

radical-education agenda they have pursued with their mentor and friend, as well as an unintended glimpse of the insularity that passionate devotion to a cause can bring.

NAPLES, FLORIDA

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F. Stuart Gulley. *The Academic President as Moral Leader: James T. Laney at Emory University, 1977-1993*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001. 250pp. Cloth \$39.95.

F. Stuart Gulley is exceptionally well-qualified to write this book. For one, he is the president of LaGrange College, so he knows what it is like to sit in the president's seat. Moreover, Gulley's family has been friendly with James T. Laney since the mid 1960s. Gulley himself attended Emory University in the 1980s and worked there from 1986 to 1996. So Gulley had the chance to see the man up close and witness the remarkable changes he brought to Emory. There are, of course, scholarly risks to being so close to a subject. Gulley admits so himself, explaining that he tried to "avoid having this work seem more hagiographical than historical and biographical" (p. 9). For the most part, he succeeded. His great admiration for Laney appears overtly only on rare occasions, for example, when he makes the unsupportable assertion that Laney "more than any research university president of his era believed that an academic president was fundamentally a moral leader" (p. 2).

Gulley's text is not a full-blown biography. It is, rather, what might be termed an institutional biography. It allots less than twenty breezy pages to Laney's upbringing, his training in divinity under Reverend Douglas Cook and H. Richard Niebuhr at Yale, his missionary work in South Korea, and his early academic and administrative career at Vanderbilt and Emory. The remainder of the book is devoted to his sixteen years as president of Emory. As such, it will prove of interest to those studying the history of Emory, the work of a modern collegiate president, and leadership.

Gulley frames Laney's presidency as a grand effort in creating a "moral community" that would foster true liberal education. Gulley says that Laney's understanding of liberal education was "unique." It had four elements: "a commitment to competence, a striving for the development of moral character, an offering of an inclusive community of learning, and an unyielding commitment to freedom of thought" (p. 46). In a nutshell, campus life was to involve free discourse, close relations among faculty and students, and grappling with the big questions in life. Students were to emerge from Emory with mastery of their coursework and a zeal for public service. Emory, though Methodist affiliated, was not to be a Methodist school. Yet there

was something Christian about Laney's vision, for he saw Emory and universities generally as "a structural expression of love" (p. 49). This is fascinating and complex, and one wishes Gulley had spent more time clarifying and exploring this idea. Unfortunately, he attempts to help readers see what Laney meant by contrasting Laney's vision with that of two "cultural cheerleaders" (Laney's term), Allan Bloom and William Bennett. This does not work so well, as Gulley seems unfamiliar with the complexities of Bloom's thought and criticism of the modern university. (See, for example, Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* [1987]; and his "The Crisis of Liberal Education" in *Giants and Dwarves* [1990].)

This frame of Laney as a "moral leader" carries with it great perils. For one, it is exceedingly difficult to acquire data on the morality of Emory. Does one turn to campus police statistics on crime or some sort of measures of vice? Does one look at the policies of the university itself, say, examining how much it paid custodial staff or what actions it undertook to create an inclusive yet free community? Gulley does not clearly delineate what will serve as his proxies for "moral community" and so finds himself late in the book reaching for evidence to support his claims about the effects of Laney's moral leadership. Clearly, Laney spoke passionately about the need to be liberal, just, and so forth, but were these just words?

This last question draws us to a larger problem with this framing of Laney as a "moral leader": it obscures much of the man and his philosophy. From what Gulley has written I see James T. Laney as an astonishing leader and driven institution builder. In a little over a decade he transformed Emory from a small teaching college into an internationally known research university with highly ranked graduate programs. Along the way, Laney raided the French Department at Johns Hopkins, bringing its top scholars and graduate students to Emory; he lavished Robert W. Woodruff, one of the Coca-Cola moguls, with enough praise ("we acknowledge his towering presence through the years and across the land") to get him to pony up \$100 million in donations (p. 81); and he lured President Jimmy Carter and other world famous figures to lecture on campus. In tenure decisions, publications became more heavily weighted than teaching. And when a student who was failing her premed courses tried to salvage her career by faking racist incidents against herself, Laney, although he learned the truth, suppressed it for a time. Rather than meet the lies and hysterics clamoring for courses in multiculturalism and racial sensitivity with the facts, Laney played clever politician: he shared their pain, expressed outrage over the faux incidents, and even had Emory pay for the young woman's self-damaged property and physical wounds.

All of this makes for an incredible tension: Laney, the former theological dean and ordained United Methodist minister vs. Laney the incredible fundraiser and great university builder. It would be interesting to hear

