



Citizens of a Christian Nation: Evangelical Missions and the Problem of Race in the Nineteenth Century (Politics and Culture in Modern America)

Derek Chang

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In America after the Civil War, the emancipation of four million slaves and the explosion of Chinese immigration fundamentally challenged traditional ideas about who belonged in the national polity. As Americans struggled to redefine citizenship in the United States, the "Negro Problem" and the "Chinese Question" dominated the debate.

During this turbulent period, which witnessed the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision and passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, among other restrictive measures, American Baptists promoted religion instead of race as the primary marker of citizenship. Through its domestic missionary wing, the American Baptist Home Missionary Society, Baptists ministered to former slaves in the South and Chinese immigrants on the Pacific coast. Espousing an ideology of evangelical nationalism, in which the country would be united around Christianity rather than a particular race or creed, Baptists advocated inclusion of Chinese and African Americans in the national polity. Their hope for a Christian nation hinged on the social transformation of these two groups through spiritual and educational uplift. By 1900, the Society had helped establish important institutions that are still active today, including the Chinese Baptist Church and many historically black colleges and universities.

Citizens of a Christian Nation chronicles the intertwined lives of African Americans, Chinese Americans, and the white missionaries who ministered to them. It traces the radical, religious, and nationalist ideology of the domestic mission movement, examining both the opportunities provided by the egalitarian tradition of evangelical Christianity and the limits imposed by its assumptions of cultural difference. The book further explores how blacks and Chinese reimagined the evangelical nationalist project to suit their own needs and hopes.

Historian Derek Chang brings together for the first time African American and Chinese American religious histories through a multitiered local, regional, national, and even transnational analysis of race, nationalism, and evangelical thought and practice.

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