

METHODISM'S SPLENDID MISSION: THE BLACK COLLEGES

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In the past, many historians of higher education often accepted the twin generalizations that black colleges, (1) "while collegiate in name, did not remotely resemble a college in standards or facilities,"¹ and (2) that the history of these colleges, while probably important as early missionary ventures, would hardly rate complete chapters in general histories of higher education.

This essay begins as a direct challenge to both points of view. Among other propositions, it will be argued (1) that, while the contrast between the facilities and standards of black and white colleges is dramatically real, it is by no means an unbroken contrast, and (2) admitting the truth of the missionary beginnings of the early black colleges, there is a much greater story of their survival and their production of a group of leaders whose quality stands high on any national standard of leadership. Indeed, the major purpose of this essay is not to argue a particular point, such as any one of the too-easy generalizations of many historians, but to tell the remarkable story of the black colleges of the United Methodist Church.

The Earliest of Foundations

The history of the black colleges, like that of all institutional history, predated the founding of any particular institution. Perhaps it is important for United Methodists to remember, in this bicentennial year, that the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, held very strong views about education and the worth of every human being. It is true that he upbraided Bishops Coke and Asbury for founding a college instead of a school, but it is even more true that his life and work emphasized dramatically the need to combine a mission to the whole individual and an emphasis upon the training of the mind.

After a series of difficult experiences (threat from the authorities in the State of Georgia, being lost in the woods, hunger and thirst, and violent illness), John Wesley wrote a strange sentence in his Journal. Said he, "I began instructing a Negro lad in the principles of Christianity."²

¹Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 488.

²*The Journal of John Wesley*, as abridged by Nehemiah Curnock (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963), p. 33.

The sentence is out of context with anything immediately preceding or following this event. For, in his Journal for December 26, 1737, Wesley went on to say:

The next day I resolved to break off living delicately and return to my old simplicity of diet; and after I did so, neither my stomach nor my head complained of the motion of the ship.³

It is a long jump in logic from instructing a Negro lad to the rigors of personal living. The first sentence of this abbreviated journal entry may reveal as much about the man Wesley as the last.

Indeed, throughout the history of Methodism, from the founders to the present day, Methodists have had a deep and abiding interest in "instructing Negro lads." Our story properly begins, then, in the twin sources of the Methodist belief about slavery and the awful devastation of mind and spirit which was wrought by this "peculiar institution" in a North American setting.

The long story of Methodism and slavery is told in other places and is far too long to be summarized here. Competent historians have written widely on the subject. It is important, at this point, only to state a summary by Bishop Francis J. McConnell: "Wesley's attitude on slavery was consistent throughout. He had from the outset of his public career called slavery the sum of all villainies and American slavery the vilest under the sun."⁴ It is sufficient at this point to say that Wesley's abhorrence of slavery was quite consistent with the mission to educate the "freedmen" over a century later.

Wesley did not live to see the founding of any successful Methodist college in America. After the ill-fated Cokesbury College burned in 1795, it was some time before Methodists ventured into higher education again. Looking back on this period, one writer put it rather too simply when he said: "Methodism and the nomenclature of the higher learning did not seem to belong together."⁵

It is now well known that Methodism and higher learning did indeed belong together, as is clear from the remarkable group of colleges now related to the United Methodist Church. Within that general history is the story of the black colleges, several of which pre-date the later institutions of higher learning, including some of the most outstanding in the group.

If it is true that, for a time, Methodists were slow to found institutions of higher learning, how was it that the black colleges were founded with such zeal and dedication? The answer is found in the terrible time of uncertainty immediately after the Civil War. Horace Mann Bond described the situation in a few graphic sentences. He said of the newly freed slaves:

³Ibid.

⁴Francis J. McConnell, *John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1939), p. 278.

⁵Charles W. Ferguson, *Organizing to Beat the Devil* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1971), p. 312.

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Stripped though they were of the very essentials of civilization, devoid even of any experiences in the difficult art of independent living, the Negro slaves, once emancipated, brought to their new official status an immense urge for progress. In their desire for advancement they followed the patterns with which they were most familiar. The first efforts of Negroes for education were so artificial that they immediately became the target for ridicule and scorn.⁶

It was into this ridicule and scorn that the Methodists came in 1866. The movement began as a small voluntary association of concerned persons. A call was issued for ten Methodist ministers and laymen to meet in Cincinnati, Ohio, on August 7, 1866. This was a proper place to meet because, thirteen years earlier, a resolution was offered in the Cincinnati Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church to found a college for black people. The resolution prevailed and Wilberforce University, the second black college founded in the United States, started its work in 1856.⁷ The university was later sold to the African Methodist Episcopal Church and remains, to this day, as one of the colleges of that denomination. Cincinnati, therefore, having been the center of an earlier interest in the higher education of black people, became also the center of this new missionary movement.

