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Introduction: The Umbrella Movement and Liberation Theology

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September 28, 2014, is usually considered the day that the theological landscape in Hong Kong changed. For 79 days, hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong citizens occupied key political and economic sites in the Hong Kong districts of Admiralty, Causeway Bay, and Mong Kok, resisting the government's attempts to clear them out until court injunctions were handed down in early December.¹ Captured on social media and live television, the images of police in Hong Kong throwing 87 volleys of tear gas and pepper-spraying students writhing in agony have been imprinted onto the popular imagination around the world. Using the image of a student standing up all wrapped up in plastic wrap to protect against police brutality, the cover story of *The Economist* on October 4, 2014, was titled "The Party v. the People," attempting to analyze the Hong Kong protests' impact on relations with Beijing. Not to be outdone, the *Time* magazine cover dated October 13, 2014, featured the image of a goggled young man with a face mask triumphantly holding up two umbrellas surrounded almost like incense with the smoke of the tear gas. On the front of the magazine is plastered three words, "The Umbrella Revolution," declaring that Hong Kong's youth were fed up with the lack of democracy in this Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Gathering shortly thereafter in their newly formed Umbrella Square, the Hong Kong Federation of Students and Scholarism (a secondary school student movement led by the charismatic Joshua Wong Chi-fung, himself gracing the cover of *Time* the very next week on October 20) declared that this was not a revolution because they were not overthrowing the government.² They asserted that the occupations were a *movement*—the Umbrella Movement—to demand that the government institute "genuine universal suffrage," the right of citizens in Hong Kong to vote for candidates that they could directly nominate and who would not have to be vetted by the central government in Beijing. A series of debates circulated in the Umbrella Movement's wake, wondering whether the protests constituted Hong Kong's Tiananmen moment, hearkening back to the student democracy movement that had resulted in close to one million people occupying Beijing's central public square in 1989, only to be violently suppressed with tanks, bayonets, and live bullets throughout the streets of the PRC's capital on June 4.³

Democracy, protest, solidarity, youth At face value, one might suppose that the Umbrella Movement is the birth of a kind of liberation theology in Hong Kong; certainly, that you are reading a volume attempting a theological reflection on the protests might evoke a sentiment of this sort. Indeed, one fascinating focal point of the constant media coverage of the Umbrella Movement was that Christians were not only involved, but heavily engaged in leading the spectrum of groups that composed the democracy movement.⁴ The official estimates of the actual number of Christians in Hong Kong, both Catholic and Protestant, has been at around a consistent 10 % of its population of seven million since the 1980s, suggesting that the significant influence of Christians on the Umbrella Movement—indeed, in a historical sense, on Hong Kong society—is not captured by sheer statistics.⁵ For example, Joshua Wong is an evangelical whose family has roots in the charismatic renewal movement. The leaders of the group that arguably brought about the civic awareness that catalyzed the movement in 2013, Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP), boast a law professor of evangelical persuasion, Benny Tai Yiu-ting, and a Baptist minister, the Rev. Chu Yiuming. While the current cardinal-bishop of

Hong Kong, John Cardinal Tong Hon, has been less than enthusiastic about the protests, his predecessor, Joseph Cardinal Zen Ze-ken actively led the students out to the protest that resulted in the occupations. In the Mong Kok occupation, an ecumenical band of Christians—Roman Catholics, Anglicans, non-denominational evangelicals—built a makeshift sanctuary called St. Francis’ Chapel on the Street. Even those who criticize these leaders as overly bourgeois count among their number those who identify as Christian. The core of radical democratic political party People Power is a group known as Narrow Church, which is led by seminary students from Chung Chi Divinity School of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). As a mentor to the radical democracy group Civic Passion, politician Raymond Wong Yuk-man is a baptized Christian who attends a socially engaged, liturgically innovative, non-denominational church in the working-class Shaukeiwan district. Certainly, there is something to be said here about how the arc of theology bends toward justice and liberation, engaged in solidarity with the demands of democracy as a way of solving social ills and political corruption.

