Mediating Race, Religion, and Modernity: The Trans-Atlantic Impact and Legacy of Edward Wilmot Blyden

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***Dedication:***

To the memory and legacy of my mother, Katherine Clay Moore—the wife of Moses N. Moore, Sr. and the mother of Ozzie, Idella, Margie, Moses, Aaron, and Kathy.

**Contents**

**Front Piece**

Acknowledgments

Preface

Introduction

**Part I Roots**

Chapter 1: Modernity’s Crucible

Chapter 2: From St. Thomas to Liberia

Chapter 3: Colonization Theologian

**Part II Nascent Scholar**

Chapter 4: New Wine

Chapter 5: Gleanings

**Part III West African Nurture**

Chapter 6: First Fruits

Chapter 7: West African Ferment

Chapter 8: Return of the Prodigal

**Part IV Transatlantic Matrix**

Chapter 9: Francis Grimke and the American Matrix

Chapter 10: Prelude to a Transatlantic Relationship

Chapter 11: The American Milieu

Chapter 12: Pedagogy and Modernity at Liberia College

Chapter 13: Donning a Trans-Atlantic Role

Chapter 14: African American Clerical Rejoinder

**Part V: Mediating Change and Conflict**

Chapter 15: Ministerial Colleagues in Transition

Chapter 16: Mediating Race, Religion, Gender, and Modernity

Chapter 17: Emergent Ministerial Controversy

Chapter 18: Emissary of the "Scientific Study of Religion"

**Part VI: Into the Twentieth Century**

Chapter 19: On the Cusp of a New Century

Chapter 20: Ecumenism, Race, and Modernity

Chapter 21: On West Africa and Europe

Chapter 22: African Religion and Customs under the Gaze of Modernity

Chapter 23**:** Liberian Requiem

Chapter 24: Twilight of a Friendship

Chapter 25: Grimke Amid Fundamentalism, Modernity, and Modernism

**Part VII: Conclusion**

Chapter 26: Posthumous Currents and Developments

Chapter 27: Nurturing a New Generation of Scholar-Activists

Chapter 28: Religious Studies Epilogue

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*Preface:*

Often heralded as “the father of Pan-Africanism,” Edward Wilmot Blyden was also a minister, missionary, educator, statesman, and scholar.[[1]](#endnote-1) From the middle of the nineteenth century until his death in 1912, he served in these multiple roles during one of the most dynamic and challenging eras in Western and African history. This era, encompassed and characterized by the pervasive encroachment of European modernity and its controversial intellectual, scientific, religious, and racial corollaries, had a profound impact upon Blyden.

Blyden was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in Liberia, West Africa, in 1858, after an examination that affirmed his knowledge of and allegiance to the tenets of Old School Presbyterianism. However, his personal and professional commitment to one of the most conservative expressions of the Reformed Tradition was almost simultaneously with the publication of two of the Victorian era’s most provocative textual responses to modernity: On the Origin of Species, published in 1859, and Essays and Reviews, published months later in 1860.[[2]](#endnote-2) Both texts heralded the profound and contentious impact that modernity and its corollaries would have in a variety of areas, including those of religion and race, during the late Victorian era. They also foreshadowed the intellectual and religious metamorphosis that would gradually distance Blyden from many traditional tenets of Reformed Orthodoxy. In fact, by the early 1870s, Blyden was already evidencing his awareness and sensitivity to the dynamic and controversial impact that modernity and its corollaries were having upon the academic, racial, and religious views and canons of the late Victorian period.

En route to becoming one of the era’s most intellectually, linguistically, hermeneutically, and theologically, gifted black ministers, Blyden found himself inescapably engaged with the myriad new perspectives, methodologies, and disciplines fostered by modernity. Especially notable, among the latter was the emergent “science of religion.” Its presuppositions and insights would prove to be of special interest to Blyden who was already convinced that “religion” was one of “the most important of all subjects” and a critical arena of the African and Diaspora African encounter with and response to the myriad challenges posed by modernity and its corollaries.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Not content to be only an interested spectator amid the increasingly contentious discourses taking place among established Western scholars and religionists regarding modernity and its corollaries, Blyden readily joined the fray.[[4]](#endnote-4) However, in contrast to his Anglo contemporaries, Blyden’s perception of and engagement with modernity was filtered through the gauze and gaze of his experiences as a person of African descent. Moreover, his interrogation and assessment of the offerings of modernity and its corollaries were also increasingly weighed and measured against the findings and insights gleaned through his own pioneering and myth-shattering scholarship on the historical contributions and contemporary attributes of Africa and Africans.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Blyden’s experiential and research foci remained primary as he engaged in critical interrogation and critique of modernity and its academic, intellectual, scientific, pedagogical, religious, and racial corollaries and assessed their intended and unintended consequences for people of African descent. The result was Blyden’s critical and selective appropriation of many of the theoretical and methodological findings advanced by his European and Western colleagues and their dynamic fusion with his own African based research and scholarship. By the early 1870’s a series of provocative articles with titles such as “Mohammedanism in West Africa” (1871); “Mohammedanism and the Negro Race” (1875); and “Christianity and the Negro Race” (1876) attested to his initial efforts at a creative and corrective synthesis of these two currents of scholarship. They also confirmed Blyden’s increasing preoccupation with the intersection of race, religion, and modernity.[[6]](#endnote-6)

In the mid-1880s, Blyden publically acknowledged the profound personal and professional impact of his interrogation of modernity and selective appropriation of its corollaries in creative dialectic with his African focused research. He announced his decision to demit his Presbyterian ordination, followed by the declaration that he would thereafter be a “minister of truth.”[[7]](#endnote-7) His ongoing intellectual and religious metamorphosis was also chronicled in the almost simultaneous publication of his magnum opus provocatively titled Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race.[[8]](#endnote-8) This ground-breaking anthology signaled his decision to mediate the profound impact that modernity and its myriad currents portended more broadly for Africans and their diaspora dispersed descendants. It was a task and role given added urgency by Blyden’s awareness that both populations had long been victims of modernity’s multifaceted bludgeon. And now, in the late Victorian era, they found not only their most deeply held religious and cultural beliefs but also their very humanity under renewed assault by modernity’s new “scientific” and “pseudo-scientific’ cudgels.

Having earlier assumed the role of “vindicator” and “defender of the race,” Blyden arguably became the era’s most prominent black interrogator, adjudicator, and mediator of modernity and its impact on Africans and their diaspora descendants.[[9]](#endnote-9) The impressive and wide-ranging corpus of publications, addresses, and correspondence that flowed from Blyden’s pen and tongue until his death in 1912 attest that he discerned and critiqued not only the more evident dangers and liabilities that modernity and its corollaries portended for African on both sides of the Atlantic but also the less obvious and more controversial intellectual, pedagogical, religious, racial, cultural and even psychological benefits that might be incurred by their critical appropriation and application.

Blyden’s determined interrogation and mediation of the intersection of religion, race, and culture amid late Victorian modernity’s new scientific, historical, comparative, as well as hermeneutical, and theological perspectives and methodologies would contribute to the acknowledgment of his role as one of the era’s notable scholars of religion. His pioneering contributions would be acknowledged and cited by both black and white colleagues and acquaintances on both sides of the Atlantic. A partial listing includes William Gladstone, Dean Arthur Stanley, Stopford A. Brooke, Frederick Temple, Henry Venn, Robert Bosworth Smith, Frederick Harrison, Herbert Spencer, Mary Kingsley, James McCosh, David Swing, Phillip Schaff, Frank F. Ellinwood, Orishatukeh Faduma, Mark Hayford, Casely Hayford, Samuel Lewis, Bishop James Johnson, Majola Agbebi, J. R. Frederick, Alexander Crummell, Frederick Douglass, Benjamin Tanner, Anna J. Cooper, W. E. B. Du Bois and Francis Grimke.

Blyden’s importance as a religious scholar of note was additionally attested among scholarly contemporaries by the award of honorary doctorates “of Laws” and “Divinity”, membership in prominent intellectual and learned organizations such as London’s Anthenaeum Club, the American Society of Comparative Religions, the Royal African Society, the Society of Science and Letters of Bengal, and the American Negro Academy, as well as by invitations to share his insights in numerous academic and religious venues on both sides of the Atlantic.[[10]](#endnote-10) Among the latter were invitations from the organizers of the 1895 Congress on Africa and a request in 1893 to deliver a paper on “Comparative Religion” at the Columbian Exposition, which hosted the most important religious gathering of the century—the World’s Parliament of Religions.[[11]](#endnote-11)

Contemporary scholars have been increasingly attentive to Blyden’s engagement with modernity during the late Victorian era.[[12]](#endnote-12) However, comprehensive analysis of his complex response to modernity’s religious and racial corollaries as a religious historian, biblical scholar, theologian, missiologist, and “indigenous comparativist and his related efforts to adjudicate and mediate their pervasive impact within and upon late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African and diaspora African communities remain largely unexplored. Consequently, they are the focus of this text.

This text additionally explores Blyden’s relationships with several of his black contemporaries and colleagues who were also responding in various ways to the challenges presented to their intellect, faith, and various racial and gender ideologies by modernity and its religious and racial corollaries. Of special importance, attention, and insight is the personal and professional transatlantic relationship that Blyden shared with fellow black Presbyterian minister Francis Grimke. As a student at Princeton Seminary during the waning years of the presidency of Charles Hodges, Grimke imbibed and embraced its faculty’s suspicion of and opposition to modernity and especially its religious corollaries. Subsequently, throughout his more than fifty-year ministry and role as one of the “deans” of African American religiosity, Grimke advanced and defended a version of Reformed Orthodoxy that was militantly resistant to modernity and what he perceived as its detrimental and “damning” religious and racial impact. Consequently, Grimke’s personal and professional relationship with Blyden is examined as an illuminating parallel and contrast to the latter’s more accommodating efforts at adjudicating and mediating the impact of modernity and its religious and racial corollaries among people of African descent on both sides of the Atlantic.

This work concludes with reflections on Blyden’s generally unacknowledged contributions to the development of the discipline of religious studies. Although he embraced and advocated theories, methodologies, and insights that would be discredited and rejected by later generations of scholars, Blyden made important and constructive contributions that anticipated and remain informative of ongoing issues, concerns, and discourses within the expansive contemporary field of religious studies.

Introduction

*Africa is no vast island separated by an immense ocean from other portions of the globe and cut off through the ages from the men who have made and influenced the destinies of mankind. She has been closely connected, as both source and nourisher, with some of the most potent influences which have affected for good the history of the world.*

(Edward Wilmot Blyden, “Africa’s Service to the World,”1880)[[13]](#endnote-13)

*I have been struck by a remark of Dr. J. H. Barrows in a recent convocation address before the University of Chicago. He said: “Scientific study of religion is recent. One of the inevitable effects of [it’s] study will be the re-writing of Christian theology [which]must have a restatement under the guiding principle of evolution and in the light of these comparative studies. Here are tasks for giants. We need not fear the results. Christ will be exalted while our conceptions of his activity are widened.” This coming from the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, is, to say the least, suggestive. I believe that in this “restatement,” the Negro should take a prominent part.*

(Edward Blyden to Booker T. Washington, 1894) *[[14]](#endnote-14)*

In 1889, Edward Wilmot Blyden, who had demitted his Presbyterian ordination after having served almost a quarter-century as a minister, missionary, and educator in West Africa, and now described himself as “a minister of truth,” penned a letter to Reverend Francis Grimke.[[15]](#endnote-15) Blyden, shared with Grimke, a graduate of Princeton Seminary and pastor of prestigious Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C, his reflections on the second volume of Ernest Renan’s controversial History of the People of Israel.[[16]](#endnote-16) Although he would cite Renan appreciatively in other contexts, Blyden was less charitable in this assessment of the controversial comparative religionist, biblical scholar, and historian, who exemplified much of modernity’s impact upon Western religious scholarship in the last half of the nineteenth century.[[17]](#endnote-17) Renan, he informed Grimke, was a man “without spiritual insight,” who “tries to be smart at the expense of sacred things,” and his text was pronounced “a curious book interesting chiefly for its literary merits, style, etc.” Nevertheless, Blyden concluded with what he considered to be sage advice to his younger and more theologically “conservative” colleague. Notwithstanding the spiritual limitations of its author, he recommended that Renan’s book “ought to be read carefully by the theologian and scholar, as a professional exercise.” And as if to emphasize the importance of this recommended “exercise,” Blyden indicated that he had taken the initiative to make the controversial text accessible to Grimke.[[18]](#endnote-18)

Blyden’s didactic missive to Grimke illuminates key aspects of the relationship shared by two of the era’s leading black clergy, who, owing to their different racial pedigrees, contrasting styles and personalities, and divergent theological, ethical, and ideological orientations, have often been perceived as studies in contrast.[[19]](#endnote-19) The communiqué indicates that of increasing concern to the two ministers of Reformed background, and particularly Blyden, was the impact of modernity and its religious corollaries as advanced by growing numbers of scholars and churchmen such as Renan. Both were mindful that the resultant views about evolutionary thought, comparative religion, and critical biblical and historical studies profoundly challenged traditional understandings of the formation, history, authority, and uniqueness of Christianity and the Bible as well as the ministerial and missionary enterprise. And of special urgency for both was the influence that these developments were having upon perceptions and policies related to people of African descent.

Five years later (1894), on the cusp of his final visit to the United States, Blyden penned a letter to Booker T. Washington, to whom he had been introduced by Grimke. His letter, subsequently published in one of the black community’s more prominent newspapers, broadcast Blyden’s most insistent and direct warning that the black Christian community could neither ignore nor evade the intellectual, religious, and racial implications and impact of modernity. The letter additionally sounded his most unequivocal call for black religious leaders and scholars to critically engage the disciplines and perspectives attendant the “scientific study of religion” that had followed in modernity’s wake. Cited in support were the recent comments delivered at the University of Chicago by Dr. John H. Barrows, one of the era’s most prominent “liberal” Presbyterian ministers and a key organizer of the recently concluded World’s Parliament of Religion’s impressive but flawed public exhibition of the findings of “the science of religion” in general and comparative religion in particular.[[20]](#endnote-20) Blyden confessed to having “been struck” by Barrows’ remarks endorsing the “scientific study of religion” and his insistence that "one of the inevitable effects of [its] study will be the re-writing of Christian theology. . . . [which] must have a restatement under the guiding principle of evolution and in the light of these comparative studies.” Sharing Barrows’ confident conclusion that Christians “need not fear the results” because “Christ will be exalted while our conceptions of his activity are widened,” Blyden insisted that engaging the “science of religion” was especially pertinent to Christians of African descent because “the Negro should [also] take a prominent part” in the ongoing restatement and “re-writing of Christian theology.”[[21]](#endnote-21)

As suggested by Blyden’s communiqués to Grimke and Washington, and in numerous publications and lectures, interrogation and critical appropriation of the findings, perspectives, and methodologies associated with modernity and the “scientific study of religion” had been a crucial factor in his intellectual and theological metamorphosis. It had profoundly contoured his pioneering efforts to forge a restatement of Christian theology and missiology “attuned to the challenges posed by modernity, particularly concerning the needs of the descendants of Africa on both sides of the Atlantic.”[[22]](#endnote-22) Consequently, Blyden’s transatlantic epistles, multiple addresses, and publications illuminate the unique role that he played throughout the Atlantic community as interrogator and mediator of modernity’s myriad academic, intellectual, and scientific corollaries and their racial and religious impact.[[23]](#endnote-23)

This text attempts to not only explore Blyden’s engagement with modernity’s religious and racial corollaries but also the discursive nature of his influence upon contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic similarly engaged to varying degrees with modernity and its corollaries. Exemplary of the latter focus is Blyden’s professional and personal relationship with Francis Grimke. In contrast to Blyden, who counseled and modeled selective appropriation of many of the tenets of modernity and its corollaries, Grimke was one of the era’s most adamant critics of modernity’s intellectual, scientific, and religious tenets, particularly as they were perceived to have a deleterious impact upon the authority and teachings of biblical Christianity and the temporal and soteriological condition of people of African descent.

