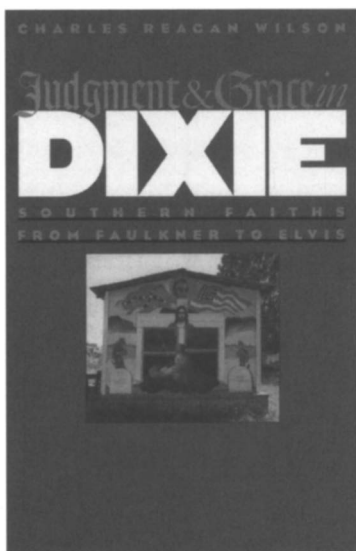


The backdrop to Dalhouse's parade of paradoxes is an impressionistic portrait of an institution interacting with the larger forces of history and theology. Dalhouse paints it clearly: though BJU attempts to act against these forces, they in turn shape Bob Jones University.

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Judgment & Grace in Dixie

Southern Faiths from Faulkner to Elvis

By Charles Reagan Wilson

University of Georgia Press, 1995

202 pp. Cloth, \$29.95; paper, \$14.95

Reviewed by **Wayne Flynt**, Distinguished University

Professor, Auburn University. Flynt regularly teaches courses on Alabama and southern history. Among his ten books are two that deal with southern religion:

Taking Christianity to China and *Alabama Baptists*.

Charles Reagan Wilson has a knack for approaching a subject from an unanticipated direction. His studies of southern culture often diverge from the mainstream toward the periphery of Moon Pies, Goo Goo Clusters, Elvis, and professional wrestling. Some readers find that off-putting. Others consider it fascinating. *Judgment & Grace in Dixie* is vintage Wilson—witty, well written, perceptive, and sometimes a little too large to swallow in one bite.

Wilson's themes are familiar to all who have followed his career. His premise is simple: religion plays an important role in southern popular culture. He prefers to study popular religion, which operates outside formal church institutions and is transmitted through nonecclesiastical channels. The new ground Wilson breaks in this study is his attention to visual aspects of regional culture. Samuel S. Hill and others have long contended that southern religion is primarily oral, hence its preference for sermons over images, icons, symbols, and rituals. Wilson challenges this thesis, not so much from inside the church house as from the perspective of folk religion.

In Part One the author covers southern civil religion—territory familiar to those who have read his earlier writings. After the Civil War, churches became the major repositories of southern identity. A distinctively regional religion emerged, characterized by evangelicalism, moralism, fundamentalism, emotionalism, and a paradoxical race and class system that provided some biracial aspects to southern