chinese Canadian living in Hong Kong. These English words are directly transcribed from the interview.

¹¹⁵ The actual words here are that of Swiss German theologian, Karl Barth, in a letter from November 1933, accusing Bonhoeffer of running to the United Kingdom and the United States to pursue quiet pastoral work when he was needed in the resistance to Germany and in the aftermath of German Reconstruction when the Nazi regime (as Barth predicted) would have fallen.
ministries for youth in Hong Kong, particularly those who were economically disadvantaged, could be generated.

The story of how Breakthrough Youth Village acquired its present location is precisely its story of how it came into proximity with the state. Looking to expand their own premises from the Jordan Street counseling centre, Breakthrough began exploring land in Sha Tin in the New Territories in the early 1990s. Applying to the zoning department in the colonial Hong Kong government for a piece of land, Philemon Choi and Freeman Chan brought the application to the attention of the Chief Secretary, Sir David Ford, in a meeting in 1991. Impressed by the youth work done by Breakthrough, Freeman Chan remembers that Ford ‘put his informal stamp of approval on it,’ writing a private letter to commend Philemon Choi for his good work. Ford also carbon copied this note to all of the government departments to expedite his application.\textsuperscript{116} ‘That’s how things work in government,’ Chan said, ‘it was a learning curve for me,’ especially because at this point, Breakthrough had operated as an FBO independent of the government with a fairly small amount of counseling services, youth programs, and a monthly magazine. With a larger parcel of land, Chan designed a ‘youth village’ that could serve as a campground in which pilot projects for disadvantaged youth in Hong Kong could be developed to help the government make policy around youth and poverty. Chan completed the project in 1996, together with a chapel without pews in which a church for disabled persons called the Ark currently meets.

Breakthrough’s new linkages with the government signaled a re-visioning of Breakthrough’s operations because Philemon Choi became an unpaid volunteer advisor to

\textsuperscript{116} Freeman Chan is responsible for architectural novelties in Hong Kong in schools and public buildings as a community architect. His most well-regarded piece is CUHK’s ‘Man Meets Heaven’ pool.
the new Hong Kong regime. Mirroring David Ford’s high regard for Breakthrough, Philemon Choi recalled that the new Chief Executive (CE), businessman Tung Chee Hwa, also visited the Youth Village. According to the South China Morning Post (1998), Tung joined a forum where ‘he was impressed by the participants’ awareness of topical issues’; he also ‘watched youngsters practicing rock climbing, an activity aimed at nurturing self-confidence and team spirit among participants,’ and ‘toured the Xyber Café in the village and saw young people learning to communicate on the Internet.’ Impressed by Breakthrough’s potential for teaching youth to be civically engaged, Tung appointed Choi to be Commissioner for Youth in 1998. Indeed, Choi’s appointment led him to be appointed as a part-time, volunteer member of the Central Policy Unit, a group drawn from various sectors to examine and propose policies for the Hong Kong government. Moreover, Choi joined some nine committees concerning poverty, youth, and childhood, contributing his expertise in youth work toward developing policies for disadvantaged youth. Responding to critiques that Breakthrough was becoming embedded with the state through these activities, Choi clarified,

I am not in the government structure. I am someone who’s inside making a statement, and they know where I come from. People say, Even Tung Chee Hwa you will help! My response is: of course, I believe God has appointed these government officials and put them in charge, and if he’s willing to listen to someone who works with young people, then so be it. But I will never take his pay, I will never get his pay. If I get paid from government, I become one of them. (Philemon Choi, personal communication, 14 Mar. 2012).

In other words, while Choi became a key advisor to the Hong Kong regime for its youth policy, there was never a point when either he or his organization became tied to the regime itself. Instead, Choi argued that he was taking a ‘prophetic stance’ within the
establishment, gently confronting unjust powers with ‘evidence-based research’ to pass policies that he saw as serving the public instead of reinforcing the state’s power.

Indeed, Philemon Choi proposed a number of innovative policies that put unemployed youth to work. One of these major policies was developed around the time that Tung Chee Hwa ran for re-election in 2001. As Tung announced that he would channel money for education ‘to create the best educated and most well-rounded generation of youth in the history of Hong Kong,’ he also commissioned Choi to study ‘youth unemployment and dropout,’ a project for which CUHK epidemiologist Joseph Lau raised funds and provided the study framework. Choi told me that out of 120,000 adolescent youth, the study found that the unemployment rate was 25 percent for those aged 15-19 and 12-15 percent for those aged 20-24, compared to the general population’s unemployment rate of 6-7 percent. Finding that about a third of those who were unemployed were ‘non-engaged youth’ (NEY) (that is, they consistently dropped out of employment or job training), Choi conducted another study entitled ‘Spread Your Wings,’ in which a research team from CUHK and Hong Kong Polytechnic University found that the major causes of NEY (dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), abuse in a family context, depression, and drug addiction) could be ameliorated by focusing on their trade skills.\footnote{I fully recognize the dangers of reifying ‘NEY youth’ as a static category. However, this is Breakthrough’s term for disadvantaged youth in Hong Kong and has been key to their policy action research.} Partnering with the Vocational Training Council (VTC), Choi started six ‘Youth Colleges’ after a successful pilot project at Breakthrough Youth Village, where NEY youth were trained in creative design, hip-hop dancing, hair-dressing, and cooking (Philemon Choi, personal communication, 14 Mar. 2012). Another project took place when Choi was appointed chair of politician Henry Tang’s Commission on Poverty’s
subcommittee on adolescence and children, where Choi developed a proposal for a Child Development Fund in 2004. Calling together an international consulting team of academics focused on intergenerational issues, Choi proposed that a policy to get youth out of poverty should include a ‘targeted savings’ clause, in which every family would be forced to save $200 HKD monthly for their child, which would be matched monthly by a Child Development Fund that had $3 million in its coffers and would reward youth who successfully saved for two years with a $3000 bonus. In turn, these targeted savings would help young people to raise their own funds to receive career training and to start up new businesses. This policy also required that each young person receive one-to-one mentoring over two years to discern a career path, positions that have often been filled by Christian church members (Philemon Choi, personal communication, 2 Mar. 2012).

In turn, Breakthrough Youth Village became a site where policy proposals like the ones above were given pilot tests, positioning Breakthrough as a research-and-development innovation institution. Philemon Choi told me that the Youth Village had four concepts guiding its activities following the 1997 handover: 1) the Information Pavilion,\(^{118}\) in which youth could learn to access information technology for civic engagement, 2) the Cultural Pavilion, in which a ‘clash of civilizations’ could be mitigated by ‘intercultural and multicultural’ understanding, 3) a ‘renewal’ agenda, in which youth culture would be revitalized, and 4) a ‘pathfinding’ agenda to help unmotivated youth find their paths in life (Philemon Choi, personal communication, 14 Mar. 2012). As longtime Breakthrough staff member Sookit Li argued, this ‘cultural renewal’ has long been Breakthrough’s agenda in

\(^{118}\) By ‘pavilion,’ Philemon Choi is imagining these conceptual frameworks as mental structures. While the Youth Village is structured with these ‘pavilions’ in mind, the actual architectural layout is more like that of a campground.
continuity with Josephine So’s mandate to renew Hong Kong’s ‘youth culture’ through media engagement. Seeking to transform the culture, pilot projects and research initiatives used social science frameworks to study various facets of youth life, including their civic engagement, gambling, pornographic usage, romantic lives, literacy, video and online gaming, social media usage, occult practices, friendship networks, family relationships, interpersonal skills, and preferred college majors (see Breakthrough Youth Ministries, 2013). In addition, Breakthrough re-launched Breakazine, a periodical that attempted to tap into what its editor Pakkin Leung called the ‘individual and ego-centric narrative’ of its readers, attempting to analyze youth culture by polling its readership.

To implement policies piloted by Breakthrough more fully through public-private partnerships, Philemon Choi organized the Hong Kong Church Network for the Poor (HKCNP). Hiring business consultant Susanna Hui, the HKCNP gathered the three largest ecumenical and evangelical Christian bodies—the Hong Kong Christian Union (HKCU), the Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement (HKCRM), and the Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC)—along with some nineteen directors from a variety of FBOs in Hong Kong to attempt to mobilize Hong Kong’s churches to execute a state-subsidized anti-poverty campaign. Beginning as a church outreach to unemployed families, the HKCNP has developed three main tasks. First, it complemented government food banks by organizing four FBOs to set up church-based Love Food Banks. Because the government food bank required applicants to meet certain criteria and only lasted for six weeks, Love Food Bank helped applicants apply for government food subsidies while providing them with food prior to the government’s welfare, and when the six weeks were over, it allowed applicants to receive food for another three months. Meanwhile, Hui said that the Love Food Banks
allowed for churches to ‘care for the individual,’ using ‘food as a means to get a person into the church doors’ to receive this care. Second, HKCNP implemented the terms of the Child Development Fund by matching church-based mentors with child mentees to help them reach their targeted $200 monthly savings and to launch them on successful career paths. To do this, Hui organized FBOs to reach both churches to look for mentors and schools to look for mentees. Third, HKCNP organized an advocacy group from a variety of local FBOs (e.g. the Society for Truth and Light, New Arrivals Ministries, etc.) and global NGOs (e.g. the CEDAR Fund, Compassion International, etc.) to lobby the government for a pro-poor policy, holding district meetings in Sham Shui Po (a district with multiple deprivation) and drafting statements to hold the regime accountable for its work with the poor. While Choi noted the innovation of bringing these disparate groups of FBOs together to serve the poor in Hong Kong, Hui noted the difficulty of getting everyone on the same page, arguing that the ‘collective witness’ of the church would eventually be achieved when ‘all 1300 church congregations in Hong Kong’ stood up for the poor (Susanna Hui, personal communication, 20 Mar. 2012).

To this end, Hui enlisted the help of an evangelical development NGO, the Christian Education, Development and Relief (CEDAR) Fund, and its CEO, Dr. Chung Chan, to teach church-based and seminary workshops on poverty, arguing that evangelicals have an ‘integral mission’ to care for the poor through development projects that empowered local people through microfinance and infrastructure building.\textsuperscript{119} So too, Christians for Hong

\textsuperscript{119} To date, the CEDAR Fund is the only organization to be affiliated with the UK-based global evangelical network, the Micah Network, which reads Micah 6.8 to ‘do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before your God’ in light of networking evangelical development agencies to empower Global South communities to become involved in the global economy. To this end, the CEDAR Fund limits its development projects in China and aspires to send Chinese Christians to Bangladesh, Nepal, Burma, and Ethiopia to develop microfinance projects.
Kong Society’s Anthony Chiu set up a fair-trade store, Fair Circle, at Breakthrough’s Jordan Centre, attempting to raise awareness among Cantonese evangelicals about the global economic implications of consumption in Hong Kong and to press evangelicals to support fair-trade practices by becoming fair-trade churches.\textsuperscript{120} In other words, HKCNP and its affiliates advocated that churches participate in this public-private effort to raise awareness about poverty, attempting to educate evangelicals on why they as individuals needed to get involved. To some extent, these voices have been heard. As Choi told me, his talk at one mega-church, Kong Fook Evangelical Free Church in Admiralty, spurred hundreds of volunteers to join the Child Development Fund’s mentorship program. At another mega-church, Yan Fook Evangelical Free Church’s social concern pastor, Jayson Tam, told me that their 2012 theme centered on ‘ethical consumption,’ inviting Anthony Chiu to speak on fair trade to their 10,000-strong congregation. While Susanna Hui told me that HKCNP’s voice was still ‘small,’ the influential churches in Hong Kong have largely heard the wider call for the church to participate in poverty issues.

Organizations influenced by Breakthrough also pursued similar courses in collaboration with the Hong Kong state. For example, Shirley Loo, the longtime chief editor for Breakthrough Magazine in the 1990s (she calls Breakthrough her ‘Shaolin forest,’ training her for future work), launched Family Heartware in 2001, a publication outlet for Loo’s books on family, parenting, and marriage with the central theological focus that ‘women are good, whole, and beautiful,’ capable of ‘dreaming for God’ without needing to despise their self-image or to find their wholeness solely in motherhood. Connecting with

\textsuperscript{120} Incidentally, Anthony Chiu was a former staff member at the CEDAR Fund, who departed CEDAR on amicable terms because he needed to focus on Fair Circle. Indeed, the CEDAR Fund and Fair Circle enjoy a collaborative relationship in their campaigns to raise awareness about global poverty in Hong Kong.
two other pastors’ wives, Loo developed the Family Development Foundation in 2005, a small organization from which Loo speaks at schools on youth issues and holds courses on mental illness and women’s dignity. Her work at Breakthrough and at the Family Development Foundation also launched her involvement in several government committees. Asked in the late 1990s to ‘do a small favour’ to promote the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), Loo found herself drawn into six years of work educating youth through media and publications for the ICAC. From here, Loo was drawn into several government committees, including the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN), the Education Resource Committee, the Social Welfare Department Family Life Education Resource Development Centre, the Quality Education Fund, and the School Site Allocation Committee. From these positions, Loo entered politician Henry Tang’s Family Council, a large gathering of the Commissions on Youth, Women, and the Elderly along with the various bureau chairs and members. At these meetings, Loo told me that she presents a ‘family voice’ that stems from her spirituality, which is drawn from a devotional called *Time with Abba*, short readings drawn from the Bible that she says gives her a ‘clear mind.’ Indeed, Loo told me that her ‘calling’ was to the ‘secular world,’ despite her Christian roots and her status as megachurch pastor Rev. Peter Ho’s wife. Secularizing her Christian convictions about the family, her ‘family voice’ has often sought to link social ills with systemic family problems that are rooted in problems in parental miscommunication as well as in the absence of love between husband and wife, contributing a voice that sought

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121 The Rev. Peter Ho is senior pastor of Tung Fook Evangelical Free Church in Causeway Bay, a megachurch with some 2000 in weekly attendance and two church plants in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Hong Kong. Shirley Loo told me that she sometimes teaches Bible courses at Tung Fook, although these engagements are separate from her secular work with the Family Development Foundation and her government committee involvement.
to enter these emotional and embodied needs of families onto the record of policy discussion. While sometimes feeling marginalized in these meetings, Loo has also pointed to the effects of her comments. For example, Loo told me that after a long debate, ACAN changed the Cantonese description of illicit drugs from ‘endangering substances’ to ‘toxic substances,’ highlighting the ‘poison’ of illicit drugs in their damage to bodies and families (Shirley Loo, personal communication, 22 Mar. 2012). In short, Loo’s participation in these government committees has positioned her as a voice for families in Hong Kong’s secular state.

In other words, FBOs that were influenced by Breakthrough argue that their prophetic stance as evangelicals lies in their ability to influence the state from within. Collaborating with the state by advising various government policy committees, launching pilot projects, and educating the public, evangelicals like Philemon Choi and Shirley Loo have advanced a view of social services that privileges partnership with the state. As Freeman Chan put it poignantly, ‘Philemon’s engagement with government in the so-called “politicization” of Breakthrough is a recognition that you must, when you engage with society and culture, you can’t leave out government. It’s nonsense.’ As if mirroring Hackworth’s (2012) critique of FBOs that claim to be anti-statist as limited in scope, these evangelicals sought to expand the impact of their work by engaging in public-private partnerships with a Hong Kong government that they knew to be relatively nascent in its governance within a ‘one country, two systems’ polity. These evangelicals’ efforts were knowingly ‘secular,’ seeking to extend a Christian voice into a non-Christian public arena by translating their values through strategic project-based partnerships that could affect policy outcomes and the media landscape. It is this expansion of evangelical influence that
has in turn come under critique from those who argue that these approaches are ‘pro-government,’ that is, complicit with the PRC state apparatus’s human rights abuses. It is to those contestations that this section now turns.

6.4.2 Debating ecumenical and evangelical engagement: contesting the secular

While evangelicals like Philemon Choi and Shirley Loo argued that they took individual prophetic stances by speaking truth to power in the Hong Kong regime, a group of progressive activists critiqued their stances as overly supportive of the state and thus not prophetic enough. Also invoking the legacy of Bonhoeffer, these activists challenged both evangelicals who tried to influence the state from within as well as groups with whom they affiliated, critiquing forms of state collaboration with Bonhoeffer’s understanding of ‘truthfulness,’ that is, they were suspicious of the possibility of actually being able to speak truth to power without being completely independent of state-based institutions.\textsuperscript{122}

However, these critiques must be placed within the context of the common stream from which Protestant Christian FBOs developed in Hong Kong as organizations mobilizing Protestants to face the 1997 handover. These FBOs were not confined to evangelicals and were not exclusive to Breakthrough. Instead, many came from ecumenical sources, that is, mainline Protestant denominations working together in interdenominational unity for

\textsuperscript{122} This emphasis on ‘truthfulness’ is from the last essay in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s (1949/1955) \textit{Ethics}, entitled ‘What It Means to Tell the Truth.’ In this piece, Bonhoeffer argues that ‘telling the truth’ means to say something true about one’s concrete relationships of love, even if it would mean to tell a lie. Bonhoeffer gives the example of a teacher who might ask a child if his or her father comes home drunk every night. The child might lie and say ‘no,’ but in fact, the child is in fact preserving the truth that the family is an institution independent of the school into which the teacher has no right to interfere. In other words, ‘truth’ has more to do with the relationships to which one is bound. HKCI and Narrow Road Church’s interpretation of Bonhoeffer’s ‘truthfulness’ thus examines to what institutions certain individuals and FBOs are bound: are they bound, for example, to relationships within the state apparatus, or are they bound in solidarity with the marginalized?
social justice causes, often also including Roman Catholic practitioners in their midst as well. While the World Council of Churches (WCC) has historically represented these ecumenical movements at a global scale, Hong Kong’s ecumenical movement found its institutional home in the Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC). It was from HKCC clergy, as well as evangelicals associated with the Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES) and Breakthrough, that organizations developed in the 1980s to advance an ecclesial voice for democracy, housed in FBOs such as the Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement (HKCRM), the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI), Christians for Hong Kong Society (CFHKS), and the *Christian Times* newspaper. In 2009, divinity students from the Chung Chi Divinity School launched a critique of all of these organizations, both ecumenical and evangelical, for what they perceived as their increasing embeddedness with the state. Launching organizations like the Alliance for the Return to the Christian Spirit and Narrow Road Church, these progressive activists were in turn criticized as being too radical in their anti-regime protests, playing the part of prophets without, as some alleged, ‘getting anything done.’ The inclusion of ecumenical and evangelical actors together in this story in turn demonstrates that the Cantonese evangelical option to influence the state from within was not the only way that Hong Kong’s Protestant Christians understood their role in secular civil society. If anything, the articulation of what that public role was became the source of heated debate among Hong Kong’s Protestant circles.

The associations to which these progressive activists belonged were in fact historic partners with Breakthrough Youth Ministries, as well as other Cantonese evangelicals, in the 1980s as they faced the 1997 handover. After the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 to return Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, concerned
Protestant clergy launched the Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement (HKCRM) in 1985. Feminist theologian Rose Wu told me that the HKCRM borrowed from the Chicago church renewal movement and focused on ‘social renewal,’ stirring conversation in deprived districts like Shek Kip Mei about how to do social work (Rose Wu, personal communication, 22 Mar. 2012). Introduced into this group by Anglican priest Rev. Chan Joi Choi, Wu met other clergy like the Rev. Kwok Nai Wung, both of whom had studied in Chicago and were bringing this ecumenical consciousness back to Hong Kong. According to HKCRM’s current general secretary, the Rev. Wu Chi Wai, these pastors expressed ‘anxiousness about the future of Hong Kong’ and called for pastors to buck the ‘immigration trend’ to Australia and North America, advising Christians to ‘stay in Hong Kong’ (Wu Chi Wai, personal communication, 11 Apr. 2012). Indeed, Breakthrough’s decision to stay in Hong Kong fell within this vein of thought.

In 1988, the mainline Hong Kong Christian Council’s (HKCC) then-chair, the Rev. Kwok Nai Wung, split from the ecumenical body because its establishmentarianism proved too intractable for thinking about a democratic future for Hong Kong.123 As HKCI’s current general secretary, Fan Lap Hin, told me, HKCI’s initial agenda revolved around theologizing what the role of the church in Hong Kong’s society was and how they could ‘show forth their Christian distinctiveness’ as they engaged society (see also Ko, 2000). While ecumenical, HKCI also featured prominent evangelicals, such as the China Graduate School of Theology’s (CGST) Dr. Carver Yu, on its board. So too, Breakthrough’s Sookit Li told me that because Breakthrough was more interested in secular cultural renewal than in trying

123 I should note, however, that the HKCC has accomplished many public engagements for charity and social justice in Hong Kong, most notably the Five Loaves and Two Fishes charity event to feed the hungry in the 1980s. It also has a Justice and Social Concern Committee. While HKCI separated from the HKCC, these two ecumenical groups are in constant conversation, with moments of occasional cooperation.
to theorize how the church should relate to the world, Breakthrough ‘connected with HKCI’ to do ‘social concern’ issues in order for Breakthrough not to be co-opted in that ‘very broad direction.’ As Li put it, attempting to do ‘social concern’ means that ‘your whole organization has an engine of its own,’ and that engine was better placed with HKCI than with Breakthrough. Similarly, one staff member at the CEDAR Fund known as Ah Shan told me that while history had it that his organization was founded by evangelicals, it did not place either him or the CEDAR Fund in diametrical opposition to HKCI, or any ecumenical organization, for that matter. Pointing out that HKCI often focused on policy advocacy while CEDAR tended to focus more on the practical work of microfinance, he said that CEDAR and HKCI were complementary: ‘I actually know HKCI very well, and I know where their predicament is; they can’t be too vague on their position [about policy issues], but there needs to be balance, but they need to participate in civic action, and they have, and I think that’s a good thing’ (Ah Shan, personal communication, 13 Mar. 2013).

Indeed, evangelicals also founded organizations that partnered with these ecumenical FBOs. In September 1987, evangelicals founded the Christian Times. Pulling Sing Tao Daily’s managing editor Lee Kam Hung in as their volunteer editor and flanking him with Carver Yu as the Christian Times’s managing editor, the Christian Times provided a space for pastors and the church to discuss how to help the church during what they called the ‘immigration trend,’ the large-scale immigration of church pastors and leaders to metropolises in the Pacific Rim leading up to 1997. Lee Kam Hung described the Christian Times as a unique publication, for it was founded by evangelicals but was unlike other publications in that it was not ‘evangelistic.’ Instead, Lee said that the newspaper walked a ‘narrow road,’ discussing issues like ‘social justice,’ ‘the problems that the church must
handle,’ ‘politics,’ and ‘a lot of ethical and moral issues.’ The approach of the newspaper was to allow for a plurality of voices; as he told me,

We have elevated a platform: in the Chinese church, we are the one and only place that truly has different voices, including those that the church likes to hear and those that the church does not like to hear, those that the church can accept, and those that the church probably can’t accept—must force itself to accept—those voices, they all appear here. So you will seldom see all of those people talking with each other, and yet all of them can write here in the Christian Times. This is the unique thing. Usually, as far as the positions are from each other, they will never meet.

Lee explained that the problem in Hong Kong’s Christian circles was that it was often easy to forego listening to voices that were ideologically different while ‘pigeonholing’ opponents into a caricatured theological camp. To ameliorate this situation, Lee said that the church had to embrace a ‘plurality of voices’:

Plurality does not mean that we don’t have a position. Plurality is an attitude: it’s not that I don’t have a position, but it’s the attitude that I will hear your voice. Or maybe there are some things that I’ve never thought of. Perhaps the world is changing too fast. There’s no way for me to grasp all perspectives. So this is our role. But this role doesn’t please many people. Many people feel that some people are too radical, some are too conservative. Some are too radical, some are too conservative! This is the difficulty of the middle road. And yet we’ve kept this position and have no intention of dismantling it. (Lee Kam Hung, personal communication, 5 Apr. 2012).

Despite its evangelical origins, the Christian Times has become a space of vibrant debate that includes both those conventionally labeled ‘ecumenical’ and those who call themselves ‘evangelical,’ detailing how church leaders and members have engaged social and political issues in Hong Kong and allowing space for those of different views to address each other.

As the 1997 handover passed, these organizations restructured themselves, adjusting their situated position between the church and the world. After the Rev. Wu Chi Wai joined HKCRM in 2000, the organization turned its focus from neighbourhood social engagement toward developing pastoral leaders within the church. As Wu noted, HKCRM’s
work from 1998 to 2005 was marked by a ‘not very obvious’ social engagement. This is not to say that HKCRM withdrew from the public sphere: indeed, it held leading roles in anti-gambling activism, the Alliance for Family that opposed SODO (see chapter 5), and the church unemployment network that became HKCNP. In other words, HKCRM also partnered with Philemon Choi, attempting to mobilize the church to influence the state from within.

Contrasting the networking role taken by HKCRM for evangelicals, organizations like HKCI moved into coordinating roles to advocate for social justice for marginalized grassroots populations, including sex workers, sexual minorities, and migrant workers, and to organize demonstrations for democracy in Hong Kong. Following Kwok Nai Wung’s retirement in 2000, Chung Chi Divinity School’s feminist theologian Rose Wu Lo Sai led HKCI from 2000 to 2007. As a prominent figure in Hong Kong’s feminist liberation movement in her founding of the Hong Kong Women’s Christian Council (HKWCC) and the Christian queer movement during her chaplaincy at Chung Chi Divinity School in the 1990s, Wu led HKCI to side radically with the economically and socially marginalized. As its current general secretary, Fan Lap Hin, explained, Wu’s time at HKCI shifted the organization toward grassroots social movements:

It was very apparent that during this time, HKCI remained vigilant against this line [the abuse of power by the state], but a shift happened when the second General Secretary came, Wu Lo Sai, and our civil society engagement was significantly strengthened. In civil society, not only in politics and democracy, but in the problem of human rights, Dr. Wu Lo Sai had a strong engagement and background here. She is a feminist. So in sexual minority rights and human rights, it got stronger. HKCI at that time became a site for identity politics...We got more involved in civil society.

124 As chapter 7 will discuss, Rose Wu Lo Sai’s leadership led HKCI to take a coordinating position among Protestant and Catholic human rights and pro-democracy movements in 2002 and 2003 as groups like HKCI, CFHKS, and the Catholic Diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission and Labour Commission grouped together with secular organizations to form the Civil Human Rights Front to oppose the Article 23 anti-sedition law.
We started to run together with the weakest in society and also got involved with civic issues. (Fan Lap Hin, personal communication, 13 Mar. 2012).

Indeed, Wu told me that her emphasis on democracy since the 1990s has been on what she calls ‘democracy as a way of life,’ leading HKCI to attack structural sins, such as economic inequality and the concentration of power among real estate tycoons. Following mainline theologian Raymond Fung Wai Man’s (1980) argument that the Christian doctrine of sin is that the marginalized are ‘sinned against’ by the political economic system, HKCI attacked Hong Kong’s policy structure that favoured (HKCI alleged) property owners over against renters, temporary migrant workers, and sexual minorities. Because of this work with sexual minorities, Wu and HKCI were often criticized by the Society for Truth and Light (STL) and the Hong Kong Sex-Culture Society (HKSCS); as Fan Lap Hin noted, they were often the first two names on their ‘pro-gay’ PowerPoint slides. However, as Wu noted about STL and HKSCS:

Their democracy is very different. I think we have to be careful about this. They talk about the good of the family. They add some things about economics, to decrease tax. In fact, the tax is the problem. They want it so that some people don’t want to pay tax. So you see, it’s very middle-class. This is a middle-class agenda...It depends on how you define morality. Because these words, after they use them, then they switch meanings. Their ‘moral’ is very narrow. I seldom use ‘moral,’ that word they only talk about sexual morality, family morality, extramarital affairs, premarital sex, sex work, these are no good. These are very personal choices, and it’s very important that these personal choices do not become law and policy. It’s like China’s one-child policy; you cannot use national policy to take over citizens’ decision-making or citizens’ rights. People have rights to their bodies, to their sexualities, their family choices; these are very private, individual rights. What we must guarantee is that the society has justice and freedom for individuals to have the rights to choose.

In other words, Wu countered her being labeled as ‘pro-gay’ with the argument that the private sphere needed to be protected by refusing to legislate items of individual morality in public policy. To this extent, Wu’s theology also reinforced secularity in a different
register, drawing a strict boundary between the secular public where values like freedom and justice were upheld in contrast to the private sphere’s emphasis on domestic and sexual affairs. HKCI in turn promoted this theology through educational efforts, holding classes, publishing books and a monthly journal, and giving talks at churches on social justice, human rights, and feminist solidarities.

Though the sexual politics of HKCI made it difficult to work with the Roman Catholic Diocese on family issues, their siding with the marginalized created an ecumenical coalition between progressive Protestants and the Catholic Church’s activism for the right of abode for migrant workers and pregnant women from China giving birth in Hong Kong. Indeed, the retired Catholic Archbishop of Hong Kong, Joseph Cardinal Zen, told me that the foremost social issue in Hong Kong was the right of abode, that is, the constitutionally-guaranteed right under Article 24 of the Basic Law to reside in and receive benefits from Hong Kong after working for seven years (Joseph Zen, personal communication, 30 Mar. 2012). While the Court of Final Appeal had ruled in Ng Ka Ling v. Director of Immigration in 1999 that the right of abode was a fundamental human right—which meant that even children born in Hong Kong without a parent who was a Hong Kong citizen had the right of abode—the Hong Kong government had forwarded Article 24 to the People’s Congress in Beijing, where it was reinterpreted as saying that the Court’s ruling was illegitimate. Indeed, my Protestant interviewees and focus group members often accepted this re-interpretation. The HKCC’s chair, the Rev. Nicholas Tai, said that these matters of secular legality did not require the church to take an absolute position, for these matters fell under the state’s governance, not the church’s. Focus group members in Sha Tin also emphasized that unlike same-sex marriage, which ‘clearly’ opposed Scriptural teaching, these were not
matters for Christian reflection. While a focus group member in Tuen Mun observed that equal treatment under the law mandated that all who work in Hong Kong for seven years should be entitled to the right of abode, another respondent in the same group argued that this model could prove to be economically unsustainable. As one focus group member in Kwun Tong expressed, this point about health benefits became abundantly clear to her when she was pregnant. Because domestic workers and mothers from China might take up more hospital beds, she said that it was not in her interest to support migrants taking up Hong Kong’s resources before citizens had access to them. Moreover, as most agreed, this was not an item for theological reflection, but was rather something upon which they deliberated as private citizens.

Alleging that the Hong Kong public’s support for the reinterpretation had been misled by political propaganda about the depletion of resources in Hong Kong, Zen and his Justice and Peace Commission (HKJP), led by human rights activist Jackie Hung, advocated an open border policy that granted the right of abode on the basis of keeping families together. On the ecumenical Protestant side, Rose Wu told me that there was ‘a great deal of cooperation’ on these issues of right of abode, despite the silence of the ecumenical HKCC on this matter. For Wu, HKCI’s educational efforts in this regard formed a ‘minority dissenting voice’ in solidarity with the HKJP:

On domestic migrant workers, Hong Kong people think of them as “others,” but in fact, they are 200,000 people serving some 200,000 families. At home, my mother also relies on an Indonesian domestic worker; that’s why I can be at this interview! So we should be very thankful and we should see that they are just the same as us! They have the same worth as us. We cannot have high and low. Our world is becoming more mobile, and our national boundaries, ethnic boundaries, gender, and the state are all breaking down. We are becoming more globalized, a global village. And so, some way, somehow, we can be a place’s hosts, but we can also be visitors; we can be simultaneously hosts and visitors, guests, aliens, and so we must learn to
be both, to be so that the Kingdom of God is to be a global citizen, breaking down these boundaries.

Arguing again in a secular theological register, Wu contended that the current globalizing realities of the world meant that migrant workers as ‘visitors’ had the same rights as Hongkongers when they were visitors in other places. Refusing to treat them as a social class, Wu led the HKCI to work together with the Catholic Church to educate Protestants in Hong Kong about the human dignity of the marginalized. These educational efforts were in turn complemented by the efforts of Italian Catholic liberation theology practitioner Fr. Franco Mella. Beginning a Right to Abode University, Mella founded an adult learning centre that meets in various places in Hong Kong where migrant workers can learn English, Italian, German, history, political science, and economics with courses taught by Mella and by others he has recruited. For Mella, the right to abode controversy highlighted the corruption of the current state and its collusions with the powerful in the market, so Mella called for the founding of a new state that would truly be Marxist and enact the ‘brotherhood’ of all. As a result, HKCI and the Catholic Church could work together on the right of abode issues, arguing that migrant workers and China mothers had the same fundamental human rights as Hongkongers and deserved to be equal before the law.

While these radical movements might seem to signal the emergence of a Christian ‘left,’ their actual emphasis was on the independence of the church from entanglements with institutions that they perceived to be in collusion with the state and the market. Christian independence from state power was necessary, these groups argued, if the church were to speak ‘truthfully’ about human dignity in a civil society whose policy structure constantly threatened to erode human rights. One church congregation that embodied the theology that HKCI advanced was the Rev. Timothy Lam Kwok Cheung’s Senlok Christian
Church in Shaukeiwan. Lam told me that he was cognizant that various journalists have painted him as a ‘political’ pastor with a ‘political church,’ even though he has ‘no interest in politics.’ He showed me a window marquee outside his church that attracted journalists because it advocated for the freedom of the Nobel Prize winner Liu Xiaobo from Chinese incarceration; it reads, ‘Let’s sing harmonious songs together / Set free Liu Xiaobo. / Let’s sing peaceful songs / Celebrate Liu Xiaobo.’ He also acknowledged that his church includes a variety of pro-democracy activists and political leaders, notably Kowloon West’s Legislative Council member, Raymond Wong Yuk Man, who had made a name for himself for his fiery political speeches, one time in 2008 even throwing bananas at CE Donald Tsang for reducing elderly pensions. Lam told me, ‘My church has political people. Yuk Man is very good, sitting in the back with his grandson. He doesn’t do naughty things here. He is an ordinary brother.’ Indeed, Lam informed me that he once assured a Chinese pastor in Mauritius where he was on a short-term mission trip that he was not a political pastor, did not only support pro-democracy activism, and was thus not a threat to the Chinese state: ‘I write about the Japanese earthquake, about the Sichuan earthquake, about Mauritius, it’s not just politics! It’s not politics! In the Sichuan earthquake, I praised Wen Jiabao [the Chinese premier from 2003 to 2013] for his visit. I do not say that China is bad’ (Lam Kwok Cheung, personal communication, 9 Mar. 2012). In other words, Lam argued that while he and his church were indeed socially engaged, the church itself was not a political entity.