Correspondence between the two ministers, often shared over the expanse of the Atlantic Ocean, confirms a friendship of almost a quarter-century as they responded to the challenges posed to their respective ministries and relationship by the peculiar intersections of race, religion, gender, and modernity as these beset not only African and African diaspora communities but also Presbyterianism and the wider Christian community. Among the era’s best-educated black clergy, they perceived from their respective theological, ministerial, and ideological orientations that modernity and particularly its religious and racial corollaries had profound implications for people of African descent on both sides of the Atlantic that transcended the traditional concerns of pulpit and pew. And as public intellectuals, both evidenced their concern with modernity’s broader intersection with the dynamics of race and religion, culture, gender, ethics, and pedagogy not only in correspondence with one another but also in an impressive number of sermons, public discourses, and publications. Their pioneering efforts to assess and even mitigate the influences of modernity helped to define the responses of an emergent black religious and secular elite on both sides of the Atlantic. Thus, their often quixotic, inconsistent, and even contradictory responses are also of broader historiographical significance for their illumination of the similarly complex responses of fellow African and diaspora clergy, as well as those of an emergent male and female secular and intellectual elite, to the interrelated challenges provoked by their inexorable encounter with modernity.[[24]](#endnote-24)

Relatedly, close examination, particularly of Blyden’s response to the religious and racial corollaries of modernity and his interaction with colleagues, supporters, and critics throughout the Atlantic community, illuminates the development of disciplines that would birth and contour the modern field of religious studies and the often detrimental impact that these disciplines portended for people of African descent. Such an examination also reveals that Blyden’s pioneering efforts at interrogation, corrective, selective appropriation, and mediation of these disciplines helped to influence how these disciplines were variously responded to by an emergent African and diaspora African intellectual elite during an era punctuated on the far side of the Atlantic by the “Scramble for Africa” and its resultant colonial legacy and within the United States by the Civil War and its prolonged aftermath.[[25]](#endnote-25)

Consequently, this text argues that as a result of the pioneering contributions of Blyden, and the often contrasting responses voiced by many of his contemporaries, a transatlantic tradition of critical discourse regarding the impact of modernity and especially its intersecting religious and racial corollaries was forged in the last half of the nineteenth and opening decades of the twentieth century. This text also argues that Blyden’s efforts make a significant though generally unacknowledged contribution to the development of the contemporary discipline of religious studies.

**Chapter I Edward Blyden and the Crucible of Modernity**

Studies of modernity usually emphasize its rootage in the myriad forces that emerged in the wake of the European Enlightenment. Its genealogy has long been associated almost exclusively with the intellectual, scientific, and cultural developments of post–fifteenth-century Western Europe.[[26]](#endnote-26) This association inspired a potent metanarrative rooted in the conviction that Europe and its inhabitants were the world’s central actors. Consistent with this narrative, the lands, peoples, cultures, and religions “discovered” by Europeans in modernity’s expansive wake were deemed inferior to those of Europe and in need of its more “advanced” developmental attributes. Consequently, their cultural traditions (language, dress, religion, etc.) were summarily scripted for replacement, even as their bodies and material resources were appropriated in accord with notions of progress and development subsumed under modernity’s intersecting tropes of “Christianity,” “Civilization,” and “Commerce.”[[27]](#endnote-27)

Providing legitimation for this agenda of suppression and exploitation of non-Western populations were intellectual, religious, and ideological theories as well as “scientific discoveries” such as Darwinism and the attendant development of new academic disciplines. Notable among the latter were the emergent disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and comparative religion (initially referred to as “the science of religion.”)[[28]](#endnote-28) These fostered “scientific” and pseudoscientific categories of comparison and classification that operated in ready collusion with the material, racial, and religious subjugation of the non-West. In accord with this genealogy and its tropes of progress, benevolence, and “Christian Civilizationism,” modernity’s often destructive impact upon the “primitive” non-West, and its inhabitants was generally perceived as both acceptable and inevitable. With presumptions of Eurocentric hegemony in all spheres, manifestations of agency by non-Western peoples both before and in response to the onslaught of modernity and its corollaries were generally ignored and/or summarily dismissed as regressive, presumptuous, treasonous, and even heretical.

Within recent years, scholars from a variety of disciplines have produced more critical analyses of modernity’s genealogy, impact, and legacy.[[29]](#endnote-29) While acknowledging its inexorable impact within Europe and upon non-European peoples and cultures, they tend to emphasize a more expansive concept that notes, for example, that modernity was “constructed in a dialectical relation with a non-European alterity”—in effect, that definitions of modernity, its genealogy, impact, and legacy must be more fully cognizant of its “asymmetrical” engagement with non-Western peoples who allegedly comprised modernity’s “underside.” Such studies also increasingly acknowledge persistent efforts by members of modernity’s “underside” to interrogate, challenge, and mitigate modernity’s most disruptive claims and agenda. They illuminate an often dynamic cultural, religious, and intellectual dialectic as members of modernity’s “underside” made far more than “ancillary and passive” contributions in their response to the bludgeon of modernity. Thus, such studies attest that modernity’s genealogy, when interpreted aright, chronicles the creative agency of modernity’s “underside” as its inhabitants attempted to interrogate, adjudicate and mediate its pervasive impact.[[30]](#endnote-30)

Comprising a significant component of modernity’s “underside” were Africans on the continent as well as their descendants dispersed throughout the Atlantic diaspora. Africans who made up the bulk of “New World” slavery provided much of the economic and industrial foundation of Western modernity as representatives of the latter formulated intersecting philosophical, biological, and religious legitimations of the slave trade. Consequently, increased attention to the unique experiences and responses of Africans and their diaspora descendants is proving essential to contemporary reassessments of the complex dynamics and extended legacy of modernity.[[31]](#endnote-31) Therefore, Patrick Manning contends “that the advent of modernity cannot be imaginatively or comprehensively engaged without taking the African peoples and the African continent as a whole into account.”[[32]](#endnote-32) Ethiopian scholar Teshale Tibebu similarly notes that “Africans [and their far-flung descendants] . . . , challenged Africa’s place in the grand project of Western modernity.” He points out that throughout the nineteenth century, a “Western-educated elite” developed and asserted themselves “into the rational discourse of the Enlightenment project.” Subsequently, to varying degrees, they not only articulated but also “represented the deep resentment, rage, and anger felt against the racialized episteme of the modern Western discourse, as well as its lived material realities.”[[33]](#endnote-33)

The writings of contemporaries such as the Haitian born Joseph Auguste Anténor Firmin, South African born Tiyo Sogo, North American born Frederick Douglass, and Alexander Crummell attest that Blyden was neither the only nor even the earliest of nineteenth-century Africans and diaspora Africans to engage in the critical interrogation and appropriation of modernity and its intersecting corollaries of race and religion. [[34]](#endnote-34) Nevertheless, it is arguable that the degree and scope of Blyden’s critical and sustained effort make him foremost among Africans and diaspora Africans engrossed in this process.[[35]](#endnote-35) Although his importance is often relegated to the acknowledgment of his contributions as “Vindicator of the [Negro] Race” and as “Father” of Pan-Africanism and West African Nationalism, Blyden was necessarily and thoroughly engaged in this related but much more expansive and complex agenda which entailed interrogating the “ process of modernity” and mediating its impact upon Africa and its descendants.[[36]](#endnote-36)

Although born on St. Thomas (V. I.) in 1832, Blyden spent most of his adult life in Liberia and the neighboring British colony of Sierra Leone on the West Coast of Africa. Not incidentally, the history of these three locales bears witness to the paradoxes and peculiarities accompanying the black transatlantic engagement with modernity. Subsequently, Blyden would play a vital role in the political, cultural, religious, and educational development of the two West African entities, which he considered foundational to the “vindication” and “modern” development of the African race, and the “epicenter” of Pan-Africanism.[[37]](#endnote-37)

Close examination reveals that Blyden’s prodigious and multifaceted efforts in defense of the well-being and unity of people of African descent throughout the Atlantic world were rooted in his unrelenting engagement with modernity, its myriad corollaries, and their influence, particularly upon African peoples. His conviction that modernity’s impact was inexorable but not impervious to alteration and correction fostered a lifelong agenda of interrogating, adjudicating, and mediating Western modernity’s often capricious and debilitating influences among both Africans and diaspora Africans. Thus, much of Blyden’s life and work on the coast of West Africa and throughout the wider Atlantic personify key aspects of the African and diaspora African encounter with the complexities and ambiguities of modernity during the late Victorian era.[[38]](#endnote-38)

Amid the unrelenting onslaught on people of African descent by black and white agents devoted to the advance of a Eurocentric vision of modernity, Blyden was committed to formulating an antidote to its most egregious influences upon Africa and the black Atlantic. In his multiple roles as a minister, missionary, educator, scholar, statesman, and public intellectual, he interrogated, critiqued, and selectively appropriated the academic, religious, intellectual, and scientific tools forged by European advocates of modernity in an attempted remedy of modernity’s most insidious qualities. Notably, his endeavor to advance a less Eurocentric and more nurturing Afrocentric version of modernity—the latter more respectful of the history, culture, and needs of people of African descent—also entailed his critique and reconceptualization of Eurocentric modernity’s most sacrosanct institutional extensions--church and school--and their respective rationalizations and agendas. Accordingly, Blyden is justifiably heralded as “one of the first black intellectuals to formulate” not only “a systematic critique of Eurocentrism,” but also one of “the first black intellectuals” to engage in a systematic interrogation and critique of Eurocentrism’s primary nurturer and conveyance—modernity.[[39]](#endnote-39)

Blyden’s role as arguably the Victorian era’s most important black interrogator and mediator of modernity is attested to by an expansive literary corpus that illuminates the intensive and sustained nature of his response to modernity and its corollaries. Chronicled in these works, authored over more than half a century, was Blyden’s intense and passionate personal and professional engagement with modernity’s religious, racial and pedagogical, implications. His scholarly efforts were also attested by membership in several organizations that reflected or were products of the intellectual dynamic fostered by modernity and its corollaries. Most prominent among these organizations whose memberships included some of the era’s most distinguished black and white scholars and intellectuals were the American Society of Comparative Religion, the Royal African Society, the Athenaeum Club, and the American Negro Academy.[[40]](#endnote-40)

Blyden’s subsequent intellectual and theological metamorphosis, corroborated by the demittance of his Old School Presbyterian ordination in 1886, his subsequent self-designation as a “minister of truth,” and publication of Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race less than a year later, attest to the passion and commitment that he brought to this endeavor.[[41]](#endnote-41) All of the above additionally confirm that Blyden was acutely aware of and engaged with the profound changes taking place, particularly within the religious arena under the press of modernity. Consequently, as he gradually distanced himself from the tenets of Old School Presbyterianism and Reformed Orthodoxy, Blyden shared his shift from allegiance to evangelical orthodoxy to evangelical liberalism along with a growing cadre of ministers and scholars on both sides of the Atlantic who similarly adopted the controversial theological synthesis that was emerging in response to modernity and its intellectual, scientific, and religious corollaries.[[42]](#endnote-42) Although relatively few members of a black intellectual elite made up primarily of black clergy would join Blyden in full embrace of evangelical liberalism, the impact of modernity and its religious corollaries was also of increasing concern to many. Their subsequent formulation and embrace of a range of responses that were often much more nuanced than merely “acceptance” or “rejection” of modernity’s intellectual, theological, hermeneutical, and missiological alternatives supports Blyden’s thesis that the religious arena was one of the most important spheres for engagement, analysis, and mediation of the complexities of the African and diaspora African encounter with modernity.[[43]](#endnote-43)

While previous studies have noted the “religious” factor as intrinsic to the African and diaspora encounter with “modern” Europe and the West, this encounter has often been viewed through the myopic lens and narrow context of the missionary enterprise. Consequently, most studies have failed to adequately explore the broader and more dynamic complexities of the religious encounter with the dialectic of modernity and the range of reactions subsequently provoked within African and diaspora African communities.[[44]](#endnote-44) This lapse within the scholarship is ironic since missionary and religious “scholarship” and discourse were critical to reifying many of the less savory tenets associated with Eurocentric notions of modernity. Religiously freighted concepts and tropes such as “savage,” “primitive,” “backward,” were employed to explain and justify the hegemonic status of Eurocentric modernity and its encounter with the “other” who made up modernity’s “underside.” As often noted by Blyden, slavery, colonization, imperialism, and other forms of exploitation and brutalization, as well as intellectual, cultural, racial, and religious chauvinism, were rationalized and legitimated by modernity’s religiously and racially loaded tropes.

These concepts and tropes became essential components of the developing discourse about the origins and functions of “religion,” which emerged during the mid-nineteenth century as part of a nascent “science of religion.” Paradoxically, proponents of this new science and its related disciplines employed academic, intellectual, scientific, and religious insights and typologies of classification, hierarchy, and development to both advance as well as challenge traditional Eurocentric notions of modernity and their extension, particularly via the missionary enterprise. An emergent black intelligentsia, mostly clergy based and educated in church and missionary affiliated institutions, was not impervious to these developments and its members were increasingly aware of and concerned with resultant challenges posed to their traditional theological, missiological, and racial beliefs.[[45]](#endnote-45)

However, an aware and creative African and diaspora African response to modernity was not limited to an emergent Western-educated intellectual and ministerial elite. A cursory examination of the religious and musical culture of predominately illiterate African and diaspora African populations readily illuminate their creative and often pained rejoinders to the trauma accompanying the encounter with modernity. For example, Cornell West suggests that “the African –American spiritual . . . is the first modern artistic expression” of an organic and mass base black response to the bludgeon of modernity and “ the unique cultural creation of New World modernity. . . .’’ The paradox is extended as West adds, “How ironic that a people on the dark side of modernity—dishonored, devalued, and dehumanized by the practices of modern Europeans and Americans—created the fundamental music of American modernity.”[[46]](#endnote-46)

Of particular and increasing concern to Blyden and other members of an emergent black intelligentsia, made up predominately of ministers, were the religious and racial implications of Darwinism and the nascent disciplines of historical and biblical criticism, anthropology sociology, and comparative religion. Singularly and especially in combination, these not only posited competing beliefs regarding the authoritative status of biblical Christianity and, by extension, “Christian Civilizationism.” They also fostered new or revived racialist theories that defied traditional biblically rooted notions of the common origins and humanity of blacks and whites. Among the latter, and especially disturbing for Blyden and his black contemporaries, was the resurgence and popularization of the theory of polygenesis, which purportedly synthesized the findings of evolutionary thought and the new biblical studies in denial of the biblical account of the Adamite origin of the African race.[[47]](#endnote-47)

Neither unconscious of, nor immune to the new religious and racial challenges posed by modernity, members of the black intellectual and clerical elite responded in various ways.[[48]](#endnote-48) Some, like Princeton Seminary, educated minister Francis Grimke, insisted on the summary rejection of most if not all the purported intellectual, academic, scientific, and especially religious insights of modernity as fostering both religious and racial heresy. Others, such as the University of Glasgow–educated South African clergyman Tiyo Soga (1829-1871) and the Cambridge-educated Episcopal minister Alexander Crummell (1819-1898), advocated a selective appropriation particularly of modernity’s Eurocentric cultural offerings while emphasizing the opportunities that these afforded as portals to the bounties of Christian Civilization.[[49]](#endnote-49) Meanwhile, like Blyden, a handful of other black clergy attempted in varied ways and degrees to more aggressively interrogate, critique, and mediate modernity’s ubiquitous offerings.[[50]](#endnote-50) Most would-be advocates of a model and process of modernity less Eurocentric and Western and more compatible with the diverse historical, cultural, racial, and religious traditions and existential needs of people of African descent throughout the Atlantic community. [[51]](#endnote-51)

