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Envisioning a Post-humanist Body for the Church's Digital Future —

A Reflection from Post-Pandemic Hong Kong

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Introduction

The Hong Kong government announced the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and lifted all related restrictions in March 2023. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, online religious activities were uncommon in Hong Kong. Despite the earlier expectation of returning to offline services post-pandemic, many churches have adopted a hybrid approach. A survey (2020b) by the Ray Bakke Centre for Urban Transformation in September 2020 showed that 71.9% of church leaders in Hong Kong planned to maintain hybrid services post-pandemic, and many have done so. The pandemic has spurred a shift to digital technology in religious practices globally, creating new digitally-mediated forms. Heidi Campbell and Troy Shepherd (2021) identified 10 critical trends for religious groups, including reconciling technology concerns with its benefits, the need for adaptability and innovation, and the continuation of digital innovations post-crisis. With the rise of generative AI in 2023, AI's role in religious spheres is another emerging trend. In addition, the rapid advancement of VR and AR technologies would soon offer hyper-real experience of presence. This essay explores online worship and sacraments within digital religion and post-digital theology frameworks, proposing an ecclesiology that incorporates a post-humanist body concept for the church's digital future. It challenges the virtual-real dichotomy, advocating for a view of embodiment that integrates humans and machines, relevant to the future digitally native Christian community. It aims to add a post-humanist dimension to the discourse on bodily presence in worship services, online and offline.

Digital Religion and Post-digital Theology

According to Maggi Savin-Baden (2022), post-digital theology examines the complex relationship between theology and digital technologies within a post-digital society. The "post-" prefix signifies moving beyond an initial fascination with the digital to critically analyzing the embeddedness of digital technologies within wider social contexts. Rather than merely exploring surface applications, post-digital theology recognizes the entanglement of the digital within cultures, institutions, politics, and society. Thus, it focuses on the interrelationship among humanity, technologies, and theologies, and examines how the digital interrupts and transforms traditional theology. In Savin-Baden's terms, post-digital theology can be understood as mediation, investigating "the relationship between the digital and religious cultural practices" (ibid., 12). While different versions of post-digital theologies have distinct perspectives and focuses, they build on and overlap with the broader discourse of digital religion. Positioning post-digital theology as a "fifth wave" of research "characterized by studying religious beliefs and practices affected by, and entangled with, digital technologies" (ibid., 7), Savin-Baden argues that post-digital theology emerges from, yet moves beyond, the prior four waves of digital religion scholarship, briefly delineated below.

The scholarship on digital religion has steadily gained legitimacy over the past decades. Initial scholarly articles in the mid-1990s by Gregory Grieve, Stephen O'Leary, and Brenda Brasher documented groups bringing religious practices into new online spaces. These descriptive accounts often took an optimistic or pessimistic stance, framing the internet as either liberating or threatening religion. Terms like "cyber-religion" and "virtual religion" reflected perceptions of the internet as a separate space for experimental spirituality. According to Ruth Tsuria and Heidi Campbell (2022), the study of religion and the internet has progressed through several waves. The first wave in the 1990s was characterized by descriptive accounts documenting new online religious phenomena. Early scholarship speculated on the internet's utopian or dystopian impacts on religion, though lacked empirical grounding. While technologically deterministic, the first wave provided an important starting point

by identifying emerging cyber-religious practices. It mapped the digital religious landscape and paved the way for future research. Despite limitations, the first wave captured the wonder and anxieties of religion's initial arrival online.

Emerging in the 2000s, the second wave focused on categorizing online religion. Scholars identified patterns and trends to classify digital religious expression. There was greater attention to how offline traditions shaped cyber-practices. Researchers moved away from technological determinism towards recognizing the ability and autonomy of users to make choices that shape their online interactions. Moreover, this wave began raising questions about the authenticity of digital practices (Campbell and Evolvi 2020, 6). It produced the first frameworks situating online religion within broader contexts.

Emerging in the late 2000s, the third "theoretical wave" focused on interpreting online religion through conceptual frameworks. It moved beyond description and taxonomy to theorize the cultural significance of digital religious practices. Key features include applying theoretical lenses to analyze online rituals, identities, and communities, examining the relationship between online and offline religion, emphasizing the two's interconnectedness (Campbell and Evolvi 2020, 6). The third wave matured the field through robust theorization of the contexts shaping digital religion.

Emerging in the mid to late 2010s, the fourth "convergent wave" brings together previous approaches to develop holistic understandings of lived online religion. It draws on earlier mapping, taxonomy, and theorization to provide rich description of the everyday realities and details of digital religious practice as actively experienced. The focus is on how people embed technologies into their religious rituals, identities, communities, and negotiations with authority. Centering embodiment, experience, and existential, ethical, political, and cultural dimensions, scholars increasingly collaborate across disciplines and develop novel methodologies. An example is the concept of hypermediated religious spaces, which provides insights into how digital spaces contribute to negotiating religious and cultural identities and meanings, blurring boundaries between the real and

imaginary (Evolvi 2019). As empirical depth converges with conceptual sophistication, the fourth wave represents the field's maturation.

The fifth wave is still emerging, but appears to be defined by a focus on postdigital theology, interdisciplinary collaboration, new technologies and methods, and the exploration of tensions between innovation and traditional orthodoxy online. Building on previous research, the fifth wave seems concerned with creating space for practitioner voices and experiences within scholarship through digital theological reflections. While nascent, the fifth wave appears to be flourishing as scholars take advantage of previous research to pose new questions, frameworks, and methods. This next era is just beginning to investigate religion's deeper imbrication in increasingly ubiquitous digital technologies amidst the tensions between online orthodoxy and liberation. The fifth wave represents the continued evolution of the field through interdisciplinary, methodological, and phenomenological expansion fueled by yet grappling with the digital revolution.

While initially framed as chronological waves, Tsuria and Campbell (2022, 10–11) remark that these research approaches may be better seen as co-existing typologies, especially as digital technologies become more interwoven with everyday life. This ensures the interdisciplinary study of religion and the internet remains vital for understanding contemporary religious phenomena. Key themes and inquiries shaping this field include adapting religious rituals to digital contexts and assessing the merits and trade-offs of such transitions. It also explores how religious identities are expressed and reshaped within online environments, along with their impact on self-understanding. Examining embodiment, interrogating real-imaginary or authenticity-virtual binaries, emergent forms of religious community through digital media and their relationship with traditional ones are ongoing concerns. In addition, it examines established religious authorities' reactions to digital media, and the rise of new online religious leadership. Finally, it raises the issue of how religion should be re-defined (See Part 1 of Campbell and Tsuria 2022). Generative AI is certainly a topic of growing importance. All these themes form the basis for current post-digital theological critiques and constructions.

The Concerns for Embodment and the Real/ Authenticity

The preceding examination of the present condition of digital religion, in which postdigital theology is positioned within the most recent wave, discloses, among others, two enduring concerns widespread in the academic field and, certainly, in practical religious experiences as well, as religious activities transition online. These intertwined concerns cover the matter of embodment versus disembodiment in digital religious practices, and the argument over the "realness/ authenticity" of online religious engagement. Furthermore, recent discussions have started to address the concept of space. Unlike Alexander Chow and Jonas Kurlberg's (2020, 301, 313) tendency to see the two as separate issues, the following shows that, as indicated by discussions of online worship required by the COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong, as in other places, these dual concerns of embodment and authenticity are, in fact, deeply intertwined and mutually implied, rather than discrete, seen especially when the concept of space intervenes. I will argue that engaging these concerns necessitates discussing religion-going-online in a way that does not take digital technology just as tools for religious purposes, nor as a new communication method enabled by cyber-technology, but as an impetus to theologically reconceptualize the human body in light of posthumanism for ecclesiology in the new era. Let us turn immediately to a Hong Kong case to gain some insights into the issue.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings, many Hong Kong churches transitioned to online worship and even online Holy Communion, as they could not hold in-person services. As mentioned, this practice, mostly hybrid, continues in many churches post-pandemic. Online worship is not new globally. For some time, cyber-churches like the Anglican Cathedral of Second Life (https://slangcath.wordpress.com/) have conducted fully online worship in many countries. Some have even "closed down," like Church of Fools, which became St Pixels, then the Ship of Fools site during the pandemic. Other examples are I.Church and similar churches/groups (see e.g. Hutchings 2017).

It might be expected that Hong Kong churchgoers who are analog natives, plus digital foreigners, immigrants, and the curious, would dislike online worship or Communion. However, a 2020 local survey (Ray Bakke Centre 2020a) of 2,151 people showed 26.2% would continue online worship if offered. Interestingly, percentages were similar across age groups, 18 to over 60. Additionally, 15.4% would join other churches' online services. Taking the opportunity of preaching to a diverse array of congregations, varying in size and denomination, throughout 2023, I conducted unstructured interviews with church ministers from these respective traditions concerning this trend. Many of them confirmed more congregants than expected persisted in online worship, even post-pandemic. A good number saw this irritatingly as a subpar alternative not meeting scriptural requisites for authentic communal worship. However, church ministers must acknowledge, even if reluctantly, congregations soon becoming digital native——a trend found in Hong Kong, as well as in other places, although slightly more than 30% of the world population are still offline in 2003 (International Telecommunication Union (ITU) 2023). Hong Kong's internet penetration hit 93.1% in 2023, with social media users at 89.9% of the population (Kemp and Kepios 2023). Hong Kong ranked highly digitally for decades, 7th globally and 2nd in developed Asia-Pacific already in 2002's Digital Access Index (ITU 2003). This suggests most now under 21 are digital natives who may become church leaders within 10 years. This paper thinks ahead——if future churchgoers are mostly digital natives, how might the church understand cyber-worship? Here, I begin to use "cyber-worship" over "online worship" or "virtual worship" to explore how bodily presence could be renegotiated in cyberspace. The main ideas in this paper are thus crafted for the near-future church, not necessarily the present one.

A Debate

During lockdowns, many local ministers, as well as Christians, shared concerns about online worship, especially digitizing Holy Communion. Some queried the theology and validity of consecrating elements in church, then pastors delivering or congregants collecting them prior to communing together online Sunday. Others, avoiding network instability disrupting worship, eschewed live-streaming and instead uploaded pre-recorded YouTube videos, often with limited availability windows to encourage concurrent participation. In some cases where pre-recorded videos were used, ministers did not tell congregants the asynchronicity to preserve the sense of communal worship. They believed authentic presence, at least in the temporal sense, was essential when togetherness in the same physical space was impossible. All this shaped my initial impressions during the pandemic that many ministers worried about the theological validity and "realness" of cyber-participation in rituals, given the bodily absence of participants and lack of simultaneous participation.

