

to note. In addition to the good analysis provided on the influence and contrast between German secular and Protestant missions' approaches to the colonial enterprise, a question not as well incorporated into the book was how broader developments in Protestant churches in Germany, as opposed to those of German society, impacted this story. A book that answers so many intriguing questions and prompts others is, of course, a commendable addition to scholarship.

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Edward W. Blyden's Intellectual Transformations: Afropublicanism, Pan-Africanism, Islam, and the Indigenous West African Church. By Harry N. K. Odamtten. Ruth Simms Hamilton African Diaspora Series. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2019. xxv + 272 pp. \$49.95 paper.

Believing Edward Wilmot Blyden to be “the most influential black intellectual of the nineteenth to early twentieth century” (vii), Harry N. K. Odamtten produced the intellectual biography *Edward W. Blyden's Intellectual Transformations: Afropublicanism, Pan-Africanism, Islam, and the Indigenous West African Church*. In it, Odamtten traces how Blyden's thinking evolved in response to his various experiences and the contexts in which he lived and how these shifts in thinking manifested in his writings. Born in St. Thomas in 1832, Blyden moved to Liberia—by way of the United States—to pursue his education. He became a Liberian citizen and lived in West Africa for the remainder of his life, ultimately moving to Sierra Leone where he died in 1912.

Odamtten articulates the ways in which his book differs from previous works on Blyden—from his more chronological approach (others have used a theoretical framework) to his assertion of Blyden's incomparable influence (others have presented him as a “failed leader” [x]). To counter arguments that Blyden “uncritically receive[d] racialist ideas from European interlocutors” (viii), Odamtten frames Blyden as an “Afropublican”—a term of Odamtten's own design that he uses “to describe African public intellectuals who utilize an Afro-positivist discourse and whose scholarly engagement with provincial, cosmopolitan, and global public spheres is undertaken from an African perspective” (xii).

The problem here is the reliance on “Afro-positivism,” a term which Odamtten neglects to adequately define. He first quotes Gregory Mann to explain that Mann used it to mean “a real, empirical and ethical commitment to perceiving African societies . . . as lived, by Africans, now” (xii), thus relying on positivism as a theory rooted in empiricism. Odamtten goes on to predominantly use “Afro-positivism” as a “tradition of valorizing Africa” (59)—which is to say representing Africa in ways that are counter to the negative European representations. In order to take Afro-positivism as having this dual meaning, Odamtten seems to believe—though he does not directly state—that any work on Africa that uses “critical observation methods” (xiii), which,

Odamtten says, Blyden's work does) is necessarily contrary to European representations, and further that anything that is not produced in line with European representations is necessarily positive (the opposite of negative). This understanding of Afro-positivism only holds if one continues to center European representations and read Blyden's (and others') work in comparison. Given that Odamtten is invested in defending Blyden against previous assessments that he "uncritically receive[d] racialist ideas from European interlocutors" (viii), it is understandable that Odamtten takes this approach, but it limits the possibilities of his analysis.

Perhaps Odamtten's most important intervention is that he devotes considerable attention to Blyden's contributions to Pan-Africanism through his concept of the "African Personality," which Odamtten argues was "an essential conceptual foundation around which later understandings of Pan-Africanism were developed" (xiii). In Blyden's formulation, the "African Personality" was "a distinctive personality [possessed by African-descended people] that was cultivated and expressed practically through African social institutions: religion, family, education, philosophy, communalism, and jurisprudence" (170–171). Odamtten argues that his emphasis on Blyden's Pan-Africanism encourages scholars not only to move away from the frequently invoked "external origin thesis" (xvii), which asserts that Pan-Africanism developed in the diaspora, but in its place to recognize West African contributions to Pan-Africanism, which have historically been downplayed. Odamtten makes this argument by characterizing Blyden as "an African public intellectual" (29) and by stating that Blyden developed his theory of the "African Personality" based on his experiences in and research about West African societies.

