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*Millard Fillmore Caldwell: Governing on the Wrong Side of History* by Gary R. Mormino (review)

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*Millard Fillmore Caldwell: Governing on the Wrong Side of History.* By Gary R. Mormino. Florida in Focus. (Gainesville and other cities: University Press of Florida, 2020. Pp. viii, 185. Paper, \$28.00, ISBN 978-0-8130-6650-9.)

The impact of presentism on historiography is an old and unavoidable question but one that is particularly pertinent today, not least regarding the U.S. South and its commemoration in statues and other public representations of white slave owners, Confederate generals, and segregationists. This astute biography of the segregationist Florida governor, U.S. congressman, and state supreme court justice Millard Fillmore Caldwell engages this debate in an interesting coda in which its author, the eminent historian of Florida Gary R. Mormino, confronts thorny questions of legacy and the biographer's eternal challenge: "How shall we measure the character and deeds of a single life?" (p. 133). Mormino does a fine job with this difficult task in a study of a historical and political figure who often seemed painfully statuesque in real life (and not just because he was well over six feet tall). An obstinate and somewhat reluctant public servant, Caldwell made it his default position as Florida governor in the shifting racial and political waters of the post-World War II South to drop anchor, defending the white primary as a cozy "club" and attacking "so-called civil rights" laws, including antilynching legislation, as the harbingers of a "Washington Gestapo to police the internal affairs" of his dear endangered Dixie (pp. 73, 79).

*Millard Fillmore Caldwell: Governing on the Wrong Side of History* perceptively shows how Caldwell personified the profound shifts taking place in 1940s Florida: he combined personal and political ties to rural, northern Florida with a traditional stranglehold on the state legislature in Tallahassee, which was being seriously challenged by the rise of a more urban, southern Florida that was (compared with Caldwell's panhandle region) less wedded to the Deep South and its ideologies of white supremacy and states' rights. Caldwell bristled at the pace and nature of these changes, longing, it seems, to quit public life for the tranquility of his Harwood plantation and Rolls-Royce. The book is most engaging when it moves beyond its biographical focus to explore wider social, political, and environmental features of the Sunshine State: the white primary and gambling, the Everglades, and education. In this last field, Mormino suggests, Caldwell made his most "progressive" contributions as a public official, seeking to reform an "abysmal," woefully underfunded state education program (pp. 1, 63). Later, after a frustrating stint in Washington, D.C., as director of the Federal Civil Defense Administration, Caldwell returned to his law office in Tallahassee and then, for much of the 1960s, sat on the state supreme court, a platform from which he railed against student protesters, federal aid, and the Supreme Court of Chief Justice Earl Warren, while defending, among other cherished legal heirlooms, the statutes that prohibited interracial cohabitation (p. 125).

The book, which is well researched but succinct, forms part of the University Press of Florida's new Florida in Focus series, designed, as editor Andrew K. Frank explains, to meet a "growing demand for public-facing scholarship" and to ask its "readers to grapple with the current implications of the past" (p. vii). As the title tells us, Caldwell may have been "governing on the wrong side of history," yet he never lost an election in his life. "Is Caldwell's historical

reputation redeemable?" Mormino asks us (p. 133). Perhaps not, but biography does not necessarily have to be about reputation—or redemption—to contribute to our understanding of the past and to unravel its contested meaning. The book explores important and timely questions about historical and political memory; it will be of interest to scholars of Florida as well as the South more broadly; and it will enlighten readers who wish to ponder both the popularity and the legacy of segregationists like Caldwell—men who, for so many decades, monopolized power and defended white supremacy across the South.

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*Doing the Word: Southern Baptists' Carver School of Church Social Work and Its Predecessors, 1907–1997.* By T. Laine Scales and Melody Maxwell. America's Baptists. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2019. Pp. xvi, 243. \$64.00, ISBN 978-1-62190-360-4.)

*Home without Walls: Southern Baptist Women and Social Reform in the Progressive Era.* By Carol Crawford Holcomb. Religion and America Culture. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2020. Pp. xii, 247. \$49.95, ISBN 978-0-8173-2054-6.)

*Doing the Word: Southern Baptists' Carver School of Church Social Work and Its Predecessors, 1907–1997*, by T. Laine Scales and Melody Maxwell, and *Home without Walls: Southern Baptist Women and Social Reform in the Progressive Era*, by Carol Crawford Holcomb, are both studies of the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), an auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), which the authors argue is key to understanding what became the largest U.S. Protestant denomination at the turn of the twenty-first century. Both institutional histories may do for SBC women what Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993) has done for National Baptist women but for different reasons. The authors note that their subjects were a specific type of SBC woman and raise further questions about the degree to which, first, they represented or influenced other Southern Baptists inside and outside the organization and, second, they were similar to or different from other religious groups. The Religion and American Culture series edited by John M. Giggie and Charles A. Israel published *Home without Walls*; it features a cover blurb from Keith Harper, the author of *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890–1920* (Tuscaloosa, 1996), also from the University of Alabama Press. Harper edits the the University of Tennessee Press series America's Baptists and has written the foreword to *Doing the Word*.

*Home without Walls* well demonstrates the limits of southern white Progressivism. Holcomb, with expertise in Baptist history and church studies, argues that templates developed between 1888 and 1920 influenced "Southern Baptist life throughout the twentieth century" (p. 10). Seven thematic chapters arranged chronologically examine subjects of Southern Baptist hagiography, those valorized by Southern Baptists seeking to portray their denomination as more "culturally, economically, and theologically diverse" than it was (p. 174). Like *Doing the Word*, *Home without Walls* highlights the WMU's Personal