

## Book Reviews

James P. Brawley, *The Clark College Legacy: An Interpretive History of Relevant Education, 1869-1975*. Atlanta: Clark College, 1977. 342 pp. \$n.a. cloth.

From humble beginnings during Reconstruction Clark College emerged as the premier college for Blacks sponsored by the Freedman's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church and after 1941 became one of the Atlanta University colleges. In *The Clark College Legacy* Dr. James P. Brawley, President Emeritus of Clark, seeks to present a definitive "full-scale history" of the college. As Dean from 1926 to 1941 and President from then until 1965, Dr. Brawley was deeply involved in setting Clark's course in the modern era and brings a wealth of personal experience and insight to this account.

*The Clark College Legacy* falls into three sections. The initial nine chapters deal with the period prior to the presidency of Dr. Matthew Davage in 1924. They trace the early growth of the college, focusing on the numerous presidents and the three physical locations. Overall, these chapters are rather sketchy, providing little more than a bare narrative. Like most Black colleges in this era, Clark maintained an extensive primary and secondary school program and had a modest collegiate enrollment. Reflecting the ideas of both Washington and the Freedman's Aid Society, there was a considerable program in Industrial Arts from the 1890's, and an Agricultural program appeared in the early 1900's. Brawley pointedly comments that these supplemented rather than replaced the academic programs.

Chapters ten through twenty-three deal with Brawley's years at Clark and are the strength of the volume. First in cooperation with President Davage and then as President, Dr. Brawley introduced a number of important academic, organizational, and social reforms to Clark. He also guided the college through the somewhat traumatic move to its present campus and membership in Atlanta University. This section is largely organized in topical, instead of chronological, chapters, focusing on "Academic Programs", "Dormitory Life", "Religious Life", and the like. Usually the main emphasis falls on the period before 1955.

The last section is comprised of a chapter on the period 1959-1975, one on "Personalities", and a stimulating "Epilogue". Coverage of the last two decades is disappointingly brief, a mere twenty-two pages including notes and photographs. One would hardly know that the Civil Rights era had any impact on Clark from Brawley's account. The contemporary era has been a trying time of readjustment for both Black and church-related colleges, but little of that tension comes forth, especially as it relates to Black institutions.

Like many college histories, Brawley's book is not a definitive treatment of his subject. Too many questions are unanswered, too many topics untouched, to fulfill his stated goal. One is left wondering about such basic matters as the size and source of the student body and the size and degree-profile of the faculty over the decades. No mention is made of the impact the expansion of public Black colleges and the later desegregation of White colleges had on Clark. Far too often, Clark appears to be existing in a vacuum, despite occasional generalizations about "social changes" on the outside.

This is not to say that *The Clark College Legacy* is without value. However, it should be viewed as Dr. Brawley's *Memoirs* on forty years of leadership in Black education. His treatment of the period from 1925 to 1955 is extremely revealing, a good first-hand account of events at a leading Black college undergoing modernization. No student of Black or Methodist higher education can ignore his analysis of these critical years. Furthermore, his "Epilogue" raises some profound questions about the modern relationship between church-affiliated colleges and the Federal Government and about the long-term future of Black institutions.

While the chatty, rosy, and sometimes superficial aspects of this work are common to college histories, it must bear responsibility for some individual flaws. Particularly in the first chapters the book is poorly organized and repetitive. At one point the narrative jumps from 1889 to 1896, only to have the following chapter retreat and fill the gap. There is an absence of systematic data, an over-abundance of excessively long quotations from reports, and a plethora of lists. On the other hand, the work is well illustrated with photographs, some very old and most quite revealing.

Clark College has been one of the leading Black colleges for

most of its history and is an important aspect of Methodist education as well. While Brawley's work represents a significant contribution to our understanding of its history, the need for a substantial historical study of Clark remains. Clark College is too important to be without such a treatment.

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Charles Ludwig, *He Freed Britain's Slaves*. Scottsdale, PA., Herald Press, 1977. 206 pp. \$5.95 cloth.

Historical fiction either tells an original story in a historical setting or presents an account of an actual event in a more permissive literary format than is available in conventional historical writing. Frequently an author will adopt the fictional approach to allow a personalized account where he centers his story around a primary personality in the episode. Through fiction, he can create the dialogue that is normally absent in source materials and thus "bring his subjects to life". This technique is particularly useful in works for younger readers and persons whose interest in a topic is not primarily historical.

*He Freed Britain's Slaves* tells the story of William Wilberforce and his struggle to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire. By using the fictional approach, Ludwig presents much of the tale through created conversations between Wilberforce, other leading abolitionists, and prominent political figures like Pitt and Burke. He also presents Wilberforce's "thoughts and feelings" to carry the narrative and create a sense of drama. These devices are generally successful if one views the work as being solely for the general reader, but there are some awkward discrepancies between the fabricated and actual words of the characters. Ludwig does not capture the tone of eighteenth century speech especially well, making for some abrupt shifts in eloquence.

None of the characters, including Wilberforce, are fully developed. Neither the nature of his Evangelical religion nor the full range of his influence on emerging Industrial Britain comes through, although the religious foundation of his crusade is made clear. Other figures, including Pitt and the tremendously important Clarkson, are one-dimensional and their motivations are seldom explained.

Nevertheless, this work does provide a good account of the struggle in Parliament to abolish the slave trade and conveys a sharp sense of the horrors of the Middle Passage. There were other important abolitionists in England, but Wilberforce was clearly the key figure in Parliament, which was the ultimate arena for the issue. It must be noted, however, that the title is misleading. In actuality, Wilberforce freed no one, for the 1807 law simply outlawed the slave trade. Granville Sharp's legal campaign culminating in the *Sommerset Case* freed the slaves in England—approximately 15,000—but receives no mention. The bill abolishing slavery in the Empire did not pass until after Wilberforce's death, and while it owed an immense debt to his groundwork and spiritual leadership he was not active in securing its passage.

*He Freed Britain's Slaves* is an adequate introduction to English abolitionism and Wilberforce for the general reader. Ludwig tells a gripping story well and does not take liberties with fact. Those who wish to investigate the topic further can proceed to more substantial works. Considering his intended audience, however, it is regrettable that Ludwig does not do a better job with Wilberforce's religion. The mainstay of his long campaign against the slave trade, Wilberforce's Evangelical Christianity became a major force in nineteenth century England and, in a real sense, laid the foundation for the Victorian Age. Ludwig shows his subject to be an ardent and sincere Christian, but both the content and influence of his particular strain of Christianity remain clouded and that is especially unfortunate in a work for persons who come to the topic from a religious, as opposed to historical, orientation.

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