The minutes of that first meeting were instructive. Near the time for adjournment, one of the ten persons assembled, J. M. Walden, offered a resolution:

Resolved that the time has come for the organization of a Society for the relief and education of the Freedmen and people of color in general, to cooperate with the Missionary and Church Extension Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁸

The resolution passed unanimously. Also adopted were resolutions calling for the attention of fall annual conferences to this most urgent of needs—the education and relief of four million black people who, while legally free, were still very much in slavery to ignorance, hunger, and discouragement. One gift they had in large measure—and this despite the terribly dark outlook in those days: an overwhelming desire to learn and become whole persons.

Once begun, the work of the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church spread rapidly. The Society's report for 1868, providing statistics for the year 1867, contained the following summary:

Schools: Tennessee, 17; Georgia, 11; Alabama, 4; Kentucky, 3; Louisiana, 9; Mississippi, 1; Arkansas, 1; Virginia, 3; South Carolina, 8; North Carolina, 2.⁹

⁶Horace Mann Bond, *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1934), p. 23.

⁷See Henry M. Johnson, "The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Education of Southern Negroes," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1939, pp. 39-43.

⁸Reports on The Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church: 1866-1871, Organization Convention (Cincinnati: Western Book Concern), p. 5.

⁹Ibid, Annual Report, 1868.

The mission had not only begun; it rapidly became a movement.

The Society was very prudent in its work. It did not assume impossible responsibilities at this early date. When it is remembered that the black population was 4,441,830 in 1860, even the early establishment of 59 schools might seem small for those who enrolled both as first-time kindergarten students and as grandparents hungry for knowledge. But the report stands on its own merits:

We have commissioned and sustained in the above places one hundred and twenty-four teachers in all, but have been able to furnish only a small proportion of the number earnestly solicited. To refuse these applications has been the most painful duty connected with the administration of the affairs of the Society. But it was our only alternative. To have incurred a heavy debt would have involved the Society in irretrievable ruin.¹⁰

It was clear that the Society was doing as much as could be done in two years and doing it with uncommon integrity and good management.

The report of the Freedmen's Aid Society for 1869 began to reveal something of the high-mindedness of these early founders. While the number of schools increased only by one in a year's time, the type and quality of school became a major issue. Under a heading on "Normal Schools," the officers of the Society reported:

We have established six Normal Schools in central locations, which will furnish accommodations to meet the present demand of colored youth, who are anxious to be prepared to teach; for the work of education among the freedmen must be carried forward by themselves.¹¹

From the beginning, the Society thought of education as complete liberation of the mind. And this, then as now, was a revolutionary concept. They planned a noble but temporary work. As soon as the South would establish public schools for blacks, it was their plan to concentrate on other levels. But the development of public schools for blacks in the South was a long-delayed program.

Nevertheless, the report of 1869 carried sections on four universities, three Normal Schools, and one college. Two of the universities exist to this day but as colleges under their original names; one continues as a college under a different name; and the others continue as unidentifiable parts of later institutions that bore different names. Claflin University has become Claflin College with a founding date of 1869; and Shaw University, of Holly Springs, Mississippi, has become Rust College with a founding date of 1866.

While there is a wealth of material for researchers beyond what time and space will permit here, it is fair to say that the program for developing schools, once established, changed very little during this thirty-five year period. The Society established Institutes, Normal Schools, Colleges, and

¹⁰Ibid, Second Annual Report, p. 10.

¹¹Ibid, Third Annual Report, p. 7.

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Universities; and did so with remarkable idealism, on the one hand, and wise pragmatism, on the other. To those who, in later years, scoffed at the idea that there could be a university for Freedmen, the facts must be clear. New Orleans University had a medical school for the first third of its life and students, even then, finished a few of these schools with graduate degrees. This was what was meant by "University."

To summarize: the period between 1866 and 1881 was a time for founding institutions. From Rust College, founded in 1866, to Morristown College, founded in 1881, the endless line of splendor continued. No college remains today that was founded after the year 1881, except Paine, which began under the sponsorship of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Colored (now Christian) Methodist Episcopal Church.

It is a relatively easy matter to outline the dates and deeds of those who founded these institutions. It is quite a different matter to tell their story. What kind of people were they? Their detractors portrayed them as misty-eyed do-gooders who were self-righteously coming into the South to do what only black people wanted. Others saw their work as so many flashes of lightning in a stormy cloud. One day, they said, the storm would be over and, except for a strike here or there, no one would know the difference. Now, over a century later, some assessment must be made of these educator-missionaries, for their work has endured.

