

Princeton had trained Fithian to embrace the worldview of Paris and London, but he could never shed his Cohansey upbringing and its jaundiced view of foreign places. For him, the elites of northern Virginia were urbane but irreligious and cruel to their slaves. Terrifying Indians and drunks filled the mountains of central Pennsylvania; its common folk could not discuss ideas and often possessed no furniture on which he could write sermons. Before he visited the Jersey shore, he imagined its inhabitants as “straggling, impertinent, vociferous Swamp-Men.” After preaching there, he changed his mind: coastal Presbyterians were respectful and civilized, and among them numbered a few “English . . . Gentlemen of Fortune and Breeding” (130).

Often, Fithian chose not to record his thoughts on crucial episodes in his life. About his formative Princeton experience, including the sudden death of his parents and his subsequent responsibility for his younger siblings, he wrote little. Although Fea speculates that he participated in the revolutionary Greenwich tea party, Fithian wrote nothing about his own involvement in it, nor about how he became a chaplain in the Continental Army. He wrote at great length regarding his six year courtship with Betsy, but when they married, he became strangely silent. Fea describes Fithian’s journals as “self-absorbing” and believes that his final diary while he worked as a chaplain “was drafted, more than any of his previous efforts, with posterity in mind” (100, 181). It is posterity’s loss that when he was most engaged in life, his journal entries disappeared. Nonetheless, the writings he left suggest the wide circulation of cosmopolitan ideas and attitudes throughout the American colonies by the time of the Revolution.

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Richard S. Newman. *Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*. (New York: New York University Press, 2008. Pp. ix, 359, notes, index. Cloth, \$34.95.)

This work does many things. It tells how one leader shepherded black Methodist worshippers into the creation of a full-blown denomination. Through a limited set of sources which he has thoroughly mined, Newman supports the idea of Allen as founder by showing that he had a clear sense of purpose in establishing the church—almost as though Allen intuited

that leaving the segregated seating in a white church would lead the black worshippers to establish their own house of worship and would inevitably lead them to establish a black denomination.

Lacking voluminous data, Newman looked for a pattern of responses on Allen's part to the issues and world around him. In Allen's case there is a pattern of being quite sure that he was right especially when others were going the other way. When faced with a decision as to how to define the doctrine, he stuck with Methodism no matter how many resources were available through the Episcopal church. Allen was stubborn and self-assured, as well as relentless, in his pursuit of a vision of a new place to worship in the Methodist way. He told the disenchanted to go ahead and start another church when they began to fuss about his leadership. When faced with a discriminatory set of remarks about black Americans' response to the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1793, Allen responded in kind, challenging the racist pamphleteer with his own pamphlet—which then made him the first black person to hold a copy-right in the form so frequently associated with the American Revolution.

When blacks were struggling with the question of African colonization as a way to give blacks the chance to live as equals (if not lead) in African nations, Allen went against the grain by definitively choosing Haiti. In doing so he carried on conversation with leaders there. He had become an international leader with a national organization who also had shown great skill in obtaining property on behalf of the church as well as for his own needs. He gave an obituary of the nation's first president in which Allen showed his approval of Washington and his decision to emancipate his slaves. Obviously, Allen's faith in his own opinion and world view had to do with his undying allegiance to Methodism, to which he converted as an enslaved youngster. But in an insight that could at the least be called novel, and at the most, brilliant, Newman also concluded that Allen was a founder of unbridled sense of purpose because as a chimney sweep, he worked in founders' homes not as an impoverished black servant and former slave but as a propertied owner of a chimney-sweeping business that oversaw its own employees, payroll, and budget development. It was in cleaning Washington's chimney, Newman surmised, that Allen became aware of the founder's character; and in connecting that character with Washington's eventual freeing of his slaves, Allen became confident of his intuition about public affairs more than perhaps any other non-white founder could have been capable of doing.

This combination of faith and work uncovers what historians have overlooked: the capacity to anticipate future change as though life inevitably

would offer rounds and rounds of soot which only he could see clearly to clean. This job and the prosperity it brought allowed for Allen to consistently stand behind all of his ideas, because he kept seeing the world from the ground up and from the inside out. Of course, many a slave and a servant did so as well, but they did not make the kind of money that Allen made or maintain the properties that he owned, nor did they rise to bishop of a denomination they founded all while working full-time as a sweep and only part-time as a minister.

Furthermore, it could be said that Newman has resisted the temptation to argue for chronological dates that at best could only be speciously reconstructed. When did Allen first come up with the idea of black Methodists meeting together? Three or four different dates were possible, but it was most important that Allen probably had the idea when, as a slave, he converted to Methodism and then later talked his newly converted master into emancipating him. When and how did he strategize the means by which the black worshippers would depart? Certainty could never be obtained but the group left the church en masse and immediately set upon finding a new home that could be obtained without help from the white Methodists who had ill-treated black worshippers.

Newman's refusal to make a final call on many specific matters of fact actually opens up a profound question: namely, why did the first ministers of black denominations accept race as the most distinctive feature of their religious organizations? In the founding era, it was necessary to redeem the nearly total negative association with African identity—particularly color difference, the association of people of African descent with American slavery, and the constant reminder through various acts of discrimination that for the most part they were seen as African first and as participants in American society second. Hence, within some of Newman's ambiguity and the limits of the sources lay one answer: often racial identity at times was the only certainty, and accepting this reality enabled Allen and others to do great acts. Feeling maligned and being mistreated, they came up with organizations of social concern and religious belief on behalf of the people of African descent. The moral questions raised in the meeting of race and religion has been wonderfully entertained here.

To summarize, Newman found that an unwavering style informed the creation of this black denomination. The person most responsible consistently built a foundation as strong and multilayered as the built-over, pebble-lined streets of Philadelphia: that of the pursuit of black rights as a

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peaceful endeavor first. In this way, Allen set forth the foundation for the cornerstone idea of all struggles for rights efforts to come. Because of this idea and his bold stubbornness, which he consistently presented in his pamphlets, sermons and memoir, Allen deserves recognition as a founder. The fact that Allen had links to Philadelphia, rural Pennsylvania towns such as Radnor, Delaware, and other parts of the mid-Atlantic, means that this region was the setting for the establishment of an idea that would shape the civil rights movement in America a century and a half later.

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Friederike Baer. *The Trial of Frederick Eberle: Language, Patriotism, and Citizenship in Philadelphia's German Community, 1790 to 1830*. (New York: New York University Press, 2008. Pp. viii, 271, illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$48.00.)

In Philadelphia in 1816, two churches, which formed a single Lutheran congregation, held annual elections for the congregation's leaders. The balloting for this election was unruly and contentious, reflecting a bitter conflict between two groups in this German-American congregation. One group wanted to elect leaders who supported the use of English in the churches' services; the other group wanted to keep the services entirely and exclusively in German. Shortly after the elections, which were won by the pro-German group, 59 German Americans from the pro-German group were charged with rioting and conspiracy during the elections. The subsequent trial takes its name from Frederick Eberle, a baker, whose name appeared first in alphabetical order among the defendants.

This is a book about that trial. In describing the trial, the book's author, Friederike Baer, examines issues of ethnicity, Americanization, social class and language use in the early 19th century. The story is a fascinating one that raises issues about identity and assimilation that remain relevant to this day. And the story abounds with ironies and interesting insights into how ethnicity was contested and defined. Both sides of the language dispute used arguments that were grounded in American values of independence and citizenship, and both sides "embraced modes of behavior that were characteristic of American behavior at that time" (21). Beyond the specific charges