Odamtten's insistence that Blyden be understood as an "African" is both essential to his project and a missed opportunity. The question of what it means to be "African" is complex, and though Odamtten raises this question, it is not thoroughly addressed. For example, he states that the book "treats him [Blyden] as an African intellectual" for reasons that include "Blyden's unquestionable African heritage, his literacy in multiple African languages as well as his claim to a specific ethnic-African heritage—Igbo" (xii). Odamtten attempts to strengthen this argument by pointing out that Blyden's contemporaries considered him an African—describing him as "a noted African, a grand old man of West Africa, and a leader of the race in West Africa" (37)—but Odamtten does not explore the rationale behind these monikers, nor does he address how Blyden himself felt about them. A more productive rationale for considering Blyden an African—as opposed to someone from the African diaspora—would seem to be because his experiences in West Africa were so transformative. However, though Odamtten's focus is to identify "the specific historical circumstances that influenced the scholarship [Blyden] produced about the black world" (3) and he argues that the most impactful of those "circumstances" were Blyden's experiences and research in West Africa, Odamtten does not cite this as one of the reasons that he considers Blyden an African. Explicitly highlighting this would have been an opportunity to address head-on how, in order to produce the impactful scholarship he is known for, Blyden had to actively overcome many of the assumptions and beliefs that he held from being part of African-descended diasporan communities as well as from the influence of White society in the United States. This, then, could have led into a discussion of the distinctions and intersections between being "Black" or "African descended," "diasporan," and "African"—one that would deal frankly with the nuanced difference between being an African-descended diasporan living in West Africa and, as Odamtten refers to Blyden, "a West African of diasporan origin" (90). Given that Blyden came to Liberia as part of the colonization movement, whereby (in reductionist terms) Black settlers

imposed colonial rule on West Africans for over 150 years, and that this book was published in the Ruth Simms Hamilton African Diaspora Series (and Odamtten references Hamilton's idea of "global Africa" [2] though this is seemingly at odds with his insistence that Blyden be labeled an African instead of diasporan), Odamtten's book would have benefitted from more attention to the complexities of what it means to claim Africanity.

Of particular interest to readers of *Church History*, Odamtten argues that diasporic Ethiopianism is one of the beliefs that Blyden reconsidered and ultimately abandoned in favor of a West African-inspired alternative. Odamtten explains that Ethiopianism is frequently understood "as the Afro-Christian belief or sentiment among African diasporans, especially blacks in the United States, that their enslavement in the Americas was God's providential plan for Africa to experience a renaissance" because "African American returnees to Africa . . . having experienced Western culture, had been divinely ordained to civilize and Christianize their native kin" (43). Though Blyden went to Liberia believing that he was part of this prodigal civilizing and Christianizing movement, his research on Islam in West Africa—and particularly his observation that the "Africanization of Islam" made it more conducive to "the regeneration of the African Personality" (135)—led him to advocate for the development of an indigenous West African Christian church, which "reflected African idiosyncrasies in fashion, language, liturgy, music, and worship" (18). Odamtten, therefore, argues that Blyden "inspired" or "spearheaded" (44) "West African Ethiopianism," though he fails to provide a definition of what this involved as a theory, only saying that it is "an anticolonialist critique of European Christian paternalism as well as European cultural hegemony" (166). Again, here Odamtten is trapped in the bind of focusing on what Blyden's work is against (colonialism, European paternalism, and cultural hegemony) and not exploring what it was for.

One of my primary criticisms of Odamtten's book is that—as I have alluded to—Odamtten frequently makes claims without earning them. His writing lacks a clear scaffolding of the necessary evidence to support his arguments. He writes repetitively, returning to the same points without increasing the depth of analysis, and though he provides examples, they are often not explicated or analyzed. And, finally, I would be remiss if I did not call out that there are instances of problematic language in the book. For example, Odamtten says that Blyden "was comfortable in both advanced and modest societies and groups" (4) and he gives photographs the minimalist caption "Indigenous Liberians" without any date or context (50–51)—both of which reinforce colonial notions of a timeless, barbaric Africa in contrast to a modern, civilized West.

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***Coping with Defeat: Sunni Islam, Roman Catholicism, and the Modern State.* By Jonathan Laurence. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021. xxviii + 579 pages. \$99.95 cloth, \$35.00 paper.**

In a title of three words—*Coping with Defeat*—political scientist Jonathan Laurence conveys the premise and argument of this lively, wide-ranging book. In the modern era,