In the first place, the wider story of the higher education of black people clearly refutes the claim of the detractors. The founders of these schools were, by and large, wise and high-minded people whose work did much to redeem the children of slavery and the entire section in which they lived.

No one who reads the works of W. E. B. Dubois would ever think of him as a pious sentimentalist. His sober assessment of the founding of these colleges is instructive indeed.

This (the work of these founders) was the gift of New England to the freed Negro: not alms, but a friend; not cash but character. It was not and is not money these seething millions want, but love and sympathy, the pulse of hearts beating with red blood;—a gift which today only their own kindred and race can bring to the masses, but which once saintly souls brought to their favored children in the crusade of the sixties, that finest thing in American history, and one of the few things untainted by sordid greed and cheap vainglory.¹²

Such was the estimate of this brilliant graduate of Fisk University who remained a bitter foe of all racism until his death, at 95 years of age, in 1963.

Indeed, these were more than saintly souls from New England. Many of them did come from New England and some of their names were given to the schools which they founded. But they came also from New York state and New Jersey; from Ohio and Iowa; from Indiana and Pennsylvania.

¹²W. E. B. Dubois, *The Soul of Black Folk*, p. 82.

While it is as easy to romanticize about these founders now as it was to detract from them then, the burden of the historical record is that "the world was not good enough for them." Yet they, like their heroes in the book of Hebrews, kept their feet squarely on the ground. They brought about a quiet revolution, the like of which this nation has rarely, if ever, seen in any time.

This was a movement in which deeply dedicated people, deploring the terrible human effects of two and a half centuries of slavery, invested their lives in a manner which had never been seen before in the history of this country.

It is easy now, by hindsight, to question the strategy of these idealists who left comfortable homes in the north for this impossible mission. But it is not easy to discount what they did. To be sure, the fifty-nine schools came upon hard times later. When, however, the Society could report five thousand pupils enrolled during the first year and seven thousand the next, it was clear that a dent was being made in the formidable armor of ignorance. The wonder is not that so many schools, hastily founded, ceased to exist; rather it is that so many of the fifty-nine survived for so long. Out of that group—certainly out of the mission itself—the present twelve black colleges of the United Methodist Church were born.

If one wishes to have some measure of the inertia, the hostility, and the ambivalence which the larger society had toward the higher education of blacks, one should ponder this statement by Horace Mann Bond:

It was recorded that before 1876 only 208 Negroes in America had received bachelor's degrees; only 96 had professional degrees, one-third of the latter being in theology. Eighty-nine of the college graduates before 1876 graduated from one Negro college; there were probably not more than a dozen Negroes graduated from college in the entire country in 1865.¹⁸

The point is that the Freedmen's Aid schools struggled with this long-standing deficit in leadership training throughout the years between 1881 and 1916. Indeed, some serious forms of this imbalance between leadership needed and those excellently prepared are still with us.

Critics of these and other schools were not entirely wrong in saying that they were spreading themselves too thin. There was this other side of history that must be faced. The great zeal for education called out all kinds of activity; some wise and well-founded, some others well-meaning but highly inadequate. Schools proliferated. Some were founded by individuals and a few lived on under other names. It was in 1904 that Mary McLeod Bethune founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro girls. Other institutions, not many at first, were founded or taken over by states. Still others were founded by conventions, conferences, and private groups.

¹⁸Horace Mann Bond, "The Evolution and Present Status of Negro Higher and Professional Education in the United States," *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. XVII (Summer 1948), No. 3.

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However they started or well-intentioned their founding, there grew up among the black colleges a highly varied group of schools that, at best, represented more than the traffic could bear. At worst, this long list of struggling schools represented an educational crazy quilt that simulated but never really reached the standard of a Fisk, or Clark, or Claflin, or Atlanta University, or a Wiley.

This extensive background is necessary for a proper understanding of the place and role of the present black colleges of the United Methodist Church. Their story is a part of the church's best story. They were, at first, the expendable ones. They would not have been founded at all but for the zeal of the northern Methodists who found at first hostility, then tolerance, and then the open support of at least a few southerners like Dr. (later bishop) Atticus G. Haygood of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

It is almost impossible for any of us, black or white, to imagine the social situation in which these early black schools were founded. To the extent that this indicates some real progress in the status of black people in America, that is good. But progress is always relative.