That the call for grassroots political agency has been key to many articulations of theologies of liberation in both Latin America and in Asia prompts the question of whether the Umbrella Movement can be considered a moment of liberation theology in Hong Kong. Certainly, there are resonances with what theologians Joerg Rieger and Kwok Puilan call the “theology of the multitude,” the “rising up” of the *ochlos* (“a crowd or mass of people”) and the *laos* (“the common people”) against their rulers by invoking the in-breaking of the kingdom of God.⁶ Typical of academic theological reflection, though, the essays that have been included in this collection do not tell a simple story that is easily continuous with such theological trends, even though one of our authors, Lap Yan Kung, has certainly drawn inspiration in his work from the Peruvian theologian known as the founder of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez.⁷ Indeed, the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council and the meeting of the Latin American bishops at Medellín, Colombia, in 1968 produced what we have come to call liberation theology and brought about the adoption of concepts such as “basic ecclesial communities,” the Second Vatican Council’s moniker of “the people of God,” the “see-judge-act” method, and the critique of unjust structures of domination through groups such as the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC), *minjung* (“of the people”) theologians during the Park Chung Hee dictatorship of Korea in the 1970s, Dalit (“untouchable caste”) theology in the Church of North India in the 1980s, the People Power Movement in the Philippines, and the emergence of theologies from migrants and indigenous peoples within Asia.⁸ Yet the simple fact that there is a tradition of Asian liberation theology should not obscure the fact that the Umbrella Movement has its own theological genealogy, one that is not generically “Asian” or beholden to “theologies of liberation,” but that is rooted in the odd history of Hong Kong’s pre-1997 colonial relationship with the United Kingdom and its post-1997 arrangement with the PRC, in which it enjoys both legal autonomy and suffers a national identity crisis through the principle of “one country, two systems.”

Indeed, the Chinese case is what makes the Umbrella Movement difficult to neatly conceptualize within the otherwise straightforward rubrics of liberation theology. After all, liberation theology has its origins in the critique of capitalist dictatorships that had allied themselves during the Cold War with the so-called “free world” of North American Treaty Organization (NATO) countries. This is not to say that liberation theology, contrary to popular opinion (as well as that of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger’s Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith from the 1980s to the 2000s), is necessarily beholden to Marxist ideologies of class struggle and the agency of capital processes. Indeed, Paulo Freire’s influence on the “conscientization” of Latin American liberation theology is—as philosopher of education Sam Rocha and his students argue⁹—perhaps better seen as a proto-evangelium for Medellín’s call for “‘conscientización’ ordered to changing the structures and observance of justice.”¹⁰ So too, theologies of solidarity with the *minjung* in Korea, the *dalit* in India, the people in the Philippines, and the migrant workers and indigenous peoples of Asia usually have more to do with the inculturation of Christian concepts than the ideological indoctrination of secular materialism.¹¹ However, the objection still stands: Most of these cases have to do with “liberation” from the un-free conditions of the free world. With the emergence of Chinese democracy movements such as the one in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and the various protests that have riddled the Republic of China in Taiwan and Hong Kong SAR when a closer relationship with the PRC central government has been

suggested, this is—strangely enough—liberation theology done in relation to a nation-state that for all intents and purposes still identifies with the now-defunct Soviet bloc of yesteryear.¹²

The question of whether such geopolitical conditions qualify the protest movements as “liberation theology” is thus complex. Add to the mess the complexity following the Open Door Policy reforms of 1978 that opened the PRC to a platform of “market socialism,”¹³ and one hears political psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek joking that the PRC is really “totalitarian capitalism” more similar to the style of Lee Kwan Yew in Singapore than Mao Zedong in revolutionary China,¹⁴ what Marxist geographer David Harvey calls “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics” in a deliberate jab at then-paramount leader Deng Xiaoping’s description of the post-reform era as a time of “socialism with Chinese characteristics.”¹⁵ On the one hand, the conditions of market reform do place the Chinese case, complete with its pretensions to “market socialism,” in square continuity with the Latin American and Asian cases. However, an intact communist government will still have the ideology that the expansion of its central government’s powers is a mode of liberation itself. In a stunning analysis by geographer Kean Fan Lim, “market socialism” may be nothing more than the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) slowing down its strategy to initiate the class struggle to bring in a communist utopia.¹⁶ Asserting sovereignty claims in Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong SAR, and Taiwan can thus be understood from the CCP’s perspective as liberating these territories from the ideological work of capitalism, placing a damper on the glib usage of “liberation” to describe theologies that might be emerging from the participation of Christians in the Umbrella Movement.