However, despite his not being interested in ‘politics,’ Lam also informed me that he often led the church to challenge unjust social policies. For example, in 2012, he launched ‘My Brother’s Keeper,’ a forty-day campaign of solidarity with what he called ‘street-
sleepers’ (Cantonese, losukze) as opposed to ‘homeless’ (Cantonese, mogahze), for while they slept on the street, Lam observed that they still considered their fellow ‘street-sleepers’ their family). During this campaign, Lam slept nightly on the street with fellow street-sleepers, taking meals of congee with them and becoming their friends. Witnessing instances of police brutality when the police searched the street-sleepers three times in a given night and confiscated their belongings because the street would be imminently swept, Lam wrote a letter of complaint to the police commissioner, as did Raymond Wong Yuk Man, which led to an immediate change in police behaviour on Lam’s watch. He also discovered that the social work department had neglected street-sleeping individuals. Having developed a hospital visitation routine with an elderly, disabled street-sleeper, Lam was dismayed to learn that the hospital discharged him prior to the social work department assigning him a place to live. As Lam visited the street sleepers, he discovered that his elderly friend had been sleeping under a bridge without access to food for two days, at which point Lam began to bring him food personally. Calling the social work department, Lam discovered that the reason that the social work department neglected this man was because the social worker’s policy was for this paralyzed man to visit him twice a week in his office. He told me, ‘These forty days have uncovered the injustices of policy. These professional social workers do nothing, and this is my example.’ While Lam said that he was not interested in politics, then, his actions became political because he discovered a connection between those for whom he cared and the policies affecting their everyday lives.

To protest the church’s collusion with the powers, then, a group of CUHK’s Chung Chi Divinity School graduates organized the Alliance for the Return to the Christian Spirit
and the Narrow Road Church in a concerted attempt to ridicule any whom they alleged to be collaborators with it. As its leading members Takchi ‘Fastbeat’ Tam, David Cheung, and Wai-yip Leung told me, the origins of these activities lay in the Global Day of Prayer event in 2009. Organized after pro-democracy demonstrations in 2003 voiced civic discontent with the Special Administration Region’s regime, the Global Day of Prayer was organized by a pro-establishment charismatic evangelical, Mrs. Linda Ma (the wife of charismatic evangelist Fredrick Ma Si Hung), after attending a Global Day of Prayer event held in South Africa with Vietnamese American charismatic revivalist Jaeson Ma. Beginning the events in 2005 to be held over five years, the event featured the Chief Executive and regime officials leading large prayer gatherings of some 300 churches and 40,000 Christians attended by many Hong Kong churches in two stadiums in Hong Kong (Jaeson Ma 2007: 96). Allying that the Global Day of Prayer was an act of church collusion with government officials, these Chung Chi divinity students organized a Facebook event titled the Alliance for the Return to the Christian Spirit to protest the gatherings in 2009 and 2010. In 2009, the students raised a banner and vocally protested church collusion with the state and were forcibly ejected from the stadium; in 2010, they wore matching T-shirts.

125 In the 1990s, Takchi Tam served as a radio host, playing the character of ‘Fastbeat’ with his radio co-host ‘Slowbeat.’ In 2000s, Tam attended Chung Chi Divinity School, where he came under the influence of theologians like Kung Lap Yan and Rose Wu Lo Sai and met the members of the Alliance for the Return of the Christian Spirit. He has retained his nickname ‘Fastbeat,’ and this thesis will call him accordingly.

126 In his book, Jaeson Ma (2007: 94-95) tells the story of how he discovered that he was related to Frederick Ma Si Hung and Linda Ma, for both were from Swatow and that his father was Frederick Ma’s half-brother, but had been separated during the Cultural Revolution. Jaeson Ma grew up in San Jose, CA, living an early life of crime before becoming a charismatic Christian evangelist attempting to bring revival to university campuses. His friendship with the Ma couple in Hong Kong led to the emergence of the Global Day of Prayer, which in turn generated the protests of the Alliance of the Return to the Christian Spirit.

127 The HKCC’s former chair, the Rev. Dr. Nicholas Tai, clarified that Linda Ma’s Global Day of Prayer took place in June and was a charismatic event (Nicholas Tai, personal communication, 7 Mar. 2012). It was different from the HKCC’s World Day of Prayer, which was a mainline ecumenical effort that took place in March that had been renamed from the Women’s World Day of Prayer in 1963 (HKCC 2013a). The Global Day of Prayer took place from 2005 to 2010 and was discontinued afterward. The World Day of Prayer began in the 1960s and continues to be an HKCC initiative.
to silently lament church-state collaboration and brought along a cross on which were written the names of victims from the Tiananmen Incident, as well as the victims of below-quality food items imported from Chinese factories (such as tofu and melamine-laced baby powder), again leading to the group's ejection (Takchi Tam, personal communication, 9 Mar. 2012).

The Alliance for the Return to the Christian Spirit also joined in what David Cheung called ‘the whole movement’ of protests around the demolition of Choi Yuen Chuen, a village that the Hong Kong government had ordered razed for a high-speed light rail from Hong Kong to Shenzhen. Forming their own worship band called Hallelujah Get Out, they went to Choi Yuen Chuen ‘every other day’ (as David Cheung said) in January 2010, organizing a prayer service where they chanted imprecations at a distance from the village as the police cleared out the area (David Chueng, personal communication, 22 Mar. 2012). These acts proved controversial within Protestant circles, for it was widely discussed during my fieldwork (even at a public lecture on ‘social concern’ that I attended at an evangelical FBO) that one Choi Yuen Chuen protester was denied baptism at an evangelical mega-church after its leadership discovered that she had protested the demolition of the village. While this activism was ostensibly directed against the human rights violations of the state, the Alliance’s activities attempted to reveal the collusions between Protestant churches and the Hong Kong regime that it alleged was the reason that these injustices were seldom criticized by the church.

By 2011, the Alliance for the Return to the Christian Spirit had registered as Narrow Road Church, meeting on Sunday afternoons at Kowloon Union Church with another
congregation, One Body in Christ Church,\textsuperscript{128} while enacting radical theological activities in
the public sphere. Their theology, as Fastbeat told me, was a ‘mélange’ of radical
orthodoxy, the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, feminist and queer theology, and liberation
theology. In particular, they drew from Chung Chi Divinity School theologian Kung Lap
Yan, a liberation theologian who synthesized the work of American theologian Stanley
Hauerwas and the liberation theology of Latin America to call the Hong Kong church to
walk apart from the secular state in order to protest its injustices. Given this theology,
Narrow Road Church joined HKCI’s Fan Lap Hin in calling for what Bonhoeffer called
‘truthfulness,’ that is, being free of collusion so that one can speak truth to power. Joining
activities led by the HKCC, Fastbeat described Narrow Road Church as an ‘embarrassment’
to the church establishment, seeking to reveal how other Christian groups were beholden
to a market economy and a state that favoured the rich and were thus complicit with the
state’s anti-democratic practices and the erosion of human rights, such as in the razing of
Choi Yuen Chuen and the support of the Global Day of Prayer events.

It is the ire with which Narrow Road Church has critiqued those it deems ‘pro-
government’ collaborators with the state that has drawn the most controversy. HKCC’s
Rev. Nicholas Tai, for example, laments the way in which he has been ‘demonized’ by
Fastbeat for his reluctance to critique the state’s policy that denied Hongkongers universal
suffrage. Chung Chi Divinity School’s dean, the Rev. Lo Lung Kwong, remarked that even
though Narrow Road Church’s members were in fact his divinity students, they had taped a

\textsuperscript{128} One Body in Christ Church is a congregation that openly embraces sexual minorities and boasts an openly
lesbian pastor. Along with Blessed Minority Christian Fellowship, these churches’ embrace of tongzhi persons
in Hong Kong make them a controversial minority. Moreover, that these churches meet at Kowloon Union
Church is especially poignant, as the church serves as the informal headquarters for Occupy Central, the Hong
Kong version of #OccupyWallStreet that includes universal suffrage as part of its activism.
vulgar sign of protest on his church’s toilet; he observed that this ‘lack of respect’ meant that even though he saw common points of dialogue with them, he would personally be reluctant to engage them in conversation. Because Philemon Choi also became a target of these protests for his collaboration with high-ranking officials like former Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa and the Family Council’s Henry Tang, he exclaimed that these were ‘hypocrites’ who critiqued the state without paying attention to the policy action research that he was doing within the state to subvert its unjust policies from within (Philemon Choi, personal communication, 14 Mar. 2012). While the Christian Times’s Lee Kam Hung may have insisted that these parties speak with each other in the pages of his newspaper, Narrow Road Church’s existence has led to the most radical critique of the Protestant establishment in post-1997 Hong Kong, leading to a vigorous debate about whether the church was in fact in collusion with the state.

Aided by the development of FBOs attempting to develop practices of Christian social engagement in Hong Kong, the intra-Christian debate in Hong Kong has thus become a heated conversation about how Protestant Christians should engage the ‘secular’ public forum. This debate has generated little consensus about how the post-1997 handover regime should be ‘prophetically’ engaged. While FBOs like Breakthrough restructured themselves as research-and-development institutions to experiment with policies for the state, Breakthrough’s positionality, and Philemon Choi’s and Shirley Loo’s work with the state, should not be taken as representative of the ways in which Protestants in Hong Kong have engaged civil society through FBOs. Instead, I have shown that there is a vigorous debate among FBOs in a post-1997 context about how the church should relate to the state. While the HKCRM and the HKCNP insist that the church can collaborate with the state to
ameliorate poverty issues, more radical critiques have emerged from HKCI’s collaboration with the Catholic Diocese on right of abode issues, the emergence of feminist theology in Rose Wu Lo Sai’s work, the ministry of the Rev. Timothy Lam Kwok Cheung’s Senlok Christian Church with ‘street sleepers,’ and the development of the Alliance for the Return to the Christian Spirit and Narrow Road Church. While critics of these movements might call them ‘liberal’ (indeed, they cite liberal German American theologian Paul Tillich’s ‘Protestant principle’ for some justification of their internal self-critique) as well as ‘liberationist’ (given some of their Marxist orientations), their interaction with more collaborationist models in the pages of the Christian Times suggests that an active debate is underway in Hong Kong. In turn, this heated conversation indicates that most acts of post-secular rapprochement have in fact led to contestation. As these disputes often come to revolve around the state, they suggest instead that the very concept of post-secularization must be braked, for these FBOs suggest that any models of the secular through which the church can engage the world is up for debate.

6.5 Conclusion: post-secularity braked

This chapter has demonstrated that the practices of Cantonese evangelical FBOs in San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong do not signal transcendence of secularization in the public sphere. Instead, they reinforce elements of the secularization thesis in each civil society, restructuring FBOs in efforts to maximize their impact on various secular public spheres, spaces that lie outside of church congregations. In San Francisco, various internal organizational scandals led to the re-constitution of influential FBOs and congregations as businesses, facilitating their negotiations with secular urban planning commissions about
their economic contributions and justifying their physical presence on the (sub)urban landscape. In Vancouver, some Cantonese evangelical FBOs remodeled their institutions into social service organizations that were privately funded, competing with publicly funded secular organizations for a voice in Vancouver’s public sphere. In Hong Kong, some Cantonese evangelicals enacted a *rapprochement* with the state, re-designing their FBOs to facilitate interaction with the government while embedding evangelicals within the state to attempt to influence the state to pursue a more socially just order. Each of these re-orientations has in turn provoked contestation. In San Francisco, lay Cantonese evangelicals contested the need for those who speak Cantonese to restrict themselves within Cantonese FBOs, joining non-Chinese American congregations and service networks such as Fremont’s CityTeam and the Silicon Valley’s CityServe because some deemed them more effective in community service than Cantonese-speaking organizations. In Vancouver, the social work re-orientation was made possible by a fractious debate between competing FBOs over what ‘Chinese culture’ meant. In Hong Kong, progressive activists associated with HKCI challenged those collaborating with the state about their potential complicity with unjust state practices.

These challenges suggest that the central contentions among the three sites continue to revolve around the question that was asked in chapter 4: *how should the ‘church’ relate to the ‘world’?* In other words, Cantonese evangelicals in the various sites debated how the ‘secular’ as a space should be engaged. Indeed, various attempts at *rapprochement* have often led to contestations, arguments that other parties among Cantonese Protestants are either overly secular or overly impractical in their approaches to the secular state. Indeed, in each of these cases, the place of the secular state has been
prominent, a constant actor in the background from which churches and FBOs have no real independence, for they are governed by a policy framework that they either reinforce or challenge. Given these case studies, then, to speak of the ‘post-secular’ is a premature theoretical step, for what these examples show is not that religious institutions fill a void left in the aftermath of a secular state that has cut its social safety net. It demonstrates instead that theologically-motivated actors, like Cantonese evangelicals, acknowledge the constant presence of the state in the background and seek either to influence it or to challenge its legitimacy. These objectives indicate that the whole notion of post-secularization must be braked, at least as an empirical description of the phenomena at work within Cantonese Protestant geographies. The final question that remains to be answered, then, is whether these interactions with the state are local or transnational. As I shall show in the next chapter, that many of these engagements attempt to articulate themselves as democratic suggests that they must be local to the civil societies that they wish to engage, translating Protestant Christian grounded theologies into secular registers in order to maximize Cantonese Protestant influences in the various public spheres.
Chapter 7: From the Chinese diaspora to civil society: grounding Cantonese
Protestants in democratic secularity

7.1 Introduction: geographies of transnationalism and democratic secularity

This chapter ties together the threads of the previous chapters by discussing how Cantonese evangelicals practice democracy in their civil societies. It does so by demonstrating that the more recent engagements of Cantonese Protestants with the public sphere are in fact different avenues by which they attempt to influence the secular state. This argument thus complements the work of geographers who study Chinese transnationalism, as they have often focused on Aihwa Ong’s (1999) flexible families strategies that construct ‘ungrounded empires,’ that is, strategic familial forms calculated to maximize the wealth accumulation of private families across national borders (see Nonini and Ong, 1997). While these discussions have produced work on the influences of these Chinese transnational forms on international property markets (Olds, 1997; Edgington et al., 2006; Ley, 1995, 2010), international education (Waters 2008), and transnational split families (Waters 2002, 2003, 2011; Preston et al., 2006; Tse and Waters, 2013), these studies have not explored whether a transnational public sphere has actually been created through these private endeavours. While it might be easy to frame cities like San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong according to Michael Peter Smith’s (2001) revisionist definition of global cities as sites of transnational political solidarity, it remains to be seen whether such solidarities are empirical realities.

This chapter counters that very notion. As even this literature shows, Chinese transnational subjects themselves often locate their political activities within civil societies
that are bound by the metropolitan areas in which they live, attempting to mobilize local Chinese communities for democratic action. My central argument here is thus: *in spite of Chinese migrants forming an alternate modernity based on flexible capitalism, ethnic Chinese political movements, especially those constituted by Cantonese Protestants, are ultimately grounded in local civil societies with metropolitan areas as the unit of analysis.* In short, the invocation of ethnicity is not equivalent to the leveraging of transnational social fields for global political solidarity.

This chapter moves in two parts. In the first part, I dispute the notion that the Tiananmen Incident on 4 June 1989 formed a geography of transnational political solidarity within the Chinese diaspora. While the Tiananmen protests catalyzed local Cantonese Protestant leaders in all three sites to think more about Chinese Christian involvement in democratic movements, the strategies that emerged located action within the civil societies of San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong, attempting to mobilize the ethnic Chinese populations in the metropolises where they resided for political purposes that were developed within those local geographies. In the San Francisco Bay Area, Cantonese evangelicals formed a Chinese American counter public through the ethnic media that focused on the business orientations of Chinese Americans in an attempt to mobilize Asian American votes in the Bay Area metropolis. In Metro Vancouver, Cantonese Protestants entered electoral politics, discovering through their initial disappointment with Canadian politics that their political views were increasingly aligned with the ideological stances of the Conservative Party of Canada. In Hong Kong SAR, Cantonese ecumenical, evangelical, and Roman Catholic groups sought to negotiate their stance with the new Special Administrative Region’s regime, debating among themselves whether calls for
universal suffrage and opposition to the Basic Law’s anti-sedition clause in Article 23 precluded them from working with the new government. In short, my empirical argument culminates in this chapter, for I argue that Cantonese evangelicals who were awakened by the Tiananmen Incident have undertaken efforts to ground the Chinese populations in their local secular civil societies, sparking contention among Cantonese Protestants about the ways in which they should participate in a public sphere conversation that transcends their church congregations. This argument feeds back into this thesis’s central contention, as it demonstrates that when Cantonese evangelicals attempted to mobilize democratic movements, they in fact triggered debates among themselves about how to participate in secular political action to influence the state.

7.2 ‘6/4’: transnational solidarities, metropolitan expressions

As many of my respondents told me, 4 June 1989 was the day that awakened the democratic consciousness of Cantonese evangelicals in Hong Kong, Metro Vancouver, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Mobilized by the death of Hu Yaobang on 15 April (the former Communist Party general secretary who had been dismissed from his post in 1987 for his reformist tendencies), student protesters in Beijing criticized what they perceived as the corruption of Chairman Deng Xiaoping’s market socialist regime and called for dialogue with the government. As sociologist Craig Calhoun (1994) argues, the student protest movement was a diffuse one, propelling certain individuals like Chai Ling, Feng Congde (Chai’s former husband), Zhang Boli, Wu’erkaixi, Li Lu, and Han Dongfang to prominence as they launched a hunger strike against the PRC government, demanded the reform of the state into a democratic polity, drew attention to their demands by appealing to onsite
Western media covering Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev’s visit to Beijing, confronted Premier Li Peng with a demand for dialogue, and erected a ‘Goddess of Democracy’ at Tiananmen Square as a symbolic gesture of protest toward Deng’s regime. Calhoun demonstrates that both the student movement and the Deng regime were beholden to internal political challenges, so while the students were able to engage in some formal talks with the government in May, the situation escalated to a point of no return when elements within Deng’s government pushed for military force to be used against the students. While the PRC government reported that twenty-three deaths occurred when the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) entered the square (a number later revised to zero deaths), the students later estimated that some three thousand of their number were killed (Calhoun 1994: 149-151). Subsequently, leaders such as Chai Ling, Feng Congde, Wu’erkaixi, Li Lu, and Da Wen, among others, escaped to Hong Kong, where they flew to Paris before seeking asylum in the United States.

While the attitude of some Cantonese evangelicals (as they told me) were mixed about the students’ demonstrations for state reform from April to early June 1989, the visceral images broadcast on live television from the military suppression of the students at Tiananmen Square sent shock waves through diasporic Chinese communities, especially for Cantonese speakers who kept in mind that the PRC government would retake sovereignty over Hong Kong by 1997. Known as ‘6/4’ (Cantonese, loksei), the Tiananmen Incident galvanized ethnic Chinese populations in Hong Kong, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Vancouver to organize local demonstrations in their metropolises. Indeed, mirroring the students’ erection of the Goddess of Democracy, the demonstrations in Hong Kong, San Francisco, and Vancouver also used the Goddess of Democracy as a symbol, later housing
this monument at Victoria Park in Hong Kong, the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, and Portsmouth Square in San Francisco’s Chinatown.

Seldom noted, however, is the role of Cantonese Protestants in organizing these secular protests, calling a repressive state regime to justice. To this end, this section will examine the San Francisco Bay Area, Metro Vancouver, and Hong Kong in turn, sketching an account of those diasporic demonstrations, though some details have been omitted due to the political sensitivities surrounding this event. On the surface, it might appear that the simultaneous protests around the Pacific Rim region regarding ‘6/4’ have formed new transnational democratic solidarities among ethnic Chinese populations across metropolitan civil societies, potentially framing them as the transnational sites of political solidarity that Michael Peter Smith (2001) terms ‘global cities.’ Indeed, as the Rev. Lo Sek Wai told me, the formation of Chinese Christians in Action (CCIA) as a ‘Love China Association’ originated from transnational meetings enabled by communications technology among Southern Californian theologian Samuel Ling, Hong Kong theologian Yeung Hing Kau, San Jose Chinese Baptist Church’s Rev. Daniel Ng, and the Rev. Lo Sek Wai in Vancouver. Despite the evidence of such transnational connections, however, I shall show that these activities were in fact intensely local, for even the aim of transnationalism was to rouse the democratic consciousness of the local Chinese populations in each site to participate in the workings of their local national governments. In other words, the Tiananmen protests set the stage for how democracy would be locally conceptualized by Protestant activists across the three sites: as attempts to influence the state in each civil society by participating in its public sphere as ethnic Chinese citizens.
7.2.1 The San Francisco Bay Area: private care to dissidents, public charity to the
PRC

Because the San Francisco Bay Area became one of the first ports of call for the
student dissidents in the United States, Cantonese evangelicals organized memorials for the
victims of the Tiananmen Incident while caring for those who arrived in their churches.
Due to the PRC business connections that many Cantonese evangelicals have in their
secular capacities, my respondents spoke to me about their role in the ‘6/4’ events on
condition of anonymity; the names that I have supplied here are a matter of public
record.129 Initially, it seemed that Californian residents, both Chinese and non-Chinese,
simply stood in solidarity with the students. The San Francisco Chronicle reported that a
range of actions had been taken to protest the Chinese regime’s violent actions: California
universities and humanitarian programs withdrew their exchange students and overseas
volunteers, the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra canceled its plans to tour China,
California state buildings and Chinatown merchants flew the American flag at half mast,
San Francisco’s Catholic Archbishop John Quinn led a ‘special mass for Chinese people’ at
St. Mary’s Cathedral, and the Chinese Christian Mission (CCM) organized a candlelight vigil
in front of San Francisco’s City Hall on 10 June (LA Chung 1989: A22).

However, my respondents said that some of the key dissidents, including Chai Ling
and her then-husband Feng Congde, arrived in person to the Bay Area to claim American

129 Indeed, I received an urgent telephone call while I was doing research in the Bay Area in which a
respondent told me that another potential key informant was experiencing some measure of paranoia from
my request for interview. After I contacted him, he had in turn called this key informant to tell her that her
life was in danger and that her connections in China were threatened because she had spoken to me, even
though he himself had played an integral role in the events that I describe in this section. While she and
others with whom I spoke re-assured me that this potential informant was overly paranoid, another
interviewee said to me, ‘Maybe you just write vaguely that this happened; don’t write so many details,’
especially regarding some American journalists who came to observe private events at which the dissidents
were hosted but never wrote about these encounters publicly.
refuge, though this piece of information has been omitted from the dissidents’ own accounts (see Chai, 2011). That the leaders of the student movement in Tiananmen Square had visited the Bay Area was no secret; one of my non-Christian informants who worked at the post office at the time told me that he had read about it in the papers, attended the rallies, received ‘truckloads’ of mail at his workplace regarding the incident, and even attempted to buy Chai Ling an airplane ticket to fly from Paris to the Bay Area. While his account is not corroborated by Chai Ling’s (2011) autobiography, this interviewee told me that he backed off when he heard on the radio that Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi had already met Chai in Paris and would fly her to California, where Chai and her surviving dissident friends met politicians such as Senator Dianne Feinstein. It was in this context that Cantonese evangelicals in the Bay Area said that they provided spiritual care to the dissidents, although the details of which churches and pastors conducted these services is an off-record matter. One pastor in the Silicon Valley corroborated Chai Ling’s (2011) account that her marriage to Feng Congde, which ended in divorce, was in a precarious situation due to Feng’s extramarital affairs in Paris. This minister said that there were ‘a lot of churches band together and some offer help to get the dissidents outside of China. We more or less provided spiritual counseling, like Chai Ling’s husband—before their divorce—they came to Christ, and a lot of other things, cared for some of their needs. That’s all we did. We did not get involved in any protests.’ As another respondent said, San Jose Chinese Baptist Church’s former senior pastor Rev. Daniel Ng (who is now senior pastor of the Hong Kong evangelical megachurch, Kong Fook Evangelical Free Church in Admiralty) coordinated this coalition of Chinese churches in San Jose, San Francisco, and

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130 Chai Ling’s (2012) autobiography places the date of her conversion in 2009 in New York. To my knowledge, Feng Congde has not professed Christian faith.
the East Bay. Ng called this network ‘the ‘Christians Love China Association’ (Cantonese, geidoktou oiwawui, 基督徒愛華會) [hereafter, Oiwawui]. As another interviewee in a prominent Cantonese evangelical FBO put it, the Oiwawui’s work was to ‘reach out to those who came out,’ referring to the dissidents who were leaving China. Indeed, these efforts had their effects, for while Oiwawui was not directly involved in the conversion of some dissident leaders to evangelical Protestantism, some of the core leadership, such as Chai Ling, Zhang Boli, Wu'erkaixi, and Han Dongfang have indeed become ‘born-again’ Christians in the United States (Aikman, 2003: 11-12). Some have even begun evangelical ministries, such as Chai’s All Girls Allowed in Boston to militate against the PRC’s ‘One Child Policy’ and Zhang’s Harvest Christian Church in a Washington D.C. suburb (see Zhang, 2002; Aikman, 2003; Chai, 2011).

Some Cantonese evangelicals in the Bay Area described the Tiananmen Incident as an ‘awakening.’ One key informant noted that though he was raised to be politically apathetic in Hong Kong, the Tiananmen Incident awakened his democratic consciousness, causing an ‘epiphany in my life [having] to do with Christians in the society, or the marketplace of ideas.’ So too, the late Pastor Mark Cheng, a prominent Chinese Christian evangelist in the Bay Area until his death in 2009, organized inter-congregational prayer meetings at local churches; as one elderly woman who attended such a gathering in San Jose put it, these events were the first of this kind that she had ever attended, for they drew Chinese Christians from multiple congregations together, though they were normally divided:

131 Indeed, Vancouver’s New Life Chinese Lutheran Church’s Rev. Lo Sek Wai told me that it was Ng who convinced him to call his post-Tiananmen democratic organization an Oiwawui as well (see chapter 6). The Vancouver group took for their English name ‘Chinese Christians in Action’ (CCIA).
As I recall it now, those feelings come back, and that feeling is that I had never attended a prayer meeting outside of my church, and in that church, there was a prayer meeting. So I went, and my feeling is that it’s like Chinese people actually have a new awareness because Chinese people often like to say, Chinese people are a pot of scattered sand. But in that moment, as I recall it, it’s not so, I saw that Chinese people are not a pot of scattered sand. When there are these events that come up, those people will come together for the same issue, the same goal, to weep and to be in prayer. That’s my biggest feeling at the time.

As yet another respondent—a prominent Cantonese evangelical FBO leader—put it, these gatherings offered prayers that asked God to ‘touch their hearts,’ that is, both the state and its dissidents in China, ‘because then they will discover that American Christians love China, even though they think that Christians are Western.’ In other words, though the Bay Area’s Cantonese evangelicals might have been ethnic Chinese, they considered themselves Americans who were joining together to pray for Chinese students outside of America.

Following these brief encounters with the Tiananmen student activists and capitalizing on the brief moment of Chinese American solidarity wrought during the prayer meetings, evangelicals in the Bay Area organized associations to attempt to influence the PRC state apparatus through transnational charitable work based in the United States. Some informants in the Bay Area told me that they joined Thomas Leung Insing’s Cultural Regeneration Research Society (CRRS), for, as Leung told me, his departure from Vancouver’s Regent College in 1993 to found CRRS led family psychologist Dr. Melvin Wong and CCM’s Cecilia Yau, both of whom worked in San Francisco, to contact him. While Leung told me in his key informant interview that he had no connections with ‘6/4’ activism anywhere, one respondent in the Bay Area directly linked his work with CRRS and his personal political awakening during the Tiananmen Incident: ‘By the grace of God,’ he said, ‘we’ve been quite active in China, and I use that as a so-called platform...So I think that’s the 6/4 Movement, I guess the sequel and consequence of that.’ In other words, while Leung
himself may have dissociated himself from the ‘6/4’ activism, his associates in the United States made the natural link for themselves. In turn, this work with CRRS was small in comparison to CRRS’s other offices: radio host David Pang (who is on CRRS’s American board) told me the Northern Californian office contrasted the ones in Vancouver and in Los Angeles, for ‘we have no staff, only volunteers; we only have staff in Southern California.’ These evangelicals told me that they came into contact with Chinese intellectuals through CRRS, while also helping to mobilize support for CRRS’s poverty work in Hunan and Guangxi. In short, there was some transnational charitable work that was wrought by the reflection of Cantonese evangelicals on the ‘6/4’ Incident, especially as an effort to aid in Chinese nation-building efforts in order to influence the PRC through humanitarian work.\footnote{To be clear, Thomas Leung Insing also clarified for me that his motivations for starting CRRS had nothing to do with the Tiananmen Incident. These responses from my Northern Californian interviewees should not be tied to Leung’s positions or even the work of CRRS. They reflect instead the personal motivations of some members of the United States chapter of CRRS.}

However transnational these activities may have been, I shall also show that these actions had ramifications for the development of a Cantonese-speaking Chinese American media landscape in the Bay Area. In this formulation, ‘Chineseness’ became conceptualized through nationalist and establishmentarian lenses, framing the concept in radio and television as a business-oriented identity. In other words, the transnationalism that came into play in San Francisco had local geographical consequences as well, for it was used to mobilize Cantonese-speaking Chinese Americans for particular strands of democratic activity in America even while they conducted charity activities in China. As I shall show in the Vancouver and Hong Kong sites, this orientation contrasts what happened to ‘6/4’ activism in the other research sites, suggesting that the development of a business-oriented
Chinese American identity in the Bay Area is uniquely local to this metropolis, despite its transnational influences.

7.2.2 **Metro Vancouver: the emergence of Chinese Christians in democratic politics**

Unlike the business-oriented work done in the San Francisco Bay Area, Cantonese evangelicals in Metro Vancouver developed their activism around ‘6/4’ because of their outreach ministries to transnational PRC students in the 1980s. The Rev. Lo Sek Wai told me that he was the senior pastor at New Life Chinese Lutheran Church on Main Street and East 46th Avenue from the early 1980s to 1997. Though he was from Hong Kong, Lo started a Bible study in Mandarin Chinese as an outreach to overseas graduate students from the PRC in the 1980s, and it was in the course of this ministry that he watched the live broadcasts of the demonstrations in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square from April to early June 1989. After speaking with these young scholars about their ‘aspiration, struggle’ for a democratic China, Lo organized members of his Lutheran congregation to write a ‘letter in appreciation of the toleration of the Chinese government for the demonstration,’ which his church delivered to the PRC consulate in mid-May. However, as the situation deteriorated in late May (though military action had not yet occurred), Lo again found himself drawn back into pastoral care for PRC scholars. Lo understood that the transnational PRC students whom he served were organizing a demonstration in Vancouver’s Chinatown on 28 May; as he joined the group, ‘strangely,’ he said, ‘I became the leader.’ Douglas Todd (1989: B11) described the event in the *Vancouver Sun* as ‘the 2,000-person rally Lo led, bullhorn in hand, on May 28 through Chinatown.’ Lo also recalled:
The RCMP\textsuperscript{133} told us that they had never seen such an orderly and peaceful demonstration, you know, so big crowd, so big emotion, with crying and shouting; well, but we are very, very peaceful, and the RCMP saw that, and the sergeant who was there told me so. He asked me, \textit{How do you do that? How do you organize this? It’s just an ad hoc event!} I said that we just had a meeting a few nights before, it’s a simultaneous action, and actually, we have never organized something like this, a demonstration, before!

Indeed, Todd (1989: B11) reports that participants in the rally, both Chinese and non-Chinese, lauded Lo for his ‘fine work’ in organizing these rallies, even though he said that he had no experience with social movements.\textsuperscript{134} Lo also recalled that Bill Chu, a member of Lo’s congregation at the time, served as the marshal for this march.

When the events of 4 June unfolded into a massacre of the students in Beijing, Lo organized a group of Cantonese evangelicals in student ministry to organize a series of events to protest the PRC state regime’s slaughter of its citizens. Meeting in Lo’s church basement, the members include To Chi Tat (the husband of SUCCESS’s Lilian To), Stanley Ng (then a campus worker at Trinity Western University), Wong Ka Cheung (the organizer of Chinese Christian Fellowships on university and college campuses), the Rev. Stephen Lee (the Cantonese pastor at the Christ Church of China), and Bill Chu. Through Stephen Lee’s friendship with the Rev. Harry Robinson at the evangelical St. John’s Shaughnessy Anglican Church, the first event that this ‘basement group’ planned was a candlelight vigil on 6 June in memory of those killed in Tiananmen Square. Some 5,000 people attended (according to Todd, ‘roughly 400 Caucasians’ were in that number), filling up the already-sizable church sanctuary and overflowing onto Granville Street outside. Again, Lo recalled that ‘the RCMP escorted us, helped us through the crowd, and the crowd was cooperative.’ He also

\textsuperscript{133} That is, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the police force in Canada.
\textsuperscript{134} Lo’s claim of inexperience is admittedly modest, as he was involved with Breakthrough Youth Ministries’ sit-in in solidarity with protesting students during the Golden Jubilee Incident in Hong Kong in 1978 (see chapter 4).
remembered that Bill Chu and Stanley Ng carried wreaths for the deceased while Lo presided over the bilingual English and Mandarin Chinese service as the liturgist and preacher. As Bill Chu recalled, ‘So the whole block was filled with people, and what was most amazing is as a Christian, that was the first time we see so many teary-eyed, not a single happy face,’ as the crowd participated together in a service of collective liturgical lament. On 18 June, Lo named the basement group the ‘Vancouver Society in Support of the Democratic Movement in China,’ organizing a large-scale demonstration in Vancouver’s downtown. Following the suggestion of the city to gather at a large downtown construction site, Lo rallied all those concerned about the ‘6/4’ incident—‘all the Chinese communities, not just Christian, and all concerned, Caucasians, other ethnic groups’—to join in this mass protest, where Lo served as the spokesperson. Gathering at the downtown site, the group marched for two to three hours down Main Street in Chinatown, after which ‘the crowd scattered orderly.’

It was at this second meeting that Lo met the emerging human rights activist, Raymond Chan. Having organized the protests in the New Life Chinese Lutheran Church’s basement, the calligraphy done for the demonstrations was drawn by Gloria Ng, a member of Lo’s congregation and Raymond Chan’s sister. Lo recalled that when Chan saw the banners that his sister created and heard about the protests, he joined the demonstrations; as Lo put it, ‘he was in the crowd.’ However, by the time that the 18 June protest occurred, Chan had himself emerged as a pro-democracy activist, calling for a further demonstration after Lo’s. It was then that Raymond Chan became known as a Tiananmen redress organizer. In a video dating from a protest that Chan organized, Chan issued the following statement to the PRC government:
We complain to the government of the People’s Republic of China for their massacre in Peking, Tiananmen, on June the Fourth. The killing of thousands of people has aroused the anger of the world, particularly the overseas Chinese, and the continuous bloodshed that the government has employed throughout China, and now, you guys are start arresting all the students that has been so patriotic and dedicated for their lives to the country, and you have shown insensitivity and brutality to such unarmed students and civilians. And what we want you to do is first, stop the massacre, stop using bloodshed to all the unarmed civilians, and second, punish those who are responsible, who issued the order, as well the generals who have carried out such outrageous orders. We would like you to set up an open court trial for those who issued the orders for the massacre. We would also ask you to step up the pace of political reform to achieve a democratic government which enforce their Constitution, which guarantees liberties and human rights. And we also want you to lift news back up and reveal the truth to the whole world. Over the years, the Chinese has been running a dictatorship. They have a Constitution in their government, but they never enforce it. They have a People’s Congress, but all the people were appointed. We are not asking to overthrow the government. All we are asking to do is for the government to enforce their own Constitution, and to have the People’s Congress be elected and have democracy realized in China. Whatever, whether it’s a Communist country, whether it’s a Communist country that dominates, whatever. We don’t care. All we want is a government that would have democracy and guarantees liberties and human rights.135

Chan’s activism contrasted Lo’s because his secular rhetoric called for the constitutional reform of the PRC state to legislate human rights into its system. Indeed, following Chan’s activism, Lo refocused his energies on his parish work, while Chan formed a secular organization, taking on Lo’s original group name, the Vancouver Society in Support of the Democratic Movement in China. Meanwhile, Lo’s basement group renamed themselves the ‘Christians in Support of the Democratic Movement in China’ in order to differentiate themselves from Chan’s work, though Chan personally became a Christian in the early 1990s and began worshipping at the Vancouver Chinese Mennonite Church. Chan’s organization subsequently joined Lo’s to co-organize an annual memorial service for the Tiananmen victims in front of the Chinese consulate, demonstrating that their institutional

135 This is a verbatim transcription of Raymond Chan’s protest speech. I have left it completely intact to preserve the flavour of the original.
separation simply maintained the theological differentiations between their two approaches.