A few reminders from the newspapers of 1866 will indicate something of the courage of these early Methodists:

- * Item 1 - On February 5, Thaddeus Stevens proposed a measure authorizing the President to set aside land to be distributed to Freedmen in 40-acre lots. The measure was defeated 126-7.
- * Item 2 - On April 9, Congress passed a Civil Rights bill over the President's veto.
- * Item 3 - On May 1-3, a race riot in Memphis, Tennessee, left forty-six black persons and two white liberals killed. About seventy-five were wounded. Ninety homes, twelve schools and four churches were burned.
- * Item 4 - Two months later, July 30, another race riot in New Orleans, Louisiana, left thirty-five killed and more than a hundred wounded.

And these were but tips of an enormous iceberg, the base of which was centuries of slavery with all of its attendant effects. It was no picnic which these missionaries of the north came to attend.

The Age of Measured Growth and Critical Evaluation: 1916-1941

There is one date with which all historians of higher education for black people must reckon: 1916. It was in that year that Thomas Jesse Jones made his classic study of Negro higher education. At the time, several major social and economic conditions made Dr. Jones' study a crucial one. By 1910, there were 9,827,763 black persons in the United States of America. For a half century the provisions for their education were, on the whole, far from adequate. The reasons were not hard to find.

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- (1) The southern states were still very late and very unequal in making any provisions for the elementary and secondary education of black people. That is why some of the Methodist colleges for black people maintained these levels of education, along with their college work, from their founding until the mid-1930s.
- (2) Standards of accredited education for blacks, never much of an issue within a dual system of education, became more and more of an issue as competent educators continued to point out the inherent injustices of a system based on discrimination.
- (3) The long-frustrated desire of black educators and students—to be considered excellent without any limiting provisions whatsoever—was beginning to be felt. What was adequate and acceptable to first-generation ex-slave-students was manifestly not so for others who were taught to consider themselves first-class human beings in every way.

A careful scholarly analysis of this period has been made by Dr. James P. Brawley, president-emeritus of Clark College and a distinguished educator of forty years' service at Clark. Dr. Brawley has outlined, more clearly than is anywhere else to be found, the institutional changes made by the Methodist Episcopal Church to improve such conditions as the Thomas Jesse Jones' study made clear to the educational world.

Between 1923 and 1966, thirteen major institutional changes in its black colleges were made by the Methodist Episcopal Church. Just to list them is to tell the story of what this quarter of a century meant in bringing us to the present situation in the higher education for black people. Eleven of those thirteen changes were made during the period 1919-1941.

- * In 1923, Cookman Institute at Jacksonville, Florida, was merged with the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro girls to form the Bethune-Cookman College at Daytona Beach, Florida.
- * In 1923, Central Alabama College in Birmingham was closed after a disastrous fire.
- * In 1924, Virginia Collegiate and Industrial Institute of Lynchburg, Virginia, was closed and its interests transferred to Morgan College, Baltimore, Maryland.
- * In 1925, George R. Smith College, founded at Sedalia, Missouri, in 1888, was closed after a disastrous fire destroyed the main building.
- * In 1926, Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina, coeducational since 1873, became the Bennett College for Women.

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- * In 1927, Haven Institute and Conservatory of Music was permanently closed in Meridian, Mississippi.
- * In 1922, Walden College of Nashville, Tennessee, with roots going back to 1865, was reduced to a junior college. In 1928, the school became a four-year academy and in 1935 it was permanently closed.
- * In 1935, New Orleans University, founded in 1869, was merged with Straight College, Congregational, of the same city. The newly-formed institution was Dillard University of New Orleans.
- * In 1937, Morgan College, Baltimore, Maryland, founded in 1866, was sold to the State of Maryland and, since that time, has been a state college (later Morgan State University).
- * In 1940, Paine College of Augusta, Georgia, founded and supported jointly by the Colored (Christian) Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, became one of the institutions under the auspices of the Board of Education of The Methodist Church.
- * In 1941, Clark University, Atlanta, Georgia, became Clark College, and moved to a completely new campus on the west side of the city.¹⁴

So massive was the change from Clark University to Clark College that it might well be called the end of an era. The crosstown location was significant for another very important reason: it was the carefully studied attempt of philanthropic persons and foundations to upgrade higher education of five institutions of varied history by bringing them close enough together to share educational and even physical resources.

No one could, at that time, see what was ahead in America's ever-present dilemma—the race problem. But one thing seemed fairly certain: the higher education for black people, having come through seventy-five years of mixed triumph and struggle, would never again be allowed to grow in its own way again. For good or ill, there would be more solid educational planning, more accreditation, more painful growth toward full maturity.

The Period of Careful Survey and Intentional Development: 1942-1957

Much of the story of this decade and a half will be found not in institutional changes (there was only one such change between 1942-1957) but in the remarkable work of the teachers and presidents of these black colleges. While the record is, of course, not uniformly great, there are numerous outstanding examples that might be cited. A few illustrations will suffice to make the point.

