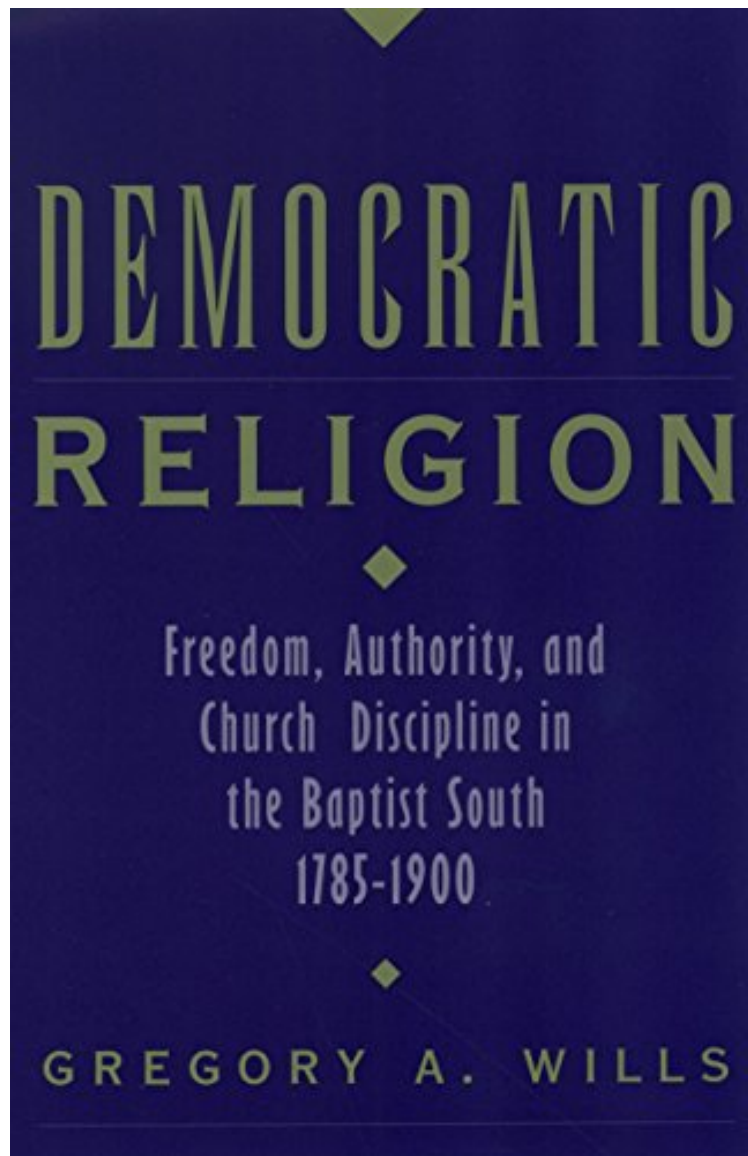


(Download pdf ebook) Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900 (Religion in America)

## **Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900 (Religion in America)**

*Von Gregory A. Wills*

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Produktinformation Veröffentlicht am: 1996-12-12 Erscheinungsdatum: 1996-12-12 File Name: B00UI4BSRC  
| File size: 34.Mb