In short, the effect of ‘6/4’ activism in Metro Vancouver led to the emergence of Chinese Canadian Protestants into democratic politics in Vancouver itself. Indeed, influenced by San Jose pastor Rev. Daniel Ng (who was, at that point, staying at Lo’s home en route to Hong Kong for ministry purposes), the basement group finally settled on ‘Chinese Christians in Action’ as its name in 1990, appointing Bill Chu as its primary spokesperson and becoming the group that, as I demonstrated in chapter 6, attempted to reformulate ‘Chinese culture’ from financial interest into a democratic concern for the common good, including advocacy for First Nations territorial sovereignty. However, with the emergence of Raymond Chan as a democratic voice, Chinese Canadians, especially the Protestants within this population, were developing a political voice within Vancouver’s civil society. This outcome was different from San Francisco’s development of a pro-PRC business agenda, and it also diverged from the involvement of Cantonese evangelicals in ‘6/4’ activism across the Pacific in Hong Kong.

7.2.3 Hong Kong: anticipating the city’s handover to an undemocratic regime

Though the secular Pro-Chinese Democracy Movement (PCDM) in Hong Kong has existed since 1976 (see PW Wang 2000), the 1989 student movement elicited the supportive commentary of evangelical and ecumenical organizations in Hong Kong since May 1989. Indeed, while democracy activists such as Szeto Wah led a small secular pro-democracy movement that, as Wang (2000) notes, was primarily composed of university student groups and radical socialist activists, Christian FBOs and church networks in Hong
Kong paid attention to the events in Beijing and sought to educate Christians about democracy. Because Hong Kong was slated to return to PRC sovereignty in 1997, the protests in Beijing represented a chance for Hong Kong churches and FBOs to think about a Christian theological response to the students' demands for democratic reform, dialogue with the state, and the abolition of government corruption. Protestant organizations, such as the Fellowship of Evangelical Students, the China Graduate School of Theology, the Church of Christ in China, the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Christian Medical Practitioners’ Association, and the Hong Kong Christian Medical Students’ Association, held classes to educate Christians in Hong Kong about the nature of democracy, issuing academic pamphlets that discussed democratic social movements and their relationship to Christian theology. Some organizations formed coalitions and issued statements in newspapers like Ming Pao, declaring that the PRC government should heed the demands of the student protesters and should engage in meaningful dialogue with them while contending that any violent suppression of the students would be met with protest.\footnote{136} Indeed, Tinming Ko (2000: 38) relates in his sociological study of Protestant ministers in Hong Kong politics that there were numerous ‘million-people demonstration walks in May 1989,’ as well as a ‘China and Hong Kong Young People in One Heart’ rally co-organized by Breakthrough Youth Ministries and the Fellowship of Evangelical Students that drew over 200,000 students to participate. Moreover, on 22 May, three hundred ministers attended a ‘Pastor Prayer Meeting’ to pray in solidarity with the Chinese students, after which on 25 May, 300 pastors walked from Wan Chai Methodist Church to deliver a letter in support of the students to the New China News Agency (Ko, 2000: 39). In

\footnote{136 I am grateful to a friend in one of my sites who showed me her private archives of these primary materials. Because of her work in the PRC, she must remain anonymous.}
short, the stage was set by late May for Hong Kong clergy and students to get involved in the 4 June Incident that was to come.

While many of my focus group members and lay interviewees participated in the ‘Million Man March’ in Hong Kong against the state brutality of the Beijing regime, few knew that this large-scale demonstration was the result of ecumenical Protestant conversations with pro-democracy activists in the immediate wake of the military suppression in Tiananmen Square. By 1989, the Rev. Lo Lung Kwong had moved from his activism in Chai Wan to Wan Chai Methodist Church (see chapter 4), where he was working with the democratic student movement in solidarity with the Beijing protesters. Working until late at night while several students were camped outside of his church, Lo heard on the radio that the People’s Liberation Army was entering Tiananmen Square:

At that moment, I called Szeto Wah, and he was unavailable, like I’m so tired. I have to sleep. And I woke him up. And immediately, we had a meeting, and immediately we launched the Alliance [which was short for the ‘Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China’]. The Alliance phone call, I made it! So we started it, and I brought the Christians in, and we decided to start the Alliance.

As this Alliance was started, Lo told the Christians at the meeting that they would start a Christian Alliance as well, known as the Hong Kong Christian Patriotic Democratic Movement (CPDM), with Breakthrough’s Philemon Choi as its chair and Lo as its vice chair.

As Choi (1991: 104; quoted in Ko, 2000: 39) wrote, CPDM’s mission was ‘our response to the love of God’ while promoting democracy is ‘a way to express our faith in loving people,’ which meant that the CPDM ‘is not a political body,’ but one that ‘can help facilitate the democratic movement in Hong Kong and China, and that the righteousness and peace of God be seen in the city we love.’ These sentiments were accompanied by statements of protest issued by Christian organizations—ecumenical, evangelical, and Roman Catholic—
in newspapers following the 4 June event, calling out the Beijing regime on its ‘bloodshed’ and the ‘massacre’ that happened. In addition to the Christian participation in the ‘Million Man March’ organized by Szeto Wah at Victoria Park before parading through Hong Kong Island in protest, Lo Lung Kwong also organized a demonstration from a Lutheran church in Kowloon’s Yau Ma Tei in which one thousand people came. Lo’s home congregation, Wan Chai Methodist Church, also hosted a 24-hour prayer event as Szeto’s demonstration started.

While the CPDM hosted yearly events commemorating the ‘6/4 Incident,’ what has become of the memory of those who participated in these events in 1989 is that these protests in Hong Kong were largely secular social movements that anxious Hong Kong residents serendipitously joined. As one middle-aged man in one of my Bay Area focus groups said, he was attending university at the time in Hong Kong and remembered that throughout the train stations, ‘people walked so slowly,’ overcome by emotion for what happened in Beijing. When I asked him if there were religious organizations involved in the protests that he attended, he replied, ‘It may not have been religion, but as an ethnic person, because at that time, I was not in church because I was a student at the time.’ Another woman in the same group remembers taking her children to Victoria Park. She observed that ‘all the Hong Kong people woke up, and there was no motivation to go to work, and there were tears were in everyone’s eyes.’ While she said that her home church had many Christians who joined in, she also insisted that ‘no church flags themselves as supporting this; it’s just as individuals.’ Her comments reflect the words of one evangelical FBO leader whom I interviewed in Hong Kong, who said that she was pregnant during that time, yet against the objections of her mother, she went to the protests as an individual
citizen. This emotional drive reflected the words of an interviewee in Vancouver who was also in Hong Kong at the time:

The one single event that influenced me to care more about the society or maybe nation, the society, it’s because in 1989, June 4, Tiananmen incident. At that time, I came to Canada already...but on June 4, that week, I just returned to Hong Kong, vacation, with my family, and that time, the Hong Kong people were very, very moved by Beijing’s Tiananmen, and many people on the television sets, facing their television sets crying, and then we saw that there were people dying, and the students dying, and we saw the students dying.

In other words, the memory of participating in the Hong Kong protests against the June 4 event was one of collective emotional solidarity with the rest of Hong Kong’s citizenry, not the Christians in particular. If anything, Christians in Hong Kong were part of these secular movements of protest against a regime which they knew themselves to be joining in 1997. Indeed, the diversity of the sites that I discussed regarding my respondents’ encounter with the Hong Kong protests suggests that the events of 4 June led to a widespread migration of Hongkongers throughout the Pacific Rim region (see Skeldon, 1994; Li, 2005; Ley, 2010).

However, despite the migrant geographies that the Tiananmen Incident engendered, what was particular to the Hong Kong protests in 1989 was that it was a society-wide protest against a regime, for they suspected that this style of undemocratic suppression might be applied to Hong Kong after 1997. While Cantonese evangelicals in the San Francisco Bay Area worked for a pro-China reform agenda and the ones in Vancouver leveraged the event for local political action, this event had a formative effect on the Hong Kong debates revolving around whether Christians should collaborate with the Beijing regime or not. Despite the ‘one country, two systems’ policy that had been advanced in 1984, these events led to a suspicion that democratic dissent and the freedom of expression would not be tolerated in Hong Kong after 1997, channeling on the one hand
substantial emigration in the early 1990s (see Skeldon, 1994) while also shaping the later public perception of the Special Administrative Region’s leadership as suppressive. In short, Christians in Hong Kong found themselves drawn into these political debates about China, particularly with the looming date of 1997, pushing them to greater civic involvement and subsequently critical debates within Christian circles about democracy and attitudes toward the regime after the handover.

7.2.4 ‘6/4’: transnational solidarities, local metropolitan geographies

In each of the sites discussed above, the Tiananmen Incident was a rallying point for the awakening of democratic action. The involvement of Cantonese Protestants in each of these activities, however, does not lead to an easy transnational religious framing. Instead, the various political activities that the responses to ‘6/4’ engendered in the different sites indicates that these democratic activities, while conceived in a moment of transnational solidarity, remained local projects with particularities in each of the sites. In the San Francisco Bay Area, Cantonese evangelicals sought to heal and serve the Chinese nation as Americans doing business and humanitarian work in collaboration with the PRC state apparatus. In Metro Vancouver, the events in Tiananmen Square served as launching points for local Chinese Canadian engagement with Canadian politics, propelling the political career of Raymond Chan, providing inspiration for CCIA’s work with the First Nations, and pushing evangelicals in Vancouver to involve themselves in Vancouver’s civil society. In Hong Kong, the Tiananmen Incident demonstrated that Christians were linked to a broader secular civil society conversation embroiled in a debate regarding how a regime that would massacre its own citizens should be regarded.
Although it would be tempting to frame the Tiananmen Incident as awakening a transnational democratic consciousness, this exploration of the local foci in San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong has demonstrated that the proper unit of analysis for these emerging democratic solidarities is not necessarily the transnational network, but the work of Cantonese evangelicals within civil societies bound by metropolitan areas. As we shall see in explorations of each site, the conception of what democratic activities were and how they should be conducted took on intensely local expressions, attempting to intervene in the civil societies of San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong with specific agendas particular to each place. It is to these local expressions that this chapter now turns.

7.3 Vocalizing the ‘silent majority’: from Bay Area Cantonese media to local municipal elections

Following the Tiananmen protests in 1989, Cantonese evangelicals in San Francisco attempted to arouse democratic sentiments among Chinese Americans in the 1990s. As I have suggested up to this point, the meanings of democracy and Chineseness were very particular to this group of Cantonese evangelicals. While I have already chronicled their sexual politics from concerned parental activism in Bay Area schools to their instrumental role in the passage of Proposition 8 in California (see chapter 5), this section picks up the thread in chapters 5 and 6 concerning the construction of a Cantonese evangelical counter public. Having advanced a prior argument that Cantonese evangelicals themselves conceptualize this counter public as secular, I now show that in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident, some Cantonese evangelicals were encouraged to practice democracy by working as Cantonese-language radio show hosts in the secular media. Far from contending that
these evangelicals co-opted the media for their theological interests, I suggest that their objective was to awaken a secular Chinese American democratic voice in the Bay Area, mobilizing Cantonese-speakers in the Bay Area from their political apathy to participate in the democratic process. However, I shall contend that their imaginations of ‘democracy’ were very particular, for they focused on the defence of model minority private interests, premising their understanding of ‘Chinese American’ as business-oriented.

This dynamic can be illustrated by the engagements of Cantonese evangelicals with the San Francisco mayoral races in 2011. Dominated by San Francisco’s political stars (like city attorney Dennis Herrera, openly gay city supervisor Bevan Dufty, and public defender Jeff Adachi), this election also featured three Chinese American men: the incumbent Ed Lee, city supervisor David Chiu, and California state senator Leland Yee. While churches in San Francisco did not clearly indicate their preferred candidate, my fieldwork in the Bay Area in 2011 revealed that the effort among some Cantonese evangelicals who attempted to mobilize Asian American electoral power for these races was fraught with geographical difficulties. Despite the emergence of Cantonese evangelicals in a Chinese American counter public through the radio, newspapers, and television, the reach of this mediated influence was regional, calling for readers, listeners, and viewers throughout the Bay Area to pay attention to these races. However, because this municipal election concerned the mayor of San Francisco, only those who resided within San Francisco’s city limits could vote. These geographical constraints meant that neither those who paid attention to these races but lived outside of San Francisco, nor those who attended church in San Francisco but resided in the suburbs, could express their choice at the ballot box. In other words, the democratic aspirations of Cantonese evangelicals in the San Francisco Bay Area following
the Tiananmen Incident were fraught with geographical constraints that frustrated their efforts for effective political mobilization.

This section moves in two parts. It first demonstrates that in the early 1990s, Cantonese evangelicals like David Pang, ‘Lavender Leung’ (a pseudonym for an influential Chinese American ‘political woman,’ as she called herself), Lam Sau Wing, Dr. Bill Tam, and Dr. James Yu attempted to articulate publicly what they understood to be ‘Chinese American values’ in a secular sense, appealing to Chinese American private interests such as private finances, second-generation education, personal health, and property values. This section then shows that this counter public’s discourse of privatization was in turn seen as a public good, awakening a ‘silent majority’ from its political apathy so that it could in turn advocate for its own interests in a democratic society. In particular, I will focus on the disagreements among Cantonese evangelicals about how to rally Cantonese evangelical support during the 2011 mayoral races in San Francisco, probing the fissures between ideological dissemination and the geographical realities that constitute democratic action.

7.3.1 Defining an ethnic counter public: Cantonese evangelicals in the secular media

In the late 1980s through the 1990s, Cantonese evangelical business people emerged as voices in the San Francisco Bay Area’s Cantonese-speaking secular media. Far from attempting to impose their theological convictions onto this Cantonese media space, they sought to ground their values into universally accepted ‘Chinese American’ ideals that could be communicated in Cantonese to a secular counter public. The issues that they discussed revolved around finances, education, personal health, private property, and family cohesion, often attempting to introduce Christian principles as universal values into
these programs. In effect, this entry into the media presented Chinese Americans as being concerned with private familial interests, constructing a model minority that was interested in protecting its own property rights and familial integrity (see chapter 5).

When Cantonese evangelicals like David Pang and ‘Lavender Leung’ became Cantonese media personalities, they told me that there were few Cantonese evangelicals who ventured into the secular public arena. Once a seminary student at the Christian Worker Seminary in the Silicon Valley, David Pang told me that his plans to enter full-time pastoral ministry were interrupted when he joined the nascent Chinese Christian Herald Crusades (CCHC). At this ministry, he attempted to host a ‘conversational’ radio talk show that discussed current affairs, and he invited secular radio personalities to coach him. In turn, they convinced him to enter the secular media, for ‘the radio people notice I have a good voice’ and that he was ‘very natural.’ With the encouragement of pastors and elders who asked him to consider his potential ‘social impact and effect with the broader chances for Christians’ that this opportunity would afford him, he spent over fourteen years at the secular radio station, 1150 FM KTSD and Tri-Star Radio KVSF, broadcasting his Cantonese-language current events and news show in the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Seattle. ‘Lavender Leung,’ in contrast, began her entry into the public sphere by holding press conferences about her private property. Lavender complained that a pothole outside her new Chinese restaurant on San Francisco’s San Bruno Avenue in 1998 prevented her from being able to erect a handicapped access walkway to her restaurant.

137 ‘Lavender Leung’ asked me to neither record nor use her actual name in this thesis, although she did sign a consent form to be interviewed and joked that she suspected that her actual identity could probably be discerned from her responses, especially if I referred to her as ‘that political woman.’ The quotes from her are from my detailed notes at the interview. Because her last name is not actually ‘Leung,’ I will refer to her as ‘Lavender.’
and that the planning department had taken too long to fix it due to bureaucratic red tape. Realizing that she was being marginalized as a Chinese American, Lavender held a press conference with several city politicians, leading to the dismissal of some obstructive planning officials while garnering her ‘that political woman’ as a nickname in San Francisco’s City Hall (‘Lavender Leung,’ personal communication, 29 Nov. 2011).

By the mid-1990s, these Cantonese evangelicals had earned the right to speak for Chinese Americans. One of Pang’s most notable achievements was his intervention when NATO bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade toward the end of the Kosovo War in May 1999, causing the deaths of three PRC journalists and injuring twenty other PRC embassy staff. In the wake of this event, the PRC ambassador to the United Nations called the bombing a ‘barbarian act,’ while protesters in PRC cities gathered to demonstrate in front of American embassies (BBC, 1999). David Pang recalled that a major American news outlet contacted him, having discovered while they were in San Francisco’s Chinatown interviewing Chinese Americans about this event that most had referred to his radio show as their primary source of news. Pang told me that he had felt conflicted about responding, as it was very ‘troublesome’ (Cantonese, mahfan), for he felt that he might ‘damage the Chinese image’ if he misspoke: ‘If I say that America is bad, then the Americans will think that the Chinese just want to help China. If I say that it’s not that bad, am I really Chinese?’

After prayerful preparations for about two hours, he compared the three slain journalists to the three American prisoners of war who were allowed to return to America at around the same time:

We Chinese in America call ourselves ‘Chinese Americans.’ We are very proud of how we are people of Chinese descent, and we have over a thousand years of history, very traditional, but we think of America as our home, and our ancestors brought over many years of tradition. We are Americans because our second
generation will grow up here, and this is our home, and we will also develop and discover things here. So we are Chinese Americans, that’s our name. And we really love our country, so when we heard that military personnel in Bosnia were killed, our hearts will feel many things and will be very sorrowful. Even though we will not be like many Americans and put a yellow ribbon outside, we care very much about it, and when they come back, we are very happy. But in the meantime, we hear the news that three Chinese journalists who thought that they were in the safest place on earth, the embassy, had been killed by an explosion. And we are very sorrowful—we are happy for the three Americans who came back, but we think of these three Chinese journalists, we will never see them again, and we are very sorrowful.

Pang recalled that the room was silent after his response, for he was able to speak about this political issue without assigning blame to either China or America. Pang’s efforts to create a space for Chinese nationalism without offending the American nation were paralleled by his service as a master of ceremonies for Chinese American redress activism against the Japanese ‘Rape of Nanking’ during the Second World War. Pang told me that he hosted many Chinese non-profit organizations’ events, and for this one, he had been recruited by a friend who was a judge. Though this event had been organized since the 1990s, both Lavender and David Pang invited me to attend the 2011 event held at the Chinese Cultural Centre in San Francisco. The program featured Pang as the master of ceremonies and Lavender Leung as the coordinator, showcasing a Chinese composer’s classical music rendition of the event and a book launch for the mother of Iris Chang, a Silicon Valley journalist who had uncovered the Japanese imperial massacre in Nanjing in *The Rape of Nanking* (I Chang 1997) and whose biography from birth to her suicide were recorded in her mother’s book (YY Chang 2011). Again, this event did not take place within Cantonese evangelical circles; it represented the leadership of Cantonese evangelicals in a broader Chinese American counterpublic. Indeed, Chinese Americans like David Pang and

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138 Support for the three American prisoners of war in Bosnia was shown in America as families hung yellow ribbons on their front porches.
Lavender Leung actively reinforced a Chinese nationalist narrative, associating Chinese Americans with an old civilization that had been bullied by colonial powers even in the present and who called for a new age of respect for Chinese Americans, that is, Chinese populations who made America their home but were not ashamed to advocate for their ancient civilizational values.

In turn, this civilizational view of Chinese Americans often focused on touting them as exceptional businesspersons with private economic interests to be defended. One political activist who works within this framework is Dr. James Yu, a Chinese American evangelical dentist with offices in San Francisco, Fremont, and Milpitas. Yu has been involved in political activities since the 1990s, organizing Chinese Americans to vote in the San Francisco mayoral races while running Republican campaigns as an Asian Pacific Islander representative at the state and federal levels. Indeed, Major Grace Tse from the Salvation Army in Oakland’s Chinatown told me that interviewing Yu was a necessity, for ‘we stay up very late talking about politics, and he is very involved, much more than me’ (Grace Tse, personal communication, 29 Jun. 2011); moreover, as Yu recounted the rumours about himself, ‘Sometimes I get involved and people say slanderous things [Cantonese, waiwah] about me too: wah, Dr. Yu does politics, don’t get near him!’ Yu told me that he began to ‘care’ about politics because ‘I saw a lot of the bills pass; they did it wrongly’ and that ‘when the issue comes out, a lot of church people say: Oh, we’ve got to go to the Capitol, we have to protest, we have to say this or that. Too late. You have to influence the politicians before they become government officials.’ While he discussed the ‘brainwashing’ of alternate sexual teaching, his major issue was American economic policy, an issue in which he was engaged in debate on KTSF 26 Cantonese news:
Because when do you see that the government giving out benefits will prosper? Look at Europe. They’re all giving them out, and they’re all collapsing. How will America pass out benefits and prosper? Have you ever seen anyone say, *Oh, this country is great, you give more benefits and I’ll come?* Look at China, in the past during the Cultural Revolution and the factories, the contrast with now, because you open a pharmaceutical factory and you prosper (*fatdat*)! You can see it: America is going downhill. This restriction, that restriction, this is due, that is due, who will do it? Look at my television recordings: I talk about this. (James Yu, personal communication, 1 Jul. 2011).

In other words, Yu became known in the secular Cantonese media for articulating a conservative Republican economic position, one that advocated an austerity budget because it held that market forces would bring about national prosperity. This economic conservatism mirrored the responses of other interviewees, who talked about how personal responsibility for one’s business dealings were the key to economic success without the state’s welfare. When Lavender Leung and I began our interview, she told me that the place in which we were sitting was her third Chinese restaurant—one that served both northern and southern Chinese cuisine—concluding, ‘Now I will teach you how to do business,’ as she told me that she purposefully served both Chinese culinary styles to maximize the attraction of customers to her business. She then said that she had taught her son how to do business in this restaurant as a waiter, teaching him such excellent customer skills that now his company serves clients such as the Bank of America, Porsche, and Audi, where he makes money that he can donate to charitable causes led by World Vision. Indeed, mirroring the political position advanced in chapter 6 by Prince of Peace Enterprise’s Kenneth Yeung, these political activists also advocated a business-centric conception of civil society, arguing that their perspectives would lead to private prosperity that would become the basis of national wealth.
Similarly, the Cantonese evangelicals who promoted ‘Christian values’ in a secular key on the radio appealed to private business interests as a means by which to share Chinese American values. David Pang’s radio show focused on ‘life’ issues, such as news, finances, and health. He said, ‘As a Christian, I will put news content on the show, but for finances and health, I will invite Christians. For example, I will have a Christian point of view on finances and other issues; we get Christians to come. I can’t talk about it as a host, but the guest can be free to give an opinion.’ To this end, Pang invited two regular personalities onto his show who in turn developed shows in their own right: CCHC’s Lam Sau Wing and the Traditional Family Coalition’s Bill Tam. On Pang’s show, Tam talked about family and parenting issues, which developed, as I discussed in chapter 5, into a radio show during rush hour, *Conscience for a Minute and a Half*. Mirroring Pang’s secular style, Tam said, ‘It doesn’t matter whether they are Christian or non-Christian,’ they might develop a sense of conscience: ‘When they want to take a drink or when they want to smoke or when they want to gamble, they will remember what they hear from the radio. [laughs] That’s a way to make it. Am I doing something unreasonable? No.’ These varying examples of drinking, smoking, and gambling revolved around the integrity of Tam’s traditional family values, for these three issues, Tam suggested, could lead to psychological problems in family life. Accordingly, he attempted to plant seeds among secular Cantonese-speaking Chinese Americans about parenting skills, transcending the prohibitions on activities that might destroy the traditional family, and suggesting that parents should positively influence their children by not letting them play too many video games, helping them to develop gender roles, and articulating compelling conservative bioethical positions on abortion and euthanasia in order to influence the second generation.
Lam Sau Wing’s show, MoneyRadio, ran in a similarly secular vein. Pang had invited Lam onto his show to help Chinese Americans with financial literacy; as Pang said, ‘He can share his financial strategies and correct values, like how we need morality in financial issues: don’t be greedy, you need to care for the society, don’t do anything illegal, don’t have any scams on your financial matters, and also he gives people insight into different products.’ Lam developed these issues into his own radio show, where he discussed American economic policy and helped Chinese Americans discern how to invest their money, especially in light of current political situations. When I listened to the 5 November 2008 broadcast, Lam’s interview played out exactly as Pang had described. As I said in chapter 5, he spoke first about ‘values,’ that is, with the election of Barack Obama and the passage of Proposition 8, he criticized Obama’s big-government economic policies while praising the voters who listened to his show for voting to ban same-sex marriage in California. However, after making these claims about the current political situation, Lam also discussed the implications of politics for personal investment in the stock market:

I have reservations about his [Obama’s] stimulus economy, so I think if we are all thinking about our investments, our stock allocation needs to proportionally be lower. Don’t think that now that Obama has won, the economy will grow, the stocks will rise, the dividends will rise. You look at it today—today, the Dow Jones dropped 486 points, that’s 5 percent, and NASDAQ dropped 98 points, 5.5%, and S&P 58 fell 1.3%, and small businesses also fell 5 percent. So I do not see this economy as going very well, unless Obama changes what he said he will do. But if he does not, then we will all continue to suffer. So in the meantime, do not touch your 401K, or your other investments, be conservative. Today I made my stock allocation very low, almost to zero. So you think about it. He will have to apologize. I think his economic policy has no way to work the way he said that it would during his campaign. (Lam, 2008)

In this illustration, Lam frames these private financial matters with the tone of a public service announcement, arguing that Obama’s election signaled an economic era when the stocks would drop. He suggested in turn that individuals in the Cantonese-speaking
Chinese American counter public had better be wise with their own financial management, given these economic projections. Appealing to private interests, Lam reinforced the image of Chinese Americans in the Bay Area as putting their business concerns first.

Finally, Pastor Liu Tong, the senior pastor at the influential megachurch River of Life Christian Center in Santa Clara, said that he was on prime time television on KTSF Channel 26:

So Thursday, 9:45 PM, two minute message, that is a prime time. A Thursday evening between soap opera and the news: prime time. 1000 dollars, 2 minutes, very expensive. But I buy that time: I just speak a message. Every week, there’s a message of wisdom. So actually, a lot of people, even non-Christians, they even like it, they love it. That’s why also the church grows fast, because they want to find the church: Where is the church? I want to go to this church. So that’s a kind of impacting the society, the Chinese community.

Repeating the foregoing analysis of Cantonese evangelicals in the media, Liu’s messages of wisdom were directed toward a secular Chinese American community. While Liu’s messages were in Mandarin Chinese, his approach mirrored his Cantonese evangelical counterparts, for his message was focused on a word of wisdom for one’s personal life, showing that Christian principles could enrich one’s private life. In turn, Liu’s statements about prime time television suggest that he conceptualizes his media appearances themselves as investments, ones that make returns to his church by growing his congregation. Indeed, while we spoke in other parts of our interview about prayer and the prophetic ministry for church growth, the method for congregational expansion that he articulates here deploys universal values as translations of Christian theology imparted to Chinese Americans by targeting his audience with appeals to wisdom in their private lives.

139 As I noted in chapter 5, Liu Tong is also a native Cantonese speaker.
As we have seen in this subsection, then, the entry of Cantonese evangelicals into the public sphere gave them influence over Cantonese-speaking Chinese Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area. However, far from attempting to proselytize Chinese Americans explicitly, they framed their arguments in terms of business interests and everyday private lives, appealing to Chinese American private concerns as vehicles by which to exert their impact. As we shall see next, however, this strategy had geographical problems, for while they built up a distinctive Chinese American identity in the Bay Area, they did not pay attention to local electoral geographies.

7.3.2 Regional media, district elections: geographies of Chinese American democracy

Focusing on current events, financial trends, and personal health, the contributions of Cantonese evangelicals to media broadcasting can be labeled as ‘political,’ attempting to demonstrate to their audience the impact of American politics on their personal Chinese American family lives and investment interests. In turn, each of the commentators also actively attempted to turn Chinese Americans out to vote, attempting to make the priorities of a ‘silent majority’ heard at the ballot box. However, these attempts to mobilize Cantonese evangelicals in the Bay Area en masse suffered a geographical hitch: neighbourhood electoral districts do not hold elections at a regional scale in the United States. While some activists attempted to mobilize Chinese Americans for state and federal elections,\(^{140}\) this subsection uses the San Francisco mayoral elections of 2011 to illustrate

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\(^{140}\) One Republican congressional candidate worth noting is Dr. Evelyn Li, a Chinese American doctor who belongs to the Church of the Latter-Day Saints. Li ran for Congress in 2012 for California’s District 17 on the
how the concerns of Cantonese evangelicals across the Bay Area were not registered in the voting box because not all Cantonese evangelicals in the Bay Area lived in the City of San Francisco. As I shall show, then, the approaches of two different activists who attempted to mobilize Chinese Americans to be concerned about the 2011 mayoral races in San Francisco, James Yu and Lavender Leung, highlight this influential geographical dynamic in the Bay Area. Indeed, the physical residential location of Cantonese evangelicals in the Bay Area mattered a great deal in whether they could participate in electing the mayor of San Francisco, though there was certainly interest in the suburbs about who the mayor would be. By corollary, the importance of one’s residential location suggested also that churches in San Francisco could not usually be involved in the mayoral races, for their members were frequently commuters from the suburbs. While the next mayor of San Francisco was certainly of interest to Cantonese evangelicals because of the actions of the previous mayor, Gavin Newsom, in 2004 regarding same-sex marriage, they spoke about the mayoral races as a non-Christian issue, but rather a secular one that was of interest to Bay Area citizens more generally.

One approach toward mobilizing Chinese Americans to vote was to raise awareness about the San Francisco mayoral races throughout the Bay Area. In 2011, James Yu was a vice-chair on the San Francisco board of the Asian Pacific American Political Action south side of Alameda County. Having been a candidate for municipal government as well as the board of the local health authority in the late 2000s, Li (2012) authored and self-published What Makes Sense as an electronic book in 2011, a defence of a Republican policy agenda (including the repeal of Barack Obama’s Affordable Care Act and an appeal to strengthen the American military), to prepare for a congressional campaign. Her campaign was notable for its appeal to grassroots voters, her family-organized advertising campaigns, and a benefit concert held on behalf of her campaign at Oakland’s Paramount Theatre featuring the popular Cantonese pop singer, George Lam. She lost to the popular incumbent Democrat representative, Mike Honda, in 2012, having taken only 57,336 (26.5%) of the total 216,728 votes cast (California Secretary of State, 2012); it was also revealed on the publicly-filed Federal Election Commission forms that she had only spent a total of $17,950 on her campaign, in comparison to Honda’s $184,411.43.
(APAPA) group, an organization that tried to turn out the Asian American vote in California. I first learned of APAPA when James Yu asked me to run an errand for him during my San Francisco fieldwork: pick up posters for a Gospel cruise (an evangelistic event on a cruise ship where Cantonese evangelicals could bring their non-Christian friends to enjoy music and presentations of the Christian Gospel) and then distribute them throughout San Francisco’s Chinatown with one of his friends from APAPA, Richard Ow. Because we were distributing evangelistic material, I had thought that APAPA was a Protestant organization. However, as I spoke with Ow, I discovered that while there were Christian members who were part of APAPA (like James Yu), APAPA was a thoroughly secular organization that attempted to raise awareness of Chinese American political issues, such as the regulation of acupuncture and an opposition to the banning of shark fin soup in California. Indeed, Ow told me that the agenda of its founder, C.C. Yin, revolved purely around turning out the Chinese American vote: while openly Republican, Yin had used money from purchasing of McDonald’s fast food franchises to provide bus rides and free meals to Chinese Americans to vote. Starting in Fresno in Central California, Yin had opened one of the organization’s sections in the East Bay and eventually had started a San Francisco chapter in the late 2000s, which was headed by James Yu in 2011 (Richard Ow, personal communication, 4 Jul. 2011). Yu led a series of events attempting to mobilize awareness about the San Francisco mayoral races, including hosting a meet-the-candidates dinner event at the Imperial Garden Seafood Restaurant on San Bruno Avenue where he attempted to attract Chinese Americans to consider how they would vote.

With such a coalitional, non-partisan approach, James Yu also managed to gather a diverse group of people with a variety of theological and political persuasions. For
example, while James Yu had told me that Ow would be a qualified key informant for my project, Ow told me during our interview that he was not a Christian. In fact, his political and theological views were completely asymmetrical from James Yu’s in two respects. First, he described himself as a ‘Democrat’ who was ‘progressive’: ‘I’m very progressive, but I still think I am progressive. Progressive means help the poor people, you know, the underpaid workers, you know, the tenants, you know. Yes, I’m a progressive!’ Second, he revealed that he had been one of the marriage commissioners performing same-sex marriages when Mayor Gavin Newsom re-interpreted the state constitution in 2004.

Because of his political relationship with the Chinese Christian Union (CCU) that had been developed when they worked against gambling in Chinatown in the 1990s, Ow felt that he had to defend some of his actions in 2004: ‘See, lots of Christians think that a supporter of gay is a terrible person, it’s no good. No good. But you cannot tell me I’m a terrible person. I know that, but I just tell you what I am, and these are open record, lots of people knows it.’ In other words, Ow admitted that his political coalitions with Cantonese Protestants sometimes brought him into contact with ideological views that did not match his own. Indeed, I interviewed Ow at a July 4 barbecue that coincided with the opening of a secular Chinese American community centre on San Bruno Avenue. There, not only did I

141 In 1995, the CCU opposed the introduction of the first site in San Francisco that would enable horse-race gamblers to place their bets in a facility not located on a racetrack. Joining the Coalition Against Off-Track Betting Parlor in Chinatown, the CCU teamed up with the Chinatown Merchants Association to block this experimental gambling site at the Grand Palace on 950 Grant Avenue in San Francisco, a site owned by the well-connected Fang family (Chin, 1995: A1). The CCU opposed the off-track betting site with a rationale that combined family values with an Asian American image. Richard Ow, one of then-mayoral candidate Willie Brown’s political operatives, worked directly with the CCU at the time, in particular with Alan Wong, the Cumberland elder who had been key to the War on Poverty in the 1960s (see chapter 4). As Ow explained it, the CCU opposed the site because it tore apart Chinese Christian families, as ‘the man will skip town and then left the wife to get wealthy, and many of these situations happened in the congregations, so they’re against it.’ This opposition in turn was framed as an Asian American image issue. As reported in the San Francisco Examiner, the petition circulated by the coalition alleged that the site would corrupt youth morals by encouraging them to gamble while negatively impacting Chinatown’s image as a tourist site with the introduction of petty crime and negative imaging (Chin, 1995).
meet a politically progressive Cantonese-speaking Eurasian woman who enthusiastically ran the publicly-funded community centre, but also Audrey Leong, a Chinese American woman who told me that she kept her Roman Catholic faith separate from her employment at San Francisco's City Hall, where she had led staff workers to oppose Proposition B in 2010, a measure to reform public employees’ pensions so that their retirement monies could be taken out for general use (Audrey Leong, personal communication, 4 Jul. 2011).

