



Down in the Valley: An Introduction to African American Religious History

By Julius H. Bailey

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African American religions constitute a diverse group of beliefs and practices that emerged from the African diaspora brought about by the Atlantic slave trade. Traditional religions that had informed the worldviews of Africans were transported to the shores of the Americas and transformed to make sense of new contexts and conditions. This book explores the survival of traditional religions and how African American religions have influenced and been shaped by American religious history. The text provides an overview of the central people, issues, and events in an account that considers Protestant denominations, Catholicism, Islam, Pentecostal churches, Voodoo, Conjure, Rastafarianism, and new religious movements such as Black Judaism, the Nation of Islam, and the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors. The book addresses contemporary controversies, including President Barack Obama's former pastor Jeremiah Wright, and it will be valuable to all students of African American religions, African American studies, sociology of religion, American religious history, the Black Church, and black theology.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This extraordinary treatment of African American religions introduces pivotal themes in the historical formation of African American religions. *Down in the Valley* elucidates a sweeping range of religious movements while attending to the larger context of social structures at work in the United States. Through skillful interpretation and a creative display of scholarly knowledge, Julius Bailey has written an exceptional book that transcends the restrictive paradigm of the Black Church to examine Black religions up to the twenty-first century. Bailey's path-breaking volume will reshape the way students and scholars understand African American religions." --Sylvester A. Johnson, Northwestern University,/p>

"From African traditional religions through Barack Obama's former pastor Jeremiah Wright, this lively introduction to African American religions reliably informs and enlightens its readers. The full variety of African American religions is clearly and concisely explained here. This may well become the standard text on African American religious history."

--Stephen W. Angell, Earlham School of Religion

"In this engaging and accessible study, Julius Bailey offers a rich portrait of African American religious life. Providing an efficient and yet detailed account of the significance of Christianity and black churches, Bailey's text also provides readers with a sense of the variety and creativity of African American religious life and highlights a range of political and social issues that shape and challenge black religious communities. It is an enormously useful introduction to the field." --Judith Weisenfeld, Princeton University

"Julius Bailey's probing look at African Americans and religion demonstrates how communities have interwoven ideological and material aspects of religion in ways that conserve and enrich tradition, even while black new religious movements have emerged throughout American history to challenge those traditions. This is a fascinating, rewarding, and eminently readable overview." --John Corrigan, Florida State University

About the Author

Julius H. Bailey is professor of religious studies at the University of Redlands in California. He earned a PhD in religious studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is the author of *Race Patriotism: Protest and Print Culture in the A.M.E. Church* (2020).

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