Not surprisingly, like so much of Blyden’s life and labors, his efforts at interrogating and mediating modernity were not always understood or appreciated by either blacks or whites. Misunderstandings emerged early and persisted.[[52]](#endnote-52) Indeed, various discrepancies and inconsistencies litter the landscape of Blyden’s personal and professional life, and several contemporary studies have opined that his activities and the extensive corpus of published works reflect what has been referred to as a dizzying array of “inconsistencies” and contradictions.[[53]](#endnote-53) However, to a degree yet to be explored, partial explanation may well lie in the extent to which Blyden’s life and work bear witness to his assumption of the monumental task of interrogating, correcting, appropriating, and mediating what he felt to be the dynamics and dangers of modernity and its corollaries, none of which he felt to be more critical, challenging, or urgent than those having to do with the intersection of religion and race.[[54]](#endnote-54)

**Chapter 2 From St. Thomas to Liberia**

Blyden’s birth and formative years in the Atlantic diaspora uniquely equipped him for his future role as the late Victorian era’s most important black interrogator, adjudicator, and mediator of modernity. He was born on August 3, 1832, to Romero and Judith Anna in Charlotte-Amalie, the capital city of the Danish West Indies island of St. Thomas. Ostensibly “discovered” by Columbus in 1493 during the first wave of European exploration of the Americas, the island had been a Danish possession since 1671, and by Edward’s birth was ruled by the Danish sovereign Christian VIII. Its link with the genealogy and history of European modernity was additionally fused with its development into "one of the largest slave markets in the world.”[[55]](#endnote-55) While the island’s role within the slave trade had waned by the time of Blyden’s birth, slavery remained an integral part of life on St. Thomas during most of his youth. And although Blyden and his five siblings were born free, slavery’s familial proximity was delineated by parents who were the descendants of enslaved Nigerians. [[56]](#endnote-56) The family’s surname, likely derived from the Dutch “Bleiden,” additionally attested to how intertwined its biography, history, and fortunes were with the expansive tentacles of European modernity.[[57]](#endnote-57) Moreover, Blyden was fifteen when slavery on the island was officially ended on July 3, 1847, and his awareness of his family history and witness to the abuse and exploitation of fellow blacks left a searing impression and undoubtedly influenced his decision to contemplate the vocation of minister.[[58]](#endnote-58)

Growing up on St. Thomas, with a brief but illuminating sojourn in Venezuela, Blyden was exposed to the region’s vibrant religious culture, which was as diverse as its indigenous and immigrant populations.[[59]](#endnote-59) On St. Thomas alone, an 1837 census reported that its non-African population consisted of "450 Creoles (native-born whites), 400 Jews, 250 Danes and Germans, 250 British and Americans, and 132 others."[[60]](#endnote-60) However, it was Africans, free and enslaved, that made up the majority of the island’s population. Consequently, despite governmental efforts at suppression, supplemented by energetic zeal on the part of Lutheran, Moravian, and later Dutch Reformed missionaries, the beliefs and rituals of Africa continued to coexist and, at times, openly contend with those of Christianity.[[61]](#endnote-61)

Africa's effervescent religious and cultural heritage variously expressed in art, story, song, and dance was especially evident in the cosmopolitan environment of Charlotte-Amalie and elicited the notice of an attentive Edward.[[62]](#endnote-62) And although his parents reportedly "kept African traditions alive in the family" as a means of fostering pride in their African ancestry, Christianity, as practiced in St. George’s Dutch Reformed Church, was designated the religion of allegiance within their household.[[63]](#endnote-63) The influence of its tenets upon the family and especially young Edward was heightened after 1845 when Rev. John P. Knox, an Old School Presbyterian minister recuperating his health on the island, became acting pastor of their congregation. Impressed by Edward’s piety and intellect, Knox envisioned a ministerial career for the youth and began tutoring him in the hermeneutical and theological intricacies of the Reformed tradition.

Blyden's membership in the Dutch Reform Church and apparent acquiescence to Knox’s vocational guidance induced his early embrace of one of the most conservative mid-nineteenth-century expressions of Christianity.[[64]](#endnote-64) His adherence to the theological, spiritual, and intellectual rigors of the Reformed tradition was further encouraged by the almost familial relationship that he developed with Knox. The latter not only bore the name of one of the Reformed tradition’s most influential architects but he was also a graduate of New Jersey’s Rutgers College, explicitly founded to maintain and advance the Reformed tradition in the United States.[[65]](#endnote-65) Of related significance was Knox's membership in the Old School Presbyterian Church, which was established in the United States five years after Blyden’s birth ostensibly to defend the doctrinal and ecclesiastical purity of the Reformed tradition from the "heretical" adaptations and adulterations of a theologically more progressive “New School” faction of the American Presbyterian community.[[66]](#endnote-66)

Under Knox’s tutelage, Blyden received the rudiments of ministerial education and imbibed key aspects of his mentor's stern Old School Calvinism as he composed biblical essays and prepared exegesis of Knox's sermons in the latter's study. Eventually, he attested to a conversion experience that served as final assurance to the hyper-Calvinist sensibilities of Knox that his young charge was perhaps counted among the “elect,” a fitting communicant of the Dutch Reformed Church, and even a worthy candidate for formal ministerial and theological training at his alma mater.[[67]](#endnote-67) Thus, in 1850 seventeen-year-old Edward accompanied the wife and children of Rev. John Knox to the United States with the intent of continuing his ministerial preparation by enrollment in the theological department of Knox's alma mater.[[68]](#endnote-68) To facilitate his admission, Blyden carried a letter from Knox that certified that he was “a member in full communion in good & regular standing, in the REF Dutch Church of St. Thomas, W. I.” It additionally “recommend[ed] him to the kind feelings & Christian fellowship of those Christians among whom his lot may be cast.”[[69]](#endnote-69)

However, Blyden’s quest for more formal theological and ministerial education was thwarted when he was refused admission to Rutgers and reportedly two other seminaries in the United States because of what he later described as “deep-seated prejudice against my race.”[[70]](#endnote-70) The disappointed youth was further shocked by the viciousness and cruelty of America's racial climate, which seemed to have reached its nadir with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in the year of his arrival. Especially distressing for Blyden was the scriptural and theological support provided the controversial legislation by segments of the white Christian community. Long afterward, he recorded his still palpable disgust at hearing a New York pastor, "a D.D. of eminent learning and ability, preach” a Thanksgiving Day sermon that cited Scripture—the so-called curse of Noah—in justification of the law and slavery as he proclaimed from the pulpit, “The decree, . . . has gone forth, and we cannot reverse it. 'Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.'" Blyden confessed, “This was the first of our hearing such weight given to that interpretation and application of Noah's malediction; and though not over eighteen years old, we experienced, as it were, an intuitive revulsion of mind never to be forgotten.”[[71]](#endnote-71)

Disheartened by the racial and religious climate of the United States and terrified of being seized under the Fugitive Slave Law as an escaped slave, Blyden was contemplating returning to St. Thomas when he came to the attention of Reverends John B. Pinney and Walter Lowrie. Both were members of the Old School Presbyterian Church and personified the intimate relationship that had evolved by the mid-century between their denomination, the colonization enterprise, and Liberia.[[72]](#endnote-72) The colonization idea, rooted in the convergence of heightened foreign mission concern and rising antislavery sentiment fostered amid more benevolent currents of modernity during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, was reenergized in 1816 with the formation of the American Colonization Society.[[73]](#endnote-73) Ironically, Princeton Seminary, which would become the American citadel of Presbyterian conservatism and orthodoxy in opposition to many of modernity’s religious corollaries, played a key role in this development as colonization's broad-based and ambiguous program (a combination of piety, pragmatism, and prejudice) appealed to denominations struggling like the Presbyterians to maintain accord in the wake of growing tensions over the Church's proper response to slavery.[[74]](#endnote-74) Consistent with the evangelical orientation of most of its leaders and supporters, the American Colonization Society was characterized by a “strong missionary spirit,” and projected as a providential instrument for the evangelization of Africa. Thus, it additionally attracted Presbyterians anxious for their church to begin missionary work in Africa.[[75]](#endnote-75) With the colonization society’s founding of Liberia on the West Coast of Africa in 1822, missionary-minded Presbyterians were provided a ready locus for their West African Mission, which formally began in 1833.[[76]](#endnote-76)

Convinced that Blyden was an ideal candidate for colonization, Pinney and Lowrie urged him to migrate to Liberia, where he might continue his education at the Presbyterian-sponsored school in Monrovia and eventually contribute to the success of both the colonization enterprise and the West African Presbyterian mission. Although aware of the intense opposition that colonization engendered among abolitionists and a substantial portion of the free black community, Blyden accepted their offer.[[77]](#endnote-77) As he set sail aboard the “Liberia” on December 21, 1850, with seventy-one other colonists, Blyden fused racial pride and religious conviction. Firmly rooted in the Reformed heritage and emboldened by a sense of divine purpose, guidance, and election, he understood his future and the redemption of the African race to be providentially linked to Liberia, Presbyterianism, and the colonization movement.[[78]](#endnote-78)

Upon Blyden’s arrival in Liberia in late January 1851, the tiny republic, which had declared its independence in 1847, was still struggling with crippling handicaps associated with its establishment as a quixotic prescription to the myriad contradictions inherent to the intersection of Atlantic slavery, evangelical outreach, and African development amid the expanding tentacles of Western modernity. [[79]](#endnote-79) Like its geographical and ideological neighbor, Sierra Leone, Liberia would continue to be convulsed with the challenges fostered by myriad currents and modes of modernity as it struggled to be an outpost of Christian Civilizationism and the primary locus of a Trans-Atlantic dream and prophecy of black liberation and freedom.[[80]](#endnote-80)

Although the preliminary theological and sermonic studies began under Knox on St. Thomas enabled Blyden to make an immediate contribution to the colony’s religious climate as a popular lay preacher, the continuation of his formal education remained a primary concern. His escalating anxiety was assuaged by the arrival of Rev. David Agnew Wilson to expedite the reopening of the Presbyterian high school, which was subsidized by the Presbyterian Board of Missions.[[81]](#endnote-81) The school’s role as a vital part of both the Presbyterian mission and colonization enterprise was commemorated by being named in honor of Archibald Alexander, the Old School Presbyterian divine, Princeton Seminary professor, former West African missionary, and colonization apologist.[[82]](#endnote-82) Moreover, Alexander, along with his younger colleague Charles Hodge, was one of the architects of the “Princeton Theology” being matured at Princeton Seminary partially in response and opposition to modernity’s religious corollaries.[[83]](#endnote-83)

Upon the high school’s reopening in January 1852, Blyden, under the tutelage of Wilson, an 1851 graduate of Princeton Seminary, was circuitously introduced to the theological and hermeneutical tenets becoming dominant at Princeton Seminary. Consistent with the interlocking religious and pedagogical tenets of Wilson’s alma mater, Blyden and his classmates engaged in studies "directed strictly under Presbyterian Principles." [[84]](#endnote-84) While lessons in Latin, Greek, geography, and mathematics were essential parts of the school’s curriculum, Livingston reports that Wilson insisted that religious instruction occupy a “prominent place." Accordingly, the Bible was considered the school’s primary textbook, and "three mornings a week,” Wilson “read from the historical parts of the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis” and, "all pupils had to memorize three or four verses of Proverbs daily."[[85]](#endnote-85)

Although Blyden would subsequently reject much of Wilson’s Princeton-based theological and hermeneutical orientation, his biblically and theologically infused pedagogy would have a more lasting influence. As surmised by Livingston: “Wilson's historical approach to the Pentateuch . . . instilled in young Blyden a pedagogical technique he would retain throughout most of his life as an educator.” [[86]](#endnote-86) It was also an approach to Scripture that helped to encourage Blyden’s initial embrace of the era’s prevailing biblically based “orientalism.”[[87]](#endnote-87) Also of lasting influence, notes Livingston, was Wilson’s biblically rooted advocacy of an “Augustinian view of history—the revelation of God being the central teleological force in history [which] profoundly impressed young Blyden.”[[88]](#endnote-88) This view fostered a perception of sacred and secular history that was consistent with one of Blyden’s most deeply held theological convictions—-that human events, past, present, and future, both personal and societal, were under the guidance of a divine though often inscrutable Providence. [[89]](#endnote-89)

Blyden’s religious orientation and academic skills immediately impressed Wilson. Letters that he penned to Walter Lowrie, Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, soliciting support for his prized student provide an informative religious and academic profile of Blyden at mid-century. As described by Wilson, he was "a promising youth . . . modest, respectful, of a kindly disposition, of good natural talents, and attainments quite beyond his years--attainments, too, chiefly self-acquired." In an addendum that presumably directed to members of the Board suspicious and skeptical of black scholastic endeavors, Wilson added that Blyden's attainments "are not [solely] scholastic; but in biblical knowledge, general information, composition & above all, in what I hope, is ardent practical piety. . . . He is eloquent in prayer, & compositions on religious subjects, & particularly passages of Scripture, are better deserving the name of sermons than most, I may say any, I have heard from [local] ministers." Evidencing prophetic insight, Wilson concluded: "I have high expectations of his usefulness. . . . If I am not greatly mistaken, he will make an able minister . . . and if not an able teacher, at least, one competent to fill my place, should it be vacated by sickness or death.”[[90]](#endnote-90)

Wilson's pedagogical and theological influence was heightened when Blyden began ordination studies under Wilson’s tutelage following what Livingston describes as a "determined yet anguished decision" in 1857 to enter the Presbyterian ministry.[[91]](#endnote-91) The exact source of Blyden’s “anguish” is unclear. As a youth on St. Thomas, he had assented to the vocational council of Knox and begun preliminary preparation for the ministry. And despite being frustrated in his efforts to attain formal ministerial training during his brief stay in the United States, a continued interest in the ministry had been evidenced in his early service as a popular lay preacher in Liberia. Perhaps mature contemplation of ordination and life as a Presbyterian minister and the financial responsibilities attendant his marriage a year earlier to fellow emigrant Sarah Yates entailed more serious deliberation. Relatedly, as his academic, linguistic, and intellectual talents were becoming apparent and valued by the wider community, ordination may have appeared to preclude the possibility of more lucrative employment in the secular and political arena.[[92]](#endnote-92) It is also likely that anxiety regarding ordination had additional rootage in feelings of personal unworthiness common to his theological orientation and heritage. Such sentiments were also probably intensified by Blyden’s awareness of susceptibility to moral and ethical lapses related to women that had already earned him the reputation of being “a ladies’ man.”[[93]](#endnote-93) Notwithstanding his anxiety, the outcome must have appeared inevitable as Blyden, true to his Reformed heritage, stoically embraced the ministry as his foreordained vocational path. Received under the care of the Presbytery of West Africa, he began part-time theological studies under Wilson's tutelage while serving as a lay preacher and a tutor at Alexander High School.