In other words, APAPA’s San Francisco chapter was a diverse, non-partisan one, comprising persons of a variety of theological and political persuasions, for while James Yu’s politics veered toward conservative social, political, and economic positions, some of the people that he had managed to gather for the San Francisco chapter of APAPA were on the other end of the political spectrum from him. Indeed, Ow suggested that Yu probably did not even know the details of his progressivism, asking me at the end of our interview ‘to tell him, and see what is his reaction’ because ‘I know James Yu is a very religious person’ and Ow was thus curious about how he would see his participation in Newsom’s same-sex marriage drama.

Not only did Yu gather people of various political and theological persuasions; he also mobilized Cantonese evangelicals from across the Bay Area to care about San Francisco’s politics. During a key informant interview with me, Lavender (‘that political woman’) criticized APAPA for bringing non-San Francisco people into the city to hear about San Francisco’s politics without being cognizant that they could not change anything politically: ‘These people always come from Fremont. They use one car and drive them to come here to listen. They just listen. They don’t know what the real situation is here. And sometimes people come from the Bay Area, or people come from Fresno,’ where C.C. Yin
lived. Lavender also complained about the way that Yu had organized a meeting between mayoral incumbent Ed Lee and Chinese Christian pastors, for he had gathered a mix of San Francisco pastors and ministers from elsewhere in the Bay Area. Because it was revealed that these clergy did not reside in San Francisco, Lavender recalled that they had received a half-hearted reception from Mayor Lee. Moreover, because Yu had not been clear about the meeting place, the CCU pastors who did reside in San Francisco had not been able to find the room until halfway through the meeting. Lavender voiced her frustration in our interview: ‘James has no right: he is not a pastor and he is a Republican. He has no power, and his church is in Fremont! With San Francisco, he has no involvement there! What relation does he have to this city? So he makes an appointment, people think he is a pastor—he’s a dentist, do you think that’s good?’

Despite Lavender’s harsh critique, Yu’s approach made sense in some ways, for Cantonese evangelicals in the suburbs told me that they were more concerned about the San Francisco mayoral races than what was happening in their own suburbs. As Mrs. Lim put it poignantly in a Fremont focus group, she cared more about the San Francisco mayoral races than local politics in Fremont:

They allow homosexual marriage, and it affects the whole thing. It doesn’t matter that it’s in San Francisco. We have people flying from other states to get married, and we watch the San Francisco news. We probably know more of what is in San Francisco than in Fremont because there is no Fremont news!

Indeed, as the focus group members told me, the news on television and the newspaper tended to focus on the urban areas, while the local Fremont paper had gone out of business. In other words, Yu had capitalized on the interests of Cantonese evangelicals throughout the Bay Area, for Gavin Newsom’s actions on same-sex marriage in 2004 had made the San Francisco mayor’s office a key point of political contention for that constituency. Indeed,
Mrs. Lim’s response mirrored the actions of the Cantonese evangelicals who had been bussed in from the Bay Area’s suburbs to attend the 19th Avenue demonstration in 2004 and to support Proposition 8 at San Francisco’s Chinatown’s Portsmouth Square in 2008 (see chapter 5). However, that they were interested in San Francisco did not mean that they could vote in San Francisco; it only meant that they could voice their concerns about the situation in San Francisco without being able to effect change in the ballot box. As a result, Lavender told me that they were seldom taken seriously by the mayor’s office.

Indeed, that pastors who worked in San Francisco’s churches attended some of Yu’s meetings did not automatically signify the possibility that these churches could support any of the mayoral candidates, for the pastors confirmed to me that because their congregation members tended to reside in the suburbs, it was difficult for the church to get involved, let alone entertain the question of political engagement. Lavender Leung told me that another mayoral candidate, supervisor David Chiu, had his Taiwanese American parents campaigning for him at several of San Francisco’s churches, touting their family’s evangelical credentials, though it was unclear what Chiu’s personal faith was. So too, Richard Ow emphasized that he frequently heard another mayoral candidate, state senator Leland Yee, speak about how he had gotten married at the Episcopal Church’s Grace Cathedral, claiming to be associated with Christians though his everyday faith practices remained off the record.142 As Lavender suggested, these appeals to churches were politically futile. At one level, ‘conservative’ evangelical churches were reluctant to get

142 Indeed, to claim an association with the Episcopal Church’s Grace Cathedral may not have been an effective move to convince Cantonese evangelicals that Leland Yee was a Christian, for the Cathedral has long been known since the 1950s as a bastion of liberal theological practice and openly supportive of gay rights. While liberalism and support for gay rights are not exclusive with a claim to practice the Christian faith, it would cast doubts for those who espoused more conservative theological formulations.
involved with their campaigns because it might compromise their churches’ political neutrality. Indeed, Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church’s former senior pastor, the Rev. Lawrence Fung, had told me that some candidates for mayor, city supervisor, and the school board tried to solicit attention from his church, to which he was very ‘selective’: while he endorsed a select few, ‘there were times that some other candidates will come to worship in our church, expecting a chance to speak and well, sometimes I do not allow them to speak,’ partly because he disapproved of their message and sometimes because he felt that their remarks might provoke unnecessary protests toward his church. At Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church, I also learned that Rev. Chanson Lau had written into his church’s constitution a ban on all ‘political activities’ since 1975, which meant that when certain candidates came to pass out literature at Cornerstone, they were turned away because of the church’s policy.

However, theology aside, another key problem was suburbanization, for neither church members nor even their pastors may have actually been San Francisco residents. While the Rev. Moa Imchen, the English-speaking pastor at the Chinese United Methodist Church, said that many in the Chinese congregation still lived in the city of San Francisco, his English-speaking congregation (who were the adult children of the Chinese congregation) came from places as diverse as Walnut Creek, Brentwood, Antioch, Cupertino, San Jose, San Rafael, San Bruno, Daly City, and San Francisco (Moa Imchen, personal communication, 30 Jun. 2011). So too, the Rev. Peter Lee at the First Chinese Baptist Church observed that it tended to be the ‘youth’ who resided in Chinatown that were the most active in electoral politics, ‘mostly for the supervisor,’ because their political involvement was tied to their reception of state-sponsored benefits. He then contrasted
these politics to those of both the English- and Cantonese-speaking congregations who did not live in Chinatown—some, he noted, lived as far as Mountain View and Fremont—and were ‘politically inactive’ because their ‘middle class’ positionality made them unwilling to pay taxes (Peter Lee, personal communication, 6 Jul. 2011). Likewise, the Rev. Sebastian Ong at the Chinese Congregational Church said that he was ‘one of two people who lives in Chinatown,’ while the bulk of his congregation had family that had grown up in Chinatown, but lived throughout the Bay Area (Sebastian Ong, personal communication, 5 Jul. 2011).

In other words, a congregation of Cantonese evangelicals in San Francisco did not automatically mean that all of those members were part of San Francisco’s voting public.

Cognizant of this dynamic, Lavender told me that she pursued a different strategy: she became directly involved in San Francisco mayoral incumbent’s Ed Lee’s re-election campaign in 2011, presenting me with an alternative to James Yu’s approach. Having previously worked for now-disgraced former city supervisor Ed Jew in his municipal campaigns,143 Lavender Leung was well-positioned to be tapped by City Hall insiders for her political insight. While a younger Chinese American formally managed Lee’s campaign, Lavender told me that she became the de facto spokeswoman for the campaign toward Chinese American communities, urging them to vote for a candidate who was Chinese. Knowing that the ballot was structured so that voters would write their top three choices in the city’s ‘ranked-choice vote’ system, Lavender encouraged Chinese Americans to put Ed Lee first, followed by their choice of David Chiu, Leland Yee, or Jeff Adachi. Moreover, because she was conversant in Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese, she was able to help the

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143 In 2008, Ed Jew pled guilty to charges of perjury, as he had violated the residency requirements of a San Francisco city supervisor, and of extortion toward small-business owners. He has been incarcerated since 2009 and will be released in 2014.
Ed Lee campaign obtain advertising in the Chinese daily newspaper, *Sing Tao Daily*, while also broadcasting videos that she made that featured the ‘Run Ed Run’ campaign slogan that had been made popular by Lee’s political supporters. With such an impact on the campaign, Lavender said, ‘This time, Ed will listen to the Christians,’ for she would bring them in as an insider, not as an outsider like James Yu. With such an effective campaign, Lee was victorious in the 2011 mayoral races, initially gaining 30.75 percent of the ranked-choice vote and then soaring to election with 59.64 percent of the final vote.

I have argued in the foregoing section on Cantonese evangelical attempts to mobilize Chinese Americans for democratic causes that the reality of electoral power is intensely geographically bound to places of residence. As I have shown, the dominant Cantonese evangelical approach in the 1990s and 2000s focused on developing a regional Chinese American counter public in the media. Accordingly, some Chinese American groups, such as APAPA, followed suit, framing their activities as oriented toward the Bay Area as a region. However, this approach was politically ineffective in terms of mobilizing votes, for it did not account for the fact that elections take place at neighbourhood levels. Contesting the overly large scale of such democratic action, Lavender Leung’s approach was distinguished from the Chinese American media approach because she became an insider in municipal politics. What this in turn shows is that the scattered residential geographies due to the suburbanization of Cantonese Protestant church members does not only relate to the private space of the congregation, but has broader bearing on the public forum of civil society. In this sense, the practice of democracy for Cantonese evangelicals in the Bay Area seems to be more effective in efforts on mass media and in mobilization for demonstrations, but not for electoral politics. In the next sections on Vancouver and Hong
Kong, I will show that these scattered geographies are particular barriers in San Francisco, for in the latter two field sites, there has been a great deal of conversation and debate about how Cantonese Protestants ought to participate in democratic elections right where they live.

7.4 Deconstructing ‘the Armageddon factor’: secularizing the emergence of Conservative Party politics in Metro Vancouver

In 2011, the Canadian Broadcasting Company’s (CBC) nightly news, *The National*, ran a segment on the voting behavior of new Canadians in Vancouver. The report focused on Chinese Christians, noting that the May 2011 elections featured three Chinese Christians running for the Conservative Party: Alice Wong (seeking re-election for her seat in the Richmond riding), Wai Young (Vancouver-South), and Ronald Leung (Burnaby-Douglas).144 The CBC’s Adrienne Arsenault cited a leaked Conservative Party strategy report in which Immigration Minister Jason Kenney indicated ten electoral ridings targeted by the Conservative Party for the 2011 elections, including Vancouver-South and Burnaby-Douglas.145 Interviewing Cantonese radio personality Andy Cheung, the Christian Social Concern Fellowship’s (CSCF) Rev. Wayne Lo, and a focus group comprised of PRC migrants

144 Incidentally, Arsenault’s (2011) report did not say that these were the same three candidates for the same three ridings in 2008.
145 The document, a PowerPoint presentation authored by Jason Kenney titled *Breaking Through – Building the Conservative Brand in Cultural Communities*, was accidentally leaked by a Conservative staffer to an NDP operative on 3 March 2011, who posted it on document-sharing site *Scribd* (Kenney, 2011). It describes ridings with high Chinese and South Asian populations in the Greater Toronto Area and Metro Vancouver to which the Conservative Party of Canada could concentrate their outreach efforts. The two ridings in Metro Vancouver that Kenney listed were Vancouver-South and Burnaby-Douglas. Noting that while being of Chinese and South Asian ethnicity had a historic ‘negative correlation’ with Conservative Party voting patterns, Kenney demonstrated that they had ‘made gains’ in each of the communities and needed to concentrate advertising campaigns in each of these ridings’ ethnic media, especially on television and newspapers.
in the Vancouver-South riding, Arsenault reported that Chinese Christians were becoming politically conservative because they espoused traditional family values, both a product of their ‘Chinese culture’ of familial integrity and toughness on crime and the fact that, as one woman said earnestly, she would vote ‘based on the Bible.’ Arsenault also found that the majority of those in the focus group had become Christian after they had moved to Canada; that they were mostly from the PRC suggested that they had moved after 1997 and were thus recent migrants (see Li, 2005).

Following the approach in the previous section on San Francisco, this section deconstructs the insinuations that Chinese Christians were mixing religion with politics that originated from transnational sources. While the undertone of media reports was that immigrants were importing ‘homeland politics’ where religion and politics were not easily disentangled into Canadian society (Ibbitson and Friesen, 2010), this section rejects the notion that Cantonese evangelicals shifted toward the Conservative Party merely because they had been deceived by Kenney’s ethnic targeting in the late 2000s. Moreover, it resists the fanciful interpretation that their conservative theological convictions led them to view the Canadian political landscape through the lens of an eschatological ‘Armageddon factor’ that motivated Christian nationalist endeavours to take over the country in order to achieve a sort of Christian theocracy (see McDonald, 2010). Following instead this chapter’s narrative of Cantonese evangelical political involvement stemming from their protest at the 1989 Tiananmen Incident, I present an alternative view of how it was possible in the 2008 and 2011 elections that three Cantonese-speaking evangelical
candidates were running for federal office. I argue that the development of Conservative Party politics among Cantonese evangelicals can be largely attributed to their disappointment in the parliamentary record of Liberal MP Raymond Chan as a Chinese Christian, for he himself a self-confessing Cantonese evangelical who campaigned on a platform of secular human rights based on his activism in the Tiananmen Incident. Contending that Chan’s voting record and personal life did not match the values of his Chinese Canadian constituents, Cantonese evangelicals in the early 2000s turned their attention toward the newly formed Conservative Party of Canada, a merger of the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative political parties. Suffering a series of setbacks in the early 2000s, their campaigns became more strategic as secularizing elements were introduced, propelling Richmond’s Conservative candidate, Alice Wong, to victory in 2008, followed by Vancouver-South’s Wai Young in 2011, based on campaigns that downplayed the private issues of family values and projected instead a secular image of coalition-building around local municipal issues. In short, these shifts should not be seen as stemming from an ‘immigrant mentality’ or ‘Chinese culture,’ as much as respondents told journalists that these were the factors that determined how they would vote. Instead, as this thesis has repeatedly argued, ‘Chinese culture’ was a contested term, continuously under construction by political actors as different as Raymond Chan and Alice Wong. By telling the story of those contestations, this section demonstrates that the real shifts came

146 I fully recognize that my account does not completely dispute Arsenault’s (2011) evidence that Mandarin-speaking PRC migrants may have in fact held the theocratic views that I am saying that the Cantonese evangelicals seldom shared. However, these fissures are subtly evident in Arsenault’s report as well. While the Cantonese-speakers like Andy Cheung and Wayne Lo attributed their conservative views to a secular Chineseness, it was the PRC migrants at the focus group that Arsenault visited who spoke more about voting according to the Bible. While Arsenault lumped the two groups together, my instinct would be to disaggregate them.
from local political disillusionment in Metro Vancouver, leading to the crystallization of ideological shifts toward Conservative Party candidates in the 2000s.

7.4.1 Rejecting Raymond Chan: the perceived hypocrisies of human rights

In 1993, Raymond Chan became the second Chinese Canadian to run as a federal Member of Parliament (MP). In 1957, Chinatown residents had elected Douglas Jung to the federal Progressive Conservative party, repudiating the Liberal Party because of its collusion with the exclusionary head tax legislation toward Chinese migrants during the exclusion era (see chapter 4). As the Chinese population in Vancouver had radically changed its demographic base from Taishanese migrants in Chinatown to Cantonese migrants from Hong Kong living in Vancouver-South and Richmond in the 1990s, Raymond Chan was considered by my respondents to be the ‘first’ candidate that they had formally supported in federal politics. Unlike Douglas Jung, Raymond Chan ran for the Liberal Party in the Richmond riding, touting the party’s passage of Multicultural Policy in the 1970s and its influence on enshrining human rights, including and especially for visible minorities, in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the 1980s. He also emphasized his own community activism with the Vancouver Society in Support of the Democratic Movement in China, vowing to represent Chinese Canadian voices for democracy in the Canadian Parliament and using his power to pressure China for a redress of the ‘6/4’ Incident.

Raymond Chan’s Liberal campaign in the Richmond riding garnered the sympathy of some Cantonese evangelical clergy. CSCF’s Rev. Wayne Lo recalls that as he began his seminary education at Regent College, he supported Raymond Chan: ‘I moved back to my present church here in Vancouver, and I started helping the Richmond candidate, Raymond
Chan. He claimed to be a Christian. At first, he claimed, *I am a Christian, you help me to be elected as a Christian politician*, that kind of saying. And I think he drew a lot of votes from the Christian voters in Richmond at that time.’ Lo himself supported Chan because the Liberal Party ran an anti-discrimination platform, a stance that resonated well with Chan’s activism during the Tiananmen Incident:

At that time, I helped him because as I knew at that time, Liberal Party is more on human rights, on no discrimination, which I think is good, because I don’t think discrimination is a good thing in the society. Of course, we cannot totally avoid it, but we should do something about it, right? Racial discrimination, sexual discrimination, yeah, I’m for that. So that’s why I think the Liberal Party is something that I should help at least, not for a lifetime, but for once or twice, as long as I think it’s OK. And also because initially, Raymond Chan build up his image as a human rights fighter for Chinese, the oppressed people in China because he became famous because after the June 4 massacre he went public, had some debate, high-profile debate with some pro-China people here, he made his name, he made his so-called fame, and initially, I also see him as someone who stands for human rights, for the oppressed people, right? So that’s why a lot of people saw him that way too, his campaign team, I still know them.

Another pastor in Vancouver’s Chinatown corroborated Wayne Lo’s statement: ‘I think at that time, in the early 90s, even the pastors, they wrote in the newspaper, they said, *I vote him just because he is Chinese*...in, I think it’s *Truth Monthly.*’ Stephen Cheung, a financial advisor who later became a Conservative Party operative, also remembers that the Chinese community favoured Raymond Chan simply because he was Chinese:

When we first came in 1992, because in the Chinese community, different activities, Chinese schools, those connections, my wife...and her friends, they did some volunteering, not me. That was when Raymond Chan was coming out to be elected, and he was a Chinese, and at the time, the *gweilo*, the Progressive Conservative, Siddon, they fought it out. And my wife, it was Chinese helping Chinese. And those concert fundraisers, I went as well, you know, sing some songs with Raymond Chan, but he sang really bad. So this was a form of participation in the small Chinese community, just a little bit of involvement. (Stephen Cheung, personal communication, 5 August 2011).
These ethnocentric sentiments were not true of all the pastors: the New Life Chinese Lutheran Church’s Rev. Lo Sek Wai said that he supported Chan’s candidacy ‘personally,’ adding: ‘I encouraged them to participate in the election, but not to mention any names in favour of any person.’ In short, there was a sense in which Raymond Chan gave Chinese evangelicals in Vancouver a sense of Chinese Christian solidarity against the injustices of the PRC’s Tiananmen crackdown and the need to push back against discrimination for minorities in Canadian society.

However, after Chan was elected to public office, these evangelicals quickly grew disillusioned with his parliamentary actions and personal life. One critique focused on how he burned incense at a Buddhist temple on Chinese New Year in 1997. Chan (1997) explained in April 1997 to the Chinese Christian newspaper Truth Monthly that as the Secretary of State for the Asia-Pacific Region, it was his duty to perform the ceremony because ‘we must know that our country, Canada, is composed of different religions, different races, different backgrounds of people’ and thus must be inclusive of all citizens. To that end, he accepted the invitation to perform the ceremony because ‘as elected Members of Parliament and ministers, I cannot [decline] because they are not Christians, as that would deprive people who believe in other religions access to government opportunities; in addition, the commemorative ancestral rituals are not religious, but commemorate Canada’s Chinese ancestral contributions.’ Because he believed that God ultimately guided the actions of Parliament, he did not feel that his actions were un-Christian. This statement garnered a rebuke from Truth Monthly’s founder and editor,
fundamentalist Peace Evangelical Church’s Rev. David Ng, in the same newspaper issue.\textsuperscript{147} Recalling Chan’s support for Bill C-41 to impose heavier penalties on hate crimes based on sexual orientation (see chapter 5), Ng (1997) argued that this was evidence that the hand of God was not guiding Canadian democracy, as Parliament passed policies that he alleged went against biblical teaching. Moreover, he criticized Chan’s compromise on ‘the incense thing’:

You’ve tried very hard to avoid being misunderstood, but the result is that you are unsuccessful because there are still very many people who think you are mistaken, because the Christian expression for ‘reverence for one’s ancestors’ is not ‘incense,’ but ‘fresh cut flowers’ and ‘silent’ commemoration. As we all know, no matter how well you interpret it, ‘incense’ is not only a prayer based on roots in religious ceremonies, but has also been for a long time extensively implemented in religious ceremonies, and the organizer’s declaration cannot change this fact. This misunderstanding is that when you are ‘too accommodating to accommodate the people of God,’ you think that people themselves are to blame in this matter as you stand on a half-Christian position, while your other half is standing on political pressure to accommodate these positions.

Contrasting Chan with the biblical examples of Daniel and his three friends who worked in a pagan political system while withstanding its pressures,\textsuperscript{148} Ng concluded that all of these actions must have occurred because Chan ‘had not believed in the Lord for too long.’

\textsuperscript{147} Though the Rev. David Ng advocated a Brethren polity in Hong Kong’s Peace Evangelical Church that did not support any form of ordination, he sought ordination by the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination shortly before moving to Vancouver and should thus be referred to by his proper credentials (as opposed to ‘Brother’ David Ng). Peace Evangelical Church is a classically fundamentalist church that bases its theology on the inerrancy of the Bible and in its strict differentiation from compromise with Roman Catholics, charismatics, ecumenical, and neo-evangelicals.

\textsuperscript{148} Certain evangelical readings of the Book of Daniel in the Hebrew Scriptures emphasize how Daniel and his friends, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, withstood the Babylonian imperial system by refusing to eat the king’s diet (Dan. 1), refusing to bow to a golden statue made by the king (Dan. 3), and refusing to regard the king as divine (Dan. 6). The result was that Daniel’s three friends were cast into a fiery furnace and Daniel into a lion’s den, but God miraculously delivered all of them. Ng is invoking the story of Daniel and his friends to demonstrate that Raymond Chan’s religious capitulation to burn incense on Chinese New Year in 1997 was a failure to stand up to a multi-religious political system with what Ng regarded as the exclusive truth of Christianity. To be sure, the Book of Daniel’s apocalyptic genre opens it to a variety of readings that Ng does not consider here, including a post-colonial one where the resistance of Daniel and his friends to imperial court practices points to the relativization of Babylonian and Medo-Persian imperial power.
Accordingly, he exhorted him to return to faith if he were to keep the support of his Chinese Christian constituency.

That this was a valid critique demonstrated that Chan’s original strategy of winning the Chinese Christian vote had backfired, for his public life became framed within the ‘conservative’ congregational ontologies that governed their worlds. Indeed, critiques of Chan’s actions that stemmed from the Buddhist temple incident—that is, an internal theological dispute—became the reigning discourse among Cantonese evangelicals in Vancouver who expressed their disappointments in him. Perceiving Chan’s parliamentary actions as acts of betrayal toward the ethnic community that he courted, Cantonese evangelicals, in the words of one anonymous pastoral interviewed in Vancouver’s Chinatown, realized: ‘Everyone figured out that he is Chinese, you vote him, he may be for the Party, not for the community. Now I think the Chinese is more understanding on how to vote.’ In the Richmond focus group, our conversation naturally gravitated toward Raymond Chan during a discussion about how the participants discovered that they needed to vote for candidates based on their party so that certain political parties could win the majority of seats in Parliament. While the participants agreed that the party was often more important than the candidate, Mrs. Chin mentioned that this axiom held true if only the candidate were not Raymond Chan, for ‘he had trust issues.’ Mr. and Mrs. Yang then clarified that ‘it’s not what he says on the platform,’ for ‘he says one thing and does another,’ telling his constituents one thing while voting differently in Parliament; ‘He just wanted to secure his vote, and many people saw that, so he lost the election,’ Mrs. Yang said. However, as I asked them to clarify what upset them so much, Mrs. Yang brought up the Buddhist incense incident again: ‘Raymond Chan’s problem was that he burned incense
and worshipped ancestors. That’s the problem. Because he said that he was Christian, people said, *No, that’s not Christian*, and then they began to pay attention to what he did—is it really for us? *That’s how they discovered that he said one thing and did another.*’ For CCIA’s Bill Chu, that Cantonese evangelicals were saying these things indicated that sustained Chinese engagement in politics was not possible without radical re-education:

> He’s [Raymond Chan] an opportunist. He comes from the point to say that you can see that all the way along, but no, I think the conclusion I had regarding the political side of engagement is, number one, Chinese is certainly not ready to be anything at this point because if we don’t even want to educate our own people, how can you have a leader that will come out that’s enlightened? And coming out from that bunch? So fundamentally, we have to do a re-education of the grassroots Chinese Christians, so that in turn they can change the mindset of the community. In turn, they can set up some MP or MLAs. But I think we got it all the wrong way around, in other words, people who are motivated by their own sense of fame or power, *Oh, I just want to be there.*

Incidentally, Thomas Leung Insing agreed with Chu’s critique: ‘My disappointment is that he became a politician. Before, he was a man of righteousness. But his righteousness became political so that he stands more on the party than on justice.’ In other words, Chan became framed as not fulfilling the obligations of a *Christian* in his public life as Cantonese evangelicals held him to standards that they would require within congregational life.

In turn, Chan’s parliamentary actions and personal life became subjects of scrutiny. Conservative Party operative Kenny Chiu told me that one of Chan’s earliest missteps was to fail to fight against a bill introduced by his own Liberal Party that would require migrants to reveal their transnational assets, for this showed that Chan did not contend for the business interests of his constituency (Kenny Chiu, personal communication, 14 January 2012). Moreover, he frustrated Cantonese evangelicals by voting in favour of Bill C-41 to increase penalties for homophobic hate crimes (see chapter 5). In addition, Chan’s appointment as Secretary of State for the Asia-Pacific Region for the Department of Foreign
Affairs and International Trade led to what some Cantonese evangelicals understood as an abandonment of his critique of China’s human rights record in order to facilitate trade deals with the market socialist regime. As Wayne Lo put it:

And that’s the one most thing that the Christian voters in Richmond really get annoyed, number one issue. Of course, his turn on the stance of the Chinese government, on how he sees the Chinese government, kind of a turn, because he had to tow the party line, the Liberal Party, superficially they criticize China’s human rights record, but under the table, they just push for trade, more trade, more trade, kind of hypocritical, I see it, and some Christians see it too, and that’s how most Christians after the second term, they just forget about Raymond. Most Christians. They don’t see him as a truly Christian politician.

Another source of damage to Chan’s image came from Chinese newspaper leaks about his private life, as focus group members in Richmond remembered reading accounts that detailed Chan’s marital infidelities, divorce, and subsequent re-marriage to a younger woman. Indeed, Wayne Lo’s assessment mirrored David Ng’s critique in Truth Monthly:

Well, his faith was too young, I could tell, because he told me he had been a Christian for just about three years when he was running as MP for Richmond. So I could understand why eventually he deserted his faith, because he was just too young at the time, temptation for power, temptation from money, that kind of thing, and maybe women as well, so too much temptation.

While supposedly private and irrelevant to public affairs, the gossip about Chan’s sexual character eroded his Chinese constituency’s trust in his political integrity.

In other words, the disappointments of Cantonese evangelicals in Raymond Chan’s character as a Cantonese evangelical politician led to disillusionment with his ability to represent them in Parliament. Frustrated by a personal life that included the dissolution of his marriage as well as his participation in traditional Chinese ancestral worship, Cantonese evangelicals labeled him as an opportunist who used a platform of human rights, anti-discrimination, and multiculturalism to gain their vote. Regretting their support for Chan, many Cantonese evangelicals began looking more carefully at the Canadian political
system, searching for a party whose ideology they could support, not simply a politician who was a self-identified Cantonese evangelical. As the next subsection will show, that party was the newly constituted Conservative Party of Canada, in which some Cantonese evangelicals themselves began to run against Raymond Chan.

7.4.2 Toward Conservative prominence: voting for ‘Chinese’ interests

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, then, the political loyalties of Cantonese evangelicals began to switch from the Liberal Party to the Canadian Alliance Party, which became the newly formed Conservative Party of Canada. As some Conservative Party operatives who were Cantonese evangelicals told me, their first taste of right-of-centre politics came from their support for Stockwell Day, a former pastor and socially conservative politician from British Columbia's Okanagan Valley who was campaigning in the 2000 federal elections to become leader of the Canadian Alliance Party (formerly the Reform Party). One of these operatives, Kenny Chiu, told me that he had joined the Reform Party in 1999, and that part of the strategy that was developed to unite the fragmented politics of Canadian conservatives in the 1990s (what Reform Party leader Preston Manning called at the time the 'United Alternative') was to form a coalition under Stockwell Day. Similarly, financial agent Stephen Cheung said that he had first heard about Stockwell Day through a pastor, who had given him the message that Manning wanted ‘Christians’ to help Day. For both Chiu and Cheung, the implication was the same: they had to help the Canadian Alliance Party win in Richmond. Their candidate was Joe Peschisolido, a Roman Catholic businessman from Ontario who had recently moved to Richmond. As Chiu put it, they made the radical move of ‘not supporting a Chinese candidate,’ that is, the Liberal
Party’s Raymond Chan, in the 2000 election, but to support Peschisolido instead. With Cheung’s help, Peschisolido entered into local business and church networks, successfully coasting to a victory over Raymond Chan, while Day nominally won the Canadian Alliance leadership, though he lost it to Stephen Harper in 2002 after an internal party referendum. Sensing the downfall of the Canadian Alliance Party during this time, Peschisolido also changed his party membership in 2002, walking across the floor to join Prime Minister Jean Chrétien’s Liberal Party. Shocked, Kenny Chiu issued a press release on behalf of the Canadian Alliance Party’s Richmond Constituency Association:

Peschisolido’s decision brings an enormous sense of betrayal to his supporters in the local riding. The action is also considered dishonorable to those friends who fought shoulder to shoulder with him against the Liberals 2000 campaign. It is a serious letdown especially to those who made personal sacrifices in going door knocking with him, and to those who donated money to his campaign. (conniew, 2002/2013).

In the run-up to the 2004 election, Raymond Chan defeated Peschisolido for the Liberal Party’s nomination, ousting Peschisolido from Parliament.

Peschisolido’s political betrayal in 2002 and the formation of the Conservative Party of Canada in 2003 as a merger between the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties cleared the way for the emergence of Alice Wong as a Conservative Party candidate in the Richmond riding in 2004. In the late 1990s, Alice Wong was a candidate in Vancouver-Kingsway and a member of the Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Free Church (VCEFC). VCEFC’s Rev. Edward Lee told me that while he had supported Wong’s entry into politics—‘I encourage her to participate, to serve God in politics’ while

149 I name both Vancouver Chinese Evangelical Free Church and Richmond Chinese Evangelical Free Church because respondents referred to them on the record. However, my analysis shows that while Alice Wong attended these churches and gained individual supporters from these congregations, they were not institutionally affiliated with her political campaigns. Indeed, as I shall show, the strategy in the more successful campaigns was to disassociate Wong from these churches.
'50 percent' of her supporters and door-knockers were drawn from individuals in the church—he had never preached about politics in the pulpit because he was cognizant that there was a strong Liberal contingent in his congregation as well and because 'I don’t want you to vote on my political stand because maturity means not to be influenced by me,' but to do one’s independent inquiries into the political system as individual citizens. As one of Alice Wong’s closest supporters and her campaign volunteer coordinator, Alice Yuen-Fun Wong,\textsuperscript{150} revealed to me, she had been advised by CASJAFVA’s Karen Chan to help ‘this sister’ in the Vancouver-Kingsway riding in 1999, convinced that Wong had a call from God to enter secular politics (Alice Yuen-Fun Wong, personal communication, 16 May 2011); as Wong’s later campaign manager Sacha Peter readily acknowledged, ‘Alice Wong is a social conservative. Every serious analyst says this. She entered politics because she wanted to work for the people, not the balance sheets.’ When she was defeated in that riding, the VCEMF’s Rev. Wayne Lo advised Wong to try her chances in Richmond, upon which she contacted Kenny Chiu (as Chiu told me) in 2002. With her contact with Chiu, she was connected with all of Peschisolido’s former Chinese supporters. As Mr. Ping also told me, curious individuals at VCEFC’s sister church, the Richmond Chinese Evangelical Free Church (RCEFC), questioned her about her understanding of Richmond’s local politics, the role of a volunteer in her campaign, and the degree to which she shared their values; mirroring their mother church in Vancouver, these individuals did not bring the church as an institution into the campaign, but were all individual members of the same congregation inquiring how much they could support this newcomer in their local riding’s politics. So too, Ludia Li, a Hong Kong popular singer who became a Christian BMW saleswoman in

\textsuperscript{150} Alice Wong the MP is properly Alice Siu Ping Wong. Her friend is Alice Yuen Fun Wong.
Richmond, recalled that when Alice Wong came down to Richmond, she helped her to ‘find
friends, do door-knocking, meet people at restaurants, and go to functions,’ establishing
Wong in Li’s network that had been built up by her fundraising work for children’s
charities such as Thomas Leung Insing’s CRRS, the Red Cross, World Vision, and the
Children’s Hospital (Ludia Li, personal communication, 26 Sept. 2011).

Entering 2004 with the Conservative Party nomination, Alice Wong’s Conservative
campaign in the 2004 elections against Raymond Chan’s Liberal machine was said to be a
political disaster because of the inexperience of her volunteer crew. Mr. Ping said that one
of the key problems was that Raymond Chan was still touting his identity as a ‘Christian,’
splitting the vote between himself and Alice Wong; moreover, he remembered the
campaign as ‘full of high passion’ but ‘lacking in manpower and support,’ resulting in a loss
that left them ‘discouraged and discontent with their own efforts.’ Indeed, Ludia Li said
that ‘the opponent used lots of political moves and more people needed to know about
that,’ for his actions that attempted to cast doubt on Wong’s ability to be a Member of
Parliament succeeded in mobilizing Richmond’s voting public to his side. Functioning as
the Conservative Party’s local riding director, Stephen Cheung told me that the Wong
campaign’s ineffectiveness was also due to Peschisolido, for his political betrayal had
‘shattered’ the Canadian Alliance volunteer base so that their volunteers had ‘no
experience,’ in contrast to a ‘booming’ Liberal Party. For Kenny Chiu, the problem was that
the concentration of Cantonese evangelicals in the campaign led to ‘a very narrow
imagination’ that was unable to build a grassroots coalition that could include a diverse
group of potential Conservative voters, such as ‘disillusioned [New] Democrats, social
conservatives, non-social conservatives, fiscal conservatives, libertarians, Hong Kong,
Taiwan, PRC, churches, and temples.’ Moreover, Chiu said that when Preston Manning’s chief-of-staff, Darrel Reid (then president of the socially conservative Focus on the Family Canada) had visited Tsawwassen, Wong had rejected his advice to meet him, missing an opportunity to ‘form an alliance’ that could have propelled her to national attention. With a campaign driven narrowly by Cantonese evangelicals, Raymond Chan handily defeated Wong in the 2004 elections by 4,747 votes (Ward, 2006).

