

Wilson Jeremiah Moses. *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992. Pp. vii, 380. Paper, \$12.95.

Wilson Jeremiah Moses, ed. *Destiny and Race: Selected Writings, 1840-1898: Alexander Crummell*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992. Pp. ix, 360. Cloth, \$35.00; paper, \$12.95.

August Meier. *A White Scholar and the Black Community, 1945-1965: Essays and Reflections*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992. Pp. ix, 232. Cloth, \$40.00; paper, \$13.95.

In the tradition of biography, few would question the persistence of a Eurocentric and male bias. With the desirable goal of resurrecting otherwise unrepresented lives, biographers have increasingly presented us with individuals who might have been better known were it not for their gender or race. From this we have learned of the lives of many individuals, T. Thomas Fortune and Robert Vann, to name but two, who have been the subject of biography in recent years. A biography of Jackie Robinson gave us a much richer glimpse of mid-twentieth-century black and white lives. Our understanding of the black community and of America is the better for these efforts.

One would like to say the same thing about this paperback re-publication of Wilson Moses's biography of Alexander Crummell and the simultaneous publication of Crummell's writings as edited by Moses. Crummell was a nineteenth-century cleric who spent his career serving various churches in the eastern United States and Liberia. His writings advanced a number of issues including black nationalism and "back to Africa," but inconsistency in his thought and a rather acid-tongue rendered him less influential than he might otherwise have been. One does learn of the struggles of the black church, the difficulties facing black clerics in confronting a white diocesan leadership, obstacles in creating a mission and school outpost in Liberia, and divisions within the black community. However, these are issues that are better developed elsewhere. While Alexander Crummell's biography is an interesting study of a nineteenth-century black intellectual and while it is soundly grounded in available source material, I am not convinced that the full-length study makes the historiographical contribution one might like.

Far more important to the understanding of black America and to the understanding that white historians have of black America is the publication of a number of essays by August Meier. *A White Scholar and the Black Community, 1945-1965* includes Meier's essays on teaching in traditionally black colleges, thoughts on the life of a white scholar studying black America, and difficult-to-find pieces from the *Crisis*, *Liberation*, and *New Politics*. Notwithstanding the fact that the essays were written in other contexts, they still have much to say as we grapple with issues of the role of traditionally black institutions or of divisions within the black community. The preface to the collection is an insightful reflection by Meier on his career and his approach to his subject. Meier clearly was an early proponent of both applied and public history in that his reflections on black thought, his understandings of the divisions within black America, and his analyses of the relations between black and white America were all the basis for an active life in the NAACP and in the more general civil rights movement. Not content to merely serve the public, Meier also served his profession as he helped integrate the Southern Historical Association. Without question, the publication of these essays will help historians of the black experience better understand that experience and better understand August Meier.

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