

scale repetition of biblical arguments that occurred during debate over the admission of Missouri as a slave state, these Charleston publications presaged the all-out scriptural defenses of slavery that proliferated for decades thereafter.

Crucial for these expositions was always Leviticus 25:44–46, which allowed Old Testament Hebrews to enslave “the heathen that are found about you” and to pass on those slaves as “an inheritance for your children.” Polemics also included full attention to the silence of Jesus on the institution and to Pauline texts in the New Testament that urged “servants” to obey their masters “as unto Christ” (Ephesians 6:5). In a pattern that would be repeated, the well-educated Rev. Furman did not refer to “the curse of Canaan” from Genesis 9:25 as a justification for enslaving Africans, but Holland, the populist lawyer, took pains to remedy that omission by linking the biblical Canaan and contemporary American slaves. Schipper also shows that the Bible-based defenses of slavery occasioned by the conspiracy hastened the shift in pro-slavery apologetics from “necessary evil” to “positive good,” and with reliance on Scripture integral to that move.

In a book focused tightly on events in the years 1822 and 1823, Schipper does slight important historical contexts, such as the possibility that the first antislavery publication by an African American, Daniel Coker’s 1810 *Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister*, might have been known by Vesey because of Coker’s cooperation with Richard Allen in founding the AME Church. Schipper mentions the Charleston presence of the eccentric, and passionately abolitionist, Methodist preacher Lorenzo Dow, but not Dow’s strong apocalypticism that anticipated a similar apocalypticism in the conspirators. The book could also have benefited from the extraordinary recent flourishing of scholarship on its subject in works by historians, litterateurs, and biblical scholars such as Allen Callahan, Vincent Wimbush, Katherine Clay Bassard, and Lisa Bowens. In addition, the timing of publication may have prevented Schipper from taking account of Christopher Tomlins’ *In the Matter of Nat Turner: A Speculative History* (Princeton University Press, 2020), in particular Tomlin’s powerful revisionist argument that Turner’s turn toward violence against slaveholders took place well *after* he had developed an African-inflected, charismatic attachment to Scripture every bit as comprehensive as the biblicism prevailing where white evangelical and Enlightenment interpretive conventions held sway. In Tomlin’s account, Scripture was a spur for Turner to attack slaveowners only because it had first become foundational for its general revelatory meaning. It would have strengthened Schipper’s study to have asked whether a similar all-purpose trust in Scripture existed as a comprehensive backdrop to Vesey’s weaponizing the Bible against enslavement.

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***The Souls of Womenfolk: The Religious Cultures of Enslaved Women of the Lower South.* By Alexis Wells-Oghoghomeh. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022. 320 pp. \$95.00 cloth; \$27.95 paper.**

Many recognize the significant role that Black women play in current American religious life. They fill the pews, call back to their ministers, and attend to the needs of

their communities. These roles have existed for centuries and root in the African experience. But the disruption of African lives through slavery and the slave trade had ruptured that connection. For decades, scholars have debated how permanent that disruption was and have generally skipped over any real explanation of how African practices survived into the American Black church despite the rending of the body and spirit of enslaved Africans.

Alexis Wells-Oghoghomeh has written an ambitious book in that it is breaking new ground to get at the inner lives of enslaved women to make those connections. *The Souls of Womenfolk* unearths the enslaved woman's lived experience and the way that enslaved African American women re-envisioned the religion of the enslaved. To do that, she reaches into the smallest and most intimate elements of human experience.

The ethereal nature of spiritual life and the meanings behind it have kept scholars from asking probing questions of populations such as enslaved women. Wells-Oghoghomeh overcomes this elusive story by examining the material circumstances of their religious practice and beliefs. In defiance of colonized archives that demean and erase the decisions, beliefs, and worldview of enslaved women, she scoured sources such as plantation records, WPA narratives, and enslaver and traveler diaries to reinterpret and reclaim the snippets about enslaved spiritual life that do exist. The book can then unpack how women reconstituted themselves after their loss of self, body, religion, and community during the slave trade.