After Wong’s defeat in 2004, Kenny Chiu worked to reconsolidate the Conservative Party’s stronghold in Richmond. Meeting at the Conservative Party’s founding convention in Montreal in 2005,151 Chiu told Wong (as he related to me), ‘I told her that I wouldn’t support her because she had to learn her lesson, so we both knew that the next candidate would not be Alice.’ Calling Chiu and Wong at the convention, Reid contemplated whether he should be the Conservative candidate in Richmond, to which Chiu replied that he did not need to be Chinese (after all, Peschisolido had previously won in 2000). As Paul Martin’s Liberal government dissolved in late November 2005 with a vote of no confidence from the opposing parties, Reid became the federal candidate in Richmond; as Chiu put it, the ‘maturing Alice Wong machinery with its factions united went behind Darrell, and Alice Wong volunteered for him.’ While Reid failed to unseat Raymond Chan in February 2006, the Conservative Party campaigns began to take on distinctively secular overtones. Granted, Raymond Chan’s campaign accused Reid of mixing religion with politics: publishing an interview in the Vancouver Sun, Chan expressed concerns that ‘they are organizing the churches’ and that his friends saw ‘church elders handing out Darrel Reid

151 Though the merger between the Canadian Alliance Party and the Progressive Conservative Party had occurred in December 2003, the Conservative Party of Canada’s ‘founding convention’ in March 2005 attempted to define its image for Canadian voters as party concerned with small government and lower taxes.
flyers.’ Contacting Wong’s home church in Richmond did not help matters, for the outgoing pastor at the time, the Rev. Philip Tse (indeed, my father), told the newspaper,

We support him because he supports the traditional family system and he is thinking the way we stand from our Bible teachings...We can not tell people what to do but from our standpoint we see which candidate would go along with our Bible teaching and what we think is right for society’ (Ward, 2006: A4).

Theocratic as these sentiments may have sounded, what my father was saying at the time was that the church as an institution saw itself as politically neutral, whatever the individuals in the congregation were thinking. These thoughts were corroborated by Mr. Ping, who complained that ‘the church did not give us a lot of support, but paid attention to the separation of the church and state,’ musing that ‘pastors focus only on the church, and that’s a problem, because they do not consider what is going on in society, yet they are still involved in the social paradigm.’ Even while the Raymond Chan campaign raised the allegation that church congregations were violating the separation of church and state, Mr. Ping was exasperated that they paid too much attention precisely to this division.

Indeed, for Kenny Chiu, Reid’s campaign was a fully secular one, highlighting instead his contributions to the Chinese Canadian community in head tax redress and moving Reid up through the Conservative Party ranks despite his ultimate loss to Raymond Chan in 2006. Mr. Ping also noticed that during Reid’s campaign, the ‘core group’ of volunteers remained the same, while a new coalition was built that decentered the Cantonese evangelical dominance of the 2004 campaign: ‘Not many of the supporters are Christian, but because of more Taiwanese volunteers, it was different from the Hong Kong people who grew up in a culture that lacked elections.’

152 I acknowledge that the limitation of my analysis is that it focuses on Cantonese-speaking Protestants. While I did not personally observe the 2006 and 2008 campaigns, I noted that there were many Mandarin speakers who volunteered for the Reid campaign, indicating a shift in the political landscape of the Chinese Canadian community.
system had led to the growth of democratic activity in the Republic of China in contrast to the lack of universal elections in Hong Kong, Mr. Ping’s broader observation was that Cantonese evangelicals no longer controlled the agenda or the approach of the campaign, shifting over to Taiwanese Buddhist volunteers who were more effective (as Mr. Ping put it) in door-knocking and in buying ‘fried rice and fried noodles’ for hungry volunteers. Moreover, Kenny Chiu played a larger role in this campaign, pushing Reid to pay attention to secular Chinese Canadian concerns, especially head tax redress during the early stages of the campaign in December 2005. Observing that Raymond Chan had signed an agreement to pay back $12.5 million to some head tax redress activist groups on 1 December while leaving out other coalitions like the Chinese Canadian National Council and the Ontario Coalition of Head Tax Payers and Families, Chiu instructed Reid to attend a visit from Prime Minister Paul Martin to Vancouver’s Chinatown where he would address head tax redress activists. From this meeting, Reid understood that the Conservative Party needed a position on head tax redress, from which he assembled a quick bullet-point list in twenty-four hours that declared that there would be a ‘formal apology,’ followed by a ‘reconciliation’ dialogue as well as a material ‘redress,’ after which a ‘fund’ would be set aside to make sure that such legislation ‘doesn’t happen again.’ While Reid did not win the election, his bullet points had been forwarded to Stephen Harper’s secretary, Jason

speakers in the 2011 campaign, as well as high school students who spoke English among themselves and Mandarin Chinese with their parents. As I observed the 2011 campaign, the core group of volunteers remained the same Cantonese evangelicals that I have discussed in this section; this observation is corroborated by the accounts of Mr. Ping and Kenny Chiu (personal communication, 14 Jan. 2012). However, because the Alice Wong campaign focused on building coalitions among disparate groups, I cannot say that the agendas of the Cantonese evangelicals were completely shared by the Taiwanese Buddhists that Mr. Ping describes here or by the PRC migrants who assisted the campaign. My story concerns the realization of the Cantonese evangelicals in the core group who realized that they needed to execute secularizing strategies to run an effective campaign.

153 I am thankful to Kenny Chiu for providing me with copies of this press release in both English and Chinese.
Kenney, directing Harper to formally apologize to head tax payers in 2006 when he was made Prime Minister of Canada. In short, the central concerns of the Reid campaign in 2005 and 2006 were secular, focused on creating a coalition of conservatives around a broader-based Chinese Canadian identity politics.

In contrast, it was second-generation Cantonese evangelicals in the Vancouver-South riding who began their political involvement with an explicitly theological agenda, although their campaigns also secularized when they were faced with having to appeal to a broader electoral public. Following the passage of Bill C-250’s neutralization of gender in marriage in Canada (see chapter 5), some evangelicals in their twenties and thirties who were bilingual in Cantonese and English, such as Esther Leung-Kong (CRRS’s Thomas Leung Insing’s daughter) and Matthew and Joyce Wan, became associated with socially conservative and spiritually charismatic activist Faytene Kryskow’s 4MyCanada. As journalist Marci McDonald (2010) reports, Kryskow’s initiatives began with organizing students to protest in front of Parliament Hill in Ottawa during the 2005 debates on same-sex marriage, leading to the formation in 2007 of TheCry, a youth organization that held an annual rally outside of Parliament to pray for government leaders and whose socially conservative agenda on sexuality issues has brought youth to resonate with Conservative Party ideologies. Esther Leung-Kong recalled that these actions were necessary to make the voices of younger people, including Cantonese evangelicals, heard in the national debate: ‘After same-sex marriage passed, we rose up because the Liberals were saying that

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154 There will be some understandable debate about the role of these Conservative Party operatives in the head tax redress. Indeed, in private conversation, some head tax activists repudiated the idea that the Conservative Party’s inner echelons were instrumental in the head tax redress effort. My conclusion on hearing both sides of the story is that this matter must be seen as both-and: first, there was a coalition of head tax redress groups advocating from without the government for head tax redress, but secondly, those in the inner echelons of Conservative Party politics, such as Darrel Reid, Jason Kenney, and Stephen Harper, felt the need to do this because of Reid’s Richmond campaign.
this is what the young people wanted. But these were not our voices, so we wanted to be heard.’ While Joyce Wan recalled that the ‘silent protest’ comprised a majority of Asian Canadian evangelicals with a mixture of first- and second-generation participants, Leung-Kong recalled that over the course of one week, their group met with ‘30 to 40 politicians, some of whom were good, and some who said that we should not mix religion with politics’ (Esther Leung-Kong, personal communication, 16 Jul. 2012).

As the 2006 elections were underway beginning in late 2005, Leung-Kong and Wan returned to Vancouver-South and began meeting with local politicians.155 As Leung-Kong told me, these meetings were propelled by further moral issues, especially Vancouver-Centre Liberal MP Hedy Fry’s advocacy for the legalization of prostitution. Arguing to me that their approach contrasted the work of first-generation Cantonese evangelicals on sexuality issues (see chapter 5), however, Joyce Wan said, ‘We’re not bringing anger to our politics. We see the value of politics and of other platforms. It’s not just one or the other.’ Leung-Kong thus described the meeting with Fry as a non-combative, cordial two-hour meeting where they were able to hear why she wanted to legalize prostitution in order to regulate the practice while agreeing that ‘we need to educate women early on, especially those with lower incomes.’ Compiling a group that included second-general professionals like Matthew and Joyce Wan as well as first-generation activists like CASJAFVA’s Karen Chan (see chapter 5), Leung-Kong met with politicians that ranged the ideological spectrum, including Vancouver-South Liberal MP Ujjal Dosanjh (whom Leung-Kong described as ‘resistant to our views’), Burnaby-Douglas NDP MP Bill Siksay (‘we didn’t know he was a gay activist; we just knew he was a Christian and he and his partner

155 Incidentally, Faytene Kryskow also lives in the Vancouver-South riding.
attended the United Church of Christ; it was a good meeting’), New Westminster NDP MP Dawn Black, Surrey North NDP MP Penny Priddy, and Vancouver mayor Sam Sullivan (‘we blessed him, and prayed with three people, and when we were done praying, he also prayed, and that shocked us’). In this earlier work during the 2006 elections, then, these second-generation activities were not directly involved with formal political campaigns, per se, but were more interested in getting to know the field of Metro Vancouver’s ideological landscape.

However, these activities also paved the way for the secular campaign of second-generation Cantonese evangelical Wai Young in the Vancouver-South riding in 2008. As the 2008 elections were called, Leung-Kong helped Wai Young fight a tough campaign against the Liberal MP incumbent Ujjal Dosanjh, a formidable opponent because he himself had been formerly Premier of British Columbia before becoming Vancouver-South’s federal MP. While Leung-Kong told me that there were prayer meetings that supported Young privately, the public face of Young’s campaign attempted to appeal to a Chinese Canadian electorate, a task that was difficult because (as Leung-Kong said) Young’s Cantonese-language skills were limited, as she was a second-generation English speaker. After a hard-fought campaign in 2008, Young’s campaign was defeated by a very narrow margin of twenty votes (16,090 for Young, 16,110 for Dosanjh).

Indeed, these very secular elements in Wai Young’s 2008 campaign brought victory to the Alice Wong campaign over her Liberal nemesis Raymond Chan in the Richmond riding. Mirroring the privacy of the Vancouver-South campaign’s prayer focus in the background, Alice Yuen-Fun Wong told me that what made the difference was that ‘there was a lot more prayer in the last few years because a campaign is like war; there are tough
changes from one day to the other.’ She cast Alice Wong’s nomination as MP as a ‘miracle,’ saying that while there were two other candidates going up for the nomination, Alice Wong received the party’s mandate in 2008. However, these appeals to the supernatural were considered private, for the entire message orchestrated by the newer campaign managers, Sacha Peter and Holden Balker, was a fully secular one, eliminating theological discourse from secular political affairs and rebuffing any attempt to pin Wong down to Cantonese evangelical congregations. As Sacha Peter said, they welcomed Chinese Christians, though they did not tie the campaign to any particular church congregation:

This is a core group of supporters of Alice Wong, and in no way would I ever try to change our own strategy to reflect different beliefs of this core support. I mean, they’re a great group of people, and they’re highly motivated, and they highly believe in the Conservative principles, and if I tried to, they’d probably kick me off the campaign. (Sacha Peter, personal communication, 6 Oct. 2011).

Indeed, the campaign was better described as a mixing space for various religious groups: as Alice Yuen-Fun Wong admitted, the campaign ‘did not distinguish between [its volunteers] as Christian or Buddhist; it’s the characters that matter, because even Caucasians do things differently from the Chinese.’ In turn, the new pastor at the Richmond Chinese Evangelical Free Church, the Rev. Anthony Yeung, told me that the church actively ‘avoided this association’ of Alice Wong with their congregation ‘because it is unfair and negative to Alice Wong’; indeed, he advised his church’s fellowship leaders to forego opportunities to bring Wong in as a fellowship speaker or else ‘this church will be labeled as an Alice Wong church’ (Anthony Yeung, personal communication, 10 May 2011). So too, when I asked the Richmond focus group if they would vote for Wong if she attended their congregation, they said that they would not: ‘Yes, we vote for Alice Wong,’ Mrs. Au said, ‘but she is only one person, so we must vote for the party, because we are talking about the big
picture here, not just one small member, unless she can influence the country as much as Stephen Harper.’ In other words, the Alice Wong campaign and its constituents became increasingly distanced from their Cantonese evangelical roots, attempting to view Canadian federal politics through secular partisan lenses and not through from the perspective of the church.

With this new focus on coalition building, Alice Wong’s campaign manager, Sacha Peter, told me that they ran a ‘different campaign’ in 2008 that led Wong to victory. Peter said that the campaign focused instead on being ‘tighter on message control, carefully preparing and rehearsing what was said, including on the gay marriage issue and the support for traditional marriage.’ Indeed, this message control was also practised in the Burnaby-Douglas riding with the Conservative candidacy of a popular Cantonese radio host, Ronald Leung, who adopted a policy that avoided media interviews and public debates, while managing to leverage Chinese Canadian votes as he ran a close race with the NDP incumbent Bill Siksay. In Richmond, Alice Wong attended debates and gave interviews, but only on particular messages that the campaign wanted to send: lower taxes and toughness on crime. They also focused their platform through a local ‘pet issue,’ the Garden City lands, a contested lot in Richmond’s City Centre that had claims by the federal government, the City of Richmond, the Agricultural Land Commission, and the Musqueam First Nation. While Raymond Chan’s platform was to put the land in the hands of the city to build a convention centre, Peter strategically maneuvered the Wong campaign to argue that the land should remain ‘fallow as is,’ citing the possibility of traffic congestion if the lands were to be developed.
With this secularizing strategy, the socially conservative moral issues for which Alice Wong was originally known became framed as campaign distractions. A high point came in the campaign’s confrontation with a Liberal political smear that attempted to pin Wong to CASJAFVA as a ‘right-wing organization' that propagated hate speech and that was unduly tied to churches (see chapter 5). Chan’s campaign press release generated over forty pages of material quoting and translating Alice Wong’s Chinese statements into English.\textsuperscript{156} In particular, it examined controversial statements from CASJAFVA’s convener, lawyer K-John Cheung, asserting that ‘sexual orientation’ had not been adequately defined and that if legislation against sexual orientation discrimination were to be on the books, it ‘could include heterosexuality, homosexuality, lesbianism, transexuality, pedophilia, polygamy, polyandry, bestiality, sadistic-sexuality, masochistic-sexuality and incestuous sexuality.’\textsuperscript{157} It then linked Wong to CASJAFVA via several pictures of them at various fundraisers and rallies together, calling her the ‘go between with CASJAFVA and senior Conservative MPs,’ especially during an October 2005 fundraiser attended by current Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The press release then presented the quotes in the context of CASJAFVA newsletters and reproduced emails from Stephen Cheung, linking Wong’s team with CASJAFVA. Based on this evidence, Chan called on Stephen Harper to remove Wong as his Richmond candidate because of her ‘extreme views.’ However, Peter handily replied to the statement by keeping the Alice Wong campaign on a secular, economic message, arguing that Chan was posing a distraction from the local concerns of Richmond’s economy and land use issues. In another instance, Alice Wong was asked at an all

\textsuperscript{156} I thank Sacha Peter, Alice Wong’s campaign manager, for providing me with the complete text of both the Liberal press release and the Conservative response, as well as for videos of Raymond Chan’s 1993 political campaign and the debate between Alice Wong and Raymond Chan on same-sex marriage in 2008.

\textsuperscript{157} See CASJAFVA, English-Chinese Bi-monthly Magazine, no. 48, June 2003; no. 66, July/August 2006, p. 2.
candidates’ debate what her position on same-sex marriage was. Replying along the lines of Peter’s message control strategy, she said, ‘My position is: I respect the position of the Parliament which has already dealt with this issue.’ When Raymond Chan retorted that it was the ‘biggest shame in this campaign’ that ‘Ms Wong has a different position in front of the Chinese media, and a different position in front of the English media,’ Wong replied,

You are the person who does the double-talking. My position has always stayed the same, whether it’s Chinese or English, but my position right now is that it’s the law of the land. The government has already dealt with it, so legally, it’s there, but my personal belief has not changed, but it does not matter. What matters is that you told the Chinese media that before you were voted in, you said that you vote against same-sex marriage, but when you got the Minister position, you don’t want to lose that position, you voted against it, you were not telling the same thing to the Chinese media. That is a great lie.

This statement dealt Raymond Chan two blows. As Kenny Chiu put it, it first reminded voters of all the reasons that they had ‘hated’ Raymond Chan in the past for the asymmetry between his campaign promises and his parliamentary record. Secondly, it demonstrated to the public that Wong’s campaign was no longer about social conservatism in Richmond, but that her political scope could build broader coalitions than the Cantonese evangelicals with which she had begun. In 2008, then, Alice Wong received 21,329 (49.77%) votes, defeating Raymond Chan by 8,108 votes (18.92%).
Table 7.1: Federal Election Results (CBC.ca, 2008)\textsuperscript{158}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Riding</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>Alice Wong (Conservative)</td>
<td>21,329 (49.77%) ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raymond Chan (Liberal)</td>
<td>13,221 (30.85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dale Jackaman (NDP)</td>
<td>5,059 (11.81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Wolfe (Green)</td>
<td>2,754 (6.43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wei Ping Chen (Independent)</td>
<td>397 (0.93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dobie Yiu-Chung To</td>
<td>93 (0.22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Richmond)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>42,878 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver-South</td>
<td>Wai Young (Conservative)</td>
<td>16,087 (38.43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ujjal Dosanjh (Liberal)</td>
<td>16,109 (38.48%) ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ann Chambers (NDP)</td>
<td>7,382 (17.64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Csaba Gulyas (Green)</td>
<td>2,068 (4.94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Boylan (Marxist-Leninist)</td>
<td>213 (0.51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Vancouver-South)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>41,859 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnaby-Douglas</td>
<td>Ronald Leung (Conservative)</td>
<td>17,139 (36.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bill Cunningham (Liberal)</td>
<td>9,177 (19.41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bill Siksay (NDP)</td>
<td>17,937 (37.94%) ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doug Perry (Green)</td>
<td>2,822 (5.97%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George Gildora (Communist)</td>
<td>205 (0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Burnaby-Douglas)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>47,280 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By 2011, then, Cantonese evangelicals working within the Conservative campaigns had developed secular political strategies of coalition-building and message control that were differentially used by the three candidates in the May 2011 election: Alice Wong in Richmond, Wai Young in Vancouver-South, and Ronald Leung in Burnaby-Douglas. While Cantonese evangelicals complained among themselves about the controversial ‘Washroom Bill’ to ensure constitutional human rights protections for bisexual and transgendered persons in Canada (see chapter 5), the campaigns themselves focused on the economic agenda of the Conservative Party of Canada, almost excluding socially conservative issues from public conversation. While functionally separate, those working for the campaigns told me that volunteers from these three ridings sometimes collaborated, a claim that made

\textsuperscript{158} I found this data from the Canadian Broadcasting Company's (2008, 2011) public election reports and systematized their findings myself.
sense in light of Immigration Minister Jason Kenney’s leaked document targeting Vancouver-South and Burnaby-Douglas as ridings with high amounts of migrants who could swing the vote toward the Conservatives. As Mr. Ping put it, ‘Their people are our people, so we go help them too.’

Alice Wong’s Richmond campaign was seen as the most experienced, having propelled Wong to victory in 2008 and given her three years of work through which her campaign developed their new ‘pet issue’: ‘infrastructure funding.’ Appealing to Wong’s record in Parliament, the campaign argued that Wong had secured funding for the successful construction of the rapid transit Canada Line, joining Richmond with downtown Vancouver. Basing itself on Wong’s political capital in Parliament, Wong’s campaign contrasted the record of her Liberal opponent, Joe Peschisolido, the same MP who had crossed party lines in 2002. Attacking Peschisolido for his unethical conduct, Alice Wong’s campaign strategically leveraged the issue of campaign signage to highlight Peschisolido’s character. Peter told me that the campaign predicted correctly that Peschisolido would put up signs in ‘illegal locations’ on public sites such as the school board building, City Hall, the Garden City Lands, and road medians. When the 6,000 ‘illegal’ signs went up, Peter called the City of Richmond to force Peschisolido to play by the rules while issuing a press release that was put in the papers, contrasting how Wong played by the rules while Peschisolido did not. In turn, high-school volunteers coordinated by Alice Yuen-Fun Wong led door-knocking expeditions; on one route on which I accompanied them, the strategy was to bring Alice Wong herself along, having the students knock on the door to ask for permission to put up signs for Wong while Wong herself would rush in to personally greet her constituents, some of whom said to her, ‘Don’t worry, Alice, we like Harper,’ while
another man who passed on the street remarked snidely, ‘Oh, you are Conservative, and you do not change,’ referencing his memory of Peschisolido’s shift. Confident that Wong was assured victory in Richmond because of Peschisolido’s poor record, the campaign volunteer staff also attempted to help Wai Young and Ronald Leung. Peter told me that his campaign volunteers ‘assisted Young’s campaign with the electronic structure.’ Moreover, to compensate for Young’s Chinese-language limitations, Kenny Chiu from the Richmond campaign worked as Young’s translator; Young also received support from the Christian Social Concern Fellowship’s (CSCF) Wayne Lo, assuring her of first-generation Cantonese evangelical support despite her second-generation identity. Peter also said that his staff was ‘closer to Ronald,’ especially as Leung’s campaign needed more help due to its no-interview policy. Indeed, as those in the Coquitlam focus group remembered, Leung’s campaign was subjected to a series of political missteps, namely when he refused to attend the all-candidates debate. Indeed, Mr. Yee expressed his disappointment with Leung, making remarks that garnered loud sighs from around the table during this focus group:

My wife was a door-knocker for Burnaby. It turned me off when he refused to debate...It was more door-knocking. We told him that refusing to debate is losing. How can you buy people in the mainstream if you only stay within the Asian community? What about the majority? He needed to publicize more. I was so ticked off. If he wanted to win, he should have gone to three or four debates, but he only showed up one time at Crystal Mall.

While these remarks about Leung demonstrated that the candidate overly focused on his Chinese Canadian voters, it also suggests that the Burnaby-Douglas campaign was equally secular in comparison to the other campaigns. Another respondent reported that he helped Leung because ‘I don’t pick NDP values, not just on the homosexuality, but because of their fiscal policy, and the Liberal Party is not a good campaign because they just parachute the candidate into the riding.’ He also confessed that Leung’s campaign was not
as organized as the NDP’s, leading to Leung’s ultimate defeat. Indeed, as the results came in, Alice Wong defeated Joe Peschisolido in Richmond by 17,802 votes, while Wai Young unseated Ujjal Dosanjh by 3,900 votes. On the other hand, Ronald Leung lost by 1,011 votes to the NDP candidate, Kennedy Stewart.

Table 7.2: 2011 Federal Election results (CBC.ca, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Riding</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>Alice Wong (Conservative)</td>
<td>25,104 (58.33) ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joe Peschisolido (Liberal)</td>
<td>8,035 (18.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dale Jackaman (NDP)</td>
<td>7,862 (18.27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Wolfe (Green)</td>
<td>2,034 (4.73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Richmond)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>43,035 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver-South</td>
<td>Wai Young (Conservative)</td>
<td>19,389 (43.33) ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ujjal Dosanjh (Liberal)</td>
<td>15,499 (34.63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meena Wong (NDP)</td>
<td>8,499 (18.99%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jean de Dieu Hakizimana (Green)</td>
<td>1,145 (2.56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Boylan (Marxist-Leninist)</td>
<td>220 (0.49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Vancouver-South)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>44,752 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnaby-Douglas</td>
<td>Ronald Leung (Conservative)</td>
<td>19,932 (40.92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ken Low (Liberal)</td>
<td>5,451 (11.19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kennedy Stewart (NDP)</td>
<td>20,943 (42.99%) ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adriane Merlo (Green)</td>
<td>1,754 (3.60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lewis Clarke Dahlby (Libertarian)</td>
<td>420 (0.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George Gildora (Communist)</td>
<td>155 (0.32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brian Sproule (Marxist-Leninist)</td>
<td>57 (0.12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Burnaby-Douglas)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>48,712 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section has demonstrated that the movement of Cantonese evangelicals toward tentative support for the Conservative Party should be understood as a secularizing shift in their participation in local democratic politics. While invoking ‘Chinese culture’ and Christian theological values, the victories that came with the elections of Alice Wong in 2008 and Wai Young in 2011 were made possible because of secular strategic calculations. Rebutting media accounts that held that Cantonese evangelicals were mobilizing churches for theocratic agendas that led to the victory of their own candidates in the 2008 and 2011 elections (see McDonald, 2010; Ibbitson and Friesen, 2010; Arsenault, 2011), this section
has demonstrated that these accusations hold little weight in the light of how Cantonese evangelicals came to Conservative politics because they became disillusioned by Liberal MP Raymond Chan *precisely because* they had elected him as a fellow Chinese Christian. After a series of political setbacks caused by the betrayal of Joe Peschisolido and the lessons learned in coalition-building beyond Cantonese evangelical circles in the Alice Wong campaign, Cantonese evangelicals came to understand that their participation in political campaigns needed to be functionally secular. Far from bringing transnational politics into Vancouver’s civil society, these Cantonese evangelicals adapted their strategy, relativizing their theological commitments in these campaigns so that secular campaign managers could give them a tighter economic message and build solidarities beyond their own religious and ethnic communities, however religiously devout they were in the privacy of their personal lives. These secularizing strategies led to the success of some Cantonese evangelicals in these federal elections, demonstrating that what appeared to be the rise of Chinese Christian theocratic politics in Metro Vancouver should be conceptualized as exactly the opposite.

### 7.5 Debating Protestant democracy: contested Cantonese Protestant public theologies in Hong Kong

As I began my fieldwork in Hong Kong in February 2012, the territory was in the midst of its fourth Chief Executive (CE) elections, and some Cantonese evangelicals with whom I spoke felt anxious that the political situation in the Special Administrative Region
was degenerating into a form of political unrest. Indeed, on the first week of my trip to Hong Kong, I attended an evangelical congregation in Aberdeen where the pastor prayed publicly for the ‘safety’ of Hong Kong during the elections. It turned out that in February to March 2012, the office of the Chief Executive was embroiled in controversy. The CE himself, Donald Tsang, had been discovered to be in collusion with property tycoons and the very wealthy, for he was discovered to be sitting with them at a Macau casino while his records showed that he had also frequented their yachts and jet planes (see Shek, 2013; Tsui, 2013). The candidates themselves were no better. Although Henry Tang was originally the favoured candidate because of his business connections, the Hong Kong media discovered that Tang had erected an ‘illegal structure’ under his house, and flew in camera cranes to report on this development to the Hong Kong public (see Cheung et al., 2012). When Tang accused his wife of having built the structure, it was then discovered that Tang had also had an affair, though his wife said to the media that she had forgiven him and that she had indeed built the structure, attempting to take the blame to shield his reputation from further damage (see Ming Pao 2011; Cheung 2012). Yet Tang’s actions ultimately discredited him from office, for the 1200-person Election Committee, along with property tycoon Li Ka-shing (rumoured to be the voice of the party line in Beijing), turned its attention to his opponent, Leung Chun-ying. Yet Leung was no better, as he was rumoured to be a ‘secret Communist Party member,’ and during a memorable all-candidates debate on 16 March, Tang accused Leung of wanting to use military force to

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159 There have technically been five selections of the Chief Executive, but only four have been elections with an Election Committee. While Tung Chee Hwa was selected to be Chief Executive in 1996 by a 400-member Selection Committee, the ‘elections’ began in 2002 when the 800-member Election Committee was assembled. There have been four elections. In 2002, Tung was re-elected. In 2005, a quasi-election was called to replace Tung with Donald Tsang, who was re-elected in the third election in 2007. The 2012 election was the contested one between Henry Tang and Leung Chun-ying.
suppress the 500,000 Hong Kong demonstrators during the 1 July 2003 demonstration, a protest against the Basic Law’s anti-sedition clause in Article 23. Invoking memories of the Tiananmen Incident, Hongkongers were both outraged at this accusation as well as stunned that Tang would reveal something so confidential in a public debate, an illegal move itself, as the public discovered, because Tang had been referring to a confidential conversation in an Executive Council meeting. Mired in controversy, the Election Committee finally elected Leung Chun-ying as Hong Kong’s third CE with 689 (57.75%) of the 800 votes (Hong Kong Elections, 2012), overturning the expected win for Henry Tang and putatively bringing an end to the scandals surrounding Donald Tsang.\textsuperscript{160}

For Protestants and Catholics, ecumenical and evangelical, the events of this fourth CE election in 2012 afforded them an opportunity for continued reflection on the unique political situation of Hong Kong SAR. Known as ‘public theology’ (Cantonese, \textit{gongong sunhok}), these conversations often occurred among academic theologians in Hong Kong as they contested each other over the role of the Christian church in relating to the workings of a secular public sphere, whether that was conceptualized as the state apparatus or the civil society of people who debated governmental actions. Paralleling the emergence of the Chinese American counter public in the San Francisco Bay Area and Chinese Canadian integration into democratic politics in Metro Vancouver, the debates that ensued from these theological efforts also revolved around the legacy of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989. For some, public theology represented a way of expressing theological values in rationalist debate, arguing that the Hong Kong public needed to be taught how to have a rational conversation before democratic governance could be entertained. However, for

\textsuperscript{160} It turned out that shortly after the elections, Leung Chun-ying himself was discovered to have built illegal structures at his house as well, damaging his reputation even more \textit{after} he was elected.
others, such logics played into the very paternalistic state attitudes that led to the
Tiananmen Incident, for they suppressed democratic conversation whenever it dissented
from the state’s party line. Those in a more democratic vein argued that the public sphere
needed to be liberated from these suppressive state logics, challenging the tendencies of
the regime toward another Tiananmen Incident (as evidenced for many by Leung’s alleged
comments) by arguing that universal suffrage and the abolition of anti-sedition laws
needed to happen imminently.

This section moves in two parts to elucidate these reflections. The first part uses
the contested issue of universal suffrage to discuss the emergence of ‘public theology’ in
Protestant academic circles in Hong Kong. As a Special Administrative Region, Hong Kong
does not allow for free elections, even though it made provisions to elect eighteen
legislators to the Legislative Council in 1991 and stipulates in Article 45 of the Basic Law:

The method for selecting the Chief Executive shall be specified in the light of the
actual situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and in accordance
with the principal of gradual and orderly progress. The ultimate aim is the selection
of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage upon nomination by a broadly
representative nominating committee in accordance with democratic procedures.

A third possible avenue that this section could have explored is the Hong Kong education system, though I
omitted it because it would have drawn this thesis’s attention too far toward the Roman Catholic Diocese
without few ecumenical Protestant solidarities. Although Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary’s Vincent
Lau (2007) has written on how Baptist schools in Hong Kong should consider not receiving government
funding to preserve their independence, much of the activism around church school independence has been
undertaken by the Roman Catholic Diocese, especially its archbishop, Joseph Cardinal Zen ke-ken. In 2009,
Zen undertook a hunger strike when he was unsuccessful in persuading the government not to enact a policy
that would allow for local parenting groups to control Catholic schools more than the Diocese, claiming that
such an act would reduce the Church’s control over its own schools. He told me that democratic activist Szeto
Wah agreed with his actions, for he interpreted the erosion of school independence as a way for the Hong
Kong regime to gain control over schools for nationalist propaganda efforts. These suspicions were
confirmed in 2012 when the government attempted to implement a National Education Curriculum, a policy
that was thwarted by a protest of 120,000 Hongkongers who claimed that the new curriculum was a
‘brainwashing’ tool of the state. Most recently, Zen has defended Alpais Lam Wai Sze, a Catholic school
teacher who used profanity against police officers who were trying to suppress a Falun Gong demonstration;
Zen said that her profanity was justified because she was advocating for the freedom of speech, paralleling his
efforts to preserve the theological independence of Catholic schools.
With referenda in the Legislative Council failing to set the date for universal suffrage at 2005, 2007, and 2012, the Beijing regime has tentatively indicated its preference for 2017 to be the year when Hong Kong citizens would directly elect the Chief Executive.

Meanwhile, the regime has made allowances for the election of the Chief Executive of Hong Kong’s Legislative Council with a twist: an Election Committee. Originally called the Selection Committee in 1996 with 400 voting seats, this voting body was renamed the Election Committee in 1998, comprising 800 seats, and has been expanded to 1,200 seats after electoral reforms in 2010. The Election Committee gathered individuals from various professional and political sectors of society, who would then vote for the CE, often with the approval of the Beijing central government. This voting body also included the six officially recognized religious bodies in Hong Kong: the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, the Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association, the Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC), the Hong Kong Taoist Association, the Confucian Academy, and the Hong Kong Buddhist Association.

Finding that the key plank of dissension on universal suffrage was over whether the state was eroding the human rights of freedom of speech and self-determination, this section then moves to the second issue at hand: the formation of the Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF) against the anti-sedition Article 23 in the Basic Law. Proposing a National Security Ordinance in 2002 and 2003 based on Article 23’s provisions to curb anti-state rhetoric in Hong Kong’s political discourse, the Legislative Council sparked outrage among Hongkongers who felt that the regime had begun a crackdown on civil liberties in Hong Kong, going beyond delaying universal suffrage to undermine the possibility of democracy altogether. This section demonstrates that the CHRF, a secular civil society coalition of
human rights activist organizations, was in fact a joint ecumenical Protestant, Catholic, feminist, and queer effort that launched the 1 July 2003 demonstration for the human right to free speech, a protest that brought some 500,000 Hongkongers onto the streets and was the largest demonstration of its kind since the Tiananmen Incident in 1989. Indeed, the theological constitution of the CHRF can be seen from the vital roles played by the Hong Kong Diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission (HKJP) and the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI). This section thus contributes to this chapter’s overall argument that the legacy of Tiananmen in 1989 has led to local expressions of democracy. Indeed, the debates in Hong Kong centered on local Hongkonger issues particular to the Special Administrative Region, featuring heated conversations revolving around the role of the church in relating to the actions of a secular state toward a nascent civil society.