¹⁴James P. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern: Bondage, Freedom, and the Education of Black People* (New York: Vantage Press, 1974), pp. 140-150.

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In 1942, Dr. Matthew W. Dogan retired from the presidency of Wiley College after a forty-six year presidency. His tenure as president was both remarkably long and effective (1896-1942).

The Thomas Jesse Jones' study, referred to above, gave Wiley high marks as it evaluated what was then twenty years of the presidential leadership of Dr. Dogan. The report stated:

The survey committee was impressed with the efficiency of the organization and the concentrated effort being made to provide an educational service of a superior type.¹⁵

While some other institutions had not advanced as far as Wiley had in 1916, all of them were trying—earnestly and with good presidential leadership—to use quite limited resources in the search for excellence during the period 1942-1957.

- * In 1941, Dr. James P. Brawley became the president of Clark College. After sixteen years as dean, he was already a proven educator who set the college on a course of excellence in every area of its life. Dr. Brawley remained as president for twenty-four years. This was by far the longest tenure served by any former president, all of them being white except one. Dr. Matthew Simpson Davage, the second black president, served for seventeen years.
- * In 1942, the first black president of Claflin College had already served for twenty years and would serve three more years before retirement. It is interesting to note that the incumbent president—the fifth in a history of 112 years—is now in his twenty-eighth year of service.
- * In 1942, Dr. David D. Jones, the president of Bennett College for Women, had served for sixteen years and would serve another fourteen years before his death.
- * In 1940, Dr. Albert W. Dent was elected president of Dillard University and served with distinction for twenty-nine years.
- * The president of Rust College, Dr. L. M. McCoy, began his service in 1924 and served until his retirement in 1957.
- * Dr. M. Lafayette Harris, president of Philander Smith College, began his administration in 1936 and served until he was elected a bishop in 1960. An earlier and first black president, Dr. James M. Cox, had served for twenty-seven years.
- * Paine College, new to the group of Methodist colleges in 1940, was led by the only white president remaining in the group of presidents of black colleges. He served for twenty-seven years (1929-1956) and was followed by Dr. E. Clayton Calhoun, who served until 1970. The first black president, Dr. Lucius H. Pitts, was elected to succeed Dr. Calhoun.

¹⁵Ibid, p. 478.

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Admittedly, there is far more to a college than the tenure of its presidents. However, the point being made here is that the period from 1942 to 1957 was a decade and a half of very serious educational administration with the thought of across-the-board excellence clearly in mind.

These illustrations, taken from a variety of sources, clearly support two points. First, the fifteen years between 1942 and 1957 were years of the most serious search for educational excellence that these colleges had ever known. Because of many difficulties, some of the colleges had concentrated more on survival than on excellence since the Jones report of 1916. They were, after all, colleges with a combination of factors that almost assured fiscal failure. Almost all of them had highly inadequate endowments. But the students who came to them came out of social and economic circumstances that required massive student aid.

Second, the faculties and presidents of these colleges, an uncommonly able group, have never been really understood or appreciated for who and what they were. Because of highly inadequate high school training, they took students from the rural and small town areas of the south and, in four years graduated many who without any reduction of educational standards finished graduate and professional schools of the north.

The answer to the puzzle—if puzzle indeed it is—is the same as that discovered by Dr. Kenneth Clark after his careful and scholarly study of the remarkable ability to learn shown by black students in Junior High School 43 on the periphery of Harlem. His summary, after all of the facts were in, was this:

The "miracle" seemed due primarily to an implementation of the belief that such children can learn.¹⁶

During this period, many books were written on the learning disabilities of black college students. This was then—as it ever will be—a mystery for a society which, for all of its history, has often produced legislation on the presuppositions that black students are inherently inferior to white students as far as intellectual capacity is concerned. There is no conceptual answer to one who believes this, consciously or unconsciously. The only effective reply is human achievement, performance, alumni quality.

It is not being argued that a group of colleges that had to spend 75 years struggling for survival could compete with any selected group that, because they were already good, were thought to be more eligible for foundation grants, individual philanthropy, and creative educational experiments. What is being said is that during the period 1942 to 1957, the black colleges of the Methodist Church produced a solid cadre of graduates, maintained good administration, and in terms of the resources available to them, made contributions to the life of the church and nation which are little known to many members of the United Methodist Church.

¹⁶Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, p. 142.

The Period of Accreditation and the Search for Permanence: 1958-1981

During this period, twelve black colleges of the Methodist Church shared, to an increasingly larger degree, in the fortunes and failures of all other Methodist colleges. However, because of their peculiar history and the continuing social circumstances surrounding them, they remained a group apart. This continues up to this date.