A better approach—one that we take in this book—is to perform thick descriptions of the concrete situation in Hong Kong as a distinct approach of doing theology, rooting our discussion not in the generic language of “Asian” liberation theology or evangelistic inculturation, but in the history, politics, and public spheres of Hong Kong itself.¹⁷ To be sure, such an approach is a direct application of Joseph Cardinal Cardijn’s see-judge-act method from the early twentieth-century Young Christian Workers movement in Belgium: one sees a sociological situation of injustice, judges it theologically, and takes action. Enshrined as the ecclesially sanctioned approach to social justice in Pope John XXIII’s 1961 encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, see-judge-act has become a staple of theologies of liberation that have both been central to the implementation of Catholic social teaching and transcended their Roman origins.¹⁸ Yet keeping in mind the caveats for calling protest theologies “theologies of liberation” in Hong Kong, we ask for patience and understanding from our readers as we nuance the continuities and discontinuities of the Umbrella Movement from other movements that have gone before it. While a Hong Kong-specific “liberation” is certainly a theme that emerges from the essays, a more accurate description of the task we have set for ourselves is that we are trying to tell the story of Hong Kong through the Umbrella Movement from several different theological perspectives—Catholic solidarity, feminist theology, the theology of *kairos*, and biblical exegesis.¹⁹

In terms of the steps of see-judge-act, we are reflecting retrospectively on an action that has already been taken, which means we are seeing and judging again afresh. We contend that this mode of place-specific theologizing is valuable even for readers without a dedicated interest in Hong Kong, because our thick description advances an approach to theology that is emerging directly out of the Umbrella Movement. In this new method, the thick details of the political apparatus, the economic system, the sociological conditions, and the local culture matter a great deal for the task of doing theology in any place. To put it another way, we are mapping the “grounded theologies”—the “performative practices of placemaking informed by understandings of the transcendent”—emerging out of Hong Kong, describing the geographies of the Umbrella Movement through a variety of theological registers.²⁰ One could advance our approach in other new protest cultures in the world, be it the global Occupy Movement, the Arab Spring with its unintentional geopolitical production of the Islamic State and the tragic refugee crisis in Syria and Iraq, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israeli occupations of Palestinian territory, the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine and the subsequent tensions on the Russia-Ukraine border, the African American #BlackLivesMatter movement in the USA, the Idle No More indigenous protests against settler colonialism in Canada, the Taiwanese Sunflower Movement against regional integration with the PRC, the Bersih movement in Malaysia calling for clean government, the protests in Caracas against Venezuelan economic policies and state-sponsored gendered violence, and the Mexican protest against state collusion with

narcotics gangs recently given a new symbolic register by the brutal events in Ayotzinapa.²¹ The task of the theologian is thus to *describe* instead of prescribe, or, to put it in a less binary way, to let the thick description drive the suggestive prescriptions from the ground up. Who are the specific theological actors in each of these cases? In what geographical conditions are they operating? How do the lenses of different theologies shift the thick description of the same place, the same protest, the same political apparatus? How can these differing theological actors work together, what are they working toward in their own terms, and how are their objectives theological?

In other words, we are using the Hong Kong case to highlight the specific theologies that the Umbrella Movement has engendered in the hope of spurring comparative scholarship to take on the thick description of protest, politics, and places as a mode of theological analysis. At this point, we need to be clear about our politics. We reject the idea that we should be neutral observers seeking a liberal overlapping consensus of every theological position on the Hong Kong protests. Indeed, critical scholars of secularization have repeatedly reminded us that the quest for political neutrality, especially in matters of faith is often its own position—and one usually allied with the modern state establishment’s political agenda to subjectify its citizens!²² During the Umbrella Movement, residents of Hong Kong wore three ribbon colors to distinguish their positions on the 2014 events: a yellow ribbon denoted support for the student strikes that eventually led to the occupations, a blue ribbon symbolized opposition, and a green ribbon signaled an attempt at neutrality. In this schematic, all of our contributors would be classified as yellow-ribboners.

