

Though awkward to use, these references place citations to obscure but valuable sources all in one place. Most of the biographical entries are far too brief or describe careers well after their relevant time.

More seriously, the editors leave historical references unexplained. In Wilson's "Speech Delivered in the Convention of the Province of Pennsylvania . . . in January 1775" (not sourced), opaque references to the Townshend Duties (33), the Association (34), the Declaratory Act (34), the Tea Act (34), and the Boston Massacre trial (35) are not explained and will not be understood by the lay reader. They also do not appear in the index (which is frequently the case), though the Tea Act is indexed as "Tea, duty on." I fear that many readers will not appreciate the allusions.

Kermit Hall argues that Wilson's lectures are a "genuinely systematic view of the law" (xiv) and a "serious contribution to the literature of the law that no student of its early national origins can ignore" (xv). He is certainly right. The added material makes the volumes even more valuable. But, their utility would have been enhanced had it been better edited.

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Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers. By RICHARD NEWMAN. (New York: New York University Press, 2008). xiii, 359 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.)

In the preface to his book, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, Richard Newman recounts a conversation with his editor in which she asked, "why can't biographers just let go of their subjects?!" (ix). It is very clear that Newman struggled with this dilemma. His refusal to "let go" has produced a monumental contribution to the discipline of early American history and, perhaps, one of the very best biographies concerned with that era.

As Newman suggests, biography is still one of the most interesting forms of historical writing, and this new and fastidiously researched biography of Richard Allen is one of the very few books dedicated to exploring the lives of eighteenth-century people of African descent. *Freedom's Prophet* not only explores Allen's importance in shaping postrevolutionary African American life, but it also examines the complex shift from slavery to freedom among African Americans in the North. Newman borrows from David Levering Lewis's important work on W. E. B. Du Bois by stating that Allen's life story provides "a biography of his race" during the early republic (4). Through the lens of Allen's life, Newman helps to define important issues such as race relations, the advent of the black church, the rise of black leadership, abolitionism, and the African American struggle to cap-

ture and maintain freedom in the ever-changing urban landscape of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America. Newman writes that, "Richard Allen's world was filled with high hopes and dashing disappointments" (5).

Although Richard Allen is most widely known for founding the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, he shared similar experiences with the men and women of African descent who lived and worked in the urban North. Allen began his own autobiography by writing, "I was born a slave to Benjamin Chew, of Philadelphia. My mother and father and four of us children were then sold into Delaware state" (28). As was the case with tens of thousands of black northerners, Allen was born into slavery but was able to use religion and hard work to purchase his own freedom. Newman states that "Allen shrewdly used Methodist preaching to shame his master into bargaining slavery down into a contract for freedom" (42). Allen's freedom and religion led to the famous walk-out of St. George's segregated church in 1792 or 1793 and the founding of the AME Church, the first independent black church in America. Allen positioned himself as a "black founder" during the early years of the republic, creating a space for free people of color to worship, to educate themselves, and to involve themselves in the politics of the "City of Brotherly Love" and in the politics of a new nation.

Perhaps one of the most important contributions of Newman's book is that it offers a balanced perspective regarding the immense hope and the spirit of change experienced by African Americans in the beginning of the nineteenth century. With the joys of freedom, a new church, and a growing free black population came the terrible setbacks of heightened racial tension and eventual disfranchisement. Although he was one of the most important and influential black leaders of his era, Richard Allen contemplated the feasibility of black success in America. Newman's depiction of Allen's strong support for Haitian emigration demonstrates a very real pessimism among black men and women. Newman writes, "Allen believed that Haitian emigration offered African Americans something white citizens increasingly enjoyed: a frontier outlet" (239). He understood that black men and women needed a "safety valve" and hoped that African American migration would "change the racial politics of the Atlantic world" (261). Allen's hopes with respect to migration did not materialize. However, his death in 1831 ushered in a new abolitionist era that would challenge slavery and notions of citizenship in America. Richard Newman's work is a tour de force and a joy to read.

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