Wells-Oghoghomeh herself draws upon venerable ancestors to describe their lives. First, she draws from Toni Morrison's use of dismemberment and remembrance to evocatively explain the dislocation of African women through the slave trade. She begins in the African experience, when enslaved people were wholly constituted and then carries the reader through the horrifying experience of the middle passage and the resulting "dismemberment" from one's culture, body, and soul. The rest of the book topically examines how women were central to "re-membering" the souls of black folk. In addition, the book extends WEB DuBois' concept of double-consciousness by centering women and asserts that they possess a triple-consciousness.

The book itself begins by reconstituting the largely lost histories of black women in Africa, particularly in the Upper Guinea Coast. She uses elements of Guinea culture to fill in absences throughout the book—not because these practices survive, but because there are "cosmological continuities." She reminds the reader that slavery existed in the African context, and that served them, but also that the American slave system racialized and dismembered them as they suffered the middle passage, particularly the experience of rape. When they began their new "American experience" in Georgia, where their bodies were monetized and subject to violence, they used their memories of Africa to re/member themselves and their communities.

The core chapters of the book review how the moral and ethical decisions of African women were made to reconstitute their humanity. Wells-Oghoghomeh examines how they understood the ways that sex and motherhood played roles in hierarchical status; but in the American context sex, motherhood, and marriage had nearly no ability to improve status but could in some situations help material circumstances and protect their children. Women therefore had to make difficult ethical decisions, unethical ones to the Christian moral systems, to keep themselves and their families intact.

She also shows how central women were to the gossamer moment of life and death. Women were the central figures in the coming of life as midwives and the primary health attendants for people at their death. Their presence at these moments of spiritual transition gave women great spiritual power in the community. This paired with

traditional ideas of female power as witches and hags, to make them primary to the reconstitution of slave religion.

Therefore, when enslavers introduced Christianity to the enslaved community, women reconstituted the gathering of souls in church and other gatherings in innovative ways. This chapter recentered African cosmologies and women into African American religion. Rather than adding African flavor to Christianity, she argues that Christianity was molded atop African religious practices. Christian language helped to serve them to reframe ancient female power. She argues that the South was not particularly Christian but were subject to the religion of slavery. As such the formal churches had to adapt to enslaver demands of ministers to support slavery. The Christian church was a space, she argues, that the enslaved avoided as a space of surveillance. Instead, they sought to gather more secretly, closer to nature, and further from the gaze of their enslavers to move, sing, wail, and preach in the brush arbor. In this practice, women helped develop the novel Christian practices that would become the Black church.

This book deftly and in a sophisticated manner unearths and refashions the religious lives of the enslaved by proving that women and, therefore, gender stood at the center of understanding the development of Black American spirituality. This book should be required for any scholar examining slave religion and enslaved women. There is little to critique for such an ambitious book. However, the depiction of Africa does not really address the role Islam may have played in their African remembrances, and I would have liked to see more historiographical footnotes to recognize other scholarship and contextualize her study in relation. Nonetheless, this is a valuable addition to our understanding of the enslaved experience and religion.

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***Dissent After Disruption: Church and State in Scotland, 1843–63*, By Ryan Mallon. Scottish Religious Cultures. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2021. ix + 306 pp. £85 (paperback, 2023, £24.99).**

Even to those well-versed in the arcane world of splits and unions in Scottish Presbyterianism, the relationships and negotiations amongst the post-Disruption dissenting Presbyterians give the impression of an impenetrable tangle of ever-shifting attitudes and relationships. Ryan Mallon has tackled the first twenty years of this tangle with admirable aplomb.

Book-ended by Introduction and Conclusion, the work is split into four two-chapter parts. Part 1 first describes the build up to the Disruption from the Patronage Act of 1712, and then discusses the new Free Church, particularly concentrating on the “establishment principle.” Part 2 looks at the relationships between the dissenting churches after the Disruption and the embryonic and tentative moves towards a union of the churches opposed to patronage. Part 3 considers the place that anti-Catholicism played in the ecclesiastical politics of the time, looking at length at the Maynooth Controversy and the churches’ influence on the parliamentary elections, particularly those of 1847 and 1852.