7.5.1 Public theology: debating universal suffrage

Because the Election Committee demanded that Roman Catholics and Protestants submit members to vote in the CE elections, the approaches of Catholic and Protestant groups for selecting potential members to join the Election Committee generated a debate over their support for universal suffrage. As the colonial British government in Hong Kong began preparations for a handover to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, Hong Kong’s Protestants and Catholics anticipated their approaches to the Election Committee in different ways. Kung Lap Yan, a liberation theologian at the Chinese University of Hong Kong’s Chung Chi Divinity School, instructed me to examine the Roman Catholic approach to the Election Committee as a point of comparison to the one taken by ecumenical Protestants at the Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC). Interviewing the retired
Archbishop of Hong Kong, Joseph Cardinal Zen Ze-ken, I learned that he had developed the notion of ‘passive compliance’ in 1998 as a compromise between his diocesan curia and his Justice and Peace Commission (the HKJP) just after he had become coadjutor bishop in 1996 (see Kwong, 2008: 132-133). Referencing ‘some quarrel within the Church between the curia and the Justice and Peace Commission,’ Zen said that he had brought forward a resolution between the HKJP, which wanted to boycott the elections because they were not universal, and the curia, which resisted the HKJP’s position. That ‘solution’ was what Zen called ‘passive compliance.’ On one hand, he sided with the HKJP’s protest: ‘This is a small circle, not democratic, we don’t want to have such a system. And the Church as such, we don’t have to have a part in that.’ However, Zen recognized the diocesan curia’s wisdom in allowing the Catholic faithful to participate, for ‘if we boycott, they may accuse us of depriving their rights.’ Zen’s ‘passive compliance’ thus took the position that ‘if any Catholic want to join, let him join by himself; we only prove and testify that he is a Catholic.’

Referring to the Catholic Church’s meticulous record-keeping, Zen said that this approach sent the message that the Church was not supportive of the elections, even though there were Roman Catholics in the Election Committee: ‘No, no, no, the Catholics, they go by themselves, they do not represent the Church, they go by their own personal capacity.’ In other words, Zen’s ‘passive compliance’ meant that while the Catholic Church objected to the undemocratic nature of the Election Committee, it did not stop individual Catholics

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162 By the *curia*, Cardinal Zen meant the ‘diocesan curia,’ that is, the chief officials of the local diocese who assist the bishop in his governing duties.
from participating, verifying their identity as Catholics without endorsing their decisions.\footnote{As Hong Kong’s Anglican Primate, Archbishop Paul Kwong (2008: 133), notes, Zen’s ‘passive compliance’ somewhat contradicted the approach of his predecessor, John Baptist Cardinal Wu, whose 1989 pastoral letter \textit{Marching into the Bright Decade} called the Catholic Church in Hong Kong to perform a ministry of reconciliation in the new social and political structures of post-1997 Hong Kong.}

In contrast, the 1997 handover represented a time of division among Protestants in Hong Kong over how their churches should relate to the incoming regime. According to Tinming Ko (2000) and Archbishop Paul Kwong (2008), the HKCC’s anticipation of the handover led them to do two things in 1996 that generated dissension among Hong Kong’s Protestants over whether they were too supportive of the new, undemocratic regime: selectively joining the Selection Committee of the Special Administrative Region Preparatory Committee and celebrating National Day. In the first instance, the Basic Law Preparatory Committee invited five members of four ecumenical churches—the Anglican Church, the Church of Christ in China, the HKCC, and the Federation of Christian Churches—to attend a consultation meeting on 14 April 1996, after which they decided in May to recommend that the HKCC would join the 400-member Selection Committee. However, their participation would be selective: the HKCC representatives said that they would only participate in the selection of the Chief Executive, not the members of the Provisional Legislature; when the Anglican Bishop of Hong Kong, the Rt. Rev. Peter Kwong, voted exactly the opposite way, it revealed that these ecumenical bodies were not in unison (Kwong 2012: 117-118).\footnote{The Anglican Bishop of Hong Kong at the time was the Rt. Rev. Peter Kwong, later made the Most Rev. Peter Kwong when he was created Archbishop of Hong Kong in 1998 until his term ended in 2007. This is not to be confused with his successor, the Most Rev. Paul Kwong, who is the current Archbishop of Hong Kong and who wrote \textit{Identity in Community} (2008) as his doctoral dissertation in theology at the University of Birmingham. In this sentence, the bishop who attended the meeting was Peter Kwong; the source from which I quote is Paul Kwong.} While the HKCC’s Rev. Tso Man-king claimed that this decision
was a democratically transparent one, the Rev. Chu Yiu Ming resigned in protest, while the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI), the Women’s Christian Association, the Christian Student Movement, the Christian Industrial Committee, the Christian Concern for Hong Kong Institute, the Social Concern group of Breakthrough Youth Ministries, and several Catholic groups held a meeting on 28 April in which the overwhelming majority of participants objected to this decision, leading to the publication of a joint declaration in newspapers challenging the HKCC’s decision on 17 May (Ko, 2000: 42-44).

These actions were compounded from May to October 1996, when Protestants debated whether they should answer the New China News Agency’s 1995 call for the six major religions in Hong Kong to prepare National Day celebrations that would show their patriotism toward the incoming regime. Hosting seminars leading up to a celebration at St. Andrew’s Church on 1 October 1996 that was only attended by 120 Christians, Protestants appeared to be divided on the matter, for while many said that such a celebration was worth holding, others objected to the seeming pro-PRC propaganda elements latent in such an event (Ko 2000: 44-48; see also SH Chan, 2000). In short, the 1997 handover brought Protestants to the brink of crisis, leading to contestations among various Protestant factions over how they should participate in the workings of the new Hong Kong regime.

It was in this context of contestation that the HKCC developed a unique approach to the first Election Committee: to hold free elections among Protestants in Hong Kong. Developed as the Election Committee was forming in 1998, the Rev. Lo Lung Kwong argued to the HKCC that the seven seats allotted for Protestants in the 800-person Election Committee should be determined by an election among Hong Kong’s Protestant Christians. Contrasting the Catholics’ ‘passive compliance,’ Lo’s strategy aimed to prepare Protestants
in Hong Kong for universal suffrage, attempting to co-opt an undemocratic system with a
democratic methodology:

I was the one who proposed this more than ten years ago...Because at that time, the
first time, HKCC wants to elect among themselves. They said, *They want seven
names. How about we just raise and pass seven names?* I said, *No way. We could not
represent the Christians of Hong Kong. They should run an election among ourselves
to elect the seven voters, not just by ourselves.* Only by one vote, I got the approval
after debate. They said, *Don’t bother. It’s very clumsy and difficult to run. And we
don’t have enough time.* I said, *Enough.* So I was the one who
proposed this and organized it and run the first Christian election for the voters.

Lo said that after he proposed this, he was attacked in the pages of the secular Chinese
daily newspaper, *Ming Pao,* for joining an ‘unjust election,’ insinuating that there was a
‘conspiracy behind you and the Beijing’s power.’ Lo retorted that if that were the case, the
HKCC should have rejected the offer to have seven names; having accepted the mandate of
the Election Committee, Lo contended that this was a question of ‘how to run it as proper
as possible so as to involve as many Christians as possible,’ eventually attempting to
include those who were not part of the HKCC. The HKCC’s past chair, the Rev. Nicholas Tai,
articulated Lo’s position as preparing for universal suffrage:

*We are in an evil model, but this evil model, we can still teach the right thing,
including we use a democratic model. Even if they pick these seven people, they
may not represent us, and they may not even use a Christian way to vote, but you
must have this kind of practice. It’s better than if you come to 2017, and suddenly
you have this thing. We say that we’ve always done things this way.*

As Tai explained, the HKCC’s theological relationship with the secular state had been
‘Constantinian’ since Hong Kong’s colonial British era, adopting an ‘Anglican model’ in
which the church played a vital social function in the state’s governance by providing
schools, social services, elderly care homes, drug rehabilitation centres, and food banks
(Nicholas Tai, personal communication, 7 Mar. 2012). This argument parallels the thesis of
the Anglican Primate of Hong Kong, Archbishop Paul Kwong, in his *Identity in Community*
(2008), where he argues that the historical place of the mainline church in Hong Kong was as a collaborative arm of the state in the provision of education and social services (see chapter 4). As a Lutheran, Tai modified this model with Martin Luther’s ‘two kingdoms’ theology, arguing that while the church and the state could collaborate, they needed to be kept distinct with respect to each sphere’s paradigm of governance: the state governed using temporal law, while the church was ruled by the law of faith. As Kwong (2008: 112-116) would have it, Tai’s theological model represented a ‘pragmatic’ approach to the new regime, attempting to work for religious freedom and state transparency by collaborating with the regime on selected issues in order to influence it through its relationship with the church (see also SH Chan 2003). The HKCC’s approach to the Selection Committee in 1996 and the Election Committee in 1998 reflected these theological convictions as well: they attempted to remind the state that it had promised universal suffrage and were preparing Protestants to follow this idealized temporal legal framework accordingly.

While this model remained intact for the first two CE elections in 2002 and 2005, the emergence of charismatic megachurches in Hong Kong in the 2007 elections raised concerns over whether these elections were in fact fair, for large churches might run more effective campaigns for their own church members than smaller ones. Though the earlier participation of mainline ecumenical churches from the HKCC had limited those who had been able to run in the 2002 and 2005 election, Lo Lung Kwong’s mandate to open the Protestant elections to all who were Protestant, not only those who were associated with the HKCC, caused unforeseen problems. As Nicholas Tai explained, the HKCC only represented several denominations: the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Churches Union, the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, the Salvation Army, Lutheran Churches,
Chinese Methodist Church, the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong, the Anglican Sheng Kung Hui,\textsuperscript{165} the Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, Chinese Young Men’s Christian Association in Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Young Women’s Christian Association.

However, he also observed that ‘as long as you are registered as a limited company, you can be a church!’ Opening up the elections beyond the HKCC, then, the third CE election integrated those who were part of the latter category of self-registered churches; as Tai put it, the Protestant voting process was subjected to ‘a lot of manipulation of churches because some newer churches really wanted to get into these positions.’ Recalling chapter 6’s discussion of the charismatics who organized the pro-establishment Global Day of Prayer in the Hong Kong stadiums, Tai said that several of these charismatic groups ‘really wanted to get into these positions, and their churches are very big, so they only vote for a member within the churches, and all the votes go to that member, and they come out.’ An Evangelical Free church pastor, the Rev. Peter Ho, remembered this scenario well. While his church, Tung Fook Evangelical Free Church in Causeway Bay, was also a 2000-person charismatic megachurch, it had not participated in this third election precisely because he saw what other large churches were doing:

The reason I said is because our way of voting is not fair. If your church is big, or if you are famous, not because you are honest or not because you are something, but just because your church is big, and you are well-known, so those 10 are well-known Christian, and also it’s also not fair is because the way of voting, they just put it in the church, some boxes. And not all the churches have box. Just only those who have delegates, they put the church outside, you know, and not many churches will do that first, and second, I think it’s not fair is that they put it outside their church, and the members of that church definitely will vote our own pastor because they don’t have to make any effort to go to vote. If you put it outside in a neutral place, so you have to make effort to go there to vote. So I say it’s not a fair way to vote. (Peter Ho, personal communication, 9 Mar. 2012).

\textsuperscript{165} Sheng Kung Hui is the technical Cantonese term for the Anglican Church in Hong Kong. It is used on all of the official English-language documents of the church.
In other words, Protestants in Hong Kong spoke of the third CE election as a compromised election because the HKCC had opened itself up to numerous other parties, some of which took advantage of the elections to gain further political influence for their own churches and pastors.

Beginning with the efforts in 2011 to compose the 1200-person Election Committee of 2012, the HKCC’s actions launched a vigorous debate among theologians in Hong Kong over ‘public theology.’ Attempting to ameliorate the problems caused by the charismatics in the 2007 election, the HKCC revisited an old proposal that Lo Lung Kwong had rejected: allow each denomination to have their own vote. However, due to the opening up of the Protestant vote to all Protestant Christian church congregations, Tai told me that he had thought it would be unfair because this would now exclude churches that were not represented by the HKCC from the vote. Indeed, Tai revealed that the Hong Kong Christian Union, which represented more of the evangelical churches in Hong Kong, had originally adopted a position of ‘silence’ in relation to the Election Committee, but ‘now they really want to be part of it.’ Indeed, these new evangelical forms of participation were due to the emergence of what some evangelical theologians called a ‘public theology,’ an attempt to develop a theological method to use the language of the church for secular public discourse. Proposing a rationalist framework, theologians like Carver Yu and Kang Phee Sang argued for an epistemological approach to public affairs in which they could use Christian theological language for public discourse. As Yu (2010) argued in his address to the Lausanne Conference in Cape Town in 2010, the situation facing Hong Kong and the PRC was that ‘without moral truth, might is right,’ which would eradicate the ‘ground of foundational democracy,’ as ‘without moral truth, the person only becomes a tool or
commodity of the market.’ Hiring Singaporean theologian Kang Phee Sang from the Hong Kong Baptist University to become the Director for Faith and Public Values in 2011, the China Graduate School of Theology (CGST) has housed this new approach to public theology. Kang told me that ‘many things that are in the public are epistemological issues’:

I always said that there’s this sort of political correctness or academic correctness, so when you are in the public square, you have to accept what is acceptable. There is a metanarrative there. Some say that religion is private...So in the midst of the public, my concern is the epistemological issues, because you already have a kind of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, what is good and what is evil. (Kang Phee Sang, personal communication, 28 Mar. 2012).

Writing in the CGST bulletin, Kang (2012: 1) argued that ‘in a free and democratic society, it is every citizen’s right to public space,’ which meant that if certain citizens were religious, they should be allowed to speak with a distinctively theological voice, claiming against the metanarrative of the public square that ‘the God we believe in is Lord of the public space.’ In other words, these theologians claimed that the supposed objective secularity of the public sphere did not prevent Protestants from being able to speak with a distinctively Christian voice in the public sphere. Accordingly, if they were to be involved in the Protestant elections, their mandate was to elect Election Committee members who could articulate the theological distinctiveness of Protestant Christianity.

However, those espousing a progressive social justice orientation in turn heavily critiqued these approaches as overly supportive of the new regime. Keeping the original approach to the Election Committee so that the elections would be more ‘representative,’ Tai said that he was then ‘demonized’ by a progressive Protestant wing for insinuating that he was ‘just like the Beijing Central Government’ in seeking representativeness from all sectors. Indeed, liberation theologian Kung Lap Yan told me that he had argued that the church needed to consider ‘not voting’ in order to ‘give a good witness to the society about
how ridiculous such an election is.’ Kung’s students at Chung Chi Divinity School who had
organized the Alliance for the Return to the Christian Spirit followed through with their
mentor’s critique by registering their movement as Narrow Road Church in 2011, joining
the HKCC as a church with the right to vote in the CE Elections (see chapter 6). Takchi
‘Fastbeat’ Tam revealed to me that Narrow Road Church then submitted an advertisement
to several progressive newspapers (in his words, ‘Wong Yuk Man’s audience,’ referring to a
progressive, pro-democratic Legislative Council representative) that ‘welcomed the entire
Hong Kong’s seven million people to be a Christian for one day.’ Arguing that individual
cognitive creedal faith was what qualified someone to be a Protestant Christian (unlike the
registration system of the Catholic Church), Narrow Road Church members printed a
Narrow Road Church Christian membership card that readers could detach, wrote out the
Apostles’ Creed, told their readers to recite it so that they would have temporarily
confessed the Christian faith, and then instructed them to claim that they were Christian
members of Narrow Road Church as they participated in the Protestant elections. These
votes in turn turned out to be blank ballots of protest, as Narrow Road Church also told
their readers to forego writing the name of a Protestant Christian for whom they were
voting, but rather statements like, ‘This is evil,’ and, ‘This is a small circle election.’ Fastbeat
said that he calculated that approximately one thousand people became Narrow Road
Church members for that day, for about ten percent of the ballots came out as blank.
Indeed, where Fastbeat said that they were effective, Nicholas Tai and Lo Lung Kwong both
expressed annoyance, pointing out that at least ten percent was a small minority of
Protestant ballots that were wasted.
By March 2012, then, the scandals that happened among both the outgoing CE Donald Tsang and the two viable CE candidates, Henry Tang and Leung Chun-ying, combined with the contestations among Protestants led to challenges within the HKCC over how the church should approach the actual CE Elections. On 2 March 2012, several ecumenical Protestant clergy in Hong Kong penned a statement in Ming Pao that was signed by some 800 Christian leaders, including both ecumenical and evangelical Protestants. The statement excoriated the various scandals that were happening: on one hand, it ‘deplored the Chief Executive Election that used various misdemeanour shocks as a point of attack and struggle’ (referring to the allegations about Henry Tang’s illegal structure) while ‘exposing how the political circle is connected with the interests of the business community’ (referencing the exposure of CE Donald Tsang as having taken personal favours from property tycoons). These Protestants then made three appeals. First, they called on the 1,200 members of the Election Committee to ‘vote based on their conscience,’ listening to the ‘voice of the seven million Hong Kong people’ without attempting to flatter the elites. Second, it called on whoever would win the CE Elections to ‘repair public confidence’ by being politically transparent. Third, it demanded that the new CE ‘remove obstacles to the implementation of universal suffrage,’ for the current electoral system was now revealed to ‘create more conflicts of interest and social differences.’

Innocuous as this statement seemed, it too was subjected to internal Protestant debate. While signed by a significant number of Protestant clergy and FBO leaders, both those who were close to the existing regime and progressive activists who demonized it found fault with the statement. As both of these sets of respondents told me, it had been subjected to revisions that made its sentiments questionable for them: the statement had
first been authored by ecumenical theologian Raymond Fung, who excoriated both Henry Tang and CE Donald Tsang for their illegal behaviour. Before the statement went to press, however, it was revised by the Rev. Lo Lung Kwong and Christian Times editor Lee Kam Hung, who took out the direct references to Tang and Tsang and made it a more palatable statement that spoke in general terms about voting ‘based on conscience’ and the need to rebuild public trust. For those who were personal friends with Henry Tang’s family, the origins of the statement made it difficult for them to sign because they felt that it unilaterally condemned him. Breakthrough Youth Ministries’ Philemon Choi did not sign the statement because it was ‘too self-righteous because it condemns Henry Tang: you have justice, but where is the mercy? When Nathan confronted David, he did so humbly and gently, so he responded with repentance.’166 Choi then said that he had personally confronted Tang, and ‘he wept, because I treated him as a real person and did not label him as evil.’ Tung Fook Evangelical Free Church’s Rev. Peter Ho also refused to sign the statement, for ‘we ourselves, we are not doing the proper way.’ Referencing Tang’s illegal structure and noting that he knew Tang’s wife personally, Ho observed that ‘maybe their [the Christian leaders’] home also has some kind of illegal structure,’ and that the public should be more forgiving of these politicians’ private lives; referencing United States President Bill Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky, Ho argued these sordid personal circumstances should have little effect on one’s governing ability.167

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166 Philemon Choi is referring to the story of King David’s adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his ‘mighty men,’ Uriah the Hittite, in 2 Samuel 11-12. After attempting to cover up the affair by having Uriah killed in battle, the prophet Nathan confronted David with a parable of a rich man with a flock of sheep stealing a poor man’s lamb. Using the story to provoke David to outrage, Nathan told David, ‘You are the man!’ driving home David’s personal guilt. Choi interpreted this story as demonstrating that guilt needed to be personally and tactfully confronted, not publicly protested.

167 Interestingly, though Peter Ho could be considered socially conservative, these comments are asymmetrical from the socially conservative report issued by Kenneth Starr’s Office of Independent Council
On the other hand, there were accusations that the revisions of the statement indicated that Protestant leaders were shifting their allegiances to Leung Chun-ying, which meant that they both supported the ‘small-circle election’ and that they were not interested in democratic reform. While Lo Lung Kwong told me in our key informant interview that ‘these criticisms are schizophrenic because they themselves rely on public opinion,’ he also said that those in the public sphere always received criticism, heightening their public persona so that even people like Leung Chun-ying knew him personally. Takchi ‘Fastbeat’ Tam articulated this to me in our key informant interview: having spoken to a number of ecumenical clergy, Fastbeat said that the overwhelming response he received was, ‘This is our reality, to be either for Tang or for Leung. There is no way out.’ Having to choose one, Fastbeat alleged that they were once on Tang’s side, for Tang had once given an interview on celebrity pastor Enoch Lam’s television show in which he had told Christians that he would ‘use love to govern Hong Kong.’ He then recounted the Ming Pao statement’s revision process, suggesting that Lo Lung Kwong and Lee Kam Hung, along with the 800 signatories, knew that Tang’s personal scandals would propel Leung Chun-ying to become the new CE. Fastbeat then speculated that this statement veiled their pragmatic support for Leung so that Lo would be able to tell Leung that ‘you are the voice of the people’ while telling the signatories that Leung had been elected ‘based on their conscience,’ finding favour with the new CE though they had previously supported his rival. Fastbeat concluded that he refused to believe that reality was a choice between Tang and Leung and that the very system of the Election Committee needed to be protested, as did HKCI’s Fan Lap Hin, who said that he was disappointed in the statement because it attempted to ‘use
politics to make an impact, for example, like making a statement,’ but those politics seldom produced structural changes because the ‘method of protest’ reinforced the system.

I was there when Fastbeat and his Narrow Road Church colleagues attempted to produce an alternative. On the night that the statement was released, I had coincidentally scheduled key informant interviews with some of Narrow Road Church’s inner circle, such as Fastbeat, David Cheung, and Wai-yip Leung. When the interviews were concluded, we returned to Fastbeat’s house, where we had dinner with Fan Lap Hin. I observed as they wrote a song of imprecation together for a protest that they joined at Victoria Park on the next day, 3 March. Keeping with the tradition of holding a prayer meeting started at the 1 July 2003 Demonstration prior to joining the large pro-democracy protest, their song used profanity to curse Donald Tsang and Henry Tang for their corruption, an approach that some of their colleagues at the Catholic HKJP and the evangelical CFHKS found too distasteful to be read at the actual prayer meeting the next day. While the prayer meeting was small (about thirty people), it assembled some of the key actors like feminist theologian Rose Wu Lo Sai, liberation theology practitioner Fr. Franco Mella, the evangelical CFHKS, the Catholic HKJP, HKCI, Senlok Christian Church’s Rev. Lam Kwok Cheung, and Narrow Road Church members, who then raised a banner at the larger protest that read, ‘We Christians are pissed off too’ (Cantonese, ngomun geidoktou dou funloliu). While their numbers were small, their vocal presence at the protest was thus significant, decrying the very undemocratic system that other Protestant clergy were ‘realistically’ supporting.

From all of these contestations within the HKCC and its various Protestant partners, then, the question is: what motivated all of these vigorous debates? As I shall conclude in the
next section, these debates were generated because there was little agreement over whether the new Hong Kong regime could be trusted to give Hong Kong citizens universal suffrage. As Archbishop Paul Kwong (2008) points out, this minority departure from the majority Protestant view that the state should be approached pragmatically was significant because while they certainly did not represent a statistical majority, they did hold some symbolic power. Indeed, these groups formed ecumenical alliances among secular civil society groups, the Roman Catholic Church, evangelicals involved in the democracy movement, and ecumenical Protestants associated with HKCI, coming together because of the legacy of the Tiananmen Incident.

7.5.2 The legacy of 1 July 2003: the ecumenism of the Civil Human Rights Front

In 2002, CE Tung Chee Hwa's Legislative Council began drafting a National Security Ordinance at the request of Beijing's State Council. Seeking to replace the laws on treason from the British colonial era, this new legislation was based on the Basic Law's Article 23, which stipulated:

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, 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.

The proposed law proved controversial because of its potential infringements on the freedom of speech. For example, a contested part of the law concerned Section 18B (which was subsequently struck in late 2003), in which if the police superintendent 'reasonably believes' that seditious publications are being held in a certain place, a search could be
ordered without a warrant. Moreover, the terms of sedition were themselves vague, for ‘treason’ constituted acts of attempting to ‘(i) overthrow the Central People’s Government, (ii) intimidate the Central People’s Government; or (iii) compel the Central People’s Government to change its policies or measures’ (National Security Bill, 4.2.1). Alleging that this bill would stifle dissent while eroding the rights of citizens, the National Security Ordinance, known commonly as ‘Article 23’ (Cantonese, *yasam tiulai*), had already sparked a 65,000-person protest on 15 December 2002 and a petition campaign on 24 December 2002 before culminating in the 500,000-strong ‘7/1’ Demonstration on 1 July 2003, a mass protest that was timed to coincide with the anniversary celebration of the return of Hong Kong to PRC sovereignty. Planned by the Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF), the protest reflected the shaken confidence of the Hong Kong public, leading to the resignations of certain state officials who had supported the law while the Tung Administration shelved the law indefinitely.

Having developed into an annual tradition since 2003, the CHRF made the Catholic Diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission (HKJP) a major part of its public persona in organizing the 1 July Demonstrations. While the HKJP’s Jackie Hung admitted to me that the 1 July Demonstration was composed of a variety of political parties and civil society sectors, she said that the HKJP was a core part of the CHRF because few of the other groups took leadership:

If you look at so many groups that are here, there are really only a few bodies who actually do anything, and those are the Christian groups and the gay and lesbian groups are the most vigorous. There are some political parties, but the political parties have their own interests. So because these groups are the most vigorously

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168 The estimate of 500,000 protesters on 1 July 2003 is a conservative one. Some of the human rights groups place the number at 700,000.
interested, we will always have many opportunities to cooperate with them. (Jackie Hung, personal communication, 26 Mar. 2012).

In turn, the Catholic Church was one of the original critics of Article 23, which had started the protests in the beginning. The Catholic Archbishop of Hong Kong, Joseph Cardinal Zen Ze-ken, told me that he objected to the law’s ban on ‘proscribed societies’ that were blacklisted by the Central Government and forbidden to operate in the Special Administrative Region (National Security Bill, s. 16.6), for one religious example of a ‘proscribed society’ in the PRC was the Falun Gong: ‘If a sect like the Falun Gong is banned on the mainland and then also should be banned in Hong Kong, putting it into the anti-subversion law, maybe it will be used tomorrow with the Catholic Church.’ Collaborating with the HKJP, they joined the CHRF as a coalition of the various groups that Hung had described to me. Immediately prior to the march on 1 July 2003, Zen started the tradition of having an ecumenical prayer meeting that gathered at Victoria Park prior to the larger demonstration. As the 500,000-person march proceeded from the park to the Central District, Zen told me that he had withdrawn from the march to pray in solidarity with elderly people and nuns who could not march because it was ‘a very hot afternoon,’ starting first at a nearby Catholic parish and then concluding with a mass at St. Joseph’s Hospital. In short, the 1 July 2003 Demonstration was conceptualized by the HKJP and by Cardinal Zen as an ecumenical, interreligious coalition against the implementation of Article 23 in order to ensure free speech and the freedom of religion in Hong Kong.

In turn, the CHRF itself had ecumenical Protestant origins, though its aim was to be a secular coalition of civil society organizations campaigning for human rights in Hong Kong. When I interviewed HKCI’s Fan Lap Hin, he showed me a pro-democracy pamphlet that had the names of key Protestant and Catholic organizations involved in a coalition for
universal suffrage and human rights activism. He said: ‘These are the post-2003 people; that’s the network,’ and they included the HKJP and HKCI (‘we are more front line,’ he said), the Catholic Diocese’s Labour Commission (‘they participate less, unless it has to do with workers’), the evangelical Christians for Hong Kong Society (CFHKS), and the HKCC’s Justice and Social Concern Group (‘they seldom come out’). Because of HKCI’s involvement, Fan also said that this coalition was in turn linked with the Alliance for the Return to the Christian Spirit in 2009. In other words, these groups were the ‘Christian groups’ to which the HKJP’s Jackie Hung had referred, the ones who had formed an alliance because of Article 23 and were now linked in collaborative pro-democratic efforts.

In turn, HKCI played a critical role in the formation of the CHRF, for feminist theologian Rose Wu Lo Sai had called the movement into being as the General Secretary of HKCI at the time. When Jackie Hung had referred to ‘the Christian groups and the gay and lesbian groups’ that were active participants in CHRF, she was also suggesting that the figure of Rose Wu loomed in the background. Prior to her work at HKCI, Wu had organized a splinter group from democratic activist Szeto Wah’s Alliance to attempt to make women’s voices more prominent in the democratic movement. Forming the Hong Kong Women’s Christian Council (HKWCC), Wu organized progressive Protestant bodies like HKCI and the Student Christian Movement to host the ‘July 1 Link’ in 1996, anticipating the handover by one year with ‘a day on which we prayed for justice and peace’; this event eventually obtained funding to organize an international conference on Dao Fung Shan in the Sha Tin hills ‘to inform them [conference members] on what is going on in Hong Kong, to provide an alternative voice.’ At the same time, HKWCC in turn organized gay and lesbian worship services and held queer theology courses, which pushed Wu to finish a doctorate on queer
the director of HKCI after the Rev. Kwok Nai Wung’s retirement. Because Wu felt that HKCI
needed to become more involved in civil society activism, she called together thirty-three
civil society groups from her time in pro-democratic activism (many of which were
Christian, feminist, and queer organizations) for a meeting at HKCI in September 2002,
where they discussed the impending ‘rumours’ that Article 23 legislation might be passed.
At this meeting, Wu became the ‘first convener’ of the Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF), a
coalition constituted by two task forces, one focusing on Article 23 and another on human
rights: ‘Hong Kong only has a human rights legislation, not a committee, so we thought that
Hong Kong needed a mechanism for that.’ Describing the public furor over Article 23, Wu
celebrated the CHRF’s success at organizing a wide-ranging demonstration on 1 July 2003:
‘The journalists, the lawyers, the students, the women, the sexual minorities, the church,
Christians, the grassroots groups, the labourers, so many groups participated, and I really
thought this platform was formed at the right time, and we had a good time to have the
CHRF voice, to have that big demonstration.’ While the Catholic Diocese’s conception of the
1 July 2003 Demonstration was that of an interreligious coalition, the CHRF that Wu
advanced was a secular civil society one, bringing in Christian groups as well as feminist
and tongzhi groups to form a united front for human rights. Secular though this vision was,
however, Jackie Hung’s assessment was insightful: the groups that stayed the most active
were the Christian ones and queer ones closest to Rose Wu’s form of ecumenical
Protestantism.

In turn, each of the groups in this civil society coalition brought different agendas to
the coalition. One group that faced a certain amount of contestation was Christians for
Hong Kong Society (CFHKS), sometimes due to their evangelical leanings. CFHKS’s vice-chair Anthony Chiu remembered that his group’s call for democratic reform had faced ‘apathy’ from Hong Kong citizens ‘until 2003’: crediting Jackie Hung and Rose Wu for their organization of the CHRF and the 1 July Demonstration, he recalled that they had only expected 20,000 to 30,000 people to come and were stunned to see all of the different citizens and civil society groups show up at the first ’7/1’ Demonstration (Anthony Chiu, personal communication, 14 Apr. 2012). Yet CFHKS sometimes did not sit well with the CHRF: at the 3 March 2012 prayer meeting, HKCI’s Fan Lap Hin told me that CFHKS’s chair, Grace Lam, had strongly objected to the use of profanity and the call for God to judge corrupt politicians with ‘death’ in the imprecatory prayer read by Narrow Road Church. Fan interpreted this conservatism as CFHKS being beholden to its evangelical constituency, which made it sit uneasily with the ecumenical groups. Indeed, while socially conservative groups like the Hong Kong Sex-Culture Society (HKSCS) were not part of the CHRF, Kwan Kai Man and Matthew Mak considered it a pro-democracy group because it supported universal suffrage, opposed Article 23, and called for the release of pro-democracy dissidents in China. As Kwan said:

If you look at the official positions, as far as possible, if you look at the Hong Kong Sex-Culture Society, we have official positions against the legislation of Article 23, we propose the abolition of all functional constituencies, we advocate the popular vote as soon as possible, and we support the democratic development. I have gone with Matthew and the staff to the Chinese Consulate to protest the imprisonment of Liu Xiaobo. (Kwan Kai Man, personal communication, 1 Apr. 2012).

Though a misunderstanding with the press in 2005 framed HKSCS’s sister organization, the Society for Truth and Light (STL), as boycotting the 1 July protest, HKSCS and STL also considered themselves pro-democratic organizations, calling for traditional family values to be considered a core element of democratic formation and human rights legislation. In
turn, these groups sat uneasily with the other progressive groups because of their asymmetrical ideological agendas in relation to the gay rights groups.

Key as these theologically-driven groups were to these pro-democracy activities, though, the participants in my focus groups were both divided and sometimes half-hearted about Article 23 and universal suffrage, suggesting that the intensity of the organization from the leaders of the democracy movements seldom translated into everyday congregational life. While the CHRF drew their inspiration from the ‘6/4’ demonstrations, one focus group that I conducted in North Point answered vehemently that any protests led by the CHRF were nothing close to the panic that they had felt when the Tiananmen Incident happened in 1989. Indeed, at the Tuen Mun focus group, Mrs. Ng expressed that she felt that the activities of some pro-democratic Christian groups were too ‘violent’: ‘Democracy is necessary, but if someone uses this to divide this society, for example, the Bible says not to cause dissension. If they are causing chaos, it’s no good to attack leaders and to divide the society.’ Instead, as Mr. Lee said in the same focus group, Hong Kong citizens should use ‘rational means’ to persuade the government to become more democratic. In Sha Tin, Mrs. Cheng recalled that the church underwent some confusion on the Protestant elections because it was not part of the HKCC and yet ‘openly allows individual members to be chosen—we have that, but some churches don’t announce it. I know because I talk with other churches’ friends.’ While she understood that one had to be part of the HKCC to become an Election Committee member, she noted that her church was not part of the HKCC, to which another church member said to her quizzically that she had not in fact heard any announcement from the church that there was an election happening. In a separate group at the same congregation, Mr. Chu said that he was hesitant to
denounce the small circle elections because he did not understand what level of consensus constitutes majority rule: ‘Is it 10 percent? 50 percent? 99 percent? 100 percent?’

Moreover, there was considerable debate in this group between Mr. Chu and Mr. Lee over their attitudes about Article 23: while Mr. Lee said that he had gone to the 1 July 2003 Demonstration to protest Article 23, Mr. Lee countered, ‘But Article 23 must be legal to prevent sedition,’ to which Mr. Chu asked him to look more carefully at the content of the law. Finally, the participants in the Kwun Tong focus group all said that while they would participate in the ‘6/4’ and ‘7/1’ protests, they never heard of their churches pushing them to go, and after the enthusiasm ebbed away from the first few years, they slowly lost interest. In short, the responses from my focus groups carried little of the intense focus of Jackie Hung, Rose Wu, Fan Lap Hin, and Narrow Road Church. If anything, they questioned whether the church’s involvement should be so radical.