We are quite untroubled and unapologetic about our politics for three key reasons. First, while we understand that theological actors in Hong Kong were rather divided on the Umbrella Movement, we also observe that the arguments against the occupations mostly rested on the need for the church to maintain the political and economic stability of Hong Kong as a global city. As several of our contributors suggest, this is not only a secular contention, but it fails the litmus test of commitment to the virtues of peace with justice and charity that are much more strongly identified with the protesters than with a government whose interests are tied to the private whims of property tycoons, PRC officials, and even the criminal underworld. Moreover, to speak in the key of liberation theology, we show that the skewed economic system in Hong Kong that funnels much of the capital and political agency to a colonizing ruling class necessitates what theologians of liberation have called a “preferential option for the poor,” a commitment to do theology from the perspective of those who have not as opposed to those who have.

Second, we note that the hard-and-fast definitions of yellow versus blue versus green ribbons describe an ideological form that did not translate neatly onto the ground during the Umbrella Movement. It is true, on the one hand, that blue-ribboners led by figures such as Leticia Lee and Robert Chow often violently attacked the yellow-ribbon protesters; what is more, some of these attackers were discovered later to have been paid agitators. However, even those who wore blue and green were forced to participate in the movement because the protests consumed the city in an all-encompassing discussion about Hong Kong’s political future. On the ground, some of those who wore blue and green sometimes gently approached the camps to understand the motivations of the yellow-ribboners; in turn, some of those who wore yellow had to face families, friends, and churches that did not approve of their acts of civil disobedience.

Third, and finally, there were various factions from moderate to radical that divided the yellow-ribboners themselves. In fact, our book may be further criticized by participants in the Umbrella Movement for including perspectives that they may find too moderate or too radical, depending on their understanding of the splits within the movement. Again, we are unperturbed. The ideological lines do not account for the messiness of the protests, and we write these theological reflections not as a final word, but as the beginning of a new process of seeing, judging, and acting that will require further conversation and debate. As careful readers will observe, the four perspectives in this volume do not speak with one voice. While Rose Wu celebrates the individual Christians who participated in the movement, Mary Yuen and Lap Yan Kung call on the institutional churches to play their part. While Wu and Kung come from distinctive backgrounds in modes of liberation theology, Sam Tsang is critical of the word ‘liberation.’ Even as Yuen and Wu celebrate the movement, Kung and Tsang are reserved because they see the potential for a dark side as well. This is not a united front; it is a

cacophony of voices in tension with each other, an attempt to be similar to the polyvocality of the leaderless Umbrella Movement itself. Because rebuttals and refinements were part of the deliberative process that so characterized the movement, we go beyond welcoming them—we are excited to be criticized, although we reserve the right to defend our various positions in subsequent publications as well.

To facilitate that process, we begin with a primer on Hong Kong, which occupies the entirety of Part I of our book. In this chapter, I offer a detailed account of the specific political apparatus at work in Hong Kong. I argue that the devil is in the details when it comes to the politics of Hong Kong, with the subtext as the localist position in Hong Kong, that is, one can only understand the Umbrella Movement by understanding clearly the system that necessitated the occupations in the first place. The chapter is lengthy because I explain the concepts of “one country, two systems,” the corporatist system of elections with “functional constituencies” that preclude democracy while purporting to advance it, the ties between the establishment and the property elites, and the erosion of judicial autonomy in Hong Kong. I demonstrate that each of these supposedly secular political concepts has theological importance because Christians are actors in both the establishment and in the democracy movement. Before we embark on the theological reflection on a place, we must know the local geography. Indeed, the remaining chapters in the book, which undertake direct theological reflection, presume knowledge of this first chapter as a baseline for understanding Hong Kong’s local politics.