As he began preparation for ordination under Wilson, Blyden revived his dream of formal theological education. In a letter of petition written to the Board of Missions requesting assistance for study in the United States at one of the denomination’s affiliate seminaries, Blyden not only expressed doubts regarding his ministerial preparation and competence. He also articulated what would become a life-long conviction--that an "enlightened ministry was an indispensable agency" for Liberia's development … and that of the race:

I am now a candidate for licensure . . . . But I do not feel competent for the new duties that will thereby devolve upon me; . . . I feel that to start out just as I am upon the duties of life, particularly duties of so high a character, would be to invite failure. I beg, therefore, for the sake of the cause of Christ, for the interest of Presbyterianism in this land, that assistance be afforded me by the Board to attend for two years one of the Theological Seminaries of our church in the United States.[[94]](#endnote-94)

Despite the Presbyterian Church’s increasing emphasis on seminary-based theological education for its ministers, the Board inexplicably rejected Blyden’s petition.[[95]](#endnote-95) Racial paternalism may well have been a factor in its decision since Blyden’s expressions of self-confidence, pride, and intelligence in his correspondence seem to have offended some members prejudiced in their expectations of black intelligence and capabilities.[[96]](#endnote-96) Notwithstanding whatever racial, pedagogical, or perhaps even theological factors were at play, the Board’s decision would have unforeseen consequences. It inadvertently helped to foster the intellectual and theological eclecticism and independence that Blyden would exhibit as he gradually distanced himself from theological, doctrinal, and eventually ecclesiastical allegiance to Presbyterian orthodoxy in subsequent decades.

Disappointed but undeterred by the Board’s decision not to support his petition for formal theological education, Blyden completed ordination studies under Wilson and, during a rigorous ordination examination, provided satisfactory evidence of his knowledge of and subscription to the tenets of Calvinism and the particular doctrines of Old School Presbyterianism. Most accounts cite 1858 as the year of Blyden's ordination.[[97]](#endnote-97) However, Holden contends that it was not until January 3, 1860, at a meeting of the Presbytery held at Monrovia, that Blyden was “examined for ordination and was ordained on the evening of the same day.”[[98]](#endnote-98) The discrepancy is insightful in light of her cryptic account of what appears to have been an extended and perhaps contentious examination and ordination process that may have relevance given Blyden’s subsequent theological and ministerial trajectory:

On October 25, 26, and 27, 1858, Presbytery met ‘for the examination of Mr. Edward Blyden.... with a view to ordination. After a very protracted and through trial, he was unanimously admitted to the ministry.” [[99]](#endnote-99)

Upon ordination, Blyden became an active member of the Presbytery of West Africa, which had been founded under Old School auspices a dozen years earlier. No doubt of special appeal to him was the Old School’s support of not only Liberia and colonization but also an agenda that included “education,” “evangelization,” and “civilization.” It was a linkage further extended and institutionalized with Old School sponsorship of Ashmun Institute, which was founded in Pennsylvania in 1854 and named in honor of Jehudi Ashmun, a pioneer of Liberian colonization. Renamed Lincoln University after the Civil War, it produced a steady stream of black graduates steeped in the conservative tenets of Reformed theology and missiology by a white faculty dominated by Princeton College and Princeton Seminary alumni. Ashmun’s graduates would help to disperse aspects of the Princeton Theology as well as Princeton’s response to modernity as they provided Presbyterianism on both sides of the Atlantic with a small but well-educated cadre of black clergy.[[100]](#endnote-100) That Ashmun alumni also constituted an influential part of the membership of the Presbytery of West Africa was illustrated by a meeting of the presbytery on December 29, 1859, which "admitted to their number" Armistead Miller, James R. Amos, and Thomas H. Amos. All, upon recent completion of their studies at Ashmun Institute, had been promptly assigned by the Presbyterian Board to its Liberia mission.[[101]](#endnote-101) Their membership and that of other Ashmun and later Lincoln graduates helped to ensure that the Presbytery of West Africa was characterized by allegiance to Reformed orthodoxy that would increasingly put many of its members at odds with the trajectory of Blyden’s intellectual and theological metamorphosis.

In the decade following his ordination, Blyden was an especially active and valued member of the Presbytery of West Africa. Through the press, pulpit, and energetic leadership within the presbytery, he vigorously sought the advance of Presbyterianism in Liberia.[[102]](#endnote-102) His participation in the life and responsibilities of the presbytery included service as moderator, filling the pulpit of local churches, laying cornerstones, tutoring candidates for ordination, as well as taking part in their ordination and installation services. Illustrative was his participation as moderator during the installation services of the Rev. Thomas H. Amos, which occasioned Blyden’s delivery of a sermon based on Acts 20:28. His sermon titled "The Duties and Responsibilities of a Pastor of a Church" was reportedly "presented with that scholarly ability and eloquence for which he has already become distinguished.”[[103]](#endnote-103) Later published and widely distributed as a pamphlet titled “The Pastor's Work,” it illuminated Blyden’s already expansive concept of the ministerial vocation and its spiritual and intellectual prerequisites.[[104]](#endnote-104)

The Pastor’s Work also forecast Blyden’s perception of the seminal role that black clergymen should play as informed public intellectuals amid the era’s rapidly changing intellectual, religious, academic, and scientific currents. As such, it also anticipated the trajectory of his vocational tract as a scholar-minister, public intellectual, and mediator of modernity. Noting that many of the men eminent in both literature and science in England and America were clergymen who influenced “the thought and tendency of their age,” he insisted that a similar role should be aspirational for black clergy in Africa and the diaspora. Consequently, the black minister must be “intellectually” as well as “spiritually” enlightened and engaged—a scholar of both science and Scripture--“who would not be content to take at second hand the views of the meaning of passages” but who could “repair to the fountainhead.” Additionally, he insisted that the black minister should be an activist, never forgetting “his duties and privileges as a citizen,” and thus laboring constantly “for the upbuilding of his country.” Moreover, he should also be progressive and, therefore, in sympathy with the better social and political movements of the times.[[105]](#endnote-105)

Blyden’s sermon foreshadowed the expansive role of the minister as pastor, scholar, statesman, and public intellectual that he would aspire to in the course of his subsequent multi-faceted ministry.[[106]](#endnote-106) Also embedded within it were hints that Blyden would prove increasingly amenable to the new academic, intellectual, scientific, and religious currents emerging in the wake of modernity during the Victorian era.

Despite the pastoral standards and responsibilities delineated in the Pastor’s Work, Blyden was only minimally effective in the traditional role of pastor. While occasionally serving for brief periods as stated supply of local congregations, it was apparent early that his primary contribution to the advance of Presbyterianism in Liberia and broader West Africa would not be in the role of minister, or even missionary as traditionally defined. Instead, his replacement of Wilson as principal of Alexander High School provided an opportunity for him to begin the development of a ministry that would be primarily scholarly and pedagogically focused.[[107]](#endnote-107)

As predicted by Wilson, Blyden, having graduated with "high honor,” was well prepared to be his replacement at the high school.[[108]](#endnote-108) Upon succeeding him as principal in 1858, Blyden began developing the pedagogically oriented ministry that would allow him to play a significant role in the advancement of the tenets and agenda of Old School Presbyterianism in Liberia. However, neither his pedagogical nor ministerial concerns were exhausted by his commitment to the advance of Presbyterianism. His increasingly expansive pedagogical and ministerial agenda was additionally rooted in a commitment to furthering “Christian Civilizationism” in Liberia by molding its future leaders of both church and state.[[109]](#endnote-109)

Under Blyden’s direction, the curriculum at the high school maintained a decidedly Presbyterian orientation with emphasis on the study of the Bible but also afforded greater attention to the classics. Having developed an appreciation for the classics and even surpassing Wilson as a “classical scholar,” Blyden was convinced that the insights and languages of the classics were not only vital complements to the study of the Bible but also critical to the successful evangelization and civilization of Africa. As surmised by one of his biographers: "Whereas most missionaries were poorly educated beyond the Bible and were content armed only with the Gospel in their work, Blyden wanted men of culture imbued with the disciplined insights of Xenophon, Thucydides, and Herodotus. He envisaged the spread of civilization borne on the pagan wings of antiquity, animated by the spirit of the Gospel."[[110]](#endnote-110) Consequently, readers of the African Repository, the official periodical of the American Colonization Society, were probably startled to discover that Alexander High School's 1860 annual examination reflected a curriculum that included not only geometry and algebra but also study of Homer's Iliad in Greek, Virgil's Aeneid in Latin, as well as the Bible in Hebrew and Greek.[[111]](#endnote-111) Of related importance, Blyden’s study and “mastery” of the classics, along with his philological interests and talents, would provide additional points of resonance with the work and background of Max Muller and several other scholars engaged at mid-century with forging and popularizing a new synthesis between religion, science, and modernity.[[112]](#endnote-112) Prominent among this group were

figures, such as William Gladstone and Dean Stanley, who would become important personal acquaintances of Blyden.

Consistent with his conviction that “educated women are needed in Liberia as well as educated men, ”Blyden’s pedagogical efforts early included attempts to increase the limited educational opportunities available to females in Liberia.[[113]](#endnote-113) It is probable that his generally progressive posture regarding women and particularly his sustained efforts at championing educational and social opportunities for women of African descent were influenced by his mother’s unusual status as an educated black woman and her key role in his early educational and spiritual development.[[114]](#endnote-114) Whatever the inspiration and source, Blyden’s early role as an advocate of female advancement in Africa and the diaspora was also a harbinger of his subsequent inclusion of gender as an integral part of his adjudication and mediation of the intersection of race, religion, and modernity.

As he undertook the ambitious and expansive ministry delineated in “The Pastor’s Work,” Blyden embarked on an intensive program of continued self-education that was focused on the study of the “Classics” and “Scripture,” and he early evidenced more than average proficiency in both. His early mentors, Knox and Wilson, had been well-schooled in the prevailing methods and perspectives of traditional nineteenth-century biblical scholarship as students at Rutgers and Princeton Seminary. Consequently, Blyden initially embraced a similarly traditional and “orthodox” approach to the study and exposition of Scripture. Having early exhibited an exceptional competence in “Biblical Knowledge,” his disciplined self-study of Latin, Greek, and eventually Hebrew would subsequently enable him to “read passages in the Bible purporting to the Negro without racist redaction.” [[115]](#endnote-115) His linguistic studies and skills would prove to be valuable hermeneutical and theological tools as he embarked on a lifelong effort to challenge and correct interpretations of Scripture and other literary, historical, and scientific canons that alleged African inferiority and oppression. It was an ambitious agenda publicly proclaimed by Blyden in one of his first major publications, boldly titled “A Vindication of the African Race: Being a Brief Examination of the Arguments in Favor of African Inferiority.”[[116]](#endnote-116) In its thirty-seven pages, a twenty-five-year-old Blyden, still engaged in his ordination studies, vigorously refuted a mélange of theories purportedly “founded upon facts of Theology, Science, or Philosophy” justifying black inferiority.[[117]](#endnote-117) Of special concern were prevailing interpretations of the Genesis narrative often referred to as the “curse of Ham”—a text quoted and misquoted ad nauseam to provide a biblical and theological rationale for continued black subjugation.[[118]](#endnote-118) Although reflecting the limitations of his youthful theological, hermeneutical, and methodological skills and orientation, Blyden’s pioneering exegesis was ambitious in its challenge of the Hamitic myth and its contention that "the malediction of Noah" was directed at the black race. Foreshadowed was a lifelong hermeneutical effort that anticipated those of later generations of black biblical scholars.[[119]](#endnote-119) More immediately, Blyden’s critical synthesis of his classical studies and hermeneutical skills employing his developing facility in the classical and biblical languages may have been a portent of his eventual embrace of the new, more critical literary and historical approaches to Scripture fostered in progressive and liberal religious circles.

Still, as Blyden approached the cusp of his third decade, his continued allegiance to the traditional hermeneutical and theological tenets of the Reformed tradition was publically manifest in what was described as an "ardent, practical piety" that was reflective of the deeply held beliefs that had sustained him in his journey from St. Thomas and in his efforts thus far to develop a life of usefulness and purpose in Liberia.[[120]](#endnote-120) He appeared to be genuinely humbled by all that had transpired in his personal and public life in the preceding decade.

Seemingly, the prayers issued by friends and family before he departed from St. Thomas and immigrated to Liberia had been answered: he had obtained an education; and as an educator, minister, and budding scholar, he was making promising contributions to the evangelization and development of his adopted homeland and even the “valorization” of the race. Upon assessing his remarkable journey thus far, Blyden was moved to evoke the essence of Reformed piety as he confessed: "The Lord has been truly kind. He has made darkness light before me, crooked things straight and rough places smooth. I have great cause for my thankfulness and humility, in view of his great goodness and my entire unworthiness."[[121]](#endnote-121) It was in this mood and mode of appreciative piety that Blyden undertook his subsequent role as one of Liberia’s foremost advocates.

**Chapter 3: Colonization Theologian**

The dispersal of Africans throughout the “New World,” the founding of the colonization movement, and the establishment of Liberia and its neighbor Sierra Leone were interrelated byproducts of the African and diaspora engagement with Western modernity. Blyden would assume a variety of roles, positions, and policies in response to the complex dialectic that accompanied their intersection. As an eighteen-year-old preparing to sail for Liberia, he penned the first of his many impassioned religion-based defenses of the young republic and colonization.[[122]](#endnote-122) Within a year of his arrival, his enthusiasm for both was conveyed to an American audience via an essay and an accompanying poem published in the columns of the New York Colonization Journal. Admonishing black and white critics who viewed colonization as the “twin-sister of slavery,” Blyden affirmed that “*It is Christian!*” In tortured prose, he valorized Liberia while contrasting its promise of “liberty” with the state of oppression and humiliation endured by blacks in the United States.[[123]](#endnote-123) Such testimony coming from the pen of a black colonizationist who professed to be both eyewitness and active participant in the development of Liberia was eagerly circulated in colonization circles and commended him to colonization’s advocates.

Foundational to Blyden’s early perceptions of both Liberia and the colonization enterprise were aspects of the Reformed Tradition which he had been introduced to as a youth on St. Thomas, reinforced during his studies at Alexander High School, and formally embraced at his ordination. Its peculiar theological, hermeneutical, and missiological orientation decisively shaped a rapidly growing corpus of writings, addresses, and sermons by Blyden that invariably projected the Colonization Society and Liberia as playing crucial roles in both temporal and salvific history.[[124]](#endnote-124) According to this perspective, the fledgling nation “providentially” birthed and nurtured by the "blessed" colonization society was destined to serve as the precursor of an assault upon not only slavery and racism but also African "heathenism." Liberia, comprised of both indigenous West Africans and black returnees bearing not only the scars of New World slavery but also the accruements of “progress” purchased with generations of sweat, blood, and tears, was projected as the vanguard of the “modern” development of Africa and its descendants on the continent and throughout the African diaspora.[[125]](#endnote-125) Moreover, in “the fullness of the Divine Plan,” Liberia would not only serve as an instrument for the redemption of Africa and its descendants but also play a vital—though as yet not fully discerned—role in the restoration and salvation of the entire human race.