Considering these impressions, and drawing from a literature search sourced from the *ATLA* database (spanning the period from 2020 to 2023 and utilizing keyword combinations including "bodily presence," "embodiment," "disembodiment," "digital-/cyber-/online-worship," "digital-/cyber-space," and "realness/authenticity/virtual"), a set of provisional codes were generated. These codes were then employed to read a collection of pertinent materials, primarily comprising essays from the local Christian newspapers, the newsletters/ magazines of various seminaries in Hong Kong, relevant YouTube videos produced basically for Hong Kong browsers, pertinent Facebook posts, webpages of various local churches, as well as my fieldnotes stemming from chats with church ministers. Following the provisional coding method (Saldaña 2009, 120–23), the codes evolved through iterative processes and were continuously enriched and revised based on emerging data. Subsequently, a thematic analysis was conducted using the coded materials. The initial provisional codes include, for example, the role of the body in rituals (i.e., cyber-worship and Holy Communion), the significance of synchronicity in rituals, the importance of bodily presence in rituals, the theological integrity of rituals, and the components contributing to the realness/authenticity of rituals.

Due to space limits, this paper selectively focuses on key findings from the debate on cyber-worship sparked by Flow Church's[1] theological statement on

online Communion in February 2020 (Flow Church 2020a). The debate includes diverse local perspectives on digitizing religious sacraments, serving the current purpose. The main points in the statement were:

- Precedents exist for online Communion——the United Methodist Church implemented it in 2013, and Catholic churches have online Eucharistic adoration.

- Online Communion involves members partaking of bread and wine at home together online.

- Sacraments signify God's grace through physical symbols; Communion represents grace specifically.

- Online Communion constitutes a genuine, not "virtual," sacrament with real elements.

- The Holy Spirit transcends space to unite believers across locations.

- What matters most is remembering Jesus through faith, not congregants' physical presence. Faith resides in the heart and spirit, independent of space.

- Communion emphasizes togetherness but COVID prevents physical togetherness. However, online Communion allows unity despite physical separation, though in-person better actualizes "being together."

- The Spirit unifies believers into one body despite dispersed locations.

- For full meaning, online Communion should occur live, not via replay, to retain synchronicity and togetherness.

- Two months later, in April 2020, the Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Liturgy Commission issued instructions on online Mass, referencing the theology of Spiritual Communion. The key points were:

- With public Masses suspended, Spiritual Communion could be promoted to maintain believers' bond with God and Church, especially when livestreaming allows synchronized prayer. Although Spiritual Communion remains feasible when watching recordings without synchronicity.

- Since God transcends time and space, fervent Spiritual Communion constitutes prayer anytime, anywhere.

- Viewing online Masses, meditating on scripture, praying devoutly, and Spiritual Communion can partially offset the lack of physical Mass attendance and Eucharist reception.

- Yet, while interrelated, physical participation in the Eucharist and Spiritual Communion differ substantially. Therefore, Spiritual Communion anticipates eventual offline Eucharist.

As seen above, one evangelical and one ecumenical statement accepted cyber-rituals amidst the pandemic's prohibited physical presence, though with some reluctance. Certain pneumatologies and theology of grace provided justification, emphasizing "togetherness" and "synchronicity" as critical in defining rituals' authenticity or optimal form.

However, opinions among Hong Kong Christians were diversified. For example, Andrew (2020), a Hong Konger, and a doctoral candidate in Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Glasgow, argued from the consubstantiation stance that online Communion is inauthentic, opposing Flow Church. He argued the bread and wine consumed watching online Communion were neither Christ's Body and Blood nor was there communion. Theologically, he contended Holy Communion involves three vital moments——offertory, consecration, and communion. Where there is no offertory, there could be no consecration, so no authentic communion. Since online Communion could only skip the moment of offertory, the bread and wine could not be consecrated as Christ's Body and Blood. Without offertory and consecration, no communion occurs. Andrew's view, particularly the conditions caused by congregants' bodily absence rendering Communion inauthentic, matched the opinions of numerous ministers I interviewed.

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1. To learn more about Flow Church and its cyber-worship, refer to (Chu 2021). In addition, Alexander Chow and Jonas Kurlberg also briefly touch on Flow Church in their discussion of digital church. See (Chow and Kurlberg 2020).

Peter Li (2020), professor emeritus at Lutheran Theological Seminary, expounded on the Lutheran tradition of receiving the Holy Communion "in the Spirit" and arrived at a similar conclusion. He refuted Flow Church's theological justification for the authenticity of online Communion, arguing that it relies merely on a memorialist view of the sacrament. Li emphasized that the Lutheran understanding of receiving Communion "in the Spirit" by faith, while a true spiritual reception, does not replace the necessity of partaking in the *material* bread and wine. This is rooted in the Lutheran understanding of sacraments as "means of grace"——physical channels instituted by Christ through which God imparts forgiveness and salvation. While online participation in the Eucharist allows for receiving Christ in Spirit through faith and partaking in the grace secured for us, it cannot replicate the full grace offered through the physical elements. Li argues that receiving Christ's Body and Blood requires the sacrament to be administered physically. Nonetheless, he acknowledged Flow Church's emphasis on "togetherness," seeing it as implying their view of online Eucharist as theologically subordinate to in-person rites.

There are more nuances to the debate. An online symposium (Flow Church 2020b) featuring both theologians and ministers reveals richer details. Invoking the Jewish theology of sanctification of time, which forms the basis of the practice of keeping Sabbath holy and other important Jewish religious rituals, Lawrence Ko, a biblical scholar teaching at the Alliance Bible Seminary, pointed out that synchronization of ritualists' participation in the ritual was necessary, saying that participation in rituals simultaneously and in the mode of physical togetherness in a Jewish ritual community were important for the diasporic Jews living in crisis to preserve their Jewish community identity. He further argued that when Jesus answered the Samaritan woman's question regarding the place of worship, saying the hour is coming when worship will no longer be on Gerizim or in Jerusalem but in spirit and truth, "spirit" actually referred to the Holy Spirit, and believers can worship through the Holy Spirit without needing to be physically present at a location. Ko remarked that these ideas of synchronization have

much implication for present-day discussions on the authenticity of online worship. For example, he said, since perfect synchronization is not affordable by live-streaming, online worship at most could only be taken as a suboptimal mode of worship, only to be seen as contingency measures, while only in-person worship is truly authentic. Slightly different, Rayson Tam, a pastor at a local megachurch called Evangelical Free Church of China Yan Fook Church, argued that "togetherness in the present moment" is an essential ingredient in the definition of authentic worship, contending that congregants need to be interacting as a community in real time, in the same physical space. Additionally, a senior pastor whom I interviewed, among many other interviewees, also stressed the importance of the practice of synchronicity, saying "being there in person is a must. But when we can't, online works if everyone joins as one, true, congregation. It's not only for identity building, but I believe the Bible commands us to worship together as one. Now we can't be there, so we gotta worship God at the same moment."

Underneath the Debate——Bodily Presence, Body, and Embodiment

Celine Yeung (2020), an assistant professor at the China Graduate School of Theology, rightly observed that churches of divergent theological traditions exhibit variance in their acceptance or rejection of online Eucharist and their modes of online worship. My empirically collected data also confirms this. However, the above findings reveal not only divergences, but, more critically, convergences. The central concerns relate to the authenticity of online worship and Communion, and the minimum requirements for a digitized ritual to be considered theologically valid, including aspects like togetherness and synchronicity. The different opinions converge at the level of a root assumption——whether digitization is accepted or rejected, or however the nuances of acceptance or rejection are articulated and explained, people presuppose, consciously or unconsciously, the congregants' "presence" in cyberspace is essentially virtual, unreal, inauthentic, suboptimal, or downright an absence. The debate is not about the "absence" itself, but rather, it is about whether the absence

of biological bodies in the physical space of rituals, and the asynchronic "presence," is theologically acceptable for an authentic ritual; and if so, in what ways and to what extent. Intriguingly, the congregants' very presence in cyberspace constitutes an absence. Regardless of how they are conducted, cyber-rituals are viewed as disembodied. Is there any room to presuppose alternatively?

If there is an alternative, I believe it is not about accepting "absence" itself. What is absent in cyber-rituals is nothing more than biological bodies of the congregants——the minds are there, the thoughts are there, the hearts are there, the voices are there, the gestures are there, even the "virtual" bodies are there, but only the biological bodies are not. Bodily presence is definitely essential to Christian rituals like worship, and particularly the Holy Communion. It seems natural to say that the absence of the biological bodies constitutes the disembodiment of cyber-rituals, which, if valid, seems theologically problematic. For example, while advocating for a good use of digital technology, Annette Potgieter (2020) insists that bodily presence must be regarded as essential in defining a church, based on theological and biblical reasons. Referring to the Pauline teachings, she insists that the church must be interpreted from a corporeal perspective, highlighting the need for Christians to align themselves with Christ, where the physical aspects of the alignment must be emphasized. Furthermore, Potgieter references the immanence of unity with Christ during the material participation of sacraments, emphasizing the corporeal nature of this unity. Potgieter is certainly not alone in insisting on the ecclesial significance of bodily presence. From a perspective of theological anthropology, Travis Pickell (2010) emphasizes the importance of the body by highlighting the significance of embodiment in theology. He discusses how the Bible celebrates embodiment, pointing out the centrality of physical healings, and Jesus sharing meals with those around him. Additionally, he underscores the doctrines of incarnation and resurrection, which confirm and heal all aspects of bodily nature, stressing the importance of the body to any theological anthropology. Furthermore, he discusses how Augustine's understanding of the Christian doctrines of creation,

the incarnation of Christ, and the doctrine of the resurrection of the body implies that the body has a high metaphysical status and is theologically an integral and permanent part of human being.

However, I argue that cyber-presence can be defended, and the absence of biological bodies justified, as a distinct mode of bodily presence in our digitally-shaped world. This argument necessitates a reconceptualization of what bodily presence could mean as we stand on the cusp of a deeply digital age.