In Part II, four theologians from Hong Kong offer theological reflections on the Umbrella Movement. Staying true to the origins of liberation theology in Catholic social teaching, we begin with Mary Yuen’s account of the Umbrella Movement—or as she calls it, the “occupy movement,” as local Hong Kong people term the protests—through a mode of Catholic solidarity that has been embedded in the local Hong Kong culture. As a former staff member of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong’s Justice and Peace Commission and a scholar of Catholicism in Hong Kong in her own right, Yuen’s account highlights how the aspect of solidarity in Catholic social teaching is embedded in the protest occupations. What is notable about Yuen’s analysis is that she does not explicitly draw on the traditions of liberation theology within Catholicism. Instead—and perhaps unintentionally—she demonstrates that there is something that official Catholic teaching from the Second Vatican Council, the Catechism, papal statements, and episcopal conferences has to contribute to understanding the participation in the protests, including but not exclusive to Catholic youth participants. Indeed, she points out that the central contribution of Catholic social teaching is a focus on dialogue, a term that has often been used by Asian bishops to denote interreligious dialogue and thus positioning Catholic participation in the Umbrella Movement as encouraging interaction with an unjust government as if it were another religious system altogether. What emerges from Yuen’s grounded analysis is the sense that the work of liberation and solidarity is done in ways that confound the existing conventional binaries so often encountered in studies of lived religion and liberation theology between conservative adherence to official church teaching and a progressive rebellion against the ecclesial powers. It turns out that the official teachings of the church on social and political solidarity were used in powerful ways by actors in the occupy movement.

While engaging with queer and feminist theory, Rose Wu’s chapter on the rebirth of Hong Kong through the Umbrella Movement maintains this consistent focus on ecclesial spirituality, although it is ultimately critical of the institutional church and seeks to revamp the power structures of Hong Kong in light of a new spirituality of solidarity from the protests. Wu’s contribution is valuable because she has been a tireless worker for women’s and sexual minorities’ rights both within the church and in civil society since the 1980s, notably convening the Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF) in 2002 to put underrepresented minorities on Hong Kong’s social map. Dubbing the Umbrella Movement a Pentecostal experience for Hong Kong, Wu performs a close reading of the empowerment that came about for racialized, gendered, and sexual minorities through the Umbrella Movement, suggesting that one of the emerging themes from the ground has to do with a changing sense of Hong Kong identity with deep resonances with the feminist theological concept of “interstitial integrity,” the intersectional stitching together of diversity to produce a radical sense of inclusive identity. In this way, though the movement’s major players consider themselves Christians of the most orthodox and even conservative varieties, they are knitted together with minority communities in Hong Kong that force

them to always expand their sense of what Hong Kong identity includes. Wu thus contends that what has happened in Hong Kong should be understood as a new Pentecost, the literal birth of a new Hong Kong wrought by the eschatological coming of the Holy Spirit.

Pulling back from overly celebratory interpretations of the Umbrella Movement, Lap Yan Kung, a liberation theologian at CUHK's Chung Chi Divinity School who has long participated in the democratic movement in Hong Kong, uses his chapter to call churches in Hong Kong to evaluate the theological meaning of the protests, including the possibility that they might have ushered in a dialectical temporality that is as much about opportunity as it is about misfortune. Sharing Wu's understanding that individual Christians played prominent roles in both OCLP and the Umbrella Movement, Kung's approach differs from Wu's muted disdain for churches that have not engaged with the movement by pointedly criticizing their theological rationales. He insists that Christian churches that seem reluctant to lend their institutional power to political engagement have no choice but to engage in reconciliation and dialogue in a Hong Kong divided precisely by what he sees as the emergence of disruptive form of time that would be called *kairos* in Greek. Indeed, *kairos* has been the subject of much heated debate in the wake of the Umbrella Movement, with some overly celebrating the revolutionary potential of the times while others insist that God has been silent about Hong Kong politics. Kung's intervention is that both readings of *kairos* are uncritical: one is overly celebratory, the other too passive. Instead, he acts as a critical theologian, performing a thick description of how the Umbrella Movement came to be and its complex relationship with its predecessor, OCLP. It is the political commentary and local description that drives Kung's theological critique of *kairos* as both a time of opportunity and misfortune, which in turn is an explicit call for churches to participate with him in the work of critical theological reflection on the Umbrella Movement.