That there was a debate over the constitution of the CHRF and the place of democracy in Hong Kong suggests that these consequences of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 remained local to Hong Kong. Indeed, this section has also found very little transnational connection between the place of Cantonese Protestants in Hong Kong’s political system and their counterparts in the San Francisco Bay Area and Metro Vancouver. Indeed, the issue of democracy in Hong Kong was itself again intensely local because the issue at hand focused on how they would deal with regime change and what methods they could use to influence the Special Administrative Region’s regime to become more democratic and transparent. The debate focused on these methods, for while the HKCC collaborated with the government in its Protestant elections, some charismatic groups manipulated these elections for their own political power even as some radical
constituencies challenged the HKCC’s participation in a ‘small circles election.’ These pro-democratic groups formed an ecumenical alliance within the CHRF, protesting a regime that threatened democratic freedoms and human rights violations. In all of this debate, lay Protestants living everyday lives as Hong Kong citizens also felt the need to get involved in democratic action, though not with the intensity of the radical groups. Instead, their stake in this contest was to live peaceful everyday lives with as little political disturbance as possible, participating only when their rights felt imminently threatened. Accordingly, this section has shown that these conversations in Hong Kong remained local to Hong Kong, forming solidarities and contextualizing political subjectivity within the boundaries of the Special Administrative Region itself.

7.6 Conclusion: Local Civil Societies and the Chinese Diaspora

Given the literature on transnational migration from Hong Kong transforming the metropolitan areas of the San Francisco Bay Area and Metro Vancouver (see Skeldon, 1994; Ong, 1999; Ley, 1995, 2010; Waters, 2002, 2003, 2008; Mitchell, 2004), a facile reading of Cantonese Protestant democratic engagements might assume that they have formed transnational political solidarities between their place of origin and their new destinations. With the events of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, it would be easy to presume that urban areas like San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong are transformed into what Michael Peter Smith (2001) might term ‘global cities,’ sites of political solidarity that transcend the economistic understanding of global cities as command-and-control centres of the global economy (see Lai, 2009; Dicken, 2012).
This chapter has deconstructed those assumptions. Following the vein of the Chinese diaspora literature that problematizes the very material existence of the Chinese diaspora (see Ang, 2001; Ma and Cartier, 2003), I have shown in this chapter that what seem to be transnational political solidarities among Cantonese Protestants in the Pacific Rim region are in fact local expressions of democracy in particular metropolitan areas. Far from creating transnational networks, the Tiananmen Incident aroused local demonstrations that awakened particular styles of democratic engagement in each of my field sites. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the focus became doing business with the PRC state in the hope of influencing it, which in turn led to the development of a Cantonese-speaking Chinese American counter public in the Bay Area that narrowly conceptualized Chinese Americans as business-oriented. While this counter public succeeded in influencing Cantonese-speakers to think of themselves through economic lenses, its problem was that it paid too little attention to the civic geographies of the Bay Area, for elections for city mayors are held within cities at neighbourhood levels, resulting in political ineffectiveness for the Cantonese evangelicals who attempted to mobilize Chinese Americans in the suburbs to pay attention to municipal elections happening within San Francisco’s city limits. These geographical problems can be contrasted with the awakening of a Cantonese evangelical democratic consciousness in Metro Vancouver. After electing the Liberal MP Raymond Chan as a representative of Chinese Christians in the Richmond riding and a human rights figure from the Tiananmen Incident, Cantonese evangelicals became disillusioned with his parliamentary actions and personal life. Switching to the Canadian Alliance Party and joining its merger into the Conservative Party of Canada, Cantonese evangelicals began the process of discovering how to participate in secular
Canadian politics, journeying toward dissociating their political activities from their congregational lives in order to win elections based on economic agendas and attention to local secular issues.

These elections in Metro Vancouver in turn are different from the Cantonese Protestant contestations in Hong Kong over the post-1997 Special Administrative Region’s undemocratic political system. While the HKCC attempted a sort of pragmatic collaboration with the new regime’s Election Committee by holding its own Protestant elections in anticipation of universal suffrage in the future, its political stance was contested by other groups, especially by pro-democratic groups that had arisen in light of the Tiananmen Incident that protested collaboration with a regime with a questionable human rights record. Even as some charismatic groups manipulated the elections for their own purposes, radically progressive Protestants attempted to challenge the system altogether. Their actions in turn were tied to the ecumenical impulses of the CHRF, a secular civil society group that attracted Roman Catholic, Protestant, feminist, and queer groups to protest the erosion of human rights under Article 23 of the Basic Law. Launching the 1 July Demonstrations in 2003, they have started a tradition of protest in Hong Kong that questions the legitimacy of the new regime altogether. While their activities are not always endorsed by everyday Protestant Christians in Hong Kong, these heated conversations in Hong Kong signal a local focus on the development of a secular civil society with theological elements in constant contestation.

Indeed, the subtext of this chapter has been that there has been a gradual move of Cantonese Protestants since the Tiananmen Incident from a sole focus on congregational activities to their place in influencing a secular state and participating in a secular civil
society. As outside of the church as these activities may be, however, this chapter has suggested that these secular activities have theological orientations, grounding Cantonese Protestant theologies in secular civil societies. These theologies, however, are in constant contestation and revision, for their purpose is to shape the political subjectivities of fellow citizens—sometimes not only Chinese ones—in each of the civil societies I have explored. Because not everyone agrees on these shaping processes, these theologies are subject to disagreement. Moreover, because not all theologies are seen to be either as pragmatically effective or as faithful to the Christian theological tradition, they are always subjected to constant revision depending on the objectives of the Cantonese Protestants performing these narratives in secular space. In short, what this chapter has shown is nothing less than when Cantonese Protestant theologies are in various civil societies in the Pacific Rim region, it never happens without some measure of contestation. The final question to be answered in conclusion, then, is where all of this secular grounding leaves us in terms of theological ethics.
Chapter 8: Conclusion: contesting the secular, cohabiting in communion

8.1 The ‘Pacific’ imperative: finding contestations and making peace

As some readers may have discerned, this thesis’s main title, *Religious Politics in Pacific Space*, is a play on the word ‘Pacific.’ On the one hand, this thesis’s main research question has been: *what are the imaginations and practices that constitute the engagements of Cantonese Protestants with the civil societies of the San Francisco Bay Area, Metro Vancouver, and Hong Kong SAR?* These three sites are metropolises in the Pacific Rim region to which Cantonese Protestants have migrated and set up residence, including Hong Kong, if one takes the *longue durée* of migration from mainland China to Hong Kong in the 1950s and includes issues of migration, the right of abode, and the ‘one country, two systems’ arrangement in the Special Administrative Region since 1997. While I have examined the ways that Cantonese Protestants have conceptualized their local civil societies and have engaged these secular public spheres in the Pacific Rim region, the subtext of my analysis has been an ethical imperative: given the contestations we have witnessed among Cantonese Protestants, we must use their case to reflect on how to build truly ‘pacific’ spaces, that is, sites that enshrine practices of peacemaking in secular political landscapes marked by the *modus operandi* of contestation.

Answering the research question, the key finding of this thesis is: *when Cantonese Protestants engage their local secular civil societies, they are often drawn into the practices of secular contestation that mark their respective public spheres by leveraging their Chinese ethnicity while playing down their theological convictions as private.* From this description, I then argued that Cantonese Protestants often inadvertently reinforce the secularization
thesis through their essentialized ethnic engagements with their local civil societies. While it may appear counterintuitive that a putatively religious population would reinforce secularization, Cantonese Protestants often unintentionally conceptualize the civil societies that they engage as spaces of political contestation separate from their church congregations, building networks as Chinese populations to influence these public spheres in democratic ways that are disconnected from their churches, which are imagined as private. These attempts to impact secular public spheres are in turn beholden to challenges both by those within Cantonese Protestant circles who dispute these activities on either pragmatic grounds, theological convictions, or conceptualizations about ethnicity and outside these circles by secular politicians and activists who argue that religion should not be mixed with politics.

However, that these forays into the public sphere in fact reinforce the secularity of these civil societies calls into question whether the grounding of Cantonese Protestant theologies in civil society in fact represents theocratic attempts to take over the state. My core contention is that their impulses are quite the opposite, for these attempts to influence the state do not posit that the church—or even ‘Christians,’ per se—should be dominant in governing powers. Instead, they suggest that those who are ethnic Chinese—and who in turn happen to be Christian—should have a voice in their civil societies, though what their ethnicity means is under constant construction and often is narrowly restricted to those who speak the Cantonese language. While the grounded theological practice of spatially ‘progressive’ Cantonese Protestant congregations has historically blurred the divisions between their church congregations and their involvement in state affairs and civil society deliberations (see chapter 4), the Cantonese evangelicals who espoused more
geographically ‘conservative’ theologies posited a strict differentiation between the space of the church and the realm of the world. While it has been common to misconstrue the engagements of individual Cantonese Protestants with civil society in their capacity as private citizens as the involvement of congregational institutions with the public sphere, a closer empirical analysis shows that this conceptualization does not fit with the grounded theologies articulated by most Cantonese evangelicals. However, it was also true that when individual Cantonese Protestants engaged the ‘world,’ they also provoked disputes from other Cantonese Protestants over how such engagements should be carried out theologically, what ethnic Chineseness actually entails, and whether their actions in fact blurred the lines between the sacred and the secular.

Because this argument is in turn a critical engagement with academic reflections on secularization, ethnicity, and migration, this conclusion elucidates the critical significance of this thesis to contemporary scholarly conversations, debates that I suggest lie at the core of the secular university’s agenda. It first unpacks the interventions that this thesis’s key findings about the involvement of Cantonese Protestants in secular political contestations make in the three core literatures that this thesis has engaged: theology and religious studies, Asian American ethnic studies, and Asia-Pacific migration geographies. Following these academic interventions, it then calls for further research on the public engagements of religious populations with their civil societies employing the geographical framework of grounded theologies. From these reflections, it calls for those in the secular public who would engage Cantonese Protestants to be mindful of their congregational ontologies as they do so. It finally ends with ethical reflections on how research into these political contestations can in turn foster practices of peacemaking, allowing us to re-imagine the
premises of peaceful cohabitation while understanding that the Christian practice of
communion makes the theological integrity of the church significant even in a secular age.
In short, this conclusion to Religious Politics in Pacific Space demonstrates that even as
Cantonese Protestants reinforce the secularization thesis through their public
engagements, an examination of how their theologies are grounded and contested in civil
society provides concrete and creative ways forward for peacemaking, suggesting that the
intervention of academic reflection into these civil society engagements can in turn suggest
possibilities for re-imagining these contested sites as ‘pacific’ spaces.

8.2 Contested practices: grounding Cantonese Protestant theologies in Pacific civil
societies

The premise that the grounding of Cantonese Protestant theologies in civil societies
engenders contestation within public spheres and among Cantonese Protestants finds its
disciplinary home in the new cultural geography. Challenging the ‘superorganic’ in
American cultural geography which framed ‘culture’ as an actor in its own right on the
landscape, James Duncan (1980) charted a new approach to cultural geography in which
human actors who were informed by narratives about the world as they knew it shaped the
built environment, leading to contestations among different actors over which narratives
should shape the landscape (Duncan, 1990; Duncan and Duncan, 2004). The task of the
new cultural geography was to examine the political processes by which these cultural
geographies became formed, which meant that what was represented by geographers were
the ways in which the meanings of symbols and the stories that landscapes told were
negotiated by different actors on the ground (see Jackson, 1989; Ley and Duncan, 1993;
Cresswell, 1996, 2005; Ley, 1995, 2010; Yeoh, 1996; Cosgrove, 1998). The objective of this disciplinary lens is to demonstrate that the formation of built environments, social arrangements, and cultural communities do not simply appear on geographical landscapes without processes of formation. Instead, they are often products of debate and conflict whose fraught histories demand to be narrated. The telling of these stories remains geographical, for they reveal the intricate imaginations and practices by which places, communities, networks, and political events are constituted.

This thesis has intervened first into the new cultural geography’s emphasis on contestation by showing that the narratives that often vie for enshrinement on cultural landscapes and social formations are theological ones (Duncan, 1990; Yeoh, 1996; Tse, 2013a). Introducing the term grounded theologies, I showed in chapter 2 that the notion that secular spaces exist separately from religious ones reveals a geographical imagination that is theologically derived, suggesting that the modern world remains constituted and contested by theological narratives, including secular ones. Critiquing facile understandings of ‘religion’ and the ‘secular’ in the sociology and geography of religion that posit that the sighting of religious phenomena putatively signals the end of secularization, chapter 2 drew from the emerging consensus of what is otherwise a disparate group of theologians, religious studies scholars, and social scientists who demonstrate that what is commonly known as ‘secular’ is not the polar opposite of ‘religion.’ Instead, secularization is a theological orientation that narrates an understanding of ‘religion’ as functionally separate from public deliberations, a story that, as I have shown, is not simply a Eurocentric one, but has affected the entire world through processes of colonization and post-colonial nation-building. This theoretical clarification intervenes into these putatively
European and American conversations about the ‘secular’ by showing that it is equally important to study the ways that secularizing theologies have shaped the practice of religion in post-colonial contexts, including those in the Asia-Pacific and among Asian North American populations.

While these secularizing theologies can be traced through actors who attempt to demarcate theologically what belongs to the ‘church’ and what is ‘secular,’ there are ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ ways of practicing these theologies. In chapter 4, I rejected the notion that ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ are temporal terms, that is, that ‘progressive’ referred to the inexorable normalization of egalitarian social arrangements over time, while ‘conservative’ meant those who would hold back such progress in favour of hierarchical communities with no basis in reason. Eschewing these grand historical narratives, I redefined ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ geographically, as Cantonese Protestants would. In chapter 4, then, I showed that the dominant understanding of what it meant to be Cantonese Protestant from the 1950s to the 1970s in all three sites was to be ‘mainline Protestant.’ Located in Chinatowns in San Francisco and Vancouver and tied to the colonial establishment in Hong Kong, the practice of mainline Protestant grounded theologies was a ‘progressive’ one, blurring the lines between the ‘church’ and the ‘world’ so that the congregation literally progressed spatially from its religious space into secular society. In this sense, it can be argued that these mainline Protestants were all allied with state establishments, though this insinuation of entanglement meant very different things in the three sites: in Hong Kong, it signified an embeddedness (at first) with the colonial powers, while in San Francisco, it meant that churches received public funding for social justice initiatives, and in Vancouver, it referred to how churches were functional sites of
Chinese Canadian identity politics to establish the political voice of a postwar Chinatown generation. However, in all three of these sites, these ‘progressive’ grounded theologies were challenged by those that I called Cantonese evangelicals. This newer group of Cantonese Protestants practised ‘conservative’ grounded theologies that sought to police the boundaries between the church and the state, often because they thought that entanglement with the state prevented them from being able to preach the Gospel freely. These challenges began in Hong Kong in the 1950s, for student revival movements led to the launching of evangelistic groups and independent churches for young people that challenged the uniformity of the Protestant mainline, questioning the legitimacy of their ties with the colonial establishment. In other words, the ‘conservative’ theologies of these new evangelical movements interrogated the collusion between the church and the state. While these developments led to the development of evangelical liberation theologies in the late 1970s and 1980s, the migration of Cantonese evangelicals from Hong Kong to North America also led them to challenge what they saw as the collusion of church and state in San Francisco and Vancouver as well. Because they established new congregations that focused on evangelism and preaching in Cantonese, these churches grew rapidly, while those of more ‘progressive’ grounded theologies became a minority. Yet these contestations also led to internal disagreements, causing church splits in the San Francisco Bay Area while culminating in a lawsuit in Vancouver’s Chinatown. In other words, these ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ grounded theologies were politically fraught, especially as they revealed that the central point of division between the two theological orientations was the way that the church was imagined in relation to the state and to civil society.
These insights in turn engage the work in Asian American ethnic studies, an activist discipline whose focus on achieving racial justice for Asian Americans and Asian Canadians has led it to focus on ‘progressive’ political activism at the expense of studying the ‘conservatives’ within this diverse population. Beholden to the temporal version of these two ideological terms, the mandate of Asian American studies has often sought to push against orientalizing racism by telling the stories of Asian Americans, raising awareness about the ways that orientalizing tropes marginalize this diverse population. While these activist strands are laudable for their efforts to question the premises of orientalism, their own marginalization of both theologically constituted and socially conservative populations makes it difficult to conceptualize the everyday lives of Asian Americans, Asian Canadians, and those living in the Asia-Pacific as constituted by contested ideological narratives. In particular, it makes it difficult to speak about those within these groups whose emphasis is to protect their own private property, not to contribute it to public community activism. By redefining ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive,’ I have sought to re-orient Asian American studies itself into a geographical discipline that explores the contestations of these ideological and theological narratives as they seek to define what being ‘Asian American’ means. Indeed, because the content of ethnicity is under constant construction, I suggest that terms like ‘Chineseness’ and ‘Cantonese’ are in fact disputed terrain and that the task of Asian American studies is to explore the contestations engendered by the political deployment of these claims to ethnic coherence.

It is to that end that I showed that Cantonese Protestants, particularly those who practice ‘conservative’ evangelical grounded theologies, leverage their ethnicity as a secularizing strategy, constructing what it means to be ‘Chinese’ so that they can intervene
into secular public debates. As I showed in chapter 5, the major issue that these more ‘conservative’ groups addressed was traditional family values. Disputing the facile interpretations of these forms of activism as a mixture of religion and politics, and suggesting that Asian American, Asian Canadian, and Asia-Pacific ‘conservatives’ needed to be considered more carefully, I demonstrated that Cantonese evangelicals who acted as traditional family activists first constructed what they understood to be Chineseness. They then highlighted those conceptual frameworks, while downplaying their theological convictions as private, as they sought to preserve heteronormative family structures in public policy. In the San Francisco Bay Area, Cantonese evangelicals expounded a ‘model minority’ understanding of what it meant to be Chinese American, highlighting their familial concerns about the education of their second generation in their protest against San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom’s legalization of same-sex marriage in 2004 and in their promotion of Proposition 8 to limit marriage to opposite-sex couples in 2008. While the lawsuit *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, 704 F.Supp.2d 921 (N.D. Cal., 2010), found that Cantonese evangelicals like concerned parental activist Dr. Bill Tam and evangelist Thomas Wang had advocated for Proposition 8 by promoting private religious moral concerns in a secular public sphere, my findings in the San Francisco Bay Area were that they in fact promoted a secular Chineseness and that despite their targeting of churches, congregations were reluctant to join their political activities and preferred to frame their actions as those of individual private citizens who all attended the same church. Indeed, that their concern for the education of their second generation mirrored their activism across the Bay Area against the redrawing of school district lines, suggested that what was more at work was the practice of a secular ‘model minority’ construction of ethnicity rather than one framed
by Christian theology. Similarly, in Metro Vancouver, Cantonese Protestant clergy in the early 1990s, the Canadian Alliance for Social Justice and Family Values Association (CASJAFVA), and the Christian Social Concern Fellowship (CSCF) attempted to mobilize Cantonese evangelicals to push back on what they perceived to be the advance of sexual minority rights to hate crime legislation and same-sex marriage over against Chinese ones framed by traditional families in Canadian civil society. While some of these organizations were successful in organizing several protests, they were criticized as secular, yet those within the church who made these critiques did so because they did not want their congregations to be dragged into these public sphere debates about their traditional Chinese family values. These activities also mirrored their neighbourhood activism against the liberalization of drug policy. Finally, in Hong Kong, advocacy institutions such as the Society for Truth and Light (STL) and the Hong Kong Sex-Culture Society (HKSCS) sought to push back against the liberalization of ‘sex-culture’ in the Asia-Pacific, successfully shelving the Sexual Orientation Discrimination Ordination (SODO) in 2005 while causing controversy in their fight against the *Gay Lovers* documentary on Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) in 2006 and provoking the charge of being a ‘religious right’ during their campaign against the inclusion of same-sex couples as families in the Domestic Violence Ordinance (DVO) in 2008. Yet these activities were also secular, for STL and HKSCS framed their arguments as rational ones that advocated pluralism and social inclusion for those who held to heteronormative views, and my focus groups confirmed this secularity when respondents said that the church should not explicitly support these activities. Leveraging their ethnicity, Cantonese evangelicals in each of these sites advanced a particular
understanding of Chineseness as tied to heteronormative families to intervene into civil society debates that putatively threatened these private spheres.

Following these explorations into the secularity of these traditional family values politics, I contended that the academic discourse of post-secularism must be braked. Here, I used my ‘conservative’ intervention into Asian American studies to challenge the assertions of the followers of Habermas (2005, 2006), who posit that contemporary civil societies must be conceptualized as post-secular for their mixing of religious and secular discourses in civic discussion. I demonstrated that the faith-based organizations (FBOs) that led these forays into civil society were disputed among Cantonese Protestants themselves. FBOs are important because some geographers have asserted that they are institutional agents of the post-secular, mixing religious and secular participants in order to advance charitable causes in civil society to fill in service gaps left by the neoliberal state (see Beaumont, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Beaumont and Baker, 2011).

However, these theoretical conversations did not match my empirical findings among Cantonese Protestants, whose FBOs and congregations in fact reinforced the secularization thesis in different ways in each of the sites. In the San Francisco Bay Area, influential Cantonese evangelical congregations and FBOs had followed a framework advanced by business leaders, such as Kenneth Yeung of Prince of Peace Enterprises and retired United Commercial Bank CEO Lam Sau Wing, to restructure their institutional operations according to business models, especially to avoid organizational scandals that had plagued them in the 1990s. These institutional shifts paralleled the evolution of urban planning policy in the Bay Area, in which planners increasingly asked churches and FBOs to demonstrate their contribution to social and economic vitality in their cities prior to
granting them conditional use permits. While many Cantonese evangelicals were able to meet these new requirements because they had restructured themselves as businesses, the larger reach of business models suggested to some that staying within Cantonese circles was too limiting in terms of community service, and they participated in a first-generation ‘silent exodus’ to Anglo-American churches that served local communities through private-public partnerships with municipal governments. In Metro Vancouver, FBOs and churches re-oriented their missions to become social service agencies because of their theological evolution on the term ‘evangelism,’ moving beyond proselytization toward a broader rubric of ‘social concern.’ As I showed, these concerns revolved around the enhancement of their own private spheres, for this narrative of Chineseness came to dominate in a debate among Cantonese evangelicals about the meaning of ethnic Chineseness. There were two sides to this conversation: a radically democratic one advanced by Chinese Christians in Action’s (CCIA) Bill Chu that called for a reworking of Chineseness to advance the common good (including the territorial rights of First Nations) that was opposed to the Cultural Regeneration Research Society’s (CRRS) Leung Insing, who argued for a mystical conception of Chineseness that protected private familial rights while expressing patriotic compassion to the PRC. Again, these contentions about Chineseness suggested that these debates revolved around how Cantonese evangelicals should serve a secular civil society, not whether that public sphere was in fact a post-secular one. Finally, in Hong Kong, Cantonese evangelical FBOs such as Breakthrough Youth Ministries, the Hong Kong Church Network for the Poor (HKCNP), and the Family Development Fund emerged as collaborative advisors to the new Special Administrative Region’s policy committees, launching pilot projects for poverty relief and youth unemployment while placing
influential Cantonese evangelicals such as Dr. Philemon Choi and Shirley Loo into voluntary advisory roles on government boards. These actions provoked opposition from some of their collaborators during the time leading up to the 1997 handover, for while some FBOs reoriented themselves to advise the government from within in order to advance just policies, others like the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI), Senlok Christian Church, and the Alliance for the Return to the Christian Spirit contested the legitimacy of the state regime itself. These latter groups cooperated with grassroots social justice groups like the Catholic Diocese's Justice and Peace Commission to advocate for the right of abode for migrant workers and mothers from the PRC, fair police treatment toward ‘street sleepers,’ human rights for sexual minorities, justice in the wake of the Choi Yuen Chuen village’s demolition in order to make way for a high-speed light rail to Shenzhen, and the decoupling of state officials from large megachurches. This situation in Hong Kong suggests that the debate over the work of these FBOs revolves around how to engage the secular state regime in Hong Kong. Intervening into the post-secularization debates, then, I suggested that these empirical realities indicate that this theoretical discourse in human geography, theology, and religious studies must be braked and that what is more interesting to study is how putatively religious organizations in fact reinforce secularization processes through their grounded theological practices. Moreover, when these groups act in these secular ways, they are constantly subjected to disputes about their activities, for they are actively trying to construct grounded theologies to justify their public engagements, resulting in dissent over the narratives that they attempt to enact in civil society.

Finally, I intervened in Asia-Pacific migration geographies by demonstrating that these theological practices of secularity were not part of a network of transnational
migration and solidarity, but were developed and worked out in local civil societies bound by metropolitan areas. As I showed in chapter 7, despite the mobility of elites back and forth across the Pacific, these public engagements tended to be local. In other words, despite the existence of private transnational social fields, the public geographies of democratic political movements were not located in transnational Chinese diasporic networks, but in the engagements of Cantonese Protestants within civil societies that were bound by metropolitan areas. While the events of 4 June 1989 in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square sparked outrage among the ethnic Chinese populations in all three of the sites that I explored, I demonstrated that the work of Cantonese Protestants in dealing with the ‘6/4’ Incident varied across the three sites. The development of a network to receive dissident students in the San Francisco Bay Area evolved into a program to aid the PRC’s nation-building attempts by helping with charity work, whereas Cantonese evangelicals in Metro Vancouver were launched into Canadian politics through their public laments and protests on this issue. In Hong Kong, both secular and Christian pro-democratic groups were formed to attempt to educate the Hong Kong public about democracy prior to the 1997 handover.

The democratic activities that developed as a result of the ‘6/4’ Incident tended in turn to be restricted to the civil societies in which Cantonese Protestants in each of my sites found themselves. In the San Francisco Bay Area, some Cantonese evangelicals became involved in the Cantonese-language media, advancing a business-oriented understanding of Chinese Americans to Cantonese speakers, especially through the secular radio. While these activities developed a regional solidarity of Chinese Americans whose articulation of ethnic identity were influenced by these radio hosts, it was difficult to turn these Chinese
Americans out to vote, particularly for municipal elections, for not all of their audience lived in the City of San Francisco, concerned as they were about the 2011 mayoral elections, for example. These electoral difficulties contrasted with my findings in Metro Vancouver, where several Cantonese evangelicals such as Alice Wong, Wai Young, and Ronald Leung were running as federal Members of Parliament by 2008 and 2011. Yet here too, I showed that the voting patterns of Cantonese evangelicals were not developed by transnational influences, but by their disillusionment with Tiananmen activist and Liberal MP Raymond Chan in the 1990s because he campaigned as a Chinese Christian who could represent this constituency in the federal Parliament. Disappointed in Chan, Cantonese evangelicals slowly learned to run campaigns through their experiences in the Canadian Alliance Party, which merged with the Conservative Party of Canada in 2003. Discovering that the only strategy that could work was to promote secular economic issues, Cantonese evangelicals learned to play down their social conservatism in public while sustaining a message control campaign on lower taxes, toughness on crime, and attention to local concerns about land use and infrastructure building. Finally, Cantonese Protestants in Hong Kong grappled with democracy in their Special Administrative Region’s undemocratic electoral system. While the ecumenical Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC) held elections for the Protestant electoral seats in the Election Committee drawn from various sectors of Hong Kong’s society, their actions were challenged both by pro-establishment charismatics who rigged the campaigns to advance their own private interests and by anti-establishment democratic activists who sought to show that the Election Committee needed to be abolished in favour of universal suffrage. As I showed, these latter activists tended to be associated with the Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF), a
secular network of democratic activists advocating against anti-sedition legislation based on the Basic Law's Article 23. I demonstrated that the formation of CHRF was itself an ecumenical activity, bringing together the Catholic Diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission, pro-democratic Protestant groups, and feminist and queer organizations through the organizational efforts of the Hong Kong Christian Institute's (HKCI) Rose Wu Lo Sai. As these efforts were also located within Hong Kong itself without any transnational influences, my conclusion here was that the ethnic Chineseness leveraged in each of the sites as a secularizing strategy did not also invoke transnationalism. If anything, it held that the actions of Cantonese Protestants appealing to ethnic Chinese populations in each site remained confined to each metropolitan area’s civil society.

In short, this thesis has provided a new cultural geographical intervention into three core literatures: revisionist accounts of secularization in theology and religious studies, the place of ‘conservatives’ in Asian American studies, and an emphasis on local geographies in Asia-Pacific migration studies. The contribution of cultural geography demonstrates that the narratives advanced by Cantonese Protestants in each of the sites are never practised without contestation. Exploring the engagements of Cantonese Protestants with the public spheres in each of the sites, a basic premise that I have uncovered is that while the dominance of ‘conservative’ grounded theologies that police the boundaries between the church and the secular civil society might give the impression that Cantonese evangelicals are not involved in public deliberations, the empirical reality is that their constant reiteration of their congregational boundaries, their appeal to their ethnicity, and their contested forms of activism in the public sphere as secular Chinese citizens suggests that they have been more involved in civil society than either the academic literature or
journalistic establishment have given them credit. The more complicated finding that has been made possible through the disciplinary lens of the new cultural geography is that these activities in the secular public sphere are always subjected to negotiation and, invariably, conflict. The stakes of these disputes revolve around their grounded theological conceptions of what a civil society is in contrast to the space of the church and their practice of ethnic invocation as a secularizing strategy to maximize their impact on each of those secular public spheres. In short, Cantonese Protestants in the Pacific Rim region can hardly be said to inhabit ‘pacific’ spaces. If anything, their congregational sites, public engagements, institutional frameworks, and civic participation are under constant construction and contestation over their theological and ethnic narratives. Indeed, one might even argue that the framing of the secular public sphere as other to the church is the source of these disputes, leading to fractious theological and ethnic debates about how the church should engage the world. The grounding of Cantonese Protestant theologies in secular civil society produces religious politics in Pacific space.

8.3 Beyond Cantonese Protestants: new ethnic and religious publics

Despite the large qualitative sample of 140 interviews and thirteen focus groups that I have gathered, this study’s limitations lie in its constraint in focusing on Cantonese-speaking Protestants and in restraining itself to a qualitative inquiry. While I detailed my methodological strategy in chapter 3, I reiterate it briefly here in this discussion of the limits of my study. Because the key informants were specifically targeted for their influence on Cantonese Protestant geographies and the focus group participants were recruited from unspecified congregations through key persons at those churches, this
study makes no claim to present a statistically representative sample of Cantonese Protestants. Indeed, the research question does not call for representativeness, but rather, an interpretation of the imaginations and practices that constitute the engagements of Cantonese Protestants in each of the sites. While I framed the population of Cantonese Protestants numerically in chapter 1, I also qualified there that both ‘Cantonese’ and ‘Protestant’ are constructs that are prone to debate, relativizing the significance of a numerical inquiry to this thesis. Instead of aiming for representativeness, I have opted for a large qualitative sample size with a methodological strategy that attempts to find voices to represent each group in the spirited conversations among Cantonese Protestants in each of the civil societies that were explored. I supplemented my qualitative fieldwork with a working archive of both print and audiovisual materials. By collecting qualitative data, I was able to tap into the conversations and debates that were happening among Cantonese Protestants, allowing my own prior assumptions to be questioned while deriving theoretical interventions from the empirical material itself.

In turn, these methodological limitations indicate that there is much more research that could be done in the expansion of this thesis’s research question for a more comprehensive literature on comparative Asian American, Asian Canadian, and Asia-Pacific religious populations and their engagements with secular public spheres. At a methodological level, the constructs that I have uncovered from the ground in this qualitative study can be paired with a quantitative approach that can assess the extent to which average Cantonese Protestant churchgoers share the grounded theologies and ethnic constructions narrated and performed by Cantonese Protestant leaders. Using the taxonomy of ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ congregational theologies, these results can
also be compared across different types of congregations espousing different narratives of how the church should approach the world. Moreover, the qualitative case itself can be expanded to encompass primarily Mandarin-speaking and English-speaking Chinese populations, as well as other ethnic groups and different theological traditions. If this case were to extended to those who speak Putonghua, however, I would start by unpacking the geopolitical fissures among those who may speak the same language, but use different Chinese language scripts based on their asymmetrical geopolitical allegiances. I would also be curious about their partisan loyalties within the transnational networks in which they come, attempting to tease out the stakes of their contestations vis-à-vis their involvement in various transnational political factions as well as the ways in which they integrate their politics into the civil societies to which they have migrated. Finally, the case of Cantonese Protestants is itself not exhausted, for this thesis has not included the fascinating cases that might also be available in Seattle, Los Angeles, San Diego, Denver, Toronto, New York, Houston, London, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Jakarta, just to name a few global cities that deserve similar treatments. Each of these directions would be appropriate ways to extend the case of Cantonese Protestants in the San Francisco Bay Area, Metro Vancouver, and Hong Kong SAR so that a fuller literature on religious politics in secular civil society that invokes ethnicity as a core practice can be more fully developed. The study of religious politics in Pacific space can also be extended to other nation-states in the Asia-Pacific, such as the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, as well as other post-colonial regimes elsewhere in the world.
Another qualitative direction to develop more fully is the participation of younger-generation Asian American and Asian Canadian religious practitioners in already-existing publics while also creating their own. While these younger generations generally speak English and are assumed to have integrated into mainstream publics, the paucity of Asian American and Asian Canadian faces on mainstream media gives one pause about the actual discrimination that they may face in the engagement of public spheres, despite the economic success of some sectors of this population (see Pew, 2013). More research must be done into how younger-generation Asian Americans and Asian Canadians engage democratic politics, especially as persons of faith; far more must be done qualitatively to understand their political reasoning. Moreover, while there is a growing literature on second-generation Asian American faith on college campuses and evangelical church plants (Busto, 1999; Alumkal, 2003; Jeung, 2005; R Kim, 2006; S Kim, 2011; Chen and Jeung, 2012), little has been done to determine whether these organizations conceptualize themselves as public institutions or private religious bodies and how their mandate for evangelism and the proliferation of artistic renditions of theology in music, drama, and the visual arts makes their public-private divisions come under flux. The emergence of younger-generation Asian Americans who may be persons of faith privately while selectively revealing it in their creation of new publics on social media also demands further examination. Research should be conducted to elucidate whether these younger generations’ social, economic, and political views align with those of their parents, as well as what new issues have captured their imaginations and shaped their practices in the public sphere. Finally, the diversity of this population suggests that the research done among these pan-Asian groups might uncover differences in the construction of what it
means to be younger generation Asian Americans and Asian Canadians and how to practice their faith in secular public contexts (see YL Espiritu, 1992).

Given also the reality that publics can be mixed coalitions that span across theologies and ethnicities, another possible area of research is how interracial, multi-ethnic, and interfaith coalitions intervene into civil societies and the extent to which their cooperation indicates that they have integrated as communities with porous boundaries. While my research has focused on one particular ethnic and religious population, more can be done to determine whether there are solidarities made with African Americans and Latino Americans. Indeed, the Vancouver case of Bill Chu makes Chinese Canadian and First Nations solidarity a priority case for further research. Moreover, because populations in Asia-Pacific nation-states are neither racially nor theologically uniform, solidarities in these sites need to be uncovered. Finally, despite the exclusivity of some theologies within evangelical Protestantism, further research could explore the ways in which pragmatic solidarities across theological and religious lines have been built with different agendas in mind.