Because there have been such vast misunderstandings of the nature and role of the black colleges of the now United Methodist Church, this concluding section will respond to several questions which, because of the peculiar twist of American race relations, keep threatening both the present respect for and future life of the black college.

Since 1942, there have been only two major institutional changes among the colleges which experienced eleven such changes between 1923 and 1941. More and more, the emphasis shifted to internal administration, institutional self-understanding, and good solid teaching.

In 1952, Samuel Huston College of Austin, Texas (Methodist) merged with Tillotson College (Congregational) to form Huston-Tillotson College.

Then, in 1958, Gammon Theological Seminary, like Clark College seventeen years earlier, moved from its campus in south Atlanta to an area close to all other black colleges in Atlanta. It seemed that the colleges had ended one era and begun another.

In all of these changes, the black college, certain, at least, of the identity forced upon it by history, began to carefully reconsider its nature and role. What, really, was a black college? In the first place, what came to be called black colleges have really been—as a group—among the most liberal and inclusive in all higher education. This is an audacious claim but history will support it.

Consider two examples: (a) These colleges were founded by high-minded people who rejected, out of hand, the limited expectations that the larger society had of the newly-freed slaves.

Among the founders of the Freedmen's Aid Society were Bishop Davis W. Clark, the then-secretary of the Board of Bishops. Among the members of the first board of managers were two future bishops, John M. Walden and Isaac W. Wiley. Also among them was Richard Sutton Rust, who was the president of Wesleyan Female College before he began his distinguished service with the Freedmen's Aid Society, and Major General Clinton B. Fisk, for whom Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, was named. Such was the quality of the founders. (b) The charters of the black colleges—and their policy from the beginning—avoided, carefully, any restrictions of enrollment based on race, class, or religious opinions.

The charter of Clark University, issued on March 19, 1877, made no reference at all to race, even though that was the unavoidable preoccupation of the times. It was a charter issued to a corporation "intended for the advancement of learning and the accomplishment of good. . . ."

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With great intentionality, the charter stated that "no instructor in said University . . . shall ever be required by the trustees to profess a particular religious opinion as a test of office and no student shall be refused admission to or denied any of the privileges, honors or degrees of said university on account of the religious opinions which he may entertain."¹⁷ Complete freedom racially; responsible freedom religiously; and these, in Georgia, in 1877!

The charter of Claflin University, issued in 1869, does mention race but only to assure everyone that segregation would be specifically prohibited. These were the rules rather than the exceptions.

The history of these black colleges, therefore, makes it plain that the onus forced upon them later by a society that maintained strict segregation was not at all justified. Not only were these colleges open by charter, some of their first students were the sons and daughters of early white residents and teachers. From the beginning, their trustee boards and faculties contained distinguished whites from the north and from the south, if and when they would serve.

Horace Mann Bond is correct in his description of the black college:

Equalitarianism and service; idealistic humanitarianism, and practical attention to desperate need; this was the meaning of Negro higher education in its inception, and might well be its future definition. Not chauvinism; not the exclusiveness that would be suggested by naming a college "a white college"; but all-embracing equality of opportunity for all who need it. It is not a designation to arouse shame or to incontinently desert.¹⁸

He went on to point out that:

If Berea College was an interracial college that became "white," Howard, Hampton, Fisk, Atlanta, Talladega, Straight, Shaw, Bennett, and all other colleges founded between 1865 and 1876 were also truly interracial colleges that became Negro.

Why, then—and how—does the burden of proof in segregated education rest more heavily upon Clark than upon Emory; why more upon Fisk than upon Vanderbilt?

In the second place, what was prudently said among the in-group in 1941 must now be said clearly to all who continue to ask, "Why do we still maintain black colleges?" That word is this: while, for understandable reasons, the black colleges of the United Methodist Church are still in need of massive support, they do not, on that account, accept the easy assumption that their graduates are somehow second class in any fundamental way.

In the course of preparing this essay, the writer asked each of the twelve college presidents and the director of the Black College Fund to submit brief statements on two or three outstanding alumni. While this would comprise a full-length study in itself, a brief summary will make the point.

¹⁷James P. Brawley, *The Clark College Legacy* (Atlanta: Clark College, 1977), p. 322-324.

¹⁸Bond, "The Evolution and Present Status."

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In addition to the numerous lesser well-known solid citizens, this list includes:

- * An Ambassador to the United Nations
- * Presiding judges, members of state legislatures, and city council members
- * Numerous college faculty and presidents
- * A Dean for medical services at Harvard University
- * A treasurer of the United States of America
- * The founder of the United Negro College Fund
- * A professor of Health Services at Harvard University
- * An internationally known novelist.¹⁹

Admittedly, this is a highly selected list. Nevertheless, it is a part of the historical record. This may easily sound like positive case-making rather than historical research and the writer is aware of that fact. The point is that the strong bias with which American history has been written—or worse, not written—must be corrected by historical perspective.

