

The Autonomous Movement within the Chinese Church during the First Half of the 20th Century: A Case Study of the Hong Kong Baptist Church

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Against the background of the autonomous movement of the Chinese Church during the first half of the 20th Century, the church gradually became self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. During this period, four types of autonomous churches emerged in Xiamen, Jinan, Beijing and Shanghai. At the same time, some churches in Hong Kong also began to show signs of autonomy. This article, using the Hong Kong Baptist Church established in 1901 as a case study to illustrate this phenomenon, will examine the self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating process of the Hong Kong Church.

As a self-governing church, it started ordaining its own deacons and setting up various departments to carry out different aspects of their work. At the same time, the church members' offerings were good enough to cover all expenditures of the church, thus enabling it to be self-supporting. With the support of its members, a new church building located on Caine Road was completed in 1923. To reach its self-propagating goal, the church set up several new chapels in different locations throughout Hong Kong, including Yaumati, Aberdeen, Kowloon City and Shaukiwan. The church is therefore a very good example of a new form of autonomous church in the history of Christianity in modern China.