Finally, Sam Tsang offers an exegesis of liberation in Hong Kong, further critiquing ecclesial practices of non-engagement by examining the sources of political action and apathy. Tsang is also a public figure in Hong Kong, known not only for his preaching and teaching as a seminary professor but also for his call to Protestant churches for integrity, most notably challenging evangelical megachurches on their ill-advised financial support for a hyped, celebrity-focused effort to find the historic Noah's Ark in Turkey without paying attention to the requisite exegetical issues and the need for churches to reflect on the Hong Kong situation. Trained as a biblical exegete, Tsang reframes the analysis of the texts to pay attention to the "world before the text," the situation in which theologians and exegetes use Scripture. For Tsang, "occupy Hong Kong" refers not so much to the Umbrella Movement, but to the colonial occupation of Hong Kong that he understands to be continuing under PRC rule. In this sense, the Umbrella Movement is about liberating Hong Kong from occupation through the co-optation of the word "occupation." Understanding the meaning of "occupation" then becomes the standard by which Tsang measures the theologies that Kung as well as evangelicals associated with the Alliance Bible Seminary and the pro-establishment Anglican Archbishop Paul Kwong attempt to use to address the occupation of Hong Kong. The result is an examination of how figures like Kung and Kwong read the Bible with and against the democracy movement in Hong Kong, resulting in varying interpretations of the word "liberation" that have less continuity with trends in Asia and Latin America than with the definitions that are arising out of the ground in the Umbrella Movement. Demonstrating that an exegesis of the exegetes is critical because all reading is contextual, Tsang provides a survey of how theologians and exegetes have understood "occupation" and "liberation" in Hong Kong with concrete consequences for their position regarding the 2014 protests.

We end with an epilogue that ties the emerging themes of the Umbrella Movement together, with its redefinitions of liberation, exegesis, and solidarity. Reflecting on the doctrinal orthodoxy that was used to mobilize participants in the Umbrella Movement, we conclude that a faith that emerges as depoliticized in Hong Kong is in fact the resistance to the historic politicization of theology by the Hong Kong establishment in both the colonial and post-handover eras. The Umbrella Movement, we suggest, is thus, as Freire would say, a moment of "conscientization," in which Hong Kong citizens became awakened to their political situation and were forced to reckon with it theologically. Following the see-judge-act matrix, what we hope that readers will take away is that it is important

that we get the social science descriptions right even as we embark on theological reflection. Doing theology depends on a deep knowledge of political apparatuses, economic justice, theological traditions, and solidarity movements. Such theologies position the theologian as squarely on the side of the people, telling their stories and allowing grounded narratives to be juxtaposed in relation to various theological lenses. The result may well be something akin to the Umbrella Movement, a constellation of groups with no need for a clear leader fighting for democracy and justice strictly as a people telling the experts to either get with the program or to get out of the way.²³