What of the Future?

During the mid 1950s, when the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools belatedly opened its membership to black colleges, the question was repeatedly asked: “Now that we have integration, what is the future role of the black colleges?” Were it not for the sincerity of many good people who raised the question, it would have been easy to point out, with sharpness, some of the presuppositions out of which the question came. For our purposes, however, it may be necessary only to point out that this question was never raised about white colleges, even though many of them were quite as inadequate as the black colleges that would presumably close because “they have no further place in an integrated society.”

A much more charitable—and historically correct—view is to refer to the open history of these colleges and the outstanding role they have played, with all of their handicaps, in educating leadership for the church and the wider society.

When one takes such a view, it becomes clear that history will speak quite differently to the sympathetic listener. The most thorough study of black colleges with which this writer is acquainted is the published research of Earl J. McGrath in 1965. In this study, documented by exten-

¹⁹Letters and completed questionnaires from Black College Presidents:
President Samuel Dubois Cook, Dillard University—July 21, 1980
President John T. King, Huston-Tillotson College—July 21, 1980
President Isaac T. Miller, Bennett College—July 24, 1980
President Julius S. Scott, Jr., Paine College—July 22, 1980
President Major J. Jones, Gammon Theological Seminary—August 22, 1980

sive research, Dr. McGrath wrote two statements that are as true today as they were when he wrote them. The first statement is this:

If this report does nothing else, it should establish the fact that, except at the topmost level of excellence represented by a few celebrated institutions, the Negro institutions run the entire gamut of quality within American higher education . . . instead of forming a separate unitary group near the end of this procession, the Negro institutions lie all along the line. Some are exceptionally far forward and others far behind, but beside each of them stands some institution attended predominantly by white students.²⁰

This perspective ought to have something to say about the closing of colleges by blocs. If that were done, it would be by inferior colleges, not by black or white ones.

McGrath's second statement is also instructive:

. . . in towns and countryside where no other college is readily available to Negro students, these institutions should be maintained despite their limited programs while energetic efforts are made to enable them to provide a better higher education for local youth.²¹

This is a word which may be helpful to United Methodists who now provide substantial support to colleges like this through the Black College Fund. It is an investment in the production of leadership from which this writer benefitted greatly and for which he will always be grateful.

Given such research, it ought not be embarrassing to United Methodists to recognize these facts:

- (1) The Methodist Church has historically supported—and the United Methodist Church now supports—the largest number and the highest general quality of black colleges of any church body of any faith in the United States.
- (2) The leadership coming from these colleges, the record of which cannot be completely documented, form the kind of productive resource that makes the Black College Fund an investment in leadership training.
- (3) The variety of educational opportunities provided for black people is unprecedented in scope and quality, both within the church and within the United States. This variety includes two medical schools in earlier days, one of which is still alive and well; an accredited theological school; junior colleges, one of which still survives; a network of secondary schools; and at least one college with a nursing school and hospital, thus giving it the chartered name of university.

At their best, bicentennial appraisals will be open as much to critical review as to celebration. Such facts as the ones stated above are too often

²⁰Earl J. McGrath, *The Predominantly Negro Colleges and Universities in Transition* (New York: Columbia University, 1965), p. 5.

²¹*Ibid*, p. 6.

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forgotten in the heated debates over the racial identity of the colleges founded over 115 years ago.

Over its two-hundred-year history, Methodism has had no more splendid mission than the story of its black colleges.

APPENDIX I

Dates of Founding Black Colleges Still Existing by Original or Other Names²²

College	Location	Year of Founding
Bennett College	Greensboro, North Carolina	1873
Bethune-Cookman College	Daytona Beach, Florida (1904) (1872)	1923
Claffin College	Orangeburg, South Carolina	1869
Clark College	Atlanta, Georgia	1869
New Orleans (Dillard University)	New Orleans, Louisiana (1930)	1869
Gammon Theological Seminary	Atlanta Georgia	1883
Huston-Tillotson College	Austin, Texas	1878
Meharry Medical College	Nashville, Tennessee	1876
Morristown College	Morristown, Tennessee	1881
Paine College	Augusta, Georgia	1882
Philander Smith College	Little Rock, Arkansas	1877
Rust College	Holly Springs, Mississippi	1866
Wiley College	Marshall, Texas	1873

²²Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, see sketches of individual institutions.

