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Review of: Citizens of a Christian Nation: Evangelical Missions and the Problem of Race in the Nineteenth Century, by Derek Chang

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Citizens of a Christian Nation: Evangelical Missions and the Problem of Race in the Nineteenth Century. Politics and Culture in Modern America Series. By Derek Chang. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. 237 pp. Notes, index. \$39.95, £26.00.)

Historians' understandings of race have changed dramatically in the last two decades. Earlier generations of historians tended to assume that racial categories were both natural and unchanging. More recently, however, many have begun to see racial categories as socially constructed and dynamic. In this engaging new book, Derek Chang builds upon recent historical and social scientific research to examine how race was made in the years following the Civil War. Acknowledging the centrality of religion in U.S. society in this period, Chang focuses specifically on two Baptist missions as sites of racial formation. One of these missions, begun in 1865 in Raleigh, North Carolina, eventually became Shaw University. The other, the Chinese Mission School in Portland, Oregon, was established in 1874.

In the post-Civil War years, particularly following the completion of the transcontinental railroad, domestic missionaries committed themselves to strengthening Christianity throughout North America. Chang points out that this missionary movement revolved around converting racialized people. Even though many missionaries insisted that all races were equal in the eyes of God, their writings reflected the prevailing biological racialism of the era and emphasized the essential foreignness of African Americans and Chinese immigrants.

Both African Americans in the post-emancipation South and Chinese immigrants on the Pacific Coast challenged the white supremacist ideas expressed by the missionaries. Many graduates of Shaw and the Chinese

Mission School became educational, religious, and community leaders. In addition to repeating their teachers' statements about racial uplift, some of these leaders also expressed their support for economic and social change and political equality. In one telling example, Chang notes that women who were educated at Shaw "appropriated evangelical rhetoric about the singular importance of Christian wives and mothers and used it as a justification for a more active role within their marriages and a more public and political position within society at large" (p. 129). White supremacist violence in both Raleigh and Portland made it more difficult to express these alternative ideas about race in the waning years of the century.

Chang effectively challenges other historians' depictions of missionaries as antiracists and persuasively argues that Baptist missionaries' statements about African Americans and Chinese immigrants should be seen as manifestations of the new racism or cultural racism that most scholars have associated with the post-World War II period. His insights should encourage other scholars to reevaluate their assumptions about the differences between the South and the West.

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Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America. By Erika Lee and Judy Yung. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. xxv + 394 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.95.)

From 1910 to 1940, Angel Island, located in San Francisco Bay, was the site of a federal immigration station and the main Pacific gateway for newcomers seeking entry to the United States. Erika Lee and Judy Yung seek to dispel its misleading characterization as the "Ellis Island of the West" in their book *Angel*