

who thought deeply about religion and society. For those two groups, this book is strongly recommended.

**John Saillant**  
Western Michigan University

doi:10.1017/S0009640708001534

*Uplifting the People: Three Centuries of Black Baptists in Alabama.*

By **Wilson Fallin, Jr.** Religion and American Culture Series.

Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007. xv + 334 pp. \$39.95 cloth.

Fallin brings a unique and rich insider perspective to this book. He grew up with a father who attended present-day Selma University and was a Baptist pastor in Alabama, while Fallin eventually became the president of both Selma University and the Birmingham-Easonian Baptist Bible College, and historian of the National Baptist Convention. His main thesis is that the religious life of African Americans informed, directed, and formed the basis of the African American community; his book illustrates this well-known premise on the smaller historical scale of Alabama.

The book is the recipient of Fallin's thirty-plus years of research into the history of black Baptists in Alabama. A strength of the book is his awareness of the idiosyncrasies of Afro-Baptist tradition as it developed and matured in that state. His attention to detail is impressive. For instance, most studies of southern history state that Reconstruction ended with the Compromise of 1877. Fallin notes that in Alabama, Reconstruction ended in 1874 when Democrats won control of the state legislature and the governor's office.

At first glance, Fallin's book appears to be a state denominational history. He recognizes this and so states in the preface, "The book goes beyond the usual black denominational history" (x). Yet his book will inform those interested in black Baptists in Alabama. Fallin devotes much attention to highlighting the contributions of local black Baptist leaders and institutions, such as Selma University and the state Baptist conventions in Alabama.

Nevertheless, this book has appeal for a larger audience for two reasons. First, while Fallin falls in line with the widely accepted view that the religious life of African Americans forms the foundation of their community life, he offers a plethora of evidence for this thesis. Interested readers of African American religious history will be rewarded with the numerous examples from slavery to Jim Crow to civil rights. Fallin peppers his

analysis with frequent primary sources that add flesh to the bones of this perspective. Second, those interested in the history of the civil rights movement will glean a better understanding from this study of the state where the movement originated. Fallin knew many of the participants and behind-the-scenes details and does not disappoint in describing the movement in Alabama.

The book is divided into five parts with a total of eleven chapters; the parts are arranged chronologically and reflect different significant time periods in African American life. The first part is titled "Slavery and Reconstruction: 1701–1874." It follows the well-trod path of analysis that slaves developed a unique religious life of their own. Included in this time period are the post-Civil War creations of black churches, associations, and state conventions. This section serves to validate the development of an independent black Christian awareness.

The second part is titled "Post-Reconstruction, 1874–1900." As can be expected of any study of this time period, Fallin discusses the black Alabamians' concern with lynching, increased hostility from whites, and the emergence of black nationalism. The influence and involvement of the African American Baptist churches is emphasized. Fallin devotes substantial pages to a discussion of the development of Selma University. In what is probably the most disappointing feature in the book, only scant attention is paid to the development of the National Baptist Convention. A more detailed description of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., founded in 1895, and the National Baptist Convention of America, founded in 1915, would have been appreciated.

The third part is titled "The Progressive Era, 1900–1917," and describes the challenges that black Baptists experienced during this time. Primary among these was the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision of 1896. Fallin shows how the legal requirement of separation forced not only segregation on the African Americans but the unintended consequence of disenfranchisement. This time period also experienced a changing population structure in Alabama as more blacks moved from rural to urban areas. In keeping with the book's emphasis on local examples, it explores how different experiences of worship developed in the cities, from storefront churches to larger churches, and the inherent economic issues that developed among the transplanted African Americans

The fourth part is titled "Before and After World War II, 1917–1954." Fallin presents this era as a prelude to the civil rights movement; his ninth chapter even has the foreboding title of "Rising Militancy." He necessarily highlights what is probably underemphasized in many history textbooks: the link between black service in World War II with the increasingly proactive mindset of African Americans to stand and fight against unfair racial practices.

The crown jewel of Fallin's book is the fifth and last part, titled "The Civil Rights Movement and Beyond, 1954–2000." He begins by quoting Charles Morgan's description of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the foremost institution fighting for blacks' rights: "SCLC is not an organization, it's a church" (221). This comment dovetails well with Fallin's thesis and provides a basis for this section. He details the events of the civil rights movement as it played out in Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma, and as founded and substantiated in the black churches. Fallin himself was a player in this chess game when he ran for state legislature in 1970 (he lost the election). He ends his book with a conclusion that notes challenges ahead for the black Baptists of Alabama.

Fallin very aptly demonstrates his thesis of the underpinning that Christianity, particularly that of black Baptists, provided for the African American community. While Fallin does not attempt to present a revision of Afro-Baptist life, he does provide an absorbing account of how it developed in Alabama and, by extension, throughout America.

**Mark Nickens**  
Averett University

doi:10.1017/S0009640708001546

***Christianity and American Democracy***. By **Hugh Heclo**. The Alexis de Tocqueville Lectures on American Politics. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007. xii + 300 pp. \$25.95 cloth.

Hugh Heclo's book reminds us that Alexis de Tocqueville still speaks, even after 175 years. Using de Tocqueville as a foundation, Heclo argues that it is the particular nature of Protestant Christianity that helped to make American democracy successful, for the Christian faith and the political order established a mutually supportive relationship. According to Heclo, however, that relationship is now imperiled. Heclo's cogent argument deserves careful consideration. His forty pages of endnotes and ten pages of index show that he has done his homework well.

According to de Tocqueville, Protestant Christianity exercised a great deal of influence in America by shaping personal morality and public reason, which helped to check and retard the natural proclivity of people to exploit their political freedom. It thus "ordered liberty" by making people subject first and foremost to God and to a clear, authoritative, and unchanging moral code. Its value was not in its political usefulness but in its universal authority.