First, Kerstin Radde-Antweiler (2021) argues that we should avoid a dichotomous distinction between "real" and "virtual," because online actions within digital realms have continuously been debated regarding their authenticity compared to face-to-face interactions. She also notes that ritual studies emphasize different forms of embodiment, including physical, spiritual, and social embodiment, which implies one should not equate physical absence strictly with disembodiment. Furthermore, she points out that emergent forms of digital religious practices have started to approach reality differently, focusing more on the actors' perspective and their criteria for evaluating "reality" and "virtuality." Wendi Bellar and Campbell (2023) appear to concur with Kerstin's latter point, stating that in the digital world, personal experiences often take precedence over official standards in judging ideas and practices as authentic. This phenomenon is termed "experiential authenticity," describing how individuals determine if their religiosity online and offline are veridical. In a different approach, Anthony Le Duc (2022) renegotiates digitally mediated presence, positing that the term "virtual" can be problematic since it suggests a differentiation between physical presence and non-physical presence, with physical presence often perceived as more genuine. He argues that both forms of presence could lead to similar religious effects and serve analogous religious functions. However, he cautions that while online presence can be real presence, it remains important to distinguish between the two "realness." These approaches——typifying, phenomenological, functional——are certainly insightful. However, in this postdigital era, a more radical reconceptualization may be warranted by

obfuscating the demarcations between corporeality and cyberspace, through a posthumanist intervention.

Posthumanism Body, and Bodily Presence

In one way or another, postdigital theology embraces posthumanism, which is variously understood (Savin-Baden 2022). Not a few churches in the post-pandemic era seem to be echoing this postdigital trend. Evidence came from a study of 2,700 Midwestern US churches transitioning from offline to online worship during the pandemic revealed a growing conceptual shift in contemporary religious culture regarding popular views and language about technology (Campbell and Jones 2022). The study investigated how church leaders discussed and congregants experienced digital religious practices during the pandemic. It discovered that their framing of the church-technology relationship differed from pre-pandemic rhetoric. Two emerging rhetorical frames were identified—a "technology-cultured frame" and a "human-technology hybrid frame." The latter echoes critical posthumanist claims, challenging anthropocentrism and praising technologically-mediated existence as empowering humans to reimagine body and embodiment. Specifically, it blurs bodily and cyber-presence boundaries. In sum, utilitarian technology embracement rhetorically opened posthumanist doors, challenging human-centered theological realities, although unintended. The study remarked that reflecting on technology's role shows some discourses and languages affirm key premises of a prophesied posthuman reality, despite intentions.

Posthumanism focuses on how technology transforms and redefines the body and embodiment. It envisions a future in which human beings have transcended their biological boundaries through the integration of technology into their bodies and minds (Jorion 2022b). It thus questions the idea of the human as a unique and separate entity, and instead emphasizes the interconnections and interpenetrations between humans, animals, machines, and the environment, seeing human nature as a social construct that is constantly evolving and changing, stressing the plasticity of human bodies (Jorion 2022a). In fact, as early as 1985, in her seminal work, Donna Haraway's (1985) conceptualization of the cyborg already rejected dichotomous framings of the relationship between the human body and technology. Raising the same question as Haraway did, namely, "why should our bodies end at the skin?" Hélène Jeannin (2022) offers an interesting analysis on modern body modification technologies. Practices once marginalized are now mainstream, showcasing how cybernetic thinking advocates for and realizes the body as a malleable and porous construction. Through various examples of such technologies, Jeannin contends that cyborgs are becoming real, with devices embedded in bodies. Skin-based technologies have rendered the skin not as what distinguishes the body from its environment, but only as a dynamic interface. Technology alters bodies and changes what it means to be human. In the past, the boundary of the body, and subject as well, was confined to the limits of the flesh; however, this concept is now being increasingly questioned by the emergence of digital technology and practices.

This worldview, growing in the post-pandemic era, especially among digital natives, can be understood in terms of trans-corporeality, which is a posthumanist mode of new materialism, meaning that "all creatures, as embodied beings, are intermeshed with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them" (Alaimo 2018, 435). This development carries significant implications for the renegotiation of the relationship between embodiment and cyberspace. Julie Cohen (2007; 2012) presents a nuanced view of cyberspace, challenging the metaphorical usage that implies it is a disembodied and separate entity from the physical world. She articulates that cyberspace is an integral extension and evolution of our spatial experiences, contending that it should not be conceptualized in terms of abstract, Cartesian space, but rather as a domain characterized by experienced spatiality. Cohen argues that our engagement with cyberspace is fundamentally mediated by our embodied human cognition, meaning that our interactions within this digital environment are deeply rooted in our physical senses and perceptions. By critiquing the notion of cyberspace as virtual, as detached from the real, Cohen posits that it is, in fact, part of lived space, dynamically shaped by the interactions of biologically embodied beings. She asserts that cognitive theory

reinforces the perspective that cyberspace is relative, mutable, and continuously constituted through our embodied practices. Thus, cyberspace is intricately connected to and interacts with our sensory and cognitive functions, thus forming a multifaceted matrix that includes both the digital and the biological body.

Various versions of posthumanism aligned with new materialism go further than what is said above in their advancement of the conceptualization of everything, including digital and biological bodies, as material things that are alive, relational, and imbued with agency. This relational ontology, brought into mainstream contemporary philosophical thought by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), refers to the notion that bodies come into being only through relations and associations with other human and non-human entities in temporary assemblages. As Deleuze and Guattari state, "assemblages have elements (or multiplicities) of several kinds: human, social, and technical machines, organized molar machines; molecular machines with their particles of becoming-inhuman; Oedipal apparatuses … and counter-Oedipal apparatuses, variable in aspect and functioning … We can no longer even speak of distinct machines, only of types of interpenetrating multiplicities that at any given moment form a single machinic assemblage" (1987, 36). This ongoing process of ontological becoming has led scholars like Jan Bennet (2010, 23–35) to apply theories of assemblage in reconceptualizing the bodily subject as a human-nonhuman assemblage. The posthumanist conception of the body is thoroughly non-anthropocentric; as Braun (2004) notes, "Deleuze's bodies are multiple. They are not simply 'human' bodies. More important, the human body is not, never was, and never can be, simply 'itself'" (272). In this framework, the body relates and becomes a body through relationality. The body and cyberspace can thus be viewed as forming an assemblage, an ad hoc body ever in flux. This means the physical body and digital realm of cyberspace are so interconnected that they create a single, constantly changing entity, rendering a dichotomous understanding of the two obsolete. As such, posthumanism positions the body as an entity reformulated through its contextual relations, advancing a conception of embodiment that focuses not on what a body essentially "is" but on

what it can do through assemblages. This approach to the body encompasses a broader sense of corporeality that includes digital and biological aspects.

Concluding Remarks

I believe that this renewed conception of the body exists not only in theory but also in practice, especially among digital natives. Many have noted that for digital natives, the understanding and experience of what the body refers to have already undergone a paradigm shift——one that is fierce and irreversible. With the emergence of "virtual" violence, "virtual" sex, "virtual" rape, etc., people are beginning to realize that the experience of cyberspace cannot be separated from the biological body. To put it bluntly, cyberspace is actually entangled with the biological body. Imagine the possibilities: the high-speed, low-latency, wide-area connectivity of upcoming internet technology will allow a surgeon in the Northern Hemisphere to operate on a patient in the Southern Hemisphere, removing a tumor with instruments guided from afar. In these instances, cyberspace becomes an extension of the surgeon's hands. Likewise, as technologies like the Internet of Things and autopilot mature, cyberspace will become the hyper-real hands and feet of the driver. Furthermore, when controllable interactive holographic projection or volumetric display technology become widespread and mature, our "bodies" at home can also be simultaneously "present" at a meeting venue, and what our eyes, ears, mouth and nose perceive will be even more real, perfect, and on-site than what our biological bodies experience. With VR and AR technologies maturing, and SpaceX's Starlink program looking likely to succeed, we may set foot on Mars!

To give a more relatable example——during the peak of the pandemic, everyone was confined at home. For us analog natives, digital immigrants and the digital curious, we complained endlessly, longing to be able to go out and meet up with friends. My then 18-year-old son, however, was immersed in cyberspace——after Zoom classes, he would team up with friends from different parts of the world, fighting war games, perfectly content without any felt need to go out; because he was already "out." Is he socially withdrawn? He actually has a wider social

circle than many who are not digital natives, and is very "close" with friends from South Africa and Japan whom he has never "physically" met before. He does not consider friends he has never met in person to be "physically" distant strangers, a perspective easily grasped by digital natives but often puzzling to those who came of age before the internet.

If the body is cyberspace and cyberspace is the body, then cyber-presence (or telepresence or even Embodied Telepresence) and what we have grown accustomed to thinking of as bodily presence no longer bear any essential differences; the differences are only surface deep, and socially constructed. Thus, the virtual and physical realms, as traditionally conceptualized, are not fundamentally distinct——the new "body" has emerged.

As a concluding remark, I posit the following questions: If future congregants consist primarily of digital natives, will their understanding and experience of the body diverge from our own in the present day? If bodily presence constitutes a fundamental building block of the church, as said above, and our understanding and experience of the body undergoes profound transformations as elucidated above, will our ecclesiology similarly evolve, and if so, how? If our conceptions of the body and thus the church are indeed destined to change so dramatically, how might we embrace this impending shift today? Should we defend the old world or re-envision our church ministry as well as our ecclesiology even now through the lens of this prospective context? In envisioning a posthumanist body for the church's digital future, we may take more seriously what Ella Brian (2011) has asserted, "if Deleuze has anything to teach us about 'virtual' bodies, it is that they have never been virtual, if by virtual we mean non-material" (139).

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Honorary Alumnus Rev. Chan Hin-cheung

Rev. Chan Hin-cheung served as the chairperson of the Theological Council from 2005 to 2017 and has been the vice-chairperson since 2018. His connection to the institution traces back even further to the late 1960s, a time when he first engaged with its community and programs, laying the foundation for a lifelong commitment to its mission and values.

Rev. Chan expressed his preference for this photo taken by his wife, which is reminiscent of the Bible verse, 'the Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon him.'