Biblical narratives, themes, motifs, and language creatively reinterpreted became staples of Blyden’s secular and religious arguments in defense of Liberian colonization and the African race. It was a formula premiered in his first published monograph, A Voice From Bleeding Africa on Behalf of Her Exiled Children.[[126]](#endnote-126) In both orientation and content, it reflected Blyden’s sensitivity to a biblically aware African American community reluctant to embrace Liberian emigration.[[127]](#endnote-127) In response, Blyden skillfully evoked and interpreted scriptural motifs of exile and exodus intimately familiar to his audience to cajole "colored men of every rank and station" to make Liberia, rather than Haiti or South America, the focus of emigration plans.[[128]](#endnote-128) Liberian emigration was cast as a phase of both racial and religious deliverance, as Blyden proclaimed that the "object of Liberia" was nothing less than "the redemption of Africa and the disenthrallment and elevation of the African race”—an enterprise “pregnant with glorious results [for] the whole human race!"[[129]](#endnote-129)

Blyden’s “messianic” appeals were grounded in the expectation that those who responded would return to Africa with the material and secular skills, talents, and resources gleaned in the course of their tragic but providentially ordained encounter with “New World” modernity. However, he would be continuously disappointed to discover that most “New World” Africans and their descendants were committed to employing their resources, talents, and skills in the diaspora context rather than as part of Liberia’s temporal and salvific mission. Given its evident import, Blyden surmised that African Americans’ reluctance to embrace Liberia and its offerings of liberty, economic success, and racial progress and redemption could only be explained by a sense of racial inferiority that made them complicit in their oppression.[[130]](#endnote-130)

As his life and career became even more vested in the colonization movement and the fledgling republic, Blyden’s theologized and romanticized justifications, presented in a flood of publications, lectures, and sermons, would soon make him one of the most articulate and prolific spokesmen of the dream that colonization would allow Liberia to become the nucleus of a modern West African state that would serve as the outpost of Christianity in Africa and proof of the capabilities of the "Negro race."

In 1861, Blyden had an opportunity to make a personal and direct appeal for Liberia and colonization to the diaspora African community with his commission by the presbytery to travel to the United States to attend the Old School General Assembly. Amid the backdrop of increased denominational strife over doctrine and slavery, he embarked on his first visit to the United States since his immigration a decade earlier.[[131]](#endnote-131) However, due to a delay in Britain, Blyden arrived too late to attend the divisive Presbyterian assembly and was unable to “enjoy the privilege of being the first black representative from Africa to that distinguished body.”[[132]](#endnote-132) Nevertheless, during his visit, he presented sermons and addresses in prominent venues that auditioned his early synthesis of ideology, theology, and biblical hermeneutics in vindication of the race and defense of Liberian colonization.[[133]](#endnote-133) It was the first of ultimately seven lecture tours throughout North America and the Caribbean between 1861 and 1895 that chronicled Blyden’s emergence as arguably the most prominent minister, religious scholar, and public intellectual of the black Atlantic.[[134]](#endnote-134)

The outbreak of the Civil War within months of Blyden’s return to Liberia presented an even more propitious opportunity to reiterate the case for Liberian emigration before black and white residents of a divided America. With an appointment by Liberia’s President, he joined Episcopal minister and Cambridge graduate Alexander Crummell along with physician J. D. Johnson as "Emigration Commissioners" in a return to North America to present Liberia's Providential and temporal claims.[[135]](#endnote-135) Amid civil war and numerous demoralizing legal, political, and domestic developments adversely impacting the African American community, the Liberian commissioners received an unusually sympathetic hearing during the spring and early fall of 1862.[[136]](#endnote-136)

Fellow black Presbyterian minister, Henry Highland Garnet, was representative of the more positive perception of African emigration entertained amid the outbreak of the civil war. [[137]](#endnote-137) Notwithstanding continued reservations about the broader agenda of the American Colonization Society and its leadership, Garnet welcomed Blyden into the pulpit of his Shiloh Presbyterian Church.[[138]](#endnote-138) There Blyden delivered "The Call of Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America."[[139]](#endnote-139) As the most theologically and hermeneutically ambitious of Blyden’s early colonization treatises, it revealed his eagerness to engage in the exploration of “the mysteries” of the Divine Will, particularly as related to “the redemption of Africa” and her descendants.[[140]](#endnote-140)

Other black ministers joined Garnet in opening their sanctuaries and even denominational conclaves to Blyden and his fellow commissioners, and versions of the “Call of Providence” were delivered “in all the major cities” and “principal colored churches” of various denominations from Washington, D.C., to Portland, Maine.[[141]](#endnote-141) However, not all black religious or secular leaders were persuaded by the commissioner’s biblically and theologically grounded arguments in justification of colonization. Characteristically assured of the validity of his hermeneutical and theological insights, Blyden was “particularly grieved” by blacks who remained obstinate in their opposition to Liberian colonization in the face of what he believed to be providential decree and directive. Much of this opposition Blyden attributed to mulattoes. Exhibiting the animus that would eventually develop into an irrational and almost paranoid distrust, fear, and even hatred of blacks of mixed racial heritage, Blyden denounced them as "immoral" and "weak people" whose "confused race instincts" chronically hampered the advance of the race on both sides of the Atlantic.[[142]](#endnote-142)

Prominent among the “half-white men” who were the target of Blyden’s ire was the Liberian colonization movement’s foremost critic—Frederick Douglass. Although he had earlier served as a lay minister of the African Methodist Zion Church, by the 1860s Douglass was increasingly disillusioned and disgusted with both black and white versions of evangelical orthodoxy, which he perceived as equally complicit in black subjugation. Having become more comfortable with the theological, biblical, and racial heterodoxy of New England luminaries who were formulating and embracing an emergent theological liberalism, Douglass was not swayed by the biblical and theological justifications offered by Blyden, Crummell, and other ministerial advocates in defense of colonization.[[143]](#endnote-143) He vehemently denounced "the satanic spirit of colonization,” which was “craftily veiling itself in the livery of Heaven, and speaking in the name of Divine Providence." Unsparing in his public ridicule of “the colonization class of theologians" and their attempted appropriation of "history, philosophy, theology” in “sanctimonious endorsement” of “all the base passions of one race towards another as the inevitable ordination of Divine Providence,” Douglass charged that their “preachments” were all the more dangerous since they were impervious to appeals to “reason, justice, and humanity."[[144]](#endnote-144)

Undeterred by ridicule from Douglass and the criticism of other prominent African American leaders, Blyden and Crummell presented their passionate pro-colonization arguments in texts authored during their tour.[[145]](#endnote-145) Notably, their books also previewed the different perceptions of mid-nineteenth century modernity and its implications for people of African descent, which the two clergymen were beginning to embrace and advocate.

Free-born in the United States in 1819, Crummell received his early education at a Quaker school in New York. However, upon seeking admission to General Theological Seminary to prepare for the Episcopal ministry, he was refused enrollment because of his race. Nevertheless, he successfully achieved ordination to the priesthood in 1842. Notably, Crummell subsequently joined the growing number of black clergy from Africa and the Atlantic diaspora who sojourned for various lengths of time in Britain and wider Europe as their religious and academic communities were being challenged and recontoured by theories and discoveries emergent amid Victorian-era modernity.[[146]](#endnote-146)

Crummell’s arrival in Britain in 1849 and subsequent enrollment in Cambridge University placed him in the midst of full-blown controversy within church and academy sparked by the new scientific and intellectual developments associated with modernity.[[147]](#endnote-147)

Ironically, Crummell’s foremost biographer contends that currents of modernity that were emergent in England at mid-nineteen century had little impact on Crummell. Consequently, he contends that Crummell’s philosophical, theological, hermeneutical, and missiological orientation remained essentially orthodox and conservative as he struggled to complete an education primarily focused on Moral Philosophy and the Classics.[[148]](#endnote-148) However, among his professors at Cambridge was William Whewell (1794–1866), “Knightsbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy” who was prominent among British scholars early engaged with modernity’s emergent academic, intellectual, scientific, and religious corollaries. And, reportedly, not only students but also prominent scholars and scientists of the era, such as Charles Darwin, “frequently turned to Whewell for philosophical and scientific advice.”[[149]](#endnote-149)

Notwithstanding, arguments to the contrary, is evident that during his five-year sojourn in Britain, Crummell was unavoidably exposed to scientific, academic, intellectual, and religious developments emergent amid Victorian modernity as well as the related discord which these were beginning to foster within the British religious and academic establishment. Moreover, it is unlikely that this exposure left Crummell’s religious, pedagogical, philosophical, or racial thought unaffected. The latter thesis is supported by Ntongela Masilela, who contends that Crummell’s engagement with and response to Victorian modernity would make him the major progenitor of a “New African Modernity” in South Africa. [[150]](#endnote-150)

In 1853 Crummell became the “first black graduate of Cambridge,” and emigrated to Liberia where he became a friend and colleague of Blyden and labored for almost two decades as an educator and missionary. [[151]](#endnote-151) Thus it was from Liberia that the initial religious, pedagogical, racial, and cultural implications of Crummell’s exposure and reactions to the currents and challenges posed by Victorian-era modernity and his assessment of their relevance for the uplift of Africans and their diaspora descendants became discernible. Ironically, his orientation and efforts, accompanied and nurtured by an Anglophilism, were characterized by his conceptualization and concern to advance a version of modernity that was rooted in classical studies, and the religion, ethics, and other accruements of “Christian Civilizationism.” Publications such as “The English Language in Liberia” (1860) and The Future of Africa (1862) broadcast his strained, conflicted, and conservative prescription and model for black engagement with modernity. Of special note is Masilela’s contention that Crummell’s writings about modernity, religion, education, and racial uplift had special impact upon Tiyo Soga and generations of South African clergy-intellectuals: “It is Alexander Crummell, the African American man of religion who had studied at Cambridge University, who brings to Xhosa intellectuals the idea that the trinity of Shakespeare, Milton, and Bacon is fundamental to any construction or participation in modernity by African people.”[[152]](#endnote-152)

Initially, Blyden and Crummell cooperated in several endeavors and concerns aimed at the uplift of blacks in Liberia and the diaspora. These included not only active support of colonization but also the fostering of higher education as colleagues at Liberia College. However, various issues, both personal and professional, including increasingly divergent views and assessments of modernity and its implications for people of African descent, strained and eventually ruptured the relationship shared by the more theologically, ideologically, ethically, and socially conservative Crummell and Blyden. Contrasting perceptions of modernity and the nature and goal of “Christian Civilizationism” were already discernible in the apologies for Liberia and the colonization enterprise published by the two amidst their 1862 lecture tour of the United States. Crummell’s text auspiciously titled The Future of Africa featured an essay titled "The Relations and Duty of Free Colored Men in America to Africa," which reflected his embrace and advocacy of a Eurocentric model of modernity that fostered moralizing and generally negative assessment of Africa, its inhabitants, their culture and religion. According to Crummell:

Darkness covers the land [Africa], and gross darkness the people. Great social evils universally prevail. Confidence and security are destroyed. Licentiousness abounds everywhere. Moloch rules and reigns throughout the whole continent, and by the ordeal of Sassy wood, Fetishes, human sacrifices, and devil worship, is devouring men, women, and little children. They have not the Gospel. They are living without God. [[153]](#endnote-153)

Blyden's publication titled Liberia's Offerings also reflected an Anglophilism and negative perceptions of indigenous African culture and religion. However, his views of both were less fixed and rigid and they would gradually be altered in the wake of his ongoing historical and hermeneutical studies and his subsequent research focused on West Africa’s indigenous populations. Arguably, Liberia’s Offering anticipated and forecast the less conservative and more positive reaction to modernity and its religious and racial corollaries and their impact upon African and diaspora Africans that would gradually characterize Blyden’s perception of and response to modernity and its corollaries. Over time, it would clearly distinguish his perception and response from that of more formally educated black clergy such as the Cambridge educated Crummell, the University of Glasgow educated Tiyo Soga, and the Princeton Seminary educated Francis Grimke.[[154]](#endnote-154)

Despite Blyden’s lack of formal higher education, Liberia’s Offering which included “The Call of Providence,” “A Vindication of the Negro Race,” “Hope for Africa,” “Eulogy of Rev. John Day,” “A Chapter in the History of the African Slave Trade,” and his “Inaugural Address at the Inauguration of Liberia College,” marked his emergence as one of the era’s most gifted young scholars and intellects. Among the publications that commended the text and its author was The Presbyterian Church’s Foreign Missionary, which described Blyden as “a man of real worth and modesty,” while adding that his text was “creditable to his intellect, scholarship, and ability."[[155]](#endnote-155)

The brief but informative bibliographical sketch that introduced Liberia’s Offerings also provided notice of an important extension of Blyden’s lecture tour—his "long-deferred and eagerly–anticipated [return ] visit" to St Thomas.[[156]](#endnote-156) Upon his arrival, residents of St. Thomas and nearby islands, spurred by notices in local papers and Blyden-produced circulars, turned out in large numbers to hear this returned favorite son expound upon the significance of Liberia and insistence that they take part in the providential drama that he described as unfolding in West Africa. Near the conclusion of his month-long visit, Blyden submitted an open letter to the “Editor of the St. Thomas Tidende,” expressing his appreciation for the warm welcome afforded him and “the noble cause which I have the honor to represent.”[[157]](#endnote-157) It also reiterated his invitation for “the exiled sons and daughters of Africa” dispersed throughout the Atlantic Diaspora to return and participate in the building up of Liberia and contribute to Africa’s regeneration. Referencing the Exodus narrative, Blyden appealed for their return to Africa bearing the gifts, talents, and skills that as Africa’s dispersed descendants they had acquired during their traumatic encounter with New World modernity:

We call them forth out of all nations, we bid them take up their all and leave the [countries] of their exile as of old the Israelites went forth from Egypt, taking with them their trades and treasures . . . .We summon them from these West India islands, from the United States and the Canada’s, from South America, --from everywhere to come and take part with us in our great work.[[158]](#endnote-158)

Citing the failed efforts of whites, he added that it was “obviously the duty of Africa’s own sons to betake themselves to their injured fatherland and bless those outraged shores . . . with the blessing of Christianity and civilization.” [[159]](#endnote-159)

Blyden’s embellished account of his return to the “West Indies” likened the response of its residents to him, his lectures, and colonization circulars to “the advent of a second Moses” and the “publication of a new Evangel.”[[160]](#endnote-160) Consequently, friends and supporters of colonization in the United States and Liberia were buoyed by his optimistic assessment of the interest and potential contributions of West Indian blacks. The Journal of the New York Colonization Society, enthused that his call for the residents of St. Thomas and the islands of the West Indies to participate in Liberia’s development inspired the interests of “hundreds there and in the Tortugas Islands [who] expressed a desire to emigrate to Liberia, to participate in its privileges, and partake of its noble duties toward Africa.” Intertwining hope and scriptural prophecy, it concluded: “We shall not wonder if Liberia and Africa, hereafter, reap a large accession of valuable population from the West Indies. Ethiopia stretches out her hand.”[[161]](#endnote-161)

Upon his return to Liberia, an emboldened Blyden took advantage of his recent appointment as Secretary of State to successfully lobby for governmental support of an emigration project that resulted in the colonization of 346 emigrants from Barbados in 1865. As the nation’s foremost colonization theologians, he and Crummell joined in a welcome for the new immigrants conspicuous for its incorporation of Pan-African and religious rhetoric with idealized expectations of their appropriation and distribution of the industrial and technological garnered in the diaspora.[[162]](#endnote-162) Both were hopeful that it would be the first of many ceremonies welcoming to Liberia hundreds of “industrious persons, mechanics of various kinds and agriculturists with their families” who would contribute to the development of the nation. However, their hopes were unrealized as the Liberian government’s lack of funds, resources, and commitment stifled further large-scale migrations from the West Indies.[[163]](#endnote-163)

Ironically, Blyden would never return to St. Thomas or the wider West Indies as a “Second Moses” to reiterate his “Evangel” of Pan-African unity and Liberian colonization. In the aftermath of the Civil War and the failure of Reconstruction, he would focus his attention on assisting the American Colonization Society to encourage and sponsor Liberian emigration from the United States. His efforts would justify his designation as one of the nineteenth century’s most prominent “colonization theologue[s]” even as his perception of Liberian colonization and development, consistent with his evolving critique of Western modernity and its impact upon peoples of African descent became more critical over ensuing decades. [[164]](#endnote-164)

**Part II Nascent Scholar**

**Chapter 4: New Wine**

Well before the start of his second decade in West Africa, Blyden had already begun fulfilling the intellectual and scholarly promise early noted by both Knox and Wilson.Ironically, the prodigious intellectual and scholarly efforts that he was beginning to exhibit was inspired in part by the Presbyterian Board of Mission’s rejection of his pre-ordination petition for formal theological education in the United States. In the wake of what appeared to be another racially rooted evasion of his formal education, he embraced a wide-ranging and disciplined program of rigorous self-study and education aimed at the vindication of both himself and the race.