APPENDIX II

Institutions Under Other Auspices and Institutions Discontinued²³

School	Location	Date of Founding	Disposition
Morgan College	Baltimore, Maryland	1866	State
Princess Ann Academy	Princess Ann, Maryland (Branch of Morgan)	1890	State
Central Alabama Academy	Huntsville, Alabama	1866	Closed 1923
George R. Smith College	Sedalia, Missouri	1888	Closed 1925

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Haven Normal School	Waynesboro, Georgia	1868	Closed 1915?
Haven Institute	Meridian, Mississippi	1879	Closed 1928
Key West Academy	Key West, Florida	1889	Closed 1900
LaGrange Seminary	LaGrange, Georgia (Clark)	1870	Closed 1915
Richmond Normal School	Richmond, Virginia	1867	Closed 1875
Rome Normal School	Rome, Georgia (Clark)	1866	Closed 1870
Virginia Collegiate and Industrial Institute	Lynchburg, Virginia (Morgan)	1892	Closed 1917
Walden College	Nashville, Tennessee (Clark)	1865	Closed 1935
West Tennessee Seminary	Mason City, Tennessee	1876	Closed 1889

²³Ibid., p. 487-508.

APPENDIX III

*Dates of Founding Academies and Preparatory Schools
Freedmen's Aid Society Schools for Negroes²⁴*

School	Location	Year of Founding
1. Haven Academy	Waynesboro, Georgia	1868
2. Central Alabama Academy evolved from Rust Institute (1866)	Huntsville, Alabama	1870
3. LaGrange Academy	LaGrange, Georgia	1872
4. Cookman Academy	Jacksonville, Florida	1872
5. Gilbert Academy	Winsted, Louisiana	1875
6. Samuel Huston College Founded 1876 as Andrews Normal School at Dallas, Texas	Austin, Texas	1878
7. Meridian Academy	Meridian, Mississippi	1879
8. Morristown Academy	Morristown, Tennessee	1881
9. Delaware Academy	Princess Ann, Maryland	1888
10. Leharp Academy	New Orleans, Louisiana	1888
11. Alexandria Academy	Alexandria, Louisiana	1889
12. West Tennessee Academy	Mason, Tennessee	—

²⁴Ibid., p. 108-109.

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APPENDIX IV

Corresponding Secretaries Freedmen's Aid Society

Associate Secretaries, Board of Education for Negroes and
Division of Higher Education, Board of Education,
the Methodist Episcopal and The Methodist Church

Corresponding Secretaries

Dr. Richard Sutton Rust	1868-1888
Dr. J. C. Hartzell	1888-1896
Dr. J. W. Hamilton	1892-1900
Dr. M. C. B. Mason	1896-1912
Dr. Wilbur P. Thirkield	1900-1908
Dr. P. J. Mareety	1908-1928
Dr. I. Garland Penn	1912-1924

Associate Secretaries

Dr. Merrill J. Holmes	1928-1940
Dr. Matthew Simpson Davage	1940-1952
Dr. James S. Thomas	1952-1964
Dr. Daniel W. Wynn	1964-1977

APPENDIX V

Summary of Institutional Changes in the Period 1916-1966²⁵

1. 1923 - Cookman Institute at Jacksonville, Florida, was merged with Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls, to form Bethune-Cookman College, located at Daytona Beach, Florida.
2. 1923 - Central Alabama College, after a disastrous fire, was permanently closed.
3. 1924 - Virginia Collegiate and Industrial Institute was closed and its interests transferred to Morgan College.
4. 1925 - George R. Smith College, after a disastrous fire destroyed the main building, was closed.
5. 1926 - Bennett College, coeducational, in 1926 became Bennett College for Women.
6. 1927 - Haven Institute and Conservatory of Music in Meridian, Mississippi, was closed.
7. 1935 - Walden College in 1922 was reduced to a Junior College; in 1928 it became a four-year academy; and in 1935 was permanently closed.
8. 1935 - New Orleans University merged with Straight College (Congregational) in New Orleans to form Dillard University.
9. 1937 - Morgan College in this year was taken over by the State of Maryland and became Morgan State College. Morgan Christian Center was established.
10. 1940 - Paine College of Augusta, Georgia, supported by the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church and the former Methodist Episcopal Church, South, became one of the institutions under the auspices of the Board of Education of The Methodist Church.

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11. 1941 - Clark University became Clark College in 1940, and in 1941 was relocated to become one of the cooperating institutions of the Atlanta University Center on the west side of Atlanta.
 12. 1952 - Samuel Huston College and Tillotson College (Congregational) Austin, Texas, were merged to form Huston-Tillotson College.
 13. 1958 - Gammon Theological Seminary was relocated to the west side of Atlanta and became the pivotal unit in the new Interdenominational Theological Center.
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²⁵Ibid., p. 149-150.