Honorary Alumnus

"In fact, I can also be considered as an alumnus of the Divinity School of Chung Chi College." Rev. Canon Chan spoke with his usual gentle tone, smiling as he recounted his little-known connection to the Divinity School of Chung Chi College (DSCCC). "After the war, several denominations, including the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church, jointly founded the Hong Kong Union Theological College. I received approval from Bishop John Hyndley Gilbert Baker to study theology at UTC." However, in the late 1960s, UTC, when contemplating the most efficient use of resources, arranged for students to attend classes at Chung Chi Seminary. Rev. Chan recalled the experience of catching the 8:30 morning train to Chung Chi, students had to walk from St. John's College in Pok Fu Lam to take Bus No. 3, then travel by train to the Chinese University after arriving at the Star Ferry Pier in Central. "UTC had a long Christmas break and a short Lunar New Year holiday; Chung Chi had the opposite schedule. Therefore, when Union Theological College had a short Chinese New Year vacation, we would attend classes at Chung Chi, and when Chung Chi had a long vacation, we would be taking courses at UTC." As a result, a group of theology students from Hong Kong Union Theological College formed a lasting connection with Chung Chi Seminary. "Although our graduation certificates were not issued by the Chung Chi Seminary, most of our courses were completed there. Prof. Archie Lee, Rev. Au Yuk-kwan, and Prof. Peter T. M. Ng were my classmates at Chung Chi. I still remember taking courses in Religious Studies and Church History. At that time, Rev. Dr. Paul Newman was the head of the seminary."

Cultivating Spiritual Growth

Rev. Chan graduated from St. Paul's College, an all-boys school, and participated in fellowship at St. Matthew's Church. He studied education at the Grantham College of Education and later pursued theology at Hong Kong Union Theological College and Divinity School of Chung Chi College, the Chinese University of Hong Kong. After graduating in 1970, he was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood the following year, serving at St. Mary's Church. In 1974, he was admitted to the University of Sussex in southern England to study religious education. Upon returning to Hong Kong, he was appointed by Bishop Baker the Religious Education Officer while also serving as the Registrar of Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Ming Hua College and the editor of the Anglican Diocesan *Echo*. In addition he was assigned

Rev. Chan attended the thanksgiving banquet in November 2019.

Rev. Chan led his family members to visit the chapel of DSCCC.

the responsibility of developing religious education for parishes, secondary schools, primary schools, and kindergartens, as well as theological education for laypeople.

"In the past, the Anglican Church faced challenges in developing a comprehensive approach to theological and religious education due to limited resources. In the mid-1960s, extra effort was set aside to strengthen religious education. In 1973, Bishop John Baker appointed Dr. Frances Young as his education consultant. She suggested the diocese to hire local members to take up the work as full-time religious education officers. After taking office, Bishop Baker attached great importance to religious education. At that time, he appointed Rev. Peter K. K. Kwong as the principal of Ming Hua Theological College. He further appointed Rev. Chan to serve as registrar in charge of reactivating the college." Rev. Chan viewed this as a meaningful and challenging job. In the course of four or five years on the job, he had met many dedicated church members seeking to deepen their faith. In 1975, after completing further studies in the UK, Rev. Chan returned to Hong Kong and was appointed Diocesan Religious Education Officer. With funding from

the Diocese of Southern Ohio in the United States, he established the Religious Education Resources Centre in 1978 and served as its founding director (1975–1981, 1982–1984). During this time, he edited the religious education textbook, *The Perfect Life*, for use in primary schools under the Anglican Church and other church primary schools. Beyond his extensive pastoral duties, Rev. Chan went to the UK again in 1980 to pursue a master's degree in philosophy and religious education at the University of Lancaster. Later, in 2005, he was awarded the Doctor of Ministry degree by the San Francisco Theological Seminary, a member college of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.

In 1997, the situation was similar to recent developments in Hong Kong, with a surge in emigration. Rev. Chan remarked, "The social responsibility of both pastors and social workers is significant, and the choice to emigrate or not is undoubtedly a dilemma. An individual may choose not to leave for personal missions, but they must also consider the choices and feelings of their family." Ultimately choosing to stay in Hong Kong to serve, Rev. Chan has continued his work in the Anglican Church, serving at Holy Trinity Cathedral, caring for parishioners and promoting the development of primary and kindergarten education that the church supports. He places great importance on religious education and is dedicated to advancing evangelism in various secondary schools within the district.

The Journey of Theological Formation

Having held the position of chairperson for twelve years, Rev. Chan is now serving as the vice-chairperson as an appointed member. As an Anglican pastor, Rev. Chan's service on the board has signified the denomination's supportive presence in the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, embodying unity and communion.

His gaze fixed on the Divinity School Chapel and chapel of President Yung Chi-tung memorial building, he recalls the time he spent serving alongside the former Head, Rev. Lo Lung-kwong. "Building a new chapel at the Chinese University required compliance with many regulations and conditions. There were numerous changes in architectural design and many difficulties encountered. Rev. Lo and I met to seek resolutions to meet various challenges. It was an unforgettable undertaking. In terms of fundraising, we are grateful to Rev. Li Ping-kwong, who led the way and mobilized the entire church community, which eventually enabled us to raise the construction costs, which kept increasing due to ever-rising material prices." He also mentioned his video recording during

Photo taken with The Most Revd Andrew Chan, the Most Revd Dr Paul Kwong, The Right Revd Dr Timothy Kwok, The Right Revd Thomas Soo, The Most Revd Peter Kwong

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the tenth anniversary thanksgiving service of the chapel, where he emphasized the significance of the sculpture depicting Jesus washing the disciples' feet. "This sculpture serves as a reminder that the ultimate purpose of theological education is not individual academic achievement or fame. I sincerely hope that every student and faculty member will embody the spirit of serving others as Jesus did. While it is a source of pride for many when the academic achievement of the seminary is endorsed, what truly matters is the spirit of dedication among the theology students themselves. The establishment of the chapel also allowed both teachers and students to experience the importance of worship and spirituality in theological education." With many years of involvement in the Theological Council, Rev. Chan believes that theological education should not be confined to train pastors, scholars, and committed believers, but also care for the grassroots members of the church. "Theological education should be open to everyone; the sharing of theological knowledge should take place not only in the seminary but also in the church."

Insights from Ministry and Education

In his spare time, Rev. Chan has documented his many years of experience in religious education and pastoral care. He is the author of two books, *Nurturing for Life* and *Of Pastoral Passion*, and has published academic papers on religious education and contextual theology in various journals. His new work, *Christian Education for an Emerging Age* was released in July 2024. Despite his scholarly demeanor, one might be surprised to learn that he was an athletic star in his youth, excelling in basketball, volleyball, badminton, and table tennis, and he was selected for the school teams in all these sports— truly impressive! Now at the age of eighty, he remains in good health. Over the years, during the DSCCC's term commencement services, term-end services, fundraising walkathon, and Theology Day Thanksgiving services, his presence and support are deeply appreciated. Although Rev. Chan Hin Cheung's name does not appear on the official graduate list of DSCCC, his unwavering love for the School, coupled with over fifty years of friendship, his faithful service on the Theological council for more than twenty years, and his subtle contributions during the construction of the new chapel make it clear that he is not just to be "considered as an alumnus of Chung Chi"; he is indeed our honorary alumnus.

In March 2024, he and his wife, Carol, held a "Thanksgiving Gathering for the Lord's Wonderful Love and Amazing Grace" at the All Saints Cathedral. The couple expressed their gratitude for the Lord's grace and protection over the family they have built, while also commemorating Rev. Chan's fifty years of pastoral ministry. On that day, their children, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandchildren, and many church brothers and sisters gathered to give thanks for Rev. Chan and his wife. Rev. Eddy Kwok, the current chairperson of the

In 2024, the couple held a Thanksgiving gathering, attended by family and friends, as well as faculty, students, and staff from Divinity School of Chung Chi College.

Theological Council at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, along with our School Director, Prof. Yip Ching-wah, Prof. Yam Cheuk-yin, Former Director Rev. Lo Lung-kwong, office administrative colleagues, and alumni of the DSCCC were present to show their support.

Interviewed and written by:
Li Kwong Ping

60TH ANNIVERSARY
OPENING CEREMONY
6/10/2023

Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of
Divinity School of Chung Chi College
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

The Divinity School of Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2023. To commemorate the anniversary, an opening ceremony was held on October 6, 2023 at the Cheng Yu Tung Building, with over 150 guests attending in person and 74 participants joining online.

During the ceremony, a short video introducing the history and current development of the School was shown, with the Director Francis C.W. Yip's narration. After the video, congratulatory speeches were delivered by Prof. Rocky S. Tuan, Prof. Wong Nim Yan, and Rev. Eddy C. W. Kwok. Rev. Leung Yuen Yiu presented a commemorative gift on behalf of the Alumni Association, which was received by Rev. Eddy Kwok and Prof. Francis Yip.

The officiating guests participated in a simple yet solemn ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Ms. Chow Y. Y. Esther
Board of Trustees/President of Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong

Rev. Eddy C.W. KWOK
Chairperson of Theological Council / Board of Trustees

Rev. Tim C. Lam
Theological Council/President of The Methodist Church, Hong Kong

Rev. Leung Yuen Yiu
Theological Council/Chairperson of Alumni Association, DSCCC

Prof. Pang Lai Kwan
Theological Council / Chairperson of Department of Cultural and Religious Studies

Rev. Po Kam Cheong
Board of Trustees/Associate General Secretary of the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China

Prof. Max Xiaobing Tang
Dean, Faculty of Arts

Prof. Rocky S. Tuan
Vice-Chancellor and President, CUHK

Prof. Francis C. W. Yip
Director, DSCCC

Prof. Wong Nim Yan
Associate Head of Chung Chi College

Mr. Jensen C. L. WONG
Chairperson of Student Union, DSCCC

International Symposium on
"Spirituality, Culture, and Chinese Societies: Interdisciplinary and Interfaith Dialogue"

Following the opening ceremony of our School's 60th anniversary celebration, the "Spirituality, Culture, and Chinese Society: Interdisciplinary and Interfaith Dialogue" international academic symposium was held at the Cheng Yu Tung Building of The Chinese University of Hong Kong on October 6 and 7. The event attracted 467 registrations, with attendance ranging from 150 to 300 participants across various sessions.

In recent years, research and dialogue surrounding "spirituality" have flourished in both academic and public spheres, demonstrating a significant relationship between "spirituality" and its transformation in Western and Chinese societies. However, what exactly constitutes "spirituality"? Different perspectives abound. To celebrate the 60th anniversaries of both The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Divinity School of Chung Chi College, the symposium gathered experts and scholars from various religious and academic fields to explore the meaning of "spirituality" and its impact on society. The symposium provided an open platform to facilitate dialogue and exchange between Eastern and Western communities.