Blyden studies and resulting scholarship would encompass multiple and intersecting foci: excavation of Africa’s overlooked contributions to the history of Christianity and civilization; examination of the inhabitants, languages, cultures, pedagogy, and religions of interior West Africa; research on the related history and impact of Africans in the Atlantic diaspora; examination of the history and impact of Islam in Africa; comparative analysis of the influences of missionary Christianity and Islam and their intersection with race and culture; and critical examination of the intellectual, religious, and cultural heritage of Europe and the West even as the latter was being challenged and reshaped under the press of modernity’s incessant discoveries and developments. Blyden’s prodigious ability to simultaneously engage this expansive, multi-focused, and interrelated intellectual and scholarly agenda and his relative success in synthesizing and forging the resulting dialectic into pathbreaking scholarship that prioritized Africa and her descendants would justifiably earn him a place of respect among the most creative scholars and intellectuals of the era.

In 1862 Blyden’s rapidly expanding corpus of scholarly publications and addresses attracted the attention of American-based friends concerned with expanding educational opportunities in Liberia. He was offered, and accepted, appointment as professor of Greek and Latin Languages and Literature at newly opened Liberia College.[[165]](#endnote-165) His appointment marked the beginning of a long and tumultuous affiliation with Liberia College that continued sporadically into the first decade of the next century. His relationship with the college would also reflect critical stages of his subsequent intellectual, religious, pedagogical, and ideological metamorphosis in response to the synthesis of his African based research and the changes being fostered by modernity and its corollaries.[[166]](#endnote-166)

Ironically, controversy related to Blyden’s appointment to the college erupted immediately. Although officially nonsectarian, no few of the college’s American-based overseers and supporters were Presbyterian clergy and educators. Consequently, the school’s linkage to the theologically embroiled American Presbyterian community occasioned conflict with Blyden as its focus. [[167]](#endnote-167) Among the points at issue was his acceptance of the College's "Fulton Professorship," allegedly without "proper evidence that he had subscribed to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith."[[168]](#endnote-168) Long of special concern to Old School conservatives preoccupied with doctrinal and theological laxity, subscription to the doctrines of Presbyterianism had reemerged as a source of contention with the further divisions of American Presbyterianism occasioned by the Civil War.[[169]](#endnote-169)

The immediate controversy at the college was handled with dispatch and discretion by its trustees and Blyden’s supporters. However, its emergence was proof that the Presbyterian mission in West African was not immune to increasing theological and doctrinal conflicts that would divide the American Presbyterian community and broader Western Christianity in the wake of academic, intellectual, scientific, racial, and religious challenges increasingly presented by modernity. The aborted controversy at the college also anticipated related tensions that would erupt and persist within the Presbytery of West Africa regarding Blyden’s religious orientation and allegiance. The controversy may also have been an early indicator that Blyden’s theological and doctrinal orientation was already undergoing transition and that it had become suspect in Presbyterian circles on both sides of the Atlantic.[[170]](#endnote-170)

Characteristically, Blyden envisioned the college and his appointment to a faculty that also included the Cambridge educated Crummell, as a crucial step toward fulfillment of what he perceived as the school’s providentially ordained role in the redemption of the African race. This theme was the keynote of his address at the formal inauguration of Liberia College on January 23, 1862.[[171]](#endnote-171) Introduced as a "youthful giant. . . [and] qualified representative of the capacity of the black man to occupy the first rank in literature," Blyden’s address celebrated the founding of the college as a momentous step in the advancement of Liberia and the African race. History, theology, and ideology were merged as he proclaimed that it was "an auspicious day for Liberia, and for West Africa" as the "descendants" of slaves, "having escaped the fiery ordeal of oppression and slavery, and having returned to their ancestral home, . . .[were now] laying the foundation of [an] intellectual empire, upon the very soil whence their fathers were torn." It was, he marveled, nothing less than the working of a "strange and mysterious providence."[[172]](#endnote-172)

While college supporters and trustees advocated a “kind of education” allegedly attuned to and circumscribed by the African’s “peculiar circumstances and characteristics,” Blyden presented a spirited call for a more ambitious pedagogical agenda as he argued that Africans “have the same intellectual needs that other men have,” and therefore “must be supplied by the same means. . . .” “Mind,” he opined, “is everywhere the same.”[[173]](#endnote-173) Therefore, he insisted that the curriculum of Liberia College should not be compromised or limited by racialized presuppositions of African intellectual or scholarly capabilities. Rather, it should be identical to that of the best Western institutions and include the study of "language," "mathematics and physical science," "jurisprudence and international law," and "the study of intellectual and moral philosophy."[[174]](#endnote-174)

Blyden’s inaugural comments evidenced both the breadth of study and the inherent Anglophilism, which characterized his early self-education. An impressive list of historical and contemporary works by Western authors was cited as he admonished students and patrons that “if we desire among us great poets, statesmen, and philosophers, if we would have profound theologians and able lawyers we must resort to such books as the great men whose tongues we speak studied; to such books as Milton and Cowper, Bacon and Newton, Butler and Paley studied; to the books which the great men of England *now* study; to the literary companion [s] of Brougham, Gladstone, and Disraeli, to Caesar, Horace, and Tactus, to Demosthenes and Cicero; to the Aeneid, the Odyssey, and The Iliad.”[[175]](#endnote-175) It was notable, that while Blyden’s list of recommended and cited books and authors critical for African development overlapped with that of Crummell, his list was more inclusive of texts and authors that anticipated the academic, intellectual, scientific, and religious challenges posed by the emergent conflict with modernity and its corollaries.[[176]](#endnote-176)

Also telling was Blyden’s rhetorical query: “Though much has been already done, there is yet a great deal to be achieved in the fields of science and literature; and may we make no achievement?”[[177]](#endnote-177) Notwithstanding his homage to Western authors, texts, and scholarship, it was an affirmation of his belief that Africans on the continent and in the diaspora were destined to add their distinctive contributions to the course of modernity’s intellectual and scientific advance. Thus he concluded with the celebratory but weighty proclamation that “The first College in West Africa is founded” and “a momentous experiment has been committed to our hand on these benighted shores, an experiment in which are involved, to a great extent, the interests of Africa and the African race. . . .We hail this institution as the precursor of invaluable blessings to this benighted land—as the harbinger of a bright and happy future for science, literature, and for all the noblest interests of the African."[[178]](#endnote-178)

Blyden’s inaugural address was additional proof that he had embarked on a rigorous program of intellectual development that included the study of an impressive array of British and American literary, academic, and religious texts and journals. Significantly, his studies also included examination records from Oxford, Harvard, and other prominent universities whose faculties and curriculum were already beginning to respond to the myriad developments and challenges posed by various currents of modernity. Correspondence with leading scholars and public figures in Europe and America who were similarly engaged also proved to be an essential component of his intellectual and scholarly development.

Prominent among Blyden’s early correspondents was William Evert Gladstone, the British statesman, liberal politician, churchman, and classical scholar, with whom he shared not only an interest in classical literature and languages but also the fusion of scholarship and public service with an intellectually grounded and activist piety.[[179]](#endnote-179) And although Blyden readily acknowledged West African exemplars such as the recently deceased Liberian minister and statesman Rev. John Day, it was Gladstone’s multifaceted and high-profile career that more closely provided the model of an informed and devout public intellectual and civic servant that Blyden sought to emulate.[[180]](#endnote-180) Over a span of sixteen years, he would pen at least eleven letters to the progressive British statesman and scholar.[[181]](#endnote-181) The first penned in 1860 displayed Blyden’s characteristic brashness as well as his lifelong tendency to ingratiate himself with the powerful and influential:

Dear Sir,

It will no doubt occasion some surprise, and perhaps, excite indignation, that an entire stranger, residing on a far off and barbarous shore, and connected with a race down-trodden and despised, should intrude upon the time and patience of one so distinguished as yourself, with matters that, in comparison with the numerous subjects that press upon your attention, must be of the merest insignificance.[[182]](#endnote-182)

After acknowledging his “impertinence,” Blyden explained that he was “a youth endeavoring to obtain an education” and made a direct appeal to Gladstone’s reigning passions:

My tastes and predilections—strange as it may seem for one in my circumstance—are for classical literature. The love of languages is my predominating passion. I have striven, under various disadvantages to gratify to some extent this passion. I have acquired some knowledge of the Greek, Latin & Hebrew languages. Of modern languages, I read, write, and speak the French somewhat; the Spanish I read a little. I have read some of the principal Latin, and portions of two of the Greek authors—the *Anabasis* of Xenophon and a part of Homer’s *Iliad.*[[183]](#endnote-183)

Blyden was also quick to assure Gladstone that he was no mere intellectual dilettante. He insisted that his studies had a practical application and that his request for help was not rooted in selfish motives: “My desire to enlarge my education arises from the interest I feel in the Negro race, and my great anxiety is to labor with increased efficiency to promote and accelerate that progress."[[184]](#endnote-184) The British statesman and classical scholar was impressed as Blyden intoned that both his study and teaching of the classics at Alexander High School was imperative for the production of “men of enlightened minds, of enlarged views, of high-toned character" necessary for the realization of Liberia’s potential.[[185]](#endnote-185)

Upon pointing out the difficulties of such an ambitious agenda “with the necessarily meager facilities” available in Liberia, Blyden requested “two favors” from Gladstone: (1) advice in the pursuit of his studies--“a succinct account of the manner in which you pursued your classical studies: which works read, and the order in which they were read”; and (2) the gift of a small library composed of eleven major works in the field. Notably, the requested materials included not only Gladstone’s Homeric Studies but also the “The Oxford or Cambridge Examination Papers for 1859."[[186]](#endnote-186) Also of significance in light of Blyden’s subsequent intellectual and theological metamorphosis was his request of works authored by two clergymen playing prominent roles in the liberalization of British thought in response to the religious and social implications of modernity—Charles Kingsley and Julius Charles Hare.[[187]](#endnote-187)

Blyden’s campaign for support succeeded in attracting the assistance of the busy British scholar and statesman. Genuinely impressed by the goals and accomplishments of his aspiring West African protégé, Gladstone not only granted Blyden an audience during his visit to Britain in 1861 but also directed his staff to be especially attentive to his requests for assistance. Additionally, indicative of the extent to which Gladstone was impressed by Blyden’s academic potential was his subsequent offer to assist him in pursuing a classical education at Oxford. Although appreciative and flattered, Blyden, encumbered with a growing family and already embarked on a path of self-study and public service in Liberia, expressed regret that he could not accept Gladstone's generous offer to "hold converse with the muses in England.”[[188]](#endnote-188) Nevertheless, over the course of his subsequent studies from West Africa, as well as personal acquaintances and friendships developed during multiple sojourns in England, a maturing Blyden would engage in increasingly influential “converse” with some of England’s most prominent muses.

Blyden's correspondence with Gladstone and especially his request for the works of progressive clergy and scholars such as Kingsley and Hare was already indicative of his increasing awareness of the new intellectual and religious currents of the era.[[189]](#endnote-189) Moreover, association with an expanding circle of prominent British academic and ecclesiastical leaders during and after his initial visit to England in1861 would further introduce Blyden to the broader implications which developments associated with modernity and its corollaries were posing to the British academic and ecclesiastical establishment.

Arguably, Blyden’s encounter with the new scientific, intellectual, and religious developments accompanying late Victorian modernity was inevitable. Ordained just a year before the 1859 publication of Darwin’s Origin of Species, he came to theological and intellectual maturity during the initial stages of the controversies which it and the host of new scientific, intellectual, academic, and religious developments that accompanied it provoked in church and academy.[[190]](#endnote-190) However, consistent with the orthodox theological and biblical orientation imbibed during his studies with Knox and Wilson and subsequently affirmed during his ordination exam and ordination, an intellectually curious Blyden was initially resistant to and critical of Darwinism and its accompanying racial, biblical, missiological, and theological corollaries. Rather, he was early allied with the forces of evangelical orthodoxy in resistance to the challenges and threats that modernity and an accompanying “scientificism,” “rationalism,” and “secularism” posed to traditional tenets of Christianity and Christian Civilizationism.[[191]](#endnote-191)

Enthralled by Victorian culture, which he still viewed as the epitome of Christian Civilizationism, Blyden even credited Britain’s international stature to a national piety existing firmly within the boundaries of mid-nineteenth century orthodoxy. The "secret to England's greatness," he professed in one of his earliest letters to William Gladstone, "lies, I apprehend, in that deep reverence, which exists in the high places of the land for God and his word; in those multiplied agencies which are everywhere in operation for the suppression of vice and for the propagation in every corner of the Empire of truth and righteousness."[[192]](#endnote-192) Relatedly, a year later, he was writing to Gladstone to express alarm about the religious sentiments articulated by the authors of Essays and Reviews. The controversial text, published just months after the Origin of Species, was penned by prominent liberal and progressive churchmen and scholars and served notice of their embrace of the new intellectual, theological, historical, and hermeneutical developments and perspectives that were emerging amid late Victorian modernity. Essays and Reviews also signaled the broader challenges which the text’s authors presented to the traditional British ecclesiastical and academic establishment as they “abandoned a literal adherence to biblical authority by using alternative textual and archaeological sources for religious history and by proposing a developmental process of religious progress.” Moreover, they “directly challenging the scientific credibility of the Bible” as they “rejected miracles for the laws of science and questioned the scientific credibility of the creation account in the book of Genesis.” Consequently, they provoked what has been described as “the greatest religious crisis of the Victorian age.”[[193]](#endnote-193)

In what must have been one of the first critiques of Essays and Reviews penned by an African, Blyden evidenced both his early anglophile and orthodox leanings as he denounced the manifesto’s authors and its religious and cultural impact. Noting that the “famous” text was “carried to all parts of the world,” he opined that its authors “certainly did not know the influence of the words they were penning” nor their impact upon "over thousands in America, Asia, Africa, and the isles of the sea." Blyden’s early anglophilism was illuminated as he charged that its authors, had abdicated their role as representatives and defenders of Victorian culture by having acted irresponsibly with the “peculiar” heritage of “language and religion” as well as “faith and morals” that had allowed Britain to obtain unprecedented influence as the world’s foremost example of Christianity and Christian civilization.[[194]](#endnote-194)

Four years later, Blyden interjected himself more directly into British intellectual, cultural, and religious conflict by offering a rebuttal to criticism of William Gladstone by religious conservatives who were alarmed at perceived desertions from orthodox circles by Gladstone and increasing numbers of prominent British ecclesiastics, academics, and intellectuals.[[195]](#endnote-195) In response, Blyden presented a vigorous defense of Gladstone in which he adamantly denied the charge by religious conservatives that Gladstone had departed from “religion,” his “first love,” with the result that he was now "revolutionary in politics and rationalistic in religion.” He also evoked a revealing comparison as he insisted that the British statesman and scholar had neither “adopted the religious creed—if creed he has—of J. Stuart Mill” nor the “vagaries of Dr. Colenso.”[[196]](#endnote-196)

