



Between Fetters and Freedom: African American Baptists since Emancipation (James N. Griffith Endowed Series in Baptist Studies)

Edward R. Crowther, Keith Harper

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In the wake of the American Civil War, freed people of color who had either worshipped with their former masters or observed their faith privately now enjoyed a measure of freedom and self-determination. Baptist ranks swelled as new converts joined the faithful in building new churches, organizing mission and educational societies, and openly exercising their faith. In short, it was a rich, diverse experience that merits further inquiry. The essays in BETWEEN FETTERS AND FREEDOM explore a number of issues bearing on post-Civil War African American Baptists. With limited resources at their disposal, precisely what did freedom mean? Would African American Baptist organizations be recognized as legitimate by white peer organizations? What sort of internal stress would African American organizations face as they gained traction in the black community, and what sort of stress would a rapidly changing culture place on those organizations and the people who made them what they were? Through it all, preachers and lay people alike wondered how their voices would be heard above the din. As the title suggests, emancipation inaugurated a time of freedom. True, the Civil War ended slavery and African American Baptists are no longer in fetters, but the War did not eradicate racism. Arguably, even in well-defined religious circles complete freedom remains tinged with uncertainty and in some respects unfulfilled.



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