Over the two days, four sessions were held in the morning and afternoon. The first session, titled "Spirituality, Religion, and the (Trans)Formation of Chinese Identity," featured Prof. Richard Madsen, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of California, San Diego, and Prof. David A. Palmer, Chair Professor of the Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences and Sociology and the Department of Sociology at the University of Hong Kong, with a response from Prof. Naomi Thurston of our School. The second session, "Spirituality and Digital Culture," included presentations by Prof. Lai Chi-tim from the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies at CUHK and Prof. Heidi A. Campbell from Texas A&M University, with a response from Prof. Kwok Wai-luen of the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Hong Kong Baptist University. The third session, "Spirituality and Holistic Care," featured Prof. Laurie Zoloth from the University of Chicago (U Chicago) Divinity School, Prof. Frances Wong Kam-yuet from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Prof. Alan W. L. Fung from University of Toronto, with a response from Prof. Colten Yam of our School. This session also included open responses and discussions. The final session was a "Round Table Discussion: Spirituality, Chinese Culture, and Interfaith Dialogues," featuring Prof. Jaroslaw M. Duraj from The University of Saint Joseph in Macau, Prof. Naomi Thurston, Prof. Elena Valussi from Loyola University, Chicago, Dr. Xue Yu and Prof. James D. Frankel from the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies at CUHK, who discussed topics from Catholicism, Protestantism, Taoist culture, Zen and human civilization, to Islamic culture. Prof. Simon K. M. Kwan, Prof. Bruce Worthington, Prof. Kung Lap Yan, and Prof. Francis C. W. Yip served as moderators for the four sessions.

Speakers and participants had opportunities for academic exchange. The symposium was conducted in English, with simultaneous interpretation in both Cantonese and Mandarin provided to ensure participants could fully engage with and understand the discussions.

Theology Day & The 60th Anniversary of the Divinity School

The Theology Day celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Divinity School was held at the Chung Chi College Chapel on November 4, 2023. Prof. Gregory Sterling, Dean of Yale Divinity School, preached a sermon entitled: "Have We Lost our Moral Compass?". Around 700 guests attended.

The 60th Anniversary Thanksgiving Banquet

The 60th Anniversary Thanksgiving Banquet was held at the Regal Riverside Hotel on December 3, 2023. 245 guests attended, including 87 VIPs, 96 alumni, 18 students, and 44 staff members.

The 60th Anniversary Alumni Theologian Lecture

The lecture was held on April 26, 2024, the online lecture was delivered by our alumna Prof. Kwok Pui Lan on "The Development of Feminist Theology in the Asia Pacific". A total of 200 participants attended the online lecture.
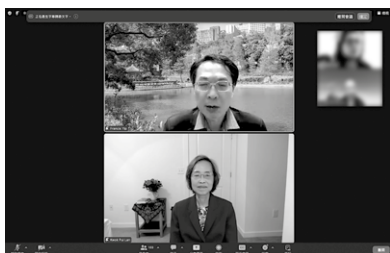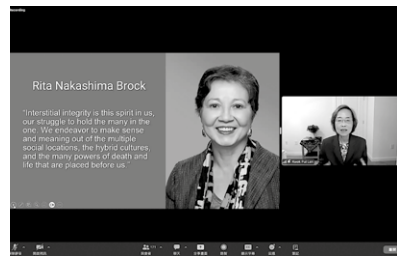
The Taiwan Study Tour

From May 16 to 23, our School organized a Taiwan Study Tour with 43 participants. The group visited various sites, including Chung Yuan Christian University (Graduate School of Religion), Tamsui Church, Mackay Cemetery, Fu Jen Catholic University, Chengchi University, Taiwan University, and Soochow University. The participants also attended Cantonese worship at Jinan Church and held a dinner with alumni in Taiwan.

Local Study Tour

Hong Kong Study Tour (Course Code: THEO5965) took place from May 28 to June 5. It was led by Prof. Kung Lap Yan, focusing on the theme of "Urban Spirituality and Theology." The 36 participants included students, teachers and staff from our school, Yale Divinity School, and the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA).

In addition to classroom activities, the study tour involved visits to various locations in Hong Kong. These included Chung Chi College Chapel, Nam Chung "Reed Blossom" Eco-community and Wan Jing Jai (a home for the elderly committed to remaining single), Tsz Shan Monastery, Dharma Nature Preaching Hall, Sik Sik Yuen Wong Tai Sin Temple, etc.

A special "Free Day" was incorporated into the study tour, allowing local students to arrange activities for oversea participants based on their interests. These activities included visiting Tai O and attending worship at the Sen Lok Christian Church.

Delegation from the University of Santo Tomas, The Philippines

On June 18, a delegation from the Institute of Religion at the University of Santo Tomas in the Philippines visited us. Following their visit, a conference was held featuring presentations from Prof. Anselm Lam, Director of the Centre for Catholic Studies, and our Director, Prof. Francis C. W. Yip. They shared their insights and expertise on the topic of Christianity in Hong Kong.

Prof. Francis Yip presented a "General Overview of Christianity in Hong Kong" while Prof. Anselm Lam focused on "An Overview of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong". Prof. Kung Lap Yan explored "Christianity and Social Change," and Dr. Bryan Mok discussed "Local Theologies."

The conference facilitated intellectual exchange, deepening our understanding of Christianity's presence in Hong Kong. We extend our gratitude to the University of Santo Tomas delegation for their visit.

The 27th Chuen King Biblical Lectureship

Prof. Konrad Schmid, Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Judaism, University of Zurich, Switzerland, was the keynote speaker of the 27th Chuen King Biblical Lectureship held online on February 22–24, 2024. The theme was "Exodus: The Tale, Its History and Its Impact." He delivered three lectures: "Moses and Monotheism: The Exodus Story in Current Pentateuchal Research," "Israel and Egypt: The Historical Background of the Exodus Story," and "God and His People: Biblical Theologies in the Exodus Story."

CPE Internship Experience

Amy Phoon (MDiv)

Being a foreign student in Hong Kong, looking for internship experience is difficult as we need to adapt to the culture and language of Hong Kong. I was grateful for the opportunity to do my internship this summer in 2024 attending the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Program at Ming Hua Theological Seminary. The CPE program is a 10-week course that builds our skills in Pastoral Care for Patients. The CPE course is like a journey of self-discovery as well as equipping ourselves with skills for future pastoral care.

The course was held over 10 weeks from the end of June to August. We needed to go to Cheung Chau for lessons for 2 days (Mon–Tues) and 3 days at Qing Shan Hospital in Tsuen Mun to do a visitation. We had to attend an orientation course at the hospital before we could do a visitation at the wards. In the first week, we took a ferry to Cheung Chau Island to the Anglican Retreat House to meet with other participants; we were in groups of 5 with our supervisors. We shared our personal life stories and our learning goals for this course. We had individual supervision time with our supervisors to discuss our progress each week. In subsequent weeks, we shared verbatims of our conversations with patients or church parishioners in group discussions. In each verbatim, we highlighted the main points of conversation that required us to further examine our feelings from our actions and underlying perceptions or expectations using the Satir model.

From the verbatims that we discussed that week, we discovered something about ourselves and unique learning points that we applied on our next visit to the hospital.

I was attached to Qingshan Hospital for 2–3 days per week. In the first 2 weeks, we were stationed in the outpatient section to observe the operations of the hospital. We talked to the patients in the waiting area to provide pastoral care to them. In subsequent weeks, we were attached to chaplains forward visitation and joined other volunteers to conduct a day program for a group of patients. Going to Qingshan Hospital was an interesting experience for me as I had the opportunity to observe the operations of the psychiatric outpatient clinic. In the first two weeks, I had the chance to talk to the patients sitting in the waiting area. I sat beside them and initiated conversations, realizing that most of them came alone for their appointments and were grateful to have someone to talk to. Most were willing to share their stories with me. When we went up to the wards for a day program with patients, we sang worship songs, played games, did word riddles, and read a Bible story as part of the program. Most patients were happy to participate and sing along, which made them joyful. We would then visit individual patients who requested a chaplain visit. Although it was a tiring week, it was a rewarding experience to minister to the needs of the patients.

After our weekly internship at the hospital, we traveled to Cheung Chau every Monday to meet with our group

and supervisor to discuss the week's events at the hospital. The verbatims served as case studies for us as we discovered our pastoral patterns when interacting with patients. One of the interesting observations was my use of prayer during our visitations, specifically when and how often I used it. I often asked myself during each visit, "Does the patient need prayers at this point?" If we did not pray, was God still present with us? We were taught to be observant of the patients' body language and tone of voice, as these might provide non-verbal cues. Each interaction with the patient was a mirror reflection of myself, helping me identify similar attitudes and feelings within us as human beings. We often think that, as ministers, we need to help patients, but from the past few weeks of interactions, I learned that patients could teach us lessons about ourselves and the fragility of our humanity. As God taught us to love one another, it is a precious lesson to love people who are different from us and rejected by society.

Before CPE, one challenge I faced was not knowing what to say to the patients when I saw them, and I often thought that I needed to bring good news to elevate their moods. However, after learning CPE, I discovered that being present with the patients and acknowledging their feelings about their situation was sufficient to comfort them. We did not need to say too many words or keep evangelizing to them. The patients mostly wanted us to listen to them, understand their situation, and empathize with them. Being respectful of the patients' faith beliefs was also necessary to establish a relationship with them. CPE taught me skills on how to interact with patients and facilitated my personal growth in discovering my strengths and weaknesses, allowing me to constantly improve myself in providing better pastoral care.

The Global Summer Institute of Theological and Intercultural Studies (Global SITIS) 2024

The Divinity School sponsored seven Asian theological educators or doctoral students to participate in the Global SITIS program.

As part of the Global SITIS program, three courses were offered in the Summer term 2023–24:1) THEO5965—Special Topics on Christianity and Society II: Urban Spirituality and Theology: Hong Kong Study Tour (Prof. Lap Yan Kung), 2) THEO5925—Chinese Christianities (Prof. Naomi Thurston) and 3) THEO5961—A Special Topic on Biblical Studies II: The Theology of Friendship (Dr. Joas Adiprasetya, President, Jakarta Theological Seminary). Eight exchange students from Yale Divinity School, seven theological educators or doctoral students from Asia and 15 DSCCC students participated in the program.

Fundraising
Walkathon

The fund-raising walkathon was held on March 10, 2024 (Sunday). 85% of the funds raised from the walkathon went to the "Chung Chi Theological Education Fund" and 15% was donated to the "Construction of the Myanmar Institute of Theology 90th Anniversary Building".