The figures selected by Blyden for contrast with Gladstone were not only indicative of his still conservative theological and missiological orientation but also illustrative of his limited perception of the range of conflict within British intellectual and religious circles. Five years earlier he had penned a letter to Gladstone rejecting Mill’s advocacy of what he described as “the secularizing theories of mere Utilitarians.”[[197]](#endnote-197) But even more illuminating of Blyden’s existing theological, hermeneutical, and missiological orientation was his dismissive reference to the “vagaries” of John William Colenso.[[198]](#endnote-198)

Colenso, a scholarly Anglican minister, and missionary had been influenced by religious progressives such as Frederick Denison Maurice and continental biblical scholars and theologians such as Abraham Kuenen. His ordination as bishop of Natal, South Africa, in 1853 provided an occasion for creative synthesis of his progressive hermeneutical, theological, comparative, and missiological tenets.[[199]](#endnote-199) The result was the publication of a provocative series of texts that challenged prevailing assumptions about the Bible. For example, in The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Considered, Colenso proclaimed that “the Pentateuch, as a whole, cannot personally have been written by Moses or by anyone acquainted personally with the facts that it professes to describe and . . .[therefore] cannot be regarded as historically true.” [[200]](#endnote-200) Not surprisingly, Colenso’s provocative texts evoked the ire of conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic. Notable among his American critics was William H. Green, professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature at Princeton Seminary and author of a rebuttal titled The Pentateuch Vindicated from the Aspersions of Bishop Colenso. [[201]](#endnote-201)

Meanwhile, Colenso’s notoriety among missiological and biblical traditionalists was heightened when, as Bishop of Natal, he appropriated the findings of the emergent “science of religion” and biblical criticism to advance the missionary cause in southern Africa with the publication of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Newly Translated and Explained from A Missionary Point of View. [[202]](#endnote-202) His iconoclastic hermeneutical and missiological efforts included redressing apparent scriptural inaccuracies as well as advocacy of respect for existing African indigenous religious and cultural practices, including polygamy. The combination would earn him the enmity and ridicule of conservatives purportedly for denying truths “precious to the sinner’s hope of salvation.” The broader threat posed by Colenso and by implication those who shared his hermeneutical and missiological perspectives were sounded in a pastoral letter penned by Bishop Gray, Colenso’s ecclesiastical superior in southern Africa:

The heresies into which Dr. Colenso has fallen are no light or common errors. They touch the very life and being of the Christian Church, overthrow the faith of Christendom. It is not merely the distinctive teaching of the Church of England that he has impugned. He has assailed those fundamental truths of our common Christianity, which are equally cherished by the Churches of the East and West, and by every sect and denomination of Protestant Christians. It is with Christianity itself, as a revelation from God, that he is at war.[[203]](#endnote-203)

Although exonerated of the more serious charges by the Church of England, Colenso endured public ridicule as “the bishop who went out to convert the heathen and [instead] became converted by the heathen.” His prosecution and persecution highlighted a growing awareness of the profound implications that the new intellectual, scientific, and academic currents associated with modernity held for the missiological enterprise. [[204]](#endnote-204)

Blyden’s spirited defense of Gladstone and insistence on the latter’s continued fidelity to Victorian orthodoxy suggest that he had underestimated the impact that currents of modernity were having even upon the intellectual thought and religious orientation of his erstwhile mentor. Conservative fears regarding Gladstone’s fidelity to orthodoxy appeared to be warranted when, in 1869, he nominated Frederick Temple to the See of Exeter-- a development described as "the foremost defeat for the politics of religious conservatism."[[205]](#endnote-205) Blyden would evidence a belated acknowledgment of the extent of Gladstone’s intellectual and theological metamorphosis as his own adherence to intellectual and theological orthodoxy became increasingly tenuous in subsequent decades. [[206]](#endnote-206)

Conservative allegations of Gladstone’s heterodoxy would prove prophetic of similar charges that later emerged regarding Blyden’s allegiance to doctrinal and missiological orthodoxy. More ironic still was the fact that the religious odyssey and scholarly career of Bishop Colenso, whose “vagaries” Blyden had ridiculed, would even more closely foreshadow the exigencies of his own religious and intellectual metamorphosis as he gradually embraced hermeneutical and missiological perspectives that paralleled those of Colenso. His subsequent efforts to make the Christian missionary enterprise and effort more sensitive to and respectful of African religious and cultural traditions would similarly reflect his critical appropriation of the findings and sensibilities of the emergent disciplines of historical and biblical criticism and the new findings of comparative religion. This synthesis would contribute to his advocacy of progressive missiology that eventually included an ardent defense of indigenous African religions and customs, including polygamy. Moreover, like Colenso, he too would be criticized and publically ridiculed for his efforts by more conservative colleagues.[[207]](#endnote-207)

Amid his growing awareness of the seismic shifts that were beginning to take place in Western intellectual and religious circles throughout the 1860s, Blyden remained committed to the “vindication” of the Negro race. However, it was an agenda that became increasingly complex and rife with unexpected personal and professional implications as his engagement with and response to the academic, intellectual, racial, and religious developments accompanying modernity became simultaneous with and increasingly influenced by his encounters with West Africa’s indigenous populations and his pioneering study of their languages, religions, and cultures.

Like most of his black and white ministerial and missiologically focused colleagues, Blyden initially expressed a pejorative and disapproving view of indigenous African religion and culture. Echoing fellow black clergy such as Crummell, he regularly employed terms such as “pagan,” “barbaric,” and “backward” in his depictions of their culture and religions. He also embraced the missionizing and civilizing mandate that such terms presumed.[[208]](#endnote-208) However, Blyden’s perceptions of indigenous Africans and their culture would undergo a gradual reappraisal that was rooted in his encounters with African tribes inhabiting the Liberian interior. The seeds of change may have been sown as early as 1853, when he participated in a military expedition against the “Vey” and found himself surprised and awed by their "inventive nature" and their social and cultural arrangements.

Consequently, in 1868 the linguistically gifted Blyden announced that he had begun a study of the Vey language, making it the first of several indigenous African languages to which he would apply his linguistic and philological skills. Although inspired in large measure by a missiological agenda--“to procure for them [the Vey] copies of the Scriptures in their own language”—racial pride was also a key factor in his decision to study their language. Thus, he pledged “to devote what spare moments I have to the study of this interesting language. . . because it is a standard vindication of the Negro against the charge of incapacity for invention, with which he had been branded.”[[209]](#endnote-209)

Thereafter, in contrast to popular claims that Africa was "not fit to dwell in" and that its inhabitants were "incorrigible" practitioners of "barbarism, degradation, and superstition, and insuperable hostility to civilization," Blyden frequently cited the existence of "black men, pure Negroes who live in large towns, cultivate the soil, and carry on extensive traffic, maintaining amicable relations with each other and with men from a distance." Continued research in the West African interior would lead him to argue that " the ideas that formerly prevailed of the interior of Africa, which suited the purposes of poetry and sensation writing, have been proved entirely erroneous."[[210]](#endnote-210)

Of related importance was Blyden’s discovery that the inhabitants of several West Africa’s interior tribes were converts to an indigenized version of Islam. [[211]](#endnote-211) Although having imbibed much of the era’s orientalism and its exotic and unflattering caricatures of Islam and its adherents which were common among his fellow black and white missionaries, Blyden found that such views were contradicted by his encounters with interior West African tribal groups that had come under Islam’s influence.[[212]](#endnote-212) The most "interesting and promising" of these tribes, he opined, were the Mandingoes, who were "numerous, intelligent, enterprising” and “not a few of them learned." Many, he also observed, were able to "read and write . . . and speak the Arabic language," which not only functioned as Islam’s primary agency of diffusion but also the most important medium of communication among the interior tribes. Moreover, under the religious and cultural influence of Islam, interior tribes had established mosques; and of related importance to the pedagogically oriented Blyden, they had also created “schools in every large town." Islam’s broader religious and missiological impact was also noted as Blyden observed that its adherents had "diffused everywhere among the pagan tribes contiguous to and within the Republic, the idea of the presence and power of the Supreme Being."[[213]](#endnote-213)

Ideological, pedagogical, missiological, and political concerns merged as Blyden, in overlapping roles as Liberia’s Secretary of State, educator, minister, and missionary, surmised that Islam and its Arabic-speaking adherents could serve as an asset in the development of the young nation. Most immediately, they might help facilitate the incorporation of the Republic’s neglected indigenous population into the body politic and eventually serve as an invaluable aid in both their education and conversion to Christianity. To this end, Blyden embraced the controversial missiological theory, accounted as heresy in most traditional evangelical circles, that the spread of Islam and via it the dissemination of Arabic could "be the medium of communicating sound Christian knowledge" into the Liberian and wider West African interior and thereby serve in effect as a “stepping stone” to the conversion of indigenous Africans to Christianity.[[214]](#endnote-214)

An immediate consequence of Blyden’s reassessment of Islam and his growing conviction that its language and adherents could play an important role in the development of Liberia was his campaign to introduce Arabic into the curriculum of Liberia College.[[215]](#endnote-215) It was to this end that Blyden departed Liberia for Lebanon in May 1866. His destination was the Syrian Protestant College, recently opened in Beirut and sponsored by an alliance of American Protestant mission agencies. There he hoped to increase his proficiency in Arabic as well as forge links with progressive missiologists and activists who were developing an innovative but controversial missiological strategy based on using Arabic as an instrument for the dissemination of Christianity. [[216]](#endnote-216) En route to Lebanon, Blyden made the momentous pilgrimage to Egypt and Palestine, later chronicled in From West Africa to Palestine. [[217]](#endnote-217) It provided archeological evidence that helped to confirm his sense of the crucial role played by Africans in antiquity—a thesis that he would articulate three years later in “The Negro in Ancient History.”[[218]](#endnote-218)

Blyden’s assumptions regarding the potential importance of Arabic and Islam in West Africa were reiterated in correspondence with Rev. Daniel Bliss, the Presbyterian president of the college in whose home he lived during his stay in Lebanon.[[219]](#endnote-219) Aware of the heightened missiological concerns and alarm of Bliss and his colleagues, Blyden concurred in their assessment that knowledge of Arabic had become a necessity "for those who were to educate the youth and train the future missionaries in that part of the world [i.e., West Africa]."[[220]](#endnote-220)

However, an Arabic-rooted outreach to adherents of Islam and West Africa’s indigenous traditions induced skepticism and derision from more traditional mission theorists and missionaries as an “absurd” and “wild caprice.” Included among the latter were most of Blyden’s colleagues in the Presbytery of West Africa and at the College of Liberia who were not reticent in their criticism.[[221]](#endnote-221)

Undeterred by his critic, Blyden proceeded to Lebanon where he joined a number of the era’s most prominent missionaries and missionary dignitaries in a hermeneutical and educational enterprise that not only anticipated and was “closely tied to modern biblical scholarship” but also more broadly reflected the intersection of the evangelical mission movement with currents of modernity.[[222]](#endnote-222) Ironically, Blyden may not have been fully aware of the extent to which his efforts to learn Arabic, his travel to the Levant, residence at the newly founded Bible College, and plans to participate in the dissemination of the newly translated and published Arabic Bible, inexorably linked him to the era’s new philological, hermeneutical, archeological, and missiological developments. Nevertheless, they anticipated and served as a harbinger of his subsequent efforts to interrogate, selectively appropriate, and mediate modernity’s scientific, intellectual, religious, and racial corollaries on behalf of the vindication and welfare of the African race.[[223]](#endnote-223)

An assessment of the significance of Blyden’s matriculation at the Syrian Protestant College and participation in its ambitious missiological agenda was sounded by no less than Rev. H. H. Jessup. Jessup, a member of the American Board of Missions and one of the era’s foremost missionary administrators, lauded as momentous Blyden's plans to study and employ Arabic to "train up young evangelists in the college of Liberia to carry the gospel into the interior." Casting Blyden’s agenda in a broader providential context, Jessup proclaimed that his presence "marks an era in the history not only of the Arabic language but of Christian Missions:”

It is not a little striking as connected with the providential history of Missions, that just when the long and patient toil of the American Missions in Western Asia is crowned with success in the completed translation of the Word of God into the Arabic languages, and when a great education institution, the “Syrian Protestant College" has become firmly established in the metropolis of Syria, that an educated professor should come from the shores of Western Africa to Western Asia, to learn the language and carry back with him this Arabic Bible, and thus confront the Koran with the Bible in that distant land.[[224]](#endnote-224)

In addition to his linguistic studies, Blyden’s stay in Beirut provided him with an opportunity to champion Liberia as a critical part of the broader advance of missionary Christianity.[[225]](#endnote-225) In celebration of the nineteenth anniversary of the republic’s independence, he presented a lecture, appropriately titled "Liberia, Past, Present, and Future," that appraised the college’s assembled missionaries and dignitaries of Liberia’s history and missiological significance.[[226]](#endnote-226) The published version of his address, introduced with a notice by Benjamin Coates of Philadelphia, informed readers that its author, "of pure African blood," was visiting Lebanon to “learn Arabic, so as to teach it in Liberia college, at Monrovia, and thus to further the great work among the Mohammedans of Western and Central Africa." In language that Blyden was already finding to be inconsistent with his changing assessment of Islam and its adherents, Coates, unabashedly reiterated the era’s popular rhetoric of missiological triumphalism and orientalism as he explained Blyden’s sojourn at the college as part of an attempt to provide West African “followers of the false prophet,” who regard the Koran with “superstitious reverence,” with “the truth, which is ‘the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.’"[[227]](#endnote-227)

Upon Blyden’s return to Liberia from Lebanon, his increased competence in Arabic facilitated more intimate contact with West African Muslims and the pathbreaking studies of Islam and Christianity that would issue from his pen in the next decade.[[228]](#endnote-228) A newly enthused Blyden also attempted to follow through with his plan to introduce the study of Arabic among his pupils at Liberia College as part of a program of national development as well as Christianization.[[229]](#endnote-229) Writing to a member of the Board of the New York State Colonization Society in 1868, he reiterated his expansive agenda: "I am more and more convinced of the importance of the cultivation of the Arabic language in Liberia” as not only the "medium of communicating sound Christian knowledge" but as also "the standard and common medium of communication for all." Of particular significance was his suggestion that Arabic might additionally serve as "the means of improving some of the [indigenous] vernaculars . . . so as to render them competent to convey European science and literature to a great mass of pagans."[[230]](#endnote-230) Of additional significance, given Blyden’s love of the Classics and role as the college’s professor of Greek and Latin Languages, was his confession that “if I could, I would suppl[ant] the place of Latin as a means of mental discipline in College, by Arabic, as having a more direct and practical bearing upon our work here."[[231]](#endnote-231)

Not surprisingly, Blyden’s push for inclusion of Arabic into the college’s curriculum did not garner unanimous support from either faculty colleagues such as Crummell or the school’s local overseers, who continued to advocate a more Eurocentric and classical pedagogy. However, it was testimony to Blyden’s influence upon more progressive members of the distant American Boards that Arabic soon joined “Latin, Greek, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonemoy [Trigonometry], Mental, Moral and Natural philosophy, Logic and History” as part of the college's curriculum.[[232]](#endnote-232)

Nevertheless, Blyden’s efforts at fostering a more linguistically and religiously expansive curriculum at Liberia College proved to be both tenuous and temporary. In private correspondence, he later alleged that neither the President nor Executive Committee of the college “encouraged the introduction of Arabic studies” but allowed it only as a “side study” and ensured that “every obstacle was thrown in the way of the boys who studied it."[[233]](#endnote-233) Lack of support would be a factor in his subsequent resignation from the college. It was the first of a series of resignations and rehires that punctuated a sporadic and contentious with Liberia College that would extend into the first decade of the next century and effectively chronicle his religious, racial, and pedagogical response to related currents of modernity.[[234]](#endnote-234)