**Von Gregory A. Wills : Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900 (Religion in America)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900 (Religion in America):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A Churches that Disciplines its Members is Healthy! Von Ein KundeDemocratic Religion is an interesting discussion on the topic of Church discipline and the authority that Church governments exerted over memberships in the 19th century. Gregory A. Wills, the author, wrote the book from a point of interest discovered when writing a short article on the subject of a nineteenth century preacher. Wills' study expanded into a book on the story of nineteenth century church polity focusing on the peculiarities of Georgia churches. Nevertheless, the book is also a commentary by way of implication of the status of the church today. Readers will not be able to help but examine their own churches in the light of some of the positive aspects of 19th century religious life and find their own experience a little lacking. Lacking primarily in the advantages of a strong religious authority over church members and a measure of real accountability added to that authority. The first three chapters deal generally with a form of uniquely American church government. The author was influenced by the book *The Democratization of Christianity*, by Nathan Hatch. Hatch evidently suggested that American preachers developed a cultural contextual style of preaching and church government, casting the gospel in a "new, populist, individualist form." However, Wills is not trapped by the motif of Hatch and clearly communicates that southern Baptists were not entirely democratic in the administration of church polity. Meaning that Baptists tended to also hold to the traditions of the reformation by asserting tremendous authority over church memberships by the adherence to and practice of strict disciplinary procedures. These disciplinary procedures were in the form of "trials" or "dealings" and each church had its own way of dealing with what Wills calls "the texture of discipline" (23). Nevertheless, "trials" were informal events which strove to hear and answer charges, render verdicts, and (hopefully) restore the accused to fellowship. The authority of these proceedings rested in their jurisdiction, over the membership only, and in their ability to either forgive or excommunicate members. The ultimate outcome of these proceedings tended to be restoration and renewal of the church in terms of real revival. In the fourth and fifth chapter the author turns his attention to, first, the role of women in church polity, and then the role of black slaves. Women seem to have had some degree of freedom to participate in the democratic process of discipline but less ability to participate in matters of church government-the same double standard was applied to slaves as well. Southern whites considered slaves to have enhanced spirituality in matters of basic morals yet unable to rule because of their low intelligence. The sixth chapter briefly describes the struggle of their system of ecclesiastical authority to "ensure pure belief as well as pure deportment" (84). The seventh chapter describes the southern Baptist practice of adhering strictly to creeds, associational authority over local churches, and the issues of Calvinism. Ironically, and in contrast to anti-creed sentiments of the post-modern era, 19th century Baptists seemed to use creeds very prolifically. Finally, chapter eight tells the story of declining church discipline practices which would cease, for all practical purposes, by 1920.0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Essential reading for Southern Baptists Von Ein KundeI grew up in a Southern Baptist Church hearing that Southern Baptists oppose all use of creeds, don't practice church discipline, and don't believe in a Calvinistic view of God's sovereignty. A lot of people try to argue that as well as being like this today, Southern Baptists were always like that. Gregory Wills totally undermines these understandings of Southern Baptist history. Unlike modern SBC historians who take an understanding of Baptist life that has existed only since 1900 and assume things have always been that way, Wills does exhaustive research into the way local churches in Georgia actually believed and behaved in the 19th century. Wills proves that most SBC churches in Georgia held to Calvinistic beliefs, regularly practiced church discipline, and favored the disciplinary use of creeds. This book is essential reading for any Southern Baptists interested in the reformation of our denomination.

KurzbeschreibungNo American denomination identified itself more closely with the nation's democratic ideal than the Baptists. Most antebellum southern Baptist churches allowed women and slaves to vote on membership matters and preferred populist preachers who addressed their appeals to the common person. Paradoxically no denomination could wield religious authority as zealously as the Baptists. Between 1785 and 1860 they ritually excommunicated forty to fifty thousand church members in Georgia alone. Wills demonstrates how a denomination of freedom-loving individualists came to embrace an exclusivist spirituality--a spirituality that continues to shape Southern Baptist churches in contemporary conflicts between moderates who urge tolerance and conservatives who require belief in scriptural inerrancy. Wills's analysis advances our understanding of the interaction between democracy and religious authority, and will appeal to scholars of American religion, culture, and history, as well as to Baptist observers.Pressestimmen"Wills' work is a thoughtful analysis of an historical practice with decidedly contemporary implications." "Well written, this book is a model of using church records as key sources. Important for students of southern religion and culture and American religious life more generally." "Will make a significant contribution to the field of American religious history."--Paul Harvey, Colorado College "Will make a significant contribution to the field of American religious history."--Paul Harvey, Colorado College "Will make a significant contribution to the field of American religious history."--Paul Harvey, Colorado College Wills's work is excellent, both in its scholarship and

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