The Devotional Camp 2024

The camp was held at Shatin Breakthrough Youth Village on January 5–6, 2024. Activities included an introduction of DSCCC by the Director, sharing by our students and alumni, individual consultations with teachers and a closing ceremony plus a worship service. 25 participants registered while 21 joined the camp. 15 participants indicated that they were interested in applying to our BD, MDiv, MACS, MTheol, DTheol and DProf programmes.

Online Public Lectures

Two online public lectures were held on December 12, 2023 and January 19, 2024. The lectures were delivered by Prof. Bruce Worthington on "Did Slaves Write the New Testament? Valuing Marginal Identities in the Production of Early Christian Texts", and Prof. Simon Kwan on "Contextual Theology: Is Truth Changing or Eternal?". A total of around 230 participants attended the online lectures.
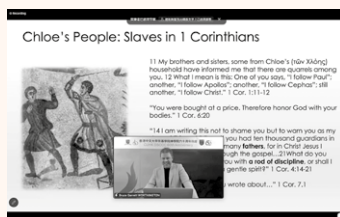
Information Day

Information Day for BD, MACS, MDiv, MTheol and DTheol programmes was held on January 27, 2024 in LG2 Activity Room, President Chi-tung Yung Memorial Building. 28 participants attended the Information Day.

New Student Orientation Day

The orientation day was held on August 31, 2024. The Orientation Day is designed to help new students know more about our School and get familiar with the new environment which including introduction of school's spirit, library workshop and plagiarism workshop. 36 new students joined the Orientation Day.

End of Term Service

The End of Term Service was held on May 2, 2024. Students, graduates-to-be, staff and members of the Theological Council joined the worship. Prof. Francis Yip preached on a sermon entitled "Facing the Reality and Hoping for God's reign". 129 persons attended the service (89 persons attended physically while 40 persons joined via Zoom).

Term Commencement Faculty-Student Camp

The Term Commencement Faculty-Student Camp on the theme "The Fisherman's Friends" was held from September 12 to 14, 2024. 68 students attended the full camp, while 17 students attended the day camp.

Term Commencement Service

The term commencement service was held on September 12, 2024. Rev. Tim Lam, President of The Methodist Church, Hong Kong, was invited to deliver a sermon. About 140 participants joined the service in person.

Graduate Thesis Salon

The salon was held on June 11, 2024, 7:00–9:30 pm, at Cheng Yu Tung Building, CUHK. Eight students, who were selected from a diversity of fields and topics, presented their theses in the salon and shared their research and methodology. The presentations were conducted in Cantonese, and English interpretation was provided upon request. It was a valuable opportunity to create an open and critical hub for theological reflection.

Pastoral Programme **"Monday Cheer Up"**

The "Monday Cheer Up" program was held on December 18, 2023, and February 19, 2024, via Zoom, for the academic year 2023–2024. The theme was "Sadness, Happiness, Pain, Bitterness, Death and Life."

Church Visits

Our teachers and students visited 3 local churches on September 29, 2024 . Near 80 teachers, pastors and students in 3 groups visited Anointed Grace Lutheran Church, The Church of Christ Wanchai Church and Lai Yiu Methodist Church.

Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture (CSCCRS)

A forum titled "The Missionary Movement in Hong Kong: View from the Missionary Life of Hans Lutz" which was organized by Christian Industrial Committee (CIC) and co-hosted by our School and CSCCRC was held in G01, Theology Building, Chung Chi College, CUHK on January 12, 2024. This forum was dedicated as a tribute to Rev. Dr. Hans Lutz's retirement. Prof. Tobias Brandner and Prof. Christina Wong were among the speakers.

Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture (CSCCRS) and The Society for the Study of History of Christianity in China (SSHCC)

The 13th International Symposium on the History of Christianity in Modern China

The symposium was held in Hong Kong, June 6–7, 2024. With the theme of "Archives and the History of Chinese Christianity in Modern Times," the symposium attracted significant attention, receiving a total of 46 applications. After careful evaluation, 33 applicants were admitted. The symposium was jointly organized by the Centre for Sino-Christian 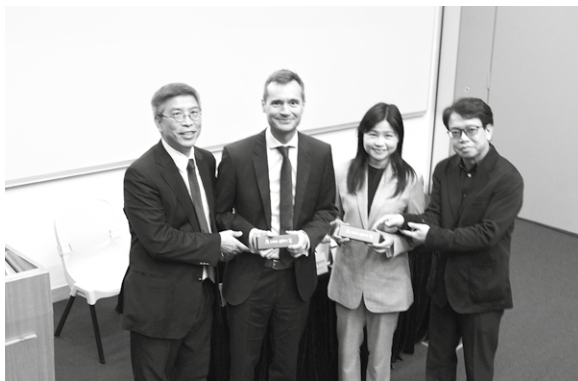Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University and the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, CUHK. Additionally, the Society for the Study of the History of Christianity in China served as a co-organizer of this important event.
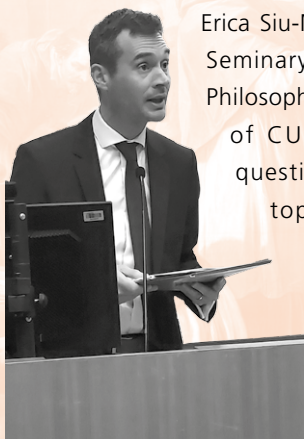
Centre for Christian Studies (CCS)

Public Lecture

"Augustine of Hippo's Life, Reflections, and Ecclesiology as a Pilgrimage"

A public lecture, titled "Augustine of Hippo's Life, Reflections, and Ecclesiology as a Pilgrimage" was held on March 12, 2024 embarked on a twofold exploration. It began by delving into the profound legacy of Augustine of Hippo, tracing the contours of his life's journey and theological contributions. The speaker, Prof. Anthony Dupont, served as the Augustine of Hippo Chair and a Research Professor in Christian Antiquity at the Research Unit of History of Church and Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven, Belgium. The lecture was moderated by Prof. Colten Yam. The two respondents, Dr. Erica Siu-Mui Lee of the Holy Spirit Seminary College of Theology & Philosophy and Prof. Lai Pan Chiu of CUHK, raised stimulating questions and insights to the topic. The discussion was further enriched by the round-table discussion which included the speaker, the moderator, the respondents and Prof. Anselm Lam.

This lecture was organized by the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, Centre for Christian Studies, and Centre for Catholic Studies. We received an overwhelming response, with over 110 people attending in person and 32 participants joining online.

A Luncheon Augustine Expert Seminar on "Divine Remedies and Healing Rhetoric in Augustine" was held on March 13, 2024 by Prof. Anthony Dupont. Prof. Colten Yam was the moderator of the seminar. The seminar was organized by the Divinity School of Chung Chi College and the Centre for Christian Studies, offering participants the chance to explore the concept of Christus medicus in Augustine's Preached Theology.

Prof. Dupont discussed the topic of Divine Remedies and Healing Rhetoric in Augustine, sharing his research and insights. He also talked about how his academic development and the continental context influenced his research interests and approaches to studying Augustine. There were about 20 participants who joined the event.

From June 7–9, 2024, the Center for Critical Research on Religion and the Divinity School of Chung Chi College successfully hosted the Critical Research on Religion Conference. The event featured keynote addresses from Professors Roland Boer of Renmin University and Vincent Goossaert of École Pratique des Hautes Études, alongside multiple panel discussions on topics such as messianism, psychoanalytic approaches to biblical interpretation, and the societal implications of religion in China.

Panels were moderated by Prof. Bruce Worthingthon and Dr. Warren S. Goldstein who facilitated engaging discussions among participants. Attendees explored contemporary issues such as liberation theology, environmental concerns, and sexuality within religious contexts.

The conference provided a valuable platform for scholars and practitioners to examine critical perspectives in the study of religion and fostered meaningful dialogue on pressing topics.

New Book Release

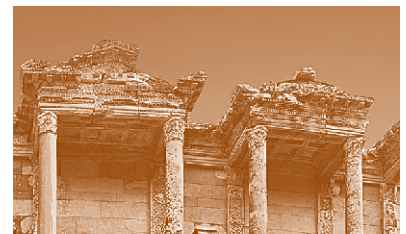### Alain Badiou and the Book of Revelation

Author: Bruce Worthington
Publisher: Lexington Books / Fortress Academic
Publication Date: July 2024

Using many key philosophical concepts based on the work of Alain Badiou, this book outlines the relationship between an event and the emergence of a "truth," which serves as a helpful organizing principle from which to study the origins of Christianity. *Alain Badiou and the Book of Revelation* argues that despite what postmodern philosophy says, truths still appear, and their immanent character can be known in the world through a militant subject, one who is willing to declare the consequences of an event that has happened. The second half of the book applies Badiou's theory of the event to the book of Revelation, a book that draws out radical, even terrifying, consequences from an event "the victory of the Lamb," particularly in the logic of a new world, and a political body that is to come. Based on several new insights following the completion of Badiou's "The Immanence of Truths," the book is a full-length treatment of Badiou's philosophy applied to the study of Christian origins and the book of Revelation.

ALAIN BADIOU AND THE
BOOK OF REVELATION
THE EMERGENCE OF A TRUTH
BRUCE WORTHINGTON

Other News

New Book Release

## Asian Feminist Biblical Studies: Perspectives and Methods

Editor: Maggie Low
Publication Date: October 2023
Publisher: Divinity School of Chung Chi College, Chinese University of
Hong Kong

This is a thought-provoking and inspiring book that offers diverse and innovative approaches to biblical interpretation. It challenges traditional interpretations, deconstructs patriarchal structures and promotes social justice. The collection of essays by mostly younger Asian scholars is an essential resource for anyone interested in feminist biblical criticism, Asian theology or the intersection of gender and religion.
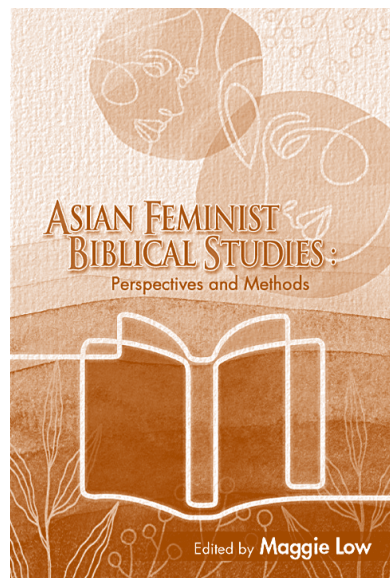
Christians in the City of Hong Kong : Chinese Christianity in Asia's World City

Author: Tobias Brandner
Publication Date: November 2023
Series: Christians in the City: Studies in Contemporary Global Christianity
Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing

Christians in the City of Hong Kong tells the story of a multi-faceted, constantly evolving Christianity in a vibrant metropolis that has always been China's gateway to the wider world. Having served in Hong Kong for over 25 years in contexts from prison ministry to theological education, Tobias Brandner offers an interplay of local and global perspectives assessing the growth, variation, and present course of Hong Kong's diverse Christian communities. These range from spiritually progressive Christians to conservative evangelicals and Pentecostals; Christians at the grassroots and in the higher echelons of wealth and power; social and educational ministries of Christians and their impact on society; and, finally, the important role of Hong Kong Christians in their outreach to mainland China.