A final direction is to research the ways in which those who do not share the same ethnicity as Asian Americans, Asian Canadians, and Asia-Pacific religious populations regard these groups, particularly as they are engaging secular civil societies that are not uniformly ‘Asian.’ While this thesis has explored the contested imaginations and practices of one of these Asian groups, it has only hinted at the attitudes of those within their civil societies who share neither their religion nor their race nor their ethnicity. When I have reported them in this thesis, they have been interpreted through the eyes of my Cantonese Protestant respondents. To do a project that examines, for example, the parties with which
Cantonese Protestants have engaged in their forays into civil society would reveal the other side of the story. Indeed, one key example might be the urban planning policies that I discussed in chapter 6: while I discussed the views of Cantonese Protestants about these policies, it would be fascinating to understand the conversations by which policy decisions that affect Asian American, Asian Canadian, and Asia-Pacific populations are made. Another possibility might be to interview activists, policymakers, and legislators in favour of legalizing same-sex marriage, liberalizing drug laws, desegregating schools by introducing a bus system, and legalizing gambling for municipal funding have come to these policy conclusions in view of the opposition of groups like Cantonese evangelicals (see chapter 5).

Because all of this further research entails exploration into groups that also need to construct their ethnicities, articulate their political alliances, and practice their grounded theologies, the literature that these directions for research will develop is one that will focus on the internal and external contestations of various groups vying to establish their imaginations in the secular public sphere. This new literature would be a helpful complement to the conversation on secularization in theology and religious studies, complementing it with different conceptions of race and ethnicity that could open up new empirical directions to study secular geographies, anthropologies, and sociologies in contemporary scholarship. It would also introduce grounded theologies as an analytic in Asian American and Asia-Pacific studies, as well as in human geography more generally, demanding that religious populations and constructions of the secular need to be taken seriously in these academic fields.
8.4 Engaging Cantonese Protestants: minding congregational ontologies

This thesis has shown that Cantonese Protestants are populations that should not be ignored in Pacific Rim public spheres. Despite the often-contentious debates among Cantonese Protestants about how their congregations should relate to secular civil societies, their participation in civic activities begs the question of how they should be engaged by other members of the secular public. Having drawn out the central stakes of contestation among Cantonese Protestants, I suggest that secular approaches to congregations, especially attempts to mobilize them for political purposes, must be mindful of their congregational ontologies. This is especially true for forms of spatial ‘conservatism’ in which the Cantonese Protestants in those congregations might be uncomfortable being mobilized as religious practitioners, but more willing to be mobilized as secular Chinese citizens acting in an individual capacity to engage a secular public sphere.

As we have seen from chapters 5 to 7, the dominant congregational ontology at work among Cantonese Protestants since the 1970s has been a spatially conservative one that seeks to maintain a strict differentiation between the ‘church’ and the ‘world.’ While I have argued that this ontology remains indebted to the secularization thesis, its dominance suggests that it would be a fool’s errand to attempt to mobilize entire congregations as religious practitioners for political causes or even forms of social engagement. It might be true that many Cantonese Protestants seem to be involved in political—or at least public—activities. However, I have demonstrated such involvement is often conceptualized as separate from church life.

In other words, Cantonese Protestants themselves have realized that maximum political success in a secular public may depend on a certain veiling of theology on their
part (see Bramadat 2013). When organizations like SUCCESS emphasized their non-religious nature or the Alice Wong campaign stuck to message control about the economy, they were successful. When political efforts such as the Traditional Family Coalition’s campaign for Proposition 8 were revealed to have theological motivations, their impact was hampered. Accordingly, while there is considerable debate within congregations and by parachurch groups wanting to mobilize churches for certain causes about where the line between the church and the world is, ‘conservative’ congregations must be treated as private, autonomous spaces in which personal concerns, not publicly political issues, should be discussed.

Instead, if people in these churches are to be mobilized, the approach should be to appeal to an ethnic Chinese sensibility, perhaps following Andrea Smith (2008) in rearticulating how solidarities work in order to form what Gayatri Spivak calls ‘strategic essentialisms’ (see esp. Chuh 2003).  

One example might be the work of individual Cantonese Protestants around traditional family values in chapter 5. While members of some congregations were mobilized for activism, the congregation as an institution seldom got involved, for they wanted to maintain their neutrality and autonomy. However, conversations within these congregations revolved around the private issues of marriage, family, and children because these were seen to be ‘Chinese’ issues, leading to members being mobilized based on their own personal concerns based on an essentialized ethnicity. So too, the institutional re-orientations discussed in chapter 6 point to how congregations and parachurch organizations positioned these autonomous groups to better engage the

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169 Though Spivak coined ‘strategic essentialism,’ she has since disavowed the term. As it is, I prefer Kandice Chuh’s (2003) usage of the term as she leverages it to see Asian American solidarities as internally contested yet moving toward a world that can ‘imagine otherwise’ outside of colonizing modalities.
public sphere while maintaining that they were independent of these spheres, deploying instead an understanding of ‘Chineseness’ to intervene into political affairs. While such a spatial framework has led to the accusations in chapters 6 and 7 that these churches seek to maintain a hierarchical status quo, what is at stake in the ‘conservatism’ of the congregation is its ability to maintain its independence from external governance. To engage with such churches and organizations in the public sphere requires a level of respect for the ontologies out of which their secular claims to ethnicity emerge, understanding their disposition toward institutional autonomy and their propensity to lean toward talking about personal issues in the private sphere while framing public issues as political. That such a framework is indebted to the secularization thesis does not mean that it can be ignored by a secular public; instead, members of civil society ought to realize that to say that such ‘conservatism’ inadvertently reinforces the secularity of the public sphere means also that that ‘public sphere’ contains multiple versions of what it means to be secular.

What I have also shown, however, is that such ‘conservatisms’ are relatively new and that there has been a history of Cantonese Protestants who might be described as ‘progressive,’ that is, willing to blur their congregational spaces with civil society. If one asks whether Cantonese Protestants could return to such a history, then one must consider why they became conservative in the first place: it was because it was perceived that that ‘progressivism’ meant that the church was being controlled by an outside establishment. Cantonese Protestants who recognized that embeddedness sought to separate the space of the church from the control of the colonial state in Hong Kong as well as the Chinatown elites in Vancouver and the Asian American movement for social justice in San Francisco.
Here again, then, we return to the question of autonomy and how it might be that churches can maintain their independence while coexisting in a secular civil society. To properly frame an approach to this question means that this thesis will finally need to end on a theological note, addressing the church from within in order to explore its own tools that might aid in the reconciliation of difference in a polarized political world.

8.5 Contestation, cohabitation, and communion: ethical directions for Pacific spaces

Geographers have long been interested in the moral and ethical implications of their work, some seeing the discipline itself as a moral and ethical tradition that shapes praxis. Indeed, David Livingstone (1991) has argued that the ‘geographical tradition’ is a version of what moral philosopher Alasdair McIntyre (1984) has called a ‘moral tradition,’ a coherent body of thought that seeks to develop virtues in its practitioners, for there has always been an ethical agenda that drives the mapping of various geographies. In the 1970s, David Harvey (1973/2009) and Bill Bunge (1971/2011) intervened into urban geography, calling for scholars to realize that their works deployed the philosophies that informed the structures contributing to the rise of systemic oppression against racialized and economically disadvantaged populations. Their emphasis on structure was challenged and complemented by humanistic geographers like Yi Fu Tuan (1978) and David Ley (1976a, 1976b) who argued that the personal lived experiences of people on the ground needed to be taken into account, for structure does not necessarily determine their exercise of agency to make places. Contested in turn by feminist geographers like Gillian Rose (1993), Geraldine Pratt (2004), and Gill Valentine (2003, 2004, 2005, 2009), geographers also
interrogate how the lines between public spheres and private lifeworlds are drawn, for they reveal how certain ethical traditions are practised on the ground, some of which lead to the disadvantage of populations that are not favoured by white patriarchal heteronormative social structures (see also D Mitchell 1997; Staeheli and Mitchell, 2008). More recently, religion has also been brought into this picture, to explore how theological contributions can shape a world of ethical practices of peacemaking, reconciliation, justice, and ecological stewardship (Pacione, 2000; Cloke, 2002; Kong, 2010; Megoran, 2004, 2010; Yorgason and della Dora, 2009; Tse, 2013a).

This thesis is located within that geographical tradition. Having mapped the various grounded theologies that Cantonese Protestants perform in their construction of congregational lives, ethnic identities, and political networks, the mandate of any such geographical study is to conclude with a statement about the ethical positionality of the researcher. This task is admittedly complicated by the reality that this study is being filed at a secular university, an academic institution with putatively little interest in theological reflections that are supposed to be kept within my private religious life in the confines of my church (see Hauerwas, 2000, 2008; BS Gregory 2012). Yet as I have argued, the ‘secular’ is itself theologically constituted, narrating a particular understanding of geographies of religion (see Asad, 2003; Mahmood, 2005, 2007; Milbank, 2006; Taylor, 2007). As this thesis comes to a close, then, I reflect on the ethical agenda that has been unveiled by my exploration of the grounding of Cantonese Protestant theologies in secular civil society, but I do so by demonstrating that the interest of secular universities is best served by a theological meditation on how Cantonese Protestants can better practice their ecclesiology, that is, their theological narrative of what the Christian church means and how
it exists in the midst of the secular world. Indeed, the final question that must be answered is: *how does one sustain theological discourse in secular universities?*

I begin in a secular register. This thesis has uncovered internal and external points of coalition-building and dispute as Cantonese Protestants seek to ground their theologies in their secular civil societies. Accordingly, these ethical reflections must begin with a meditation on the nature of the contestation that we have seen throughout this study. Beginning in chapter 4, we saw that the central point of contention among Cantonese Protestants since the 1950s lay in the relationship between their theology of congregational space, their perception of the secular state, and their service to the civil society surrounding their congregations. These disputes were neither idle nor insular. They were debates about the role of Chinese Americans, Chinese Canadians, and Hong Kong Chinese residents in public discourse, civic action, and social justice, and they led to divisions within Cantonese-speaking Protestant congregations as well as among Chinese populations in each of the sites that we have explored. As ‘conservative’ Cantonese evangelicals began to dominate Cantonese Protestant landscapes in the 1960s and 1970s, their strict differentiation between the space of the church and the sphere of the secular public did not in fact mean that they were non-secular. Quite the contrary: as their defence of traditional family values, their restructuring of their FBOs, and their participation in democratic politics after 1989 demonstrate, this imagination of the differentiation between the church and the world reinforced the secularization thesis, and they dealt with this geographical imagination by framing themselves as secular ethnic Chinese persons whenever they participated in civil society conversations, no matter how religiously devout they were privately. It was these secularizing activities in turn that engendered the further
contestations that we have witnessed in this thesis, as Cantonese Protestants disputed among themselves over whether these grounded theologies were faithful to their theological tradition, whether ethnic Chineseness was really as uniform as it was constructed, and whether these secularizing approaches were politically pragmatic enough to be workable.

In a secular register, these contestations reveal the need to talk about an ethic of cohabitation, of how to live together peaceably without letting disagreements inhibit our contributions to the common good. Indeed, the contestation that I have uncovered is due to the co-existence of groups with disputed grounded theologies and constructions of ethnicity living in proximity to one another. Hannah Arendt (1967: 279) eloquently articulates this ethic in her conclusion of her account of the trial of Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem:

> For politics is not like the nursery; in politics obedience and support are the same. And just as you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations—as though you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world—we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to share the earth with you. This is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang.

While it would be an exaggeration to talk about Cantonese Protestants *qua* Eichmann, the importance of this passage transcends the Nazi regime: the simple point that Arendt makes is that political cohabitation is not an option; it is an empirical reality and an ethical mandate.\(^\text{170}\) Indeed, Gill Valentine (2009) writes about this as she wants to develop a ‘geography of encounter,’ a way of living together despite our differences by encountering

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\(^{170}\) I am indebted to my colleague, literary scholar Artur Sebastian Rosman (2013), for this keen insight about Hannah Arendt and the importance of theological discourse in secular universities from his blog, *Cosmos the in Lost* (a deliberately backward reading of Catholic novelist Walker Percy’s *Lost in the Cosmos*).
one another in personal ways. Hopeful as Valentine seems at times about this prospect, however, she is disheartened by the end of her discussion of geographies of micro-encounter, for she reads studies of encounters at close proximity as only developing shallow relationships, not the strong bonds needed to develop any real form of social capital.

In the midst of these frustrations about peaceful cohabitation, Judith Butler (2008, 2012) signals a different way forward: to tell each other stories of dispossession as a way of enacting unlikely solidarities. As I concluded chapter 5, I discussed Butler’s claim that narrating stories of dispossession and understanding that the ‘other’ also has stories of precarious living and experiences of being dispossessed can be a source of common ground. One could argue that the reasons that Cantonese Protestants feel that they must adopt secularizing strategies is to prevent themselves from becoming marginalized in a secular civil society, which would eventually lead to their dispossession of familial integrity and religious freedom. While the mainline Protestants in each of the sites allied themselves with state establishments in order to serve Chinese communities in San Francisco, Vancouver, and Hong Kong, the ‘conservative’ Cantonese evangelicals also spoke of the precariousness of their private congregational spaces, which they saw as threatened by the forces of cultural secularization, sexual liberalization, family disintegration, and racializing marginalization in the public sphere. These ‘conservative’ concerns are not so different from those articulated by the ‘progressives.’ The difference lies in how these differing theological practitioners articulate the way that they practice their grounded theologies and construct their ethnicities in the face of such marginalization. Yet if they recognized the solidarity that they have in facing their fears together, perhaps it might not be too far a
stretch to say that there are opportunities for collaboration despite their ideological fissures.

This is the point at which we see that it is not only possible, but necessary, to have a conversation in the secular university about how contestations within the church can be transposed into the key of cohabitation. As scholars as diverse as critical theorist Jürgen Habermas (2006) and theologian Miroslav Volf (2010) have noted, the Christian church does not dominate secular civil society as an institution in a secular age (see also Casanova, 1994; Milbank, 2006; Taylor, 2007; Lilla, 2008; BS Gregory, 2012). While this assertion sometimes is said with the assumption that the ‘secular’ is a category with a uniform meaning positioned against the united forces of ‘religion,’ the reality is that this means that the church is also fragmented in its approach to what it perceives as a secular civil society. In other words, the church is itself pluralistic and is in conversation with multiple grounded theologies. Some of those conversations happen among those who confess to be Christian, while others are part of different ‘religious’ traditions while still others participate in the crypto-theological strands that compose the various secularisms at play in the contemporary world. Those conversations are the source of debate among groups like Cantonese Protestants who do not agree on how the church should in fact approach the secular world.

The secular university is precisely the place to examine the practice of these various grounded theologies in the common space where we all cohabit, for academia is a safe space for real dialogue about how various theologies are grounded. Within Catholic academia, Jesuit theologian Avery Cardinal Dulles (1998/2008) observes that university theology can be a service to the church, for theology ‘can be invigorated and purified by
interaction with the human and natural sciences’ while the secular disciplines ‘can profit from the comprehensive vision of theology and from theology’s integration of truth with values’ (Dulles, 1998/2008: 10). This experimental approach with religion is also possible in secular academic contexts. As lived religion scholar Robert Orsi (2001) provocatively puts it, the study of religion in the space of secular academia calls for a ‘polytheistic’ classroom where faculty and students who practice multiple forms of grounded theologies can meet at least halfway into each other’s traditions, seeking to understand each other’s theological worlds in good faith without the need to subscribe to anyone else’s religious narratives. While some conservative Christians might be uncomfortable with the idea of not being able to take back the whole space of academia for the kingdom of God, I might remind them that this notion of spatial control is a very modern development associated more with the church being wielded by the state for its own secular ends (see esp. Taylor, 2007; Tse 2013b). More faithful interpretations of Judeo-Christian tradition posit that the people of God usually bear quiet witness in polytheistic contexts to a new way of life marked by love, humility, and forgiveness.

Indeed, these new bonds of solidarity are the basis of Christian communion, according to Jesus, who tells us, ‘Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’ (Matt. 5.4 NRSV). Because of the dominance of the work of sociologist Émile Durkheim (1915/1965), it has become a common assumption that religion is totemic, that the purpose of ritual is to enact bonds of abstract and mystical forces of solidarity that bind communities together and give them social cohesion. However, literary scholar René Girard (2001) insightfully demonstrates that the rituals of primal societies described by Durkheim do not describe abstract bonds of social cohesion, but arbitrary acts of excluding
scapegoats to release social tension and bring about political harmony through violence. In other words, the dispossession of the scapegoat is often the way by which societies maintain their cohesion. Mirroring Butler’s (2012) argument, Girard demonstrates that the Christian difference to such social relations is possible because Jesus Christ is the scapegoat who was executed but rose to life. Christian communion ultimately is solidarity with this Jesus, leading (as Girard puts it) to the practice of a new ‘concern for victims’ that was never present in earlier pagan societies, the formation of a society precisely around the disposessed. Indeed, Girard’s point converges with St. Augustine’s (1972) central argument in the City of God, where he argues that what makes the city of God different from pagan societies is that it is founded on a radically humble renunciation of violence and acquisitiveness, leading to an ethic of welcoming hospitality toward the other. If there is a site in which cohabitation should be sought, it should be in the communion of the church of Jesus Christ, participating in solidarity with the one who was disposessed on the cross and vindicated in his resurrection.

Teasing out the ethical implications of such solidarity and communion that the church is supposed to embody, some Christian theologians have argued that the task of the church in the midst of the secular world is simply to be the church. One of these theological ethicists, Stanley Hauerwas (2000, 2001), has been accused of advocating a ‘conservative’ grounded theological practice of withdrawal, with some of his critics calling him a ‘sectarian fideistic tribalist.’ In this sense, Hauerwas has been misread. Following a conversation launched by revisionist theorists of secularization such as John Milbank (2006) and Charles Taylor (2007), Hauerwas observes that the division between the church and the world within the Christian theological realm is not a spatial one in which
boundaries must be ideologically policed. It is an ontological differentiation, one that proposes that the practices of the church are themselves political because they run counter to the *modus operandi* of the secular world while the church still exists in the midst of the world. While various forms of secularity assume that social relations are constituted by contestation and the exclusion of the scapegoat, Hauerwas reads Milbank and Taylor as proposing that one’s entire ontological being must be converted and one’s understanding of social relations must be shifted from one based on contestation toward one premised on love, solidarity, and communion. As Milbank (2006) argues, this mode of social relations does not erase difference; instead, it regards difference as enshrined in an ‘ontology of harmonious communion’ so that different ways of doing things are regarded simply as different expressions of solidarity with Jesus Christ that are equally valid. Following Charles Taylor’s (2007) unfolding of the conversion of various literary figures to this new ontology, being the church with the practice of such solidarity is the church’s true resistance to secularization, bearing witness to a world of contestation by living in such a way that the practice of different approaches to the world need not result in the fragmentation of the church, but can co-exist together in harmony. In this way, the church does not demarcate a spatial boundary between itself and the world. Instead, it achieves its distinct voice through a radical practice of hospitality toward all who would disposess themselves in order to participate with Jesus in his program of resurrection.

Because this thesis has concerned Cantonese Protestants, the most appropriate place to end this argument for communion is to consult a Protestant theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for how he would propose an ethic of cohabiting communion for Cantonese Protestants. The choice of Bonhoeffer is not arbitrary. A frequent joke that I heard during
fieldwork in Hong Kong was that every other thoughtful Christian in the Special Administrative Region was a self-proclaimed Karl Barth or Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Indeed, what became apparent was that those who espoused conservative political positions and those who enacted radically progressive agendas both said that their theologies were derived from these two German Protestant theologians. Both theologians resisted the rise of the National Socialist regime in Germany as they started what came to be known as the ‘Confessing Church.’ Along with other pastors at the time, Barth penned the Barmen Declaration, declaring that the church could never be controlled by the state, mailed a copy to Adolf Hitler, and fled to Switzerland. Bonhoeffer returned to Germany at that time to start an underground seminary, joined a plot to assassinate Hitler, and when the plot was revealed, was imprisoned and ultimately executed months before Allied forces liberated Germany. Whether they were conservative or progressive, many Cantonese Protestants in Hong Kong saw Barth and Bonhoeffer as their theological ancestors, informing their contemporary public engagements. At a coffee shop interview with the radically progressive Narrow Road Church, Fastbeat announced to me, ‘I am Bonhoeffer. We are waiting for my friend, Karl Barth, to show up.’ When ‘Barth’ arrived in the person of a fellow graduate student in theology, they proceeded to tell me that they did not consider homosexuality a sin and that evangelicals would be better off taking the focus off sexuality issues and focusing on economic injustice in Hong Kong. What a contrast, then, when I interviewed conservative theologian Kang Phee Sang at the China Graduate School of Theology, who informed me that he was a Karl Barth devotee who used a Barthian notion of the church to combat sexual and social liberalization in Hong Kong. So too, when I interviewed another pastor who was supportive of the Hong Kong Sex-Culture Society, he
told me that he was taking a stand against a sexual revolution in Hong Kong much as Bonhoeffer stood up against Hitler.

While invoking Bonhoeffer for an individual ethic of cultural resistance may be inspirational, Bonhoeffer’s theology does not revolve around individual ethics, *per se*, but around the ethical implications of the theological constitution of the church. Bonhoeffer’s (1930/1998) doctoral dissertation at the University of Berlin was titled *Sanctorum Communio: a theological study of the sociology of the church*. Positioned as an intervention into both the social sciences and in theology, the main argument of the thesis was that the Christian church manifested a particular philosophy of personhood and social relations.

Contrasting German sociology’s emphasis on the uniting force of an abstract, rational ‘spirit’ that absorbed all individuals into the social fact of life together under the state, Bonhoeffer posited that the Christian conception of the human person revolved around an ‘I’ in relation to a concrete ‘You.’ If the ‘You’ was God, Bonhoeffer reasoned, then the ‘I’ was not just an individual person, but God’s collective people, the communion of saints located in the church. A Christian sociality thus was about how the ‘I’ of the church, with all of its internal pluralities, related to the ‘You’ of God revealed in Jesus Christ. In other words, the sociality of the church contrasts the mode of social relations promulgated by secular sociology on the grounds of ontological conception: we are not held together by abstract ideologies, but by personal relationships that bind us into concrete bonds of solidarity, ultimately with Jesus Christ himself. This conception of the solidarity and communion of the church was what Bonhoeffer (1930/1998: 288) meant when he wrote, ‘Now the objective spirit of the church really has become the Holy Spirit, the experience of the “religious” community now really is the experience of the church, and the collective person
of the church now really is “Christ existing as church-community.” In other words, the church embodies Jesus Christ himself in the world through its practice of communion, the radical solidarity that makes cohabitation possible despite difference. Barth called the thesis a ‘miracle,’ for a secular university, the University of Berlin, approved it.

Indeed, the implication of Bonhoeffer’s theology was a challenge to fissures in the church along the lines of race and ethnicity. Traveling to America in the late 1930s, Bonhoeffer taught at Union Theological Seminary and attended an African American church in Harlem, the Abyssinian Baptist Church, where he observed, ‘If it has come about that today the “Black Christ” has to be led into the field against the “White Christ” by a young black poet, then a deep cleft in the church of Jesus Christ is indicated’ (Bonhoeffer 1939/1995: 525). Returning to Germany, he joined the Confessing Church, a resistance against Hitler’s racist policies against the Jews that led to his ultimate execution. Put this way, Bonhoeffer questions the practices of leveraging ethnicity as a secularizing strategy to maximize the impact of Cantonese Protestants on secular civil societies, for the divisions that these practices create make cohabitation and communion more difficult. Indeed, as African American theologian J. Kameron Carter (2008) argues, these moves are definitely secularizing moves because they follow the logics of secular states that introduced race and ethnicity as categories of differentiation in the modern world. They are in fact foreign practices in terms of the Christian tradition’s breaking down of these very walls. So too, Jewish biblical scholar Mark Nanos (1996) has performed a radical re-reading of St. Paul’s letters. While Paul’s letters have long been associated with anti-Jewish polemics in favour of developing a Gentile, non-Jewish Christianity (see Carroll, 2001), Nanos argues that Paul’s letters were written for both Jewish and non-Jewish Christians to recognize their
new solidarities as worshipping the Jewish God in ways disapproved by the existing Jewish establishment. Paul thus never differentiates Christians from Jews; instead, he is arguing that Christians are Jews, but not ones that are recognized by the powers that be. Moving further into Christian history, one might also cast the schism between the Roman Catholic Church and its Greek Orthodox counterparts in the same light, for the divisions fell precisely along occident-orient binaries. When Charles Taylor replied to a critique that his catholicity in *A Secular Age* is not Catholic enough as it does not seem grounded enough in the Catholic Church, he surprisingly notes, 'But there is more than one tradition. Think of the mutual impoverishment which results from the unfounded and scandalous schism which divides us from the Orthodox. We need to challenge some of the ghettos we have ended up comfortably inhabiting' (Taylor, 2010: 679). Following the ecumenical imperative laid out by John Paul II (1995) in his stunning encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Taylor contends that the church can never simply be content to be ensconced in its own walls, but that the action of the church must be to seek to practice communion more fully, reaching even beyond barriers it has erected for itself to come into fuller solidarity with those it deems its others. Instead of leveraging ethnicity as a political strategy, Cantonese Protestants might instead begin to see themselves as inheritors of the theological imperative to challenge ecclesial orientalization and the fissures wrought by racial and ethnic differentiation, for these secular practices compromise the ontological witness of the church. While many have explained their practices as essentially ‘Chinese,’ an alternative would be to practice Christian engagements with a secular public as a communion that pushes back against the very idea of east-west racialized divides. Such a witness does not reopen the spatial differentiations between the church and the world, but posits that the
church as an alternate ontological witness does things very differently from the practices of contestation enshrined by the secular state and civil society.

While Bonhoeffer conducted a theological study of traditions of sociality in the Christian church, I have performed an empirical study of Cantonese Protestant notions of the church in relation to civil society and the state. As theologian Kathryn Tanner (2010: 44) reminds us, the social sciences yield insights with which theology must contend, for they reveal ‘the often messy, ambiguous, and porous character of the effort to live Christianly.’ Where my study has uncovered the contestations among Cantonese Protestants as they relate to secular societies, Bonhoeffer’s theology provides the ethical and moral imperative that must be derived from such observations: even though we work in the secular university, we must advocate for the unity of the Christian church because the *sanctorum communio* is nothing short of an ontological mirror through which we can learn about cohabitation through its communion. In other words, the communion of saints is meant to be a gift to the world because it is intended to model how peacemaking is done. Accordingly, if there is a critique to be had of Cantonese Protestants, it is not that their faith is shallow. Indeed, I strongly disagree with Herberg’s (1960) assessment of internal secularization as the vacating of theological values from religious identities, for the Cantonese Protestants described in this thesis are devout, pious, and sincerely trying to follow what they understand to be God’s will in their public engagements, especially when their activities prove to be unpopular with a secular civil society. However, without a more robust theology of the church that allows for internal differentiation, there is some cause for concern that Cantonese Protestant congregations and FBOs will become ideological gatherings, promoting the politics of ethnic identity along self-orientalizing lines and
propagating hardline positions (progressive or conservative) vis-à-vis a secular civil society and the state – and each other! The gift of university discussion about grounded theologies is that it might remind the Christian church of its theological identity as a pacific gift to the world and to each other. To do this would be to replace practices of contestation with acts of communion. Only then will Cantonese Protestants be truly prophetic to a secular society that they correctly recognize to be practising a sociality at odds with theirs. As Hauerwas (2000) argues, such a witness would be truly political, for it would show the world what a ‘pacific’ space really looks like.
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Appendix A: Interview Letter of Invitation and Consent Form

18 April 2011
Title: Religious Politics in Pacific Space: The Political Interventions of Cantonese Christians in the Civil Societies of Hong Kong, San Francisco, and Vancouver

Greetings! My name is Justin Tse, a PhD Candidate in Geography at the University of British Columbia at Vancouver. I am writing this letter to ask for your help in my doctoral thesis project.

The project is titled Religious Politics in Pacific Space: The Political Interventions of Cantonese Christians in the Civil Societies of Hong Kong, San Francisco, and Vancouver, and is jointly funded by the University of British Columbia and the Province of British Columbia through the Pacific Century Graduate Scholarship, the Four-Year Fellowship for PhD Students, and the PhD Tuition Award. The project aims to explore how Cantonese Christians are involved in the civil societies of which they are a part, how they form political networks, and how they conceive of politics and society more generally. It seeks a scholarly, fair, and accurate interpretation of these issues and makes concerted attempts to avoid stereotyping and caricature of any kind and to pursue a respectful conversation.

We are requesting a one-hour interview with you because you are either a) a self-identifying Cantonese-speaking Christian, b) someone who has worked closely with Cantonese-speaking Christians, and/or c) someone who is considered a leader to Cantonese-speaking Christians at either a church or an organization. During this interview, we will inquire about the concrete political networks and conceptions of civil society of Cantonese-speaking Christians. The interview will be conducted at a time and location that is convenient to you.

Your decision to participate in this project is entirely free, informed, and voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose, you also may remain anonymous. If you volunteer to participate in this study, please contact either Justin Tse by telephone at 604-728-0024 or by email at jkhtse@interchange.ubc.ca. Details of the study and your commitment are on the attached consent forms. Please bring a signed copy to the interview and keep a copy for your own records.

If you have any questions or concerns on the project, our principal investigator, Dr. David Ley, would be happy to discuss them with you. You may reach him at 604-822-3268. In addition, if you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Sincerely yours,
Justin Tse
Department of Geography, University of British Columbia
1984 West Mall
Vancouver BC V6T 1Z2
Phone : 604-728-0024
Email : jkhtse@interchange.ubc.ca
Religious Politics in Pacific Space: The Political Interventions of Cantonese Christians in the Civil Societies of Hong Kong, San Francisco, and Vancouver

Principal Investigator: Dr. David Ley, Professor of Geography, University of British Columbia, telephone: 604-822-3268.

Co-Investigators:
Justin Tse, Ph.D. student, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, telephone: 604-728-0024.

Purpose: This study seeks to conduct data collection on Cantonese Christians and political interventions in Hong Kong, San Francisco, and Vancouver. This study refers to the “political” as an intervention into civil society, including (and not limited to) family values, social justice, electoral campaigns, and local political decisions (such as land use and zoning). The purpose of the study is to present a scholarly, fair, and accurate representation of Cantonese Christians, their concrete political networks, and their conceptions of civil society.

Study Procedures: This study involves interviews with key informants and focus groups with lay persons from Cantonese Christian communities in Metro Vancouver, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Hong Kong SAR. If this is an interview, you have been contacted as a key informant because one or more of the following are true for you: a) you identify as a Cantonese-speaking Christian, b) you have concrete networks with Cantonese-speaking Christians, and/or c) you are a leader of Cantonese-speaking Christians as part of a religious organization or a church. If you are participating in a focus group, you have been contacted as a lay person to participate in a focus group of about ten people to share your views on how Cantonese Christians should be involved in politics and society. Your commitment to participate is limited to a one to 1.5 interview or focus group session.

Risks: There are minimal risks to you in participating in this research project. However, should you feel discomfort in the course of this research, you have the right to withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality: If this is a key informant interview, we ask for your consent to use your name in our study, unless you wish to remain anonymous (as below). Any other identifying information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential unless specific consent for attributable statements is granted in advance of any public dissemination; however, given the public nature of government policy, it may be possible to identify you from the context of your responses. If this is a focus group, your name will be automatically anonymized with pseudonyms so that your name cannot be linked with your statements in the researcher’s forthcoming publications. While we have no control over your activities outside of the focus group, we will also ask that you refrain...
from sharing responses from the focus group outside of the group out of a respect for confidentiality. Data from both interviews and focus groups will be kept in a locked filing cabinet or be computer password protected in electronic format.

**Contact for information about the study:** Please contact Justin Tse at +1-604-728-0024 or by email at jkhtse@interchange.ubc.ca if you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study.

**Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:** If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

**Consent:** Your participation in this study is free, informed, and voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form prior to the set-up of the interview. You also have received a copy of this form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Printed Name of Subject</th>
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</thead>
</table>

☐ I would like to remain anonymous.
Appendix B: Interview and Focus Group Themes

My interviews and focus groups are semi-structured in the sense that they are structured by themes. I have included sample questions under each theme to demonstrate the kinds of issues that I am exploring with each theme. I have also bold-faced possible lead-in questions to each theme. As the interviews are semi-structured, this list of questions is by no means definitive or exhaustive; what is more important are the themes that are addressed in each interview and focus group.

THEME A: POLITICAL PRACTICES (PERCEPTION AND ACTUALITY)
• Do you think it is important to be politically involved in your society?
• What are the most important political interventions you or your community has made recently in the public?
• Do you agree with your community’s political activity?
• What do you think of the way that the media has portrayed Cantonese/Chinese Christians here? Do you think the media pays enough attention to Chinese Christians?
• When you hear about family values, what other services would you like provided for families? Why do you think families are important?
• Do you think family is more of an issue of morals or politics?
• How important is it for Christians—especially Chinese Christians—to be in political office?
• What political actions do you take for the disadvantaged in this society?
• What alliances between Cantonese Christians need to happen for political action? What about with non-Cantonese speakers or non-Christians?

THEME B: RELIGION, POLITICAL IMAGINATIONS, AND CONCEPTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY
• What do you understand as being a Christian? How should Christians live?
• How does being a Christian affect your politics?
• How do you understand how Christians should relate to non-Christians, especially in terms of politics?
• When I say “impact on society,” how do you understand “society”?
• Aside from politics, are there any personal reasons you have for either getting involved in politics or staying away from politics?
• I understand that there are many different groups of Christians, even within the Protestant and Catholic worlds. What sense do you think that your denominational tradition has on your understanding of politics and society?
• What biblical and theological reasons are behind your understanding of politics and society?
• Do you think most Chinese Christians agree on the role Christians should have in politics? What are some points of agreement and points of disagreement that you see?
• Do you think that there is something specific to being a Cantonese Christian (as opposed to ABC/CBC, Taiwanese, PRC) that affects your conceptions of politics and society?

THEME C: POLITICAL IMPACT ON CIVIL SOCIETY
• How effective do you think your political activity is on your society?
• How do you think your political activity could be more effective on your society?
• Are you active in trying to motivate other Chinese Christians to be socially engaged? What success do you have in that area?
• Do you see yourself as belonging primarily to Vancouver/San Francisco/Hong Kong? What other senses of belonging do you see yourself having?
• Do you think your political activity is mostly effective locally, or do you see yourself as also affecting Asia (when in North America)/North America (when in Asia)?

THEME D: RELIGIOUS NETWORKS (LOCAL AND TRANSNATIONAL)
• Which Christian organizations are you most comfortable supporting? Why?
• Which church do you belong to? Is your church part of a network of churches?
• Would you say that your church’s networks are politically active?
• Do you identify with any other religious networks that are not local (for example, Lausanne)?

THEME E: IMAGINED GEOGRAPHIES: CHINESENESS IN NORTH AMERICA AND ASIA-PACIFIC
• What do you understand “Chinese” as meaning?
• Is China ever on your mind as a Chinese Christian? Do you want to do anything for China as a Christian?
• How do you see Hong Kong as relating to China? How effective do you think Hong Kong is for reaching China?
• When you think of North America, what are the major issues you think of addressing? Do American or Canadian differences matter when you think of these issues?
• Do you think Christians from Hong Kong would be effective in reaching and addressing major issues in North America?
• When you think of Asia, what are the major issues you think of addressing?