Notes

1. The court case is *Kwoon Chung Motors Company Limited and All China Express Limited v. Persons Who Erected or Placed or Maintained Obstructions or Otherwise Do Any Act to Cause Obstructions, or to Prevent or Hinder the Clearance and Removal of the Obstructions or Occupying on the Portion of Connaught Road Central Eastbound between Edinburgh Place (Western Portion) and Edinburgh Place (Eastern Portion) ("Section 1") and/or the Portion of Harcourt Road Eastbound between Edinburgh Place (Eastern Portion) and Cotton Tree Drive ("Section 2") and/or the Portion of Cotton Tree Drive Towards Mid Levels ("Section 4") (Together "The Area") to Prevent or Obstruct Normal Vehicular Traffic from Passing the Area, Kwok Cheuk Kin, and Wong Ho Min*, HCA 2223 of 2014. The case was decided on December 1, 2014, against the protesters, giving bailiffs the legal mandate to clear the occupations in December 2014.
2. The genealogy of the term "Umbrella Revolution" on social media is recounted in Amaelle Guiton, "Hong Kong: #umbrellarevolution, anatomie d'un hashtag," *Slate France*, September 30, 2014 (accessed December 16, 2014, from <http://www.slate.fr/story/92747/hong-kong-umbrellarevolution-hashtag>).
3. Michael Forsythe, "Hong Kong and Tiananmen Protests Have Major Differences," *New York Times*, October 2, 2014 (accessed October 25, 2014, from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/03/world/asia/hong-kong-and-tiananmen-protests-have-major-differences.html?_r=0); Jeffrey Wasserstrom, "No Tiananmen Redux: Picking the Right Analogy for the Protests in Hong Kong," *Foreign Affairs* (accessed October 25, 2014, from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142143/jeffrey-wasserstrom/no-tiananmen-redux>).
4. Justin K. H. Tse, "Under the Umbrella: Grounded Christian Theologies and Democratic Working Alliances in Hong Kong," *Review of Religion in Chinese Society* 2, no. 1 (2015): 109–142. Sample media reports include: June Cheng, "Decisive Moment: As Protesters Demand Democracy in Hong Kong, Churches There Are Divided Over Whether to Support the Marchers," *WORLD Magazine*, October 2014 (accessed October 25, 2014, from http://www.worldmag.com/2014/10/decisive_moment); Matthew Bell, "Christians Take a Prominent Role in Hong Kong Protests," *PRI's The World*, October 6, 2014 (accessed October 25, 2014, from <http://www.pri.org/stories/2014-10-06/christians-take-prominent-role-hong-kong-protests>); Ned Levin, "Hong Kong Democracy Protests Carry a Christian Mission for Some: Churches Are Deeply Embedded in Hong Kong Society," *Wall Street Journal*, October 3, 2014 (accessed October 25, 2014, from <http://online.wsj.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/articles/hong-kong-democracy-protests-carry-a-christian-mission-for-some-1412255663>); Frank Langfitt, "A Surprising Tie That Binds Hong Kong's Protest Leaders: Faith," *NPR All Things Considered*, October 9, 2014 (accessed October 25, 2014, from <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2014/10/09/354859430/a-surprising-tie-that-binds-hong-kongs-protesters-faith>); Dorcas Cheung-Tozen, "Why the Hong Kong Protests Should Matter to Christians: This Is How All Social Change Begins," *Relevant Magazine*, October 10, 2014 (accessed October 25, 2014, from <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/current/global/why-hong-kong-protests-should-matter-christians>); Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "Hong Kong Christians Lead

Protests for Democracy: As the Island City Braces for Another Week of Gridlock, Faith Is in the Foreground,” *Christianity Today*, October 13, 2014 (accessed October 25, 2014, from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/October-web-only/hong-kong-christians-lead-protests-for-democracy-china.html>); Jennifer Ngo, “Religion on the Front Line Puts Faith into Place: Christians, in Pursuing Equality and Justice, Have Long Been Part of the City’s Fight for Freedom,” *South China Morning Post*, October 27, 2014, News Focus 2, p. 5; Andrew West, “The Role of Religion in Hong Kong’s Umbrella Revolution,” *ABC Religion and Ethics Report*, November 5, 2014 (accessed June 25, 2015, from <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/religionandethicsreport/the-role-of-religion-in-hong-kong-28099s-umbrella-revolution/5868790>).

5. The classic introductory text to this phenomenon of Christians making an overwhelming influence in Hong Kong’s society and politics despite their ostensibly small numbers is Beatrice Leung and Shun-hing Chan, *Changing Church-State Relations in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong University Press, 2003).
6. Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 6. See also Kwok Pui-lan, “2011 Presidential Address: Empire and the Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 2 (2012): esp. 285–286. Their theology of the ‘multitude’ is also indebted to the crypto-Augustinian work of critical theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, “The Multitude Against Empire,” ch. 4.3, in *Empire* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 393–413.
7. See the pieces in this volume by Lap Yan Kung and Sam Tsang.
8. While the constitutions and decrees of the Second Vatican Council pertain strictly to Roman Catholics, a compelling case that the ethos of the council also launched movements in public religion and liberation theology beyond Catholicism is made in José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994). For more on Asian liberation theology, see Gaudencio Rosales and C. G. Arévalo, eds., *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992); Peter C. Phan, *In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003); Jonathan Y. Tan, “A New Way of Being Church in Asia: The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) at the Service of Life in Pluralistic Asia,” *Missiology: An International Review* 33, no. 1 (2005): 72–94; Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).
9. Sam Rocha, “Reflections on Paulo Freire and Liberation Theology,” *YouTube*, January 4, 2015 (accessed July 25, 2015, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfFj_0BxjO0).
10. Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, “Justice,” in *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council: Conclusions*, 1.23. In the original, the Spanish *conscientización* is in boldface as a keyword of the conference. I have removed the formatting for readability’s sake in our manuscript.
11. Phan, *In Our Own Tongues*; Jonathan Y. Tan, *Christian Mission Among the Peoples of Asia* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014).