Tracing how Christianity has extended into all parts of society, including arts, politics, and academia, Brandner presents key theological insights into the dynamics of a community at the cultural intersection of China and the West.
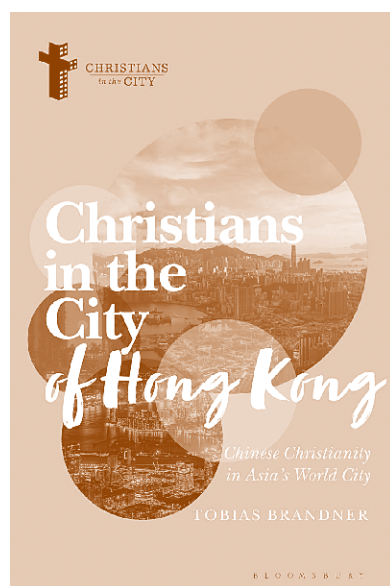
Ching Feng

A Journal on Christianity and Chinese Religion and Culture
New Series, Volume 22, Numbers 1–2

Religions and Peace:
Inter-Religious Dialogue in a World of Conflict and Violence

In What Sense Can Inter-Faith Dialogue Contribute to Inter-Faith Peace? | Perry Schmidt-Leukel

非暴力本體論 —— 論托瑪斯 · 默頓社會參與的神學基礎 | 徐曉燕

Pope Francis on the Wedding of Peace and Fraternity, and the Service of Religions in their Promotion | Batairwa Kubuya Paulin

Articles

A Comparative Reading of *Nada and Wu-wei* 無為 | Huili Shen Stout

The Polyphonic Structure of Xu Dishan's Early Short Stories on Religious Themes | Xu Ke

火炮與明末天主教的傳播 —— 以天啟、崇禎年間購炮活動為例 | 劉闊

A Subtle Consensus: Fabian's and Ricci's Understanding of Confucianism | Han Qiaoyu

Book Reviews

何光滬：《生於憂患，長於憂患 —— 何光滬「漢語神學」文選》| 高喆

Wang Yi et al. *Faithful Disobedience: Writings on Church and State from a Chinese House Church Movement* | Maria Chen
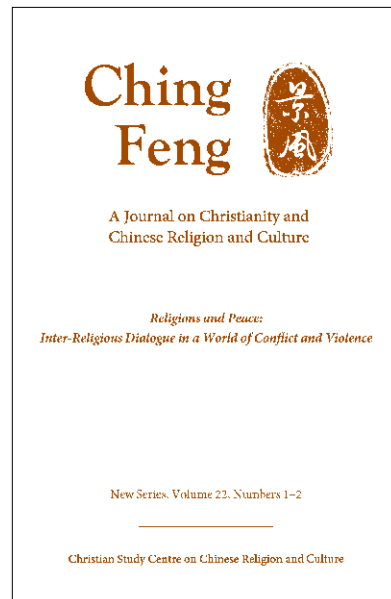
Magdaléna Rychetská. *Uneasy Encounters: Christian Churches in Greater China* | Katja Wengenmayr

曾劭愷編：《文化宣教：跨學科現象及理論研究》| 吳振南

Tobias Brandner. Christians *in the City of Hong Kong: Chinese Christianity in Asia's World City* | Alex Mayfield Leopold Leeb. *Parallel Lives, Congenial Visions: Christian Precursors of Modernity in China and Japan* | Benoît Vermander

Originally published under the title *Quarterly Notes* since 1957, *Ching Feng* (ISSN 0009–4668) is a peer-reviewed journal and one of the major publications of Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, by which it seeks to promote critical and constructive studies of all aspects of Chinese Christianity, Chinese religions and culture, and inter-religious dialogue between Christianity and other religious traditions in Asia.

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IASACT 2024

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IASACT 2024 was smoothly accomplished between June 14 and July 13, 2024. The theme for this year was *"The Poetics, Politics, and Performances of Spaces"*. 14 scholars from China, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and U.S.A were selected and joined the program.

Prof. Jeane Peracullo from De La Salle University, Philippines who is IASACT alumna in 2016 continuously supported the program as one of the mentors. IASACT Dean, Prof. Kung Lap Yan was the other mentor. Each of them provided mentorship to seven scholars.

An Opening Worship was held on June 17 in Prayer Room of the Divinity School followed by a Welcome Lunch in the lobby of Theology Building. Prof. Naomi Thurston, Prof. Sonia Wong, Prof. Christina Wong and Rev. Dr. Leo Li were invited to the Opening Worship, respectively performing the role of officiant, reading scriptures and leading benediction. Participants of Global SITIS were also invited to join the worship followed by the Welcome Lunch to mingle with the
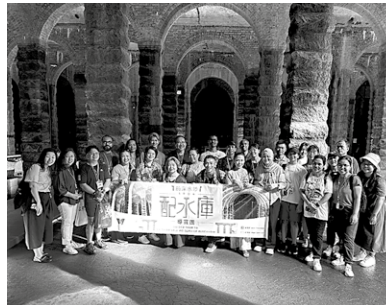
Participants of both Global SITIS and IASACT joined the excursion to Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir.

IASACT scholars. Participants of both Global SITIS and IASACT joined the excursion to Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir in the afternoon. On June 20, there was a visit to Tao Fong Shan and Lutheran Theological Seminary when participants of Global SITIS also took part in the visit.

On June 18, there was a tour in Chung Chi College Library which IASACT scholars got a chance to explore the use of library facilities and access to electronic journals.

Each scholar delivered a brief presentation of the proposal on June 19 and took turns to give a comprehensive presentation from the second week to the last Wednesday on July 10. Each scholar was the

Participants of both Global SITIS and IASACT visited Tao Fong Shan and Lutheran Theological Seminary

respondent to the other scholar. There were floor discussions after each presentation.

Prof. Kung Lap Yan organized an HK Island tour on July 6 leading the scholars to explore the history of Hong Kong when scholars found the tour not only interesting, but also comprehensive enough to learn more about the colonial history.

This year was the 20th Anniversary of IASACT which was found in 2004. A celebration lunch was held on July 4 in lobby of Theology Building. Dr. Pareena Lawrence, President of United Board and her colleagues of United Board attended the lunch to celebrate the anniversary with IASACT scholars. Our School Director, Prof. Francis Yip and some of our faculty members have also joined the lunch.

The program was accomplished by a Farewell Lunch at the Gastronomy Club on July 11. Most scholars left Hong Kong on July 13 while there were 3 who stayed behind after the program to visit around Hong Kong.

Group photo after Opening Worship

20th Anniversary Lunch was held in the Lobby of Theology Building

Congratulations

Our Director, Prof. Francis C. W. Yip, was awarded the Faculty Outstanding Teaching Award 2023. A certificate was presented in the Faculty Outstanding Teaching Award & Dean's List Presentation Ceremony 2022–23 on March 23, 2024.

Prof. Colten Yam and Rev. Yiu Chi Ho, teachers of the Chung Chi General Education programme GECC1132 Learning through Serving: Student-Oriented Teaching, each received the Exemplary Teaching Award in Service-Learning 2023–24 from Chung Chi College on January 12, 2024.

Prof. Bruce Worthington was awarded the Best Teaching Award (2023–2024) by the DSCCC Student Union by election.

Director's News

Prof. Francis C. W. Yip

Prof. Yip was invited to lead the 2023 Provincial Clergy Conference of Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui which was held from November 28 to 30 with the theme "Church and Mission in Hong Kong Society." The theme of the meeting was divided into four sessions: "God's Kingdom & Mission", "The Situation of Hong Kong Christianity", "Responses to the Situation" and "The Church & Missio Dei."

Invited by the Chaplain's Office of the Hong Kong Baptist University, Prof. Francis Yip delivered a series of three public lectures (March 22, 23, and 24) on the theme "Is the God-Human Relationship a Zero-Sum Game?" for the 17th Faith-in-Practice Forum. The topics of the three lectures were, respectively, "God's Actions and the Operations of the Human World," "God's Word and Human Writings," and "Communities of Saints and Communities of Sinners."

On October 23, he participated in the Thanksgiving Dinner for the 180th Anniversary of the Founding of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui cum the 25th Anniversary of the Inauguration of the Province of Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui. On October 28, he attended the second meeting of the Deans and Academic Deans for the academic year 2023–24 organized by the Hong Kong Theological Education Association. On October 31, he went to Seoul, South Korea, to participate in the Asian Church, Mission and Theology Conference organized by the Methodist Theological University, where he delivered a keynote speech.

From November 16 to 23, Prof. Yip attended the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, where he chaired a session titled "Comparative Ideologies and Materialities in Chinese Christianities".

After the School collaborated with the Hong Kong Christian Council to conduct research and published the "Survey Report on the Public Perception of Christianity in Hong Kong 2021" and the "Focus Group Study on Christianity in Hong Kong 2023," Prof. Yip was invited by various organizations to share the quantitative and qualitative research findings, as well as the current state of the church in Hong Kong. The reports have generated extensive discussions in Christian churches and various media. This has also allowed for the re-evaluation of future development directions.

Despite his active schedule, Prof. Yip delivered sermons almost every Sunday in congregations across different churches throughout the academic year.

Teachers' News

Prof. Tobias Brandner

Prof. Brandner attended the Annual General Meeting of ATESEA on March 13 and 14, 2024 in Iloilo, Philippines.

In February and March 2024, Prof. Brandner gave two lectures at the Divinity School of Silliman University, Dumaguete, Philippines: the first was a talk on in-prison ministry at a regional forum of prison ministries organized by Prison Fellowship International in Singapore. The second was a keynote speech at a church conference on ministry to those in prison in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Locally, he led a workshop on "new perspectives in mission" at the Evangelical Free Church of Christ Waterloo Hill Church.

