

Baptized in the Fire of Revolution



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The American Social Gospel
and the YMCA in China:
1919-1937

Jun Xing

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This book recounts one of the most fascinating episodes in the encounter between American and Chinese cultures in the twentieth century, the American attempt to convert the Chinese to Protestantism.

China has long been recognized as the largest and most important missionary field for American Protestantism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ever since the first American missionary landed at Canton in 1830, with some notable exceptions most of the American missionaries, motivated by revivalist Evangelism and a secular sense of mission, adopted a conquering attitude toward the "heathen land" and

demanded a total ideological surrender of their Chinese converts. However, starting from the turn of the century, the social gospel movement transformed American Protestantism and greatly influenced its mission work in the China field. This social gospel approach was best represented in the work of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in China during the first half of the twentieth century.

The efforts made by YMCA secretaries, as the administrative officers were called, to apply social gospel ideas to China's political, social, and cultural environment provides a unique perspective on the history of cross-cultural interaction, or rather collisions, between the two countries born of different civilizations. While the influence in this case ran mainly in one direction - from the United States to China - the implications flowed in two ways, especially for the YMCA secretaries as field workers. The process of implanting the American social gospel into the Chinese setting involved negotiations, confrontations, and amalgamation along a whole range of different cultural norms and values on the scene, including the indigenous Confucianism, Chinese nationalism, and international communism. The YMCA leaders' cross-cultural experiences transformed their own understanding and interpretation of the Christian mission and their own cultural identity as a result of their interactions with the cultural forces in China.

The export of benevolence and the spread of American dreams is a recurrent theme in American history. The social gospel experience not only forms an important chapter in the history of Sino-American cultural relations, but also bears important contemporary implications. It may show that many Americans have yet to learn that American society is pluralistic, and that differences in color, religion, and political beliefs must be tolerated. Also, in view of the recent escalation of international reformism and the call for exporting the American dream, it is important to know that Americans cannot Christianize the world after their own images, for every culture has its own share to contribute to an interdependent world community in the twenty-first century.

作者介绍:

Jun Xing is a professor in the Department of Ethnic Studies and director of the Difference, Power and Discrimination Program at Oregon State University, and author of *Asian America Through the Lens: History, Representations, and Identity*, and *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution: The American Social Gospel and the YMCA in China, 1919-1937*.

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标签

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评论

以前在廈門大學的時候讀過中譯本。不過當時留給我的印象，這本書寫得好差啊。這次去上海的火車上，把英譯本終於讀完，暢快。作者使用史料和對史料的分析渾然天成，太爽了。厲害。而且給了我很多關於博士論文的啟發。（2015年1月12日）

英文版作者名弄错了。应该是Jun Xing (邢军) 吧？

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书评

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