12. For a close reading of the Tiananmen protests in relation to the changing political economy and public sphere cultures of the PRC, see Craig Calhoun, *Neither Gods Nor Emperors: Students and the Struggle for Democracy in China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1994).

13. A good introduction to the effect of the 1978 reforms on the PRC is Timothy Cheek, *Living with Reform: China Since 1989* (London: Zed, 2013).

14. Tom Ackerman and Slavoj Žižek, “Slavoj Žižek: Capitalism with Asian Values,” *Al Jazeera*, November 13, 2011 (accessed February 22, 2015, from <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2011/10/2011102813360731764.html>). November 13, 2011 is the upload date on the *Al Jazeera* website. See also Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009), 131; *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012), 793; *Demanding the Impossible* (Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity, 2013), 41; *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2014), 3; *The Universal Exception* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), x.

15. David Harvey, “Neoliberalism ‘with Chinese Characteristics,’” ch. 5, in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 120–151.

16. Kean Fan Lim, “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics: Uneven Development, Variegated Neoliberalization and the Dialectical Differentiation of State Spatiality,” *Progress in Human Geography* 38, no. 2 (2014): 221–247.

17. See Tse, “Under the Umbrella.” This approach of thick description emerges from the discipline of cultural geography, a field that has always included reflections on religion in the core of its scholarly activity. Classics in the discipline include: Pierre Deffontaines, *Géographie et religions* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948); David Sopher, *Geography of Religions* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967); Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Chicago: Aldine, 1971); Peter Jackson, *Maps of Meaning* (London: Routledge, 1989); James S. Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Brenda S. A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1996); Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Humanist Geography: An Individual’s Search for Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

18. Edward L. Cleary, *Crisis and Change: The Church in Latin America Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), 4. Cleary observes that while ‘see-judge-act’ originates from Catholic Action groups in Europe and was adopted by Latin American liberation theologians, it owes its reasoning to Thomas Aquinas’s instruction on prudential judgment. This genealogy foregrounds the ironic traditionalism of liberation theology, which has popularly been interpreted as a Marxist-Christian synthesis.

19. We are grateful to Christian Amondson at *Syndicate: A New Forum in Theology* for allowing us to expand and adapt essays from a forum that I edited. The original essays are: Kung Lap Yan, "Occupy Central, Umbrella Movement, and Democracy: A Theological Articulation," *Syndicate: A New Forum in Theology* (accessed July 25, 2015, from <https://syndicatetheology.com/commentary/occupy-central-umbrella-movement-and-democracy-a-theological-articulation/>); Rose Wu, "The Rebirth of Hong Kong," *Syndicate: A New Forum in Theology* (accessed July 25, 2015, from <https://syndicatetheology.com/commentary/the-rebirth-of-hong-kong/>); Sam Tsang, "Right Texts, Wrong Applications: The Exegetical Typhoon against the Hong Kong Umbrella," *Syndicate: A New Forum in Theology* (accessed July 25, 2015, from <https://syndicatetheology.com/commentary/right-texts-wrong-applications-the-exegetical-typhoon-against-the-hong-kong-umbrella/>); Justin K. H. Tse, "Mapping the Umbrella Movement: Uncovering Grounded Theologies in Hong Kong," *Syndicate: A New Forum in Theology* (accessed July 25, 2015, from <https://syndicatetheology.com/commentary/mapping-the-umbrella-movement-uncovering-grounded-theologies-in-hong-kong/>).

20. Justin K. H. Tse, "Grounded Theologies: 'Religion' and the 'Secular' in Human Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 38, no. 2 (2014): 202.

21. This is part of an argument that I advanced in Justin K. H. Tse, "Can American Christians Care About Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement," *Washington Institute for Faith, Vocation, and Culture*, November 18, 2014 (accessed July 25, 2015, from <http://www.washingtoninst.org/9057/can-american-christians-care-about-hong-kongs-umbrella-movement/>).

22. The movement in scholarship toward critical studies of secularization can be represented by the following texts: Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds., *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Cornel West, *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendietta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 2012).

23. For a critique of expertise that could shed light on the Umbrella Movement's rejection of ungrounded knowledges, see Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002).