His book *Christians in the City of Hong Kong: Chinese Christianity in Asia's Global City* was published by Bloomsbury Academics (London) in November 2023.

In early June, Prof. Brandner held two public lectures at Satya Wacana Christian University (UKSW) in Salatiga, Indonesia, and at Duta Wacana Christian University in Yogyakarta.

On August 15, 2024, he was invited as a keynote speaker to participate in a conference organized by the Cambodian Prison Association for senior prison officials from the General Department of Prisons, with the theme "Prison Ministry and Renewal."

Prof. Simon S. M. Kwan

Prof. Kwan published an edited book *Asian Spiritualities and Social Transformation* in late October 2023.

Prof. Kung Lap Yan

Prof. Kung led a Seminar on "Public Theology: Doing Public Theology for Myanmar" from November 3 to 6, where he had 2 presentations: 1. Civic Agency and Space in Authoritarian Contexts and 2. Public Theology of Food: Safety, Security, and Sovereignty.

Prof. Christina W. Y. Wong

From October 24 to 28, 2023, Prof. Christina Wong attended the coordinating meeting of the Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology held in Taoyuan, Taiwan.

Prof. Wong presented at a forum entitled "The Missionary Movement in Hong Kong: View from the Missionary Life of Hans Lutz" on January 12, 2024, which was co-organized by Hong Kong Christian Industrial Council and Divinity School of Chung Chi College, CUHK. Her presentation was "Missionaries and Hong Kong Social Transformation: Their Participation in Hong Kong Society in the 1960s–1970s." It integrates the research findings of her ECS project, "Radical Social Movements and Networked Ecumenism: An Analysis of Three Christian NGOs in Colonial Hong Kong."

From March 4 to 6, 2024, Prof. Wong was invited to Bangkok, Thailand, to participate in the preparatory meeting for the Council for World Mission's 2024 East Asia Conference, where she presented on "Feminist Theology and Transformative Power."

From March 11 to 15, Prof. Wong attended the Fifth International Interdisciplinary Conference on World Christianity online, with the theme "Revisiting Women and Gender in World Christianity." The conference was co-organized by Princeton Theological Seminary, the Overseas Ministries Study Center, and the University of Ghana. On March 11, she presented a paper titled "Reflecting on Historical Methodology: Transnational Collaboration among Christian Women in Guangzhou, China." Additionally, on March 14, she responded to the author Gina Zurlo at the book launch event for Zurlo's work *Women in World Christianity: Building and Sustaining a Global Movement* (WileyBlackwell, 2023).

Prof. Wong secured the Publication Support Fund 2024, awarded by the Faculty of Arts. Her manuscript "Transnational Cooperation and the Christian Women's Community in Canton, 1847–1951: From True Light Seminary to Young Women's Christian Association" will be published by Lehigh University Press in December 2024.

Prof. Sonia K. Wong

Prof. Sonia Wong attended the 2023 Annual Meetings in San Antonio, Texas, November 18–21, hosted by the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), the world's largest gathering of scholars interested in the study of religion. She presented a session paper: ""Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through the Traumatic Loss of Homeland in the Deuteronomistic (Hi)Story," at the conference.

Prof. Wong had two new publications:

"What Is Postcolonial Studies and How Is It Applied to the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament." In *The Old Testament Hebrew Scripture in Five Minutes*, edited by Philippe Guillaume and Diana Edelman, 419–23. Sheffield: Equinox, 2024.

"Naked Exposure of the Female Body in the Hebrew Bible and Modern China." In *Asian Feminist Biblical Studies*, edited by Maggie Low, 26–65. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2023.

Prof. Wong was accepted into the visiting scholar program at Princeton Theology Seminary from January 15 to April 30, 2024, which she joined as a part of her ECS project "The Political Unconscious of the Deuteronomistic (Hi) Story."

Prof. Wong has successfully supervised a graduate of Doctor of Theology programme (DTheol 2022), Miss Garbo Hui Po Ying, who was awarded the Rev. Dr. Lien-Wah Chow Memorial Foundation 2023 Outstanding Theological Doctoral Thesis Award "Excellent Doctoral Thesis Award."

Prof. Colten C. Y. Yam

Prof. Colten Yam attended the Annual Meeting of Society of Biblical Literature from November 18 to 21, 2023, and presented a paper: "Nature as Wonder: Basil's Interpretation of Genesis 1 in Light of Greek Culture."

Prof. Yam was invited to serve as the external examiner in a doctoral oral defense of the Lutheran Theological Seminary. Thesis entitled: "A Call for Unity: Applying Cyprian's Theology of the Unity of the Church in Myanmar Context."

Prof. Yam was invited to attend the 2nd Chinese-German Conference, Augustine in Dialogue, and presented the paper "Anti-Origenist Colour in Augustine's Later Theology of Image" on April 6–8, 2024 in Quanzhou, China.

Prof. Yam was also invited by Fudan University to be a respondent/commentator for the series of four public lectures (Platonism and Christianity as Competitive Orders in the 4th century up to Augustine) on April 8–12, 2024, in Shanghai.

Prof. Yam gave a lecture in Tsinghua University, titled: "Basil of Caesarea's Creation Theology and Stoic Philosophy" on April 15, 2024, in Beijing.

Prof. Yam also delivered a talk at the Institute of World Religions (IWR) Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), titled: "The Different Interpretations of God's Image by the Ancient Church Fathers" on April 15, 2024, in Beijing.

Prof. Yam was invited to be a respondent/commentator for a public lecture on Augustine's eschatology at Peking University on April 15, 2024, in Beijing.

Prof. Naomi Thurston

Prof. Thurston participated in the Fifth International Interdisciplinary Conference on World Christianity, which took place online from March 11 to 15, 2024. During this event, she presented her paper "Women Missionaries as Ethnographers and Chroniclers" and responded to Gina Zurlo during the book launch for Zurlo's *Women in World Christianity: Building and Sustaining a Global Movement* (WileyBlackwell, 2023).

Prof. Thurston attended the American Academy of Religion (AAR) Conference in November 2023, where she presented a paper titled "Critique of Christian Conversations on Chinese and African Ancestral Traditions in Comparative Perspective" at the African Religions Unit and moderated a session at the Chinese Christianities Unit.

Prof. Thurston organized and chaired the annual meeting of the Chinese Christianities Study Group (CCSG), which met as an affiliate group of the Association of Asian Studies on March 16, 2024. This year a group meeting was held in Seattle, WA. The CCSG Meeting and Business Meeting featured the project presentations of three emerging scholars in the field, as well as a book talk by Professor Chloë Starr of Yale Divinity School on her new 3-volume book series, Modern Chinese Theologies. Prof. Thurston has a book chapter in the third of the three volumes, Modern Chinese Theologies Volume 3: *Academic and Diasporic*, edited by Chloë Starr (Fortress, 2024), entitled, "Scholar, Critic, Scribe: Zha Changping 查常平's Humanist Criticism."

Prof. Thurston co-guest-edited an issue of *Religions* with Xiao Qinghe, entitled, "Texts, Interpretations, and Reception Histories in Chinese Christianity," https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/DR021IE7F8.

Prof. Thurston published a Chinese translation of her article, "Relating to the Whole Community in Akan and East Asian Ancestral Traditions," Filosofia Theoretica Volume 11, Issue 1 (January/April 2022) 159–171. Translation by Zhang Yong, https://www.csccrc.org/news_tc.php?id=24.

Prof. Thurston published a short piece in *The Occasional* (Blog of Princeton Theological Seminary's OMSC), "Women Missionary-Ethnographers in 19th Century China? A Field for Further Research." 2024.

On August 4, the US-China Catholic Association (USCCA) held its 29th International Conference at DePaul University in Chicago, USA, where Prof. Thurston delivered the closing keynote speech.

Stewards High Rock: Stories from a Century-Old Hong Kong Community was published in December 2024. The first author was Dr Alfred H. Y. Lam, while Dr Fok Yeung Yeung and Prof. Naomi Thurston served as co-authors.

Prof. Bruce Worthington

Prof. Worthington was the keynote speaker for the Asian Methodist Conference organized by the Asian Methodist Council on February 6, 2024. The theme of the event was Theology and Youth Culture, and the title of the talk was "The Homelessness of Legion: Mark 5:1–13 and Its Intersections." The talk has been turned into a paper and accepted for presentation in the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in the Fall of 2024.

Prof. Worthington participated in a Symposium on the topic of "New Testament and Critical Theory," along with a doctoral dissertation at Lund University on April 5 to 7, 2024. He presented research and discussed the topic "Community in the Study of the New Testament," which included a pre-circulated paper and discussion.

Prof. Worthington organized an international conference on the topic of "Critical Research on Religion," from June 7 to 10, 2024 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The conference was in collaboration with the Centre for Critical Research on Religion (USA) and worked alongside the journal Critical Research on Religion. Keynote addresses were provided by Vincent Goossaert and Roland Boer. The conference was partially funded by the CUHK Faculty of Arts Conference Support Grant.

On June 16, Prof. Worthington presented a paper titled "Populist Features of the Qumran Community" at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies held at McGill University.

From June 7 to 10, Prof. Worthington hosted an international conference titled "Critical Research on Religion" at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, where over 50 papers were presented by scholars from around the world.

From August 26 to 31, Prof. Worthington attended the annual meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in Rome, where he visited the archaeological sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum with other archaeologists.

On August 15, his new book *Alain Badiou and the Book of Revelation: The Emergence of a Truth* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2024) was launched, with the event taking place on September 13 at The Chinese University of Hong Kong bookstore.

AAPTHK
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PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Asian Practical Theology International Conference 2025

The Asia Academy of Practical Theology (AAPTHK), in conjunction with the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, is pleased to announce the upcoming Second Asian Practical Theology International Conference.

Date: **June 13-14, 2025 (HKT)**
Mode: **Online**
Theme: Intersection of Trauma and Practical Theology in Asia
Call for Papers: **https://bit.ly/3UwIVzU**
Abstract Submission Deadline: **Feb 28, 2025**

details

We are currently in the "Call for Papers" phase, and we cordially invite you to participate as a paper presenter. We would be honored to receive your abstract, which will undergo peer review.

Help us spread the word! Share this post with your academic networks, colleagues, and friends interested in practical theology and the impact of trauma.

For more details: **https://www.aapthk.org/aptic2025**

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year