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rural life. Along the way Armitage examines the ideas and work of key movement leaders including Francis Wayland Parker, Wilber Jackman, Anna Botsford Comstock, Mabel Osgood Wright, Gene Stratton Porter, and Liberty Hyde Bailey.

Bailey exemplified one of Armitage's key arguments: "Environmentalism, along with its embrace of science, is simultaneously infused with criticisms of modern life" (211). This is revealed in Bailey's response to the question the president of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture posed about how nature study would help farmers and their children make a living. "I think that most farmers can make a living now," Bailey replied. "But what our farmers need, is not so much to know how to make more money as to know how to live." I doubt the president was satisfied with this answer. It illustrates the depth of meaning and purpose—well beyond simply the popularization of science or the promotion of a conservation ethic through state action—that leaders like Bailey and his Cornell colleague Anna Botsford Comstock invested in nature study. By sketching the story of how these leaders developed and made practical the "beautiful theory" behind the nature study movement, Armitage makes a major contribution to the work of illuminating and interpreting a neglected chapter in American life that offers many lessons for the present.

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A Nominally Christian Nation

CHANG, DEREK. *Citizens of a Christian Nation: Evangelical Missions and the Problem of Race in the Nineteenth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. 237 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8122-4218-8.
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"The American reformer," Alice Felt Tyler wrote in 1944, was "a product of evangelical religion."[1] Derek Chang's thoughtful study of American Baptist

[1]Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War* (Minneapolis, 1944), 2.

missions among ex-slaves in North Carolina and Chinese immigrants in Portland, Oregon augments Tyler's straightforward assertion with considerable nuance and hints of ambiguity. Chang observes that from the early days of the missions in the years immediately following the Civil War, American Baptists were torn between an ideology that insisted that "Christianity knows no distinction of race" and "assumptions of cultural and religious differences that fed racist stereotypes" (5). As Chang conclusively demonstrates, this fundamental contradiction plagued American Baptist missions in the United States throughout the late nineteenth century. Further, Chang argues, it was this contradiction that betrayed the primary goal of American Baptist missions: the transformation of American society into a "Christian republic."

In this comparative study, Chang faces special challenges due to inevitable differences in geography and culture. For example, American Baptist home missions were viewed correctly by white southerners as part of the North's occupation of the South, whereas mission efforts among Chinese in Portland were largely at the behest of Portland's business and civic elites. Chang handles these challenges with skill and effectively details the problems faced by each mission.

The central point of Chang's intriguing study is his belief that "evangelical nationalism" was at the heart of northern Baptist home missions and that it "provided a comprehensive vision of America's exceptional and providential destiny as a Christian nation" (21). Chang suggests that the missionaries themselves were aware that this desire "to make Christianity a national norm" was as much a dream as a real possibility (34). As both pioneer American Northern Baptist Home Missionary corresponding secretary Henry Lyman Morehouse and Oregon missionary Fung Chak admitted, American's racist immigration policy amply demonstrated that the United States was at best only a "nominally Christian" nation.

William Hutchinson noted in his landmark study of American Protestant foreign missions that missionaries have faired poorly in the hands of scholars. Those missionaries who sought to respect foreign cultures and "preach Christ only" were criticized for ignoring human needs and leaving converts in ignorance. If they came to see "intuitively that attempts [that] undermine someone's religion were ultimately cultural aggression," they were denounced by the more religiously inclined for reducing Christianity to the promotion of western technology and ideology. Hutchinson sees missionaries as operating on a continuum, from those primarily interested in converting people to those primarily focused on

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civilizing them.[2] Chang's missionaries and perhaps the American Baptist home missionaries themselves operated in a far simpler world, the complete conflation of Christian mission into a tool for civilizing alien people.

I suspect that this is not the full story. Many missionaries, especially those in the tradition of American Methodist William Taylor, operated using another paradigm. Taylor's "Pauline method," which looked to the apostle Paul and the Book of Acts for inspiration, sought to establish indigenous congregations largely left to manage their own affairs. This model was a direct challenge to denominationally based mission boards, which insisted that converts needed to be civilized as much or more then Christianized. In other words, "Christian nationalism" was a contested concept not only by the African Americans in North Carolina and Chinese converts in Oregon but among northern white evangelicals themselves.

Like many scholars, Chang sees evangelical Christianity as a unified and dominant force in late-nineteenth-century society. His evidence suggests otherwise. In truth, northern Baptist missionaries struggled against a well-organized white southern resistance, in addition to African American desires to create their own institutions. In Oregon, in spite of cooperation from Portland's elite, northern Baptist missionaries were unable to protect Chinese converts from vigilante violence. Closer research would likely show that, far from being a united hegemonic force, evangelicalism was internally divided and, in spite of some local successes, largely unable to impose its will on recalcitrant white southerners and westerners. Even in the North, evangelicals' initial post-Civil War feelings of triumph quickly receded before the growing popularity of infidels, such as Robert Ingersoll, and a rising tide of indifference among male elites to evangelicalism. Emerging currents in evangelicalism fired by the socially pessimistic premillennial eschatology embraced by postbellum America's greatest evangelist, D. L. Moody, looked forward not to a Christian America but divine intervention through the actual reign of Christ on earth. By the late nineteenth century real racial egalitarianism was found in fringe groups such as the Free Methodist Church, Church of God Reformation Movement, and among the new largely African American "sanctified" churches. The spirit of American Baptist home mission egalitarianism did live on in the social gospel movement, and remnants shaped the revived civil rights movement in mainline Protestant churches after World War II.

[2]William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago, 1987), 13.

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In spite of the author's clear cultural sensitivities, he is less successful with hiding his religious biases. Conversion in this account is a means to an end: the creation of a "Christian republic." Although Chang is correct in observing that both missions created space that allowed ex-slaves and Chinese immigrants to create indigenous institutions, his book does not allow for the fact that other, primarily religious motives may have been determinative. It assumes that the converts' motives were primarily pragmatic, such as becoming elite members of their communities or gaining important patrons. The evidence tells another story. For Chinese immigrants, conversion could mean loss of jobs and actual physical persecution, including the possibility of death. Certainly the willingness to endure such harrowing experiences must have its own internal logic. Moreover, an important question left unanswered in this study is how the religious experiences of Chinese and African American evangelicals differed and how they were similar.

For Chang this is a story of declension and the "ways in which liberal Christian tradition's international tensions limited the actions of well-meaning evangelicals" (165). Such a conclusion is hard to fault. Still, liberals are often too easy targets. As Ronald C. White demonstrated in his landmark study of racial reform in the Progressive Era, it is precisely these folks who kept the flame of racial egalitarianism alive in the dark days of Jim Crow.[3] It was, after all, the old social gospel-inspired Methodist Sunday school teacher Hubert Horatio Humphrey who forced the Democratic Party to face its less then egalitarian past in 1948, and the cigar smoking, social gospel Methodist Branch Rickey who played a decisive role in the integration of baseball. In the words of Garrison Keillor, American Baptist home missionaries were undoubtedly flawed but probably "above average."

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[3]Ronald C. White Jr., *Liberty and Justice for All: Racial Reform and the Social Gospel (1877–1925)* (New York, 1990).

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