Blyden’s growing interest in Arabic and Islam and his interaction and cordial familiarity with members of Liberia’s Muslim community proved increasingly disconcerting to fellow members of the Presbytery of West Africa. Few if any of his presbytery colleagues shared his enthusiasm for engagement with either the adherents of Islam or Africa’s more indigenous religions and cultures. Their unquestioned adherence to the theological, pedagogical, and missiological tenets of traditional Old School Calvinism as well as the era’s prevailing Orientalism provided little incentive for them to look beyond the trappings of Western Christianity and culture to appreciate either Islam or indigenous West African religions. Most persisted in viewing them as "pernicious and perverted religion[s] propagated by disciples of a false prophet" and their adherents as “debased” and “backwards.”[[235]](#endnote-235) Consequently, Blyden's increasingly sympathetic studies of Islam and its adherents elicited not only ridicule but also heightened suspicions about his theological and doctrinal allegiance from fellow members of the presbytery.[[236]](#endnote-236)

In contrast, Blyden’s growing enthusiasm for work in the Liberian interior, particularly among its Muslim population, and his success in publicizing his engagement with them elicited support from key members of the American Colonization Society and the Presbyterian Board of Missions. Eager to convey his success among Liberia’s Muslim population and its missiological implications, he provided them with an effusive narrative of his interactions with Muslins in 1868: “I am just now particularly interested in the interior where, especially among the Mohammedans, I have frequent visits from distinguished men among them. I wished the other day that some of the condemners of Negro intelligence among you could have been present, when a scholarly Foulah priest from Futa Jallon called upon me, and [I]. . . heard him read, in sonorous and melodious accents, the Arabic both in the Koran and the Bible. . . . He did it beautifully, and the greatest Arabic purist-Dr. Van Dyck himself, would have heard him with pleasure.” “Earnest professors of Islam,” he added, “urge me to come out and see their country. I am now about to avail myself of their invitation.”[[237]](#endnote-237)

Seeking endorsement for his efforts amid eroding support from the college and Presbytery, he also argued in correspondence to the Board of Missions that the Presbyterian Church and its Liberian missionaries were particularly situated to successfully convert adherents of Islam: "From this church I am persuaded will come the men who will cope most successfully with the Mohammedans of the interior; and I am persuaded that teachers from among us will bring aspiring Mohammedan youth as willing leaders to their feet. The quietness and dignity of the well-educated Presbyterian contrasts in his favor to the Mohammedan, with the excitable and emotional religion of the Methodists and others. His self-reliance and intelligent acquaintance with the Scriptures are elements of character that impress the Mohammedans."[[238]](#endnote-238)

Blyden's labors and perhaps more importantly his success in persuading the American Board to support his efforts would eventually induce even skeptical members of the Presbytery of West Africa to belatedly, though not enthusiastically endorse his work.[[239]](#endnote-239) Still, notwithstanding his more positive views of Islam and its adherents, Blyden’s religious orientation and missiological agenda remained constrained by his continued embrace of and allegiance to the theological and missiological tenets and agenda of Reformed Orthodoxy which emphasized the study of Arabic and Islam and interaction with its adherents primarily as tools of Christian conversion and missionary advance. Nevertheless, Blyden’s travels, contacts, and studies helped to lay a foundation that would eventually make him an increasingly respected, though controversial, participant in the heightened missiological discourse of the era and a pioneering "scholar in the emergent field of Islamic studies."[[240]](#endnote-240)

Blyden’s increased interaction with West African Muslims and his study of Arabic further inspired and complemented what had he had early affirmed as his lifelong mission—retrieval of Africa and her descendants from the waste bin of both sacred and secular history and their defense from the continued onslaught of racism.[[241]](#endnote-241) Consistent with his commitment to the “vindication” of the race, in 1869 he authored “The Negro in Ancient History” which was published in the influential Methodist Quarterly Review. The article’s racial and literary significance was noted by the journal’s editor Reverend Daniel E. Whedon, who professed, “This is so far as we know, the first article in any [literary] quarterly, written by a hand claiming pure Ethiopic lineage.” [[242]](#endnote-242) Both title and content of the article illuminated Blyden’s concern to correct misinformed and racist assessments of the past, present, and future of the African race. With no apologies, it forthrightly challenged prevailing truisms which insisted that Africa and Africans had made no contributions worthy of note to either sacred or secular history.[[243]](#endnote-243)

The full scope and repertoire of Blyden’s developing biblical, literary, historical, and philological skills were employed in researching and writing "The Negro in Ancient History." Notwithstanding the scarcity of resources available in Liberia, he labored to access and become familiar with the extant literature regarding ancient Africa and its progeny. He also petitioned scholarly acquaintances such as Gladstone for “sources of information on the Ancient Ethiopians.”[[244]](#endnote-244) Additional inspiration, as well as data, had been gleaned during his 1866 trip to Palestine and North Africa en route to Lebanon. The profound impact which this trip had upon his sense of racial pride and heightened commitment to scholarship on behalf of the African race was made explicit in his confession of the deluge of emotions elicited upon viewing the pyramids which he proudly proclaimed to be “the work of my African progenitors.”[[245]](#endnote-245)

The Bible was also among the key literary and historical resources, additionally excavated by Blyden. Although the findings and methodology of the discipline of biblical criticism making inroads in progressive academic and religious circles had yet to be incorporated as part of his scholarly arsenal, his deft handling and creative application of the era’s traditional hermeneutics nevertheless yielded valuable support. The testimony of Scripture as confirmed by his own literary, historical, as well as the nascent archeological research undertaken during his recent trip to Egypt, provided incontrovertible proof that Africans had been a significant presence in antiquity—that they "had played an important part in the early history of Egypt" and as active participants in the world's first great civilization had been partly responsible for passing to posterity "the germs of all the arts and sciences."[[246]](#endnote-246)

Heralded as “the most serious attempt made by a member of the Negro race to reconstruct aspects of early Negro history,” Blyden’s article anticipated the work of later generations of scholars of various disciplines who would follow his lead in exploring the role and contribution of blacks in both sacred and secular antiquity.[[247]](#endnote-247) Thus, despite being primarily framed within the hermeneutical and theological orientation and methodology of traditional nineteenth-century Reformed orthodoxy, Blyden’s pathbreaking scholarship helped to lay the foundation for a hermeneutic that anticipated the work of later generations of black biblical scholars, historians, and theologians.

The scholarly and critical acumen demonstrated by Blyden in researching and authoring “The Negro in Ancient History,” also anticipated his subsequent interrogation, selective appropriation, and mediation of the academic, intellectual, and racial corollaries associated with modernity, particularly as they were perceived as impacting the welfare of people of African descent.[[248]](#endnote-248) Additionally, by affirming the role of Africans in the progressive development of humanity and civilization, Blyden laid the basis for his challenge and refutation of the prevailing genealogy and concept of modernity with its rootage in the primacy and hegemony of the economic, cultural, intellectual, scientific and religious accruements of Europe and the West.

As Blyden stood poised in 1870 to enter his fifth decade, he was aware that many of the foundational tenets and presuppositions undergirding his early education as well as his initial religious and racial beliefs and even ministry were being challenged not only by his own West African based research but also by the findings of a growing cadre of Western scholars engaged with and advancing the intellectual, academic and religious accruements of modernity. He appears to have experienced and responded to these varied currents of research and scholarship as inexorably interrelated and intertwined: emanating on the one hand from the insights gleaned from his encounter with Africa’s past and present, and on the other from his increased awareness of the myriad currents and developments associated with modernity that were rapidly reshaping the theological, missiological, and racial presuppositions of Western Christianity and culture. Amid this dialectic, he would attempt to forge a complementary and corrective synthesis. It would prove to be a daunting but eagerly embraced lifelong mission.

**Chapter 5: Gleanings**

As a budding young scholar, Blyden had informed Gladstone that he would make “usefulness” the measure of his scholarship, and despite his initial resistance, he gradually discerned much amid modernity’s new academic, intellectual, scientific, religious, and even racial developments that would prove useful and aid him in achieving this goal.[[249]](#endnote-249) An important benchmark of his increasing openness to and acceptance of the new scholarship and ethos associated with modernity and its corollaries was his changing perceptions of the theory of evolution. Darwin’s Origin of Species was published in London less than a year after his ordination, and he was aware of the conflict which it was engendering within church and academy. [[250]](#endnote-250) His initial response to the controversial theory was consistent with and reflective of his newly professed allegiance to the tenets of Reformed orthodoxy, and he identified it as one of the era’s new “forms of infidelity.”[[251]](#endnote-251) However, he gradually concluded, as had Gladstone and theological moderates such as Scottish minister and Princeton Seminary Professor James McCosh, that Darwin’s findings, when properly understood, were not necessarily antithetical to the teachings of Christianity or the authority of the Bible.[[252]](#endnote-252) A related factor influencing Blyden’s appreciation of the theory of evolution was his discernment that the concept could be appropriated in support of his own racial, religious, and pedagogical agenda. Importantly, however, he refused to embrace all versions of Darwin’s thesis since he was also keenly aware that some interpretations and applications provided ready legitimation for some of the era’s most malicious racist theologies, theories, and policies.[[253]](#endnote-253)

Blyden’s selective and cautious embrace of the concept of evolution heralded his openness to the findings and discoveries of the broader trove of scientific, intellectual, academic, and even religious developments emergent in the wake of late Victorian modernity.[[254]](#endnote-254) Prominent among the new methodologies which he cautiously and selectively appropriated was the historical-critical method.[[255]](#endnote-255) His adoption of its methodology and perspectives would facilitate his pioneering historical, ecclesiastical, literary, and hermeneutical studies. It also helped to legitimate his iconoclastic reinterpretations of the history and origins of Christianity with particular emphasis on the contributions made by Africa and her descendants to Christianity's development and expansion that were ignored within traditional nineteenth-century historical, ecclesiastical, and biblical scholarship.[[256]](#endnote-256) Blyden’s pioneering appropriation of historical-critical methodology in the exploration and legitimation of this thesis also underscores his under-appreciated role as a scholar of the historical development of Christianity and his role as an astute interpreter of the broader ecclesiastical history of Europe, Africa, and the African diaspora.

By providing scholarly support for what would become Blyden’s persistent argument that contemporary manifestations of Western Christianity were neither normative nor final, his appropriation of the historical-critical method also legitimated his challenges to the hegemonic authority of Western and European versions of Christianity. Thus, it provided important validation and support for his demand for revision of the methods and goals of the Christian missionary enterprise and, ultimately, his insistence on the indigenization of Christianity in Africa with accompanying African rituals, theology, and leadership.[[257]](#endnote-257)

Of related significance was Blyden’s gradual embrace and selective appropriation of the controversial methodology and scholarship associated with biblical criticism. His initial commitment to biblical hermeneutics had been inspired by the “revulsion of mind” which he experienced as an eighteen-year-old upon hearing an American Divine “of eminent learning and ability” torture scripture in justification of slavery and the recently passed Fugitive Slave Law. [[258]](#endnote-258) Subsequently, his early hermeneutical efforts and self-study of Latin, Greek, and eventually Hebrew were intended to enable him to “read passages in the Bible purporting to the Negro without racist redaction.” [[259]](#endnote-259) They also reflected his initial adherence to the basic precepts of traditional mid-nineteenth-century biblical scholarship as evidenced by his dismissive reference to the controversial biblical studies of Bishop Colenso in 1866.[[260]](#endnote-260)

Nevertheless, within a decade, Blyden was clearly en route to becoming one of the foremost black adherents and advocates of the methodology and findings of biblical criticism even as he issued a cautionary admonition to scribes “spending their time in investigating the letter of the Scripture and failing to catch its spirit.”[[261]](#endnote-261) By the close of the century, Blyden was calling upon blacks to familiarize themselves with biblical criticism as well as broader developments related to the “scientific study of religion” and warning that they could ill afford not to do so.[[262]](#endnote-262) Central to his specific argument that black educators, as well as ministers, appropriate the methodology and findings of biblical criticism was his perception that it was a partial antidote to the era’s resurgent hermeneutical racism and all the more imperative because the “sinister influence” of the Hamitic Myth was being magnified as a result of the pernicious impact which it was exerting “upon the consciousness of [increasing numbers of] Christian Negro youth in theological schools and colleges.” [[263]](#endnote-263)

Several works published by Blyden before the end of the 70s indicate that theories, methodologies, and findings associated with evolutionary thought, the historical-critical method, and biblical criticism were already being critically and cautiously appropriated in dialectical synthesis with his pioneering studies of African history, languages, religions, and culture. Of additional importance was Blyden’s increasing familiarity with the findings and methodologies of a related crop of new disciplines emerging under the press of modernity. Anthropology, comparative philology, sociology, and the “science of religion” would become crucial additions to the intellectual, academic, and ideological arsenal that he was forging in defense of the race and the mediation of modernity.

The emergent discipline of comparative religion, initially known as “the science of religion,” would be of special relevance and usefulness to Blyden. Although having antecedents that extended into antiquity, its emergence in the late Victorian era was directly related to the impact of modernity and its corollaries. Instrumental in its formulation and that of the related field of comparative philology was the British based German scholar Friedrich Max Muller. [[264]](#endnote-264) The German-born Muller was exposed to the new intellectual and religious currents and challenges posed by modernity during his youthful studies in Berlin. His orthodox Lutheran piety and heritage eventually proved susceptible to not only evolutionary thought but also the new historical and literary-based methodology and findings of biblical criticism which nurtured his conviction “that the Old and New Testament were historical books. . . to be treated according to the same critical principles as any other ancient book….”[[265]](#endnote-265)

Upon migrating to England in 1846, Muller’s studies and scholarship became focused on the intersection of “science,” language, religion, race, and culture.[[266]](#endnote-266) With his innovative studies focused on Sanskrit, the ancient language of "British India," Muller was instrumental in developing the discipline of comparative philology as “an extension of modern critical techniques and principles” that “intersected with theology and with the academic study of religion.” [[267]](#endnote-267) His scholarship, buttressed by his appropriation of the findings of biblical criticism and evolutionary theory, coupled with a religious orientation that was liberal and progressive, attracted the attention and support of similarly inclined British scholars such as William Gladstone, Arthur Stanley, Benjamin Jowett, and A. H. Clough. [[268]](#endnote-268)

Muller’s scholarship also elicited opposition from conservative religious and academic critics who were especially concerned with his application of evolutionary theory to discourses regarding the origins and development of religion. [[269]](#endnote-269) Conservative journals such as the British and Foreign Evangelical Review pronounced his account of the evolutionary development of religion to be a “formidable threat to revelation” and in “irreconcilable contradiction to the teaching of our Lord and his apostles.” [[270]](#endnote-270)

Although Muller insisted “that one of his objects in editing the Sacred Books of the East” was ‘to assist missionaries,’ conservative opposition to his religious orientation and scholarship effectively coalesced around the threat which his work appeared to pose for the traditional missionary enterprise. Conservative opposition would prove to be a deciding factor in Muller’s failed quest in 1860 for appointment to the prestigious Boden chair at Oxford and the award of the position to the more theologically and missiological traditional Monier Williams.[[271]](#endnote-271)

However, eight years later, despite continued conservative opposition, Muller became Oxford's first professor of “comparative philology.” [[272]](#endnote-272)

Muller’s subsequent application of comparative methodology to the realm of religion would contribute to the formation of the “science of religion.” In testimony of his growing scholarly acclaim and that of neoteric science, Muller was invited in 1878 to deliver the inaugural Hibbert Lecture “On the Origin and Growth of Religion” in what became the premier forum of the emergent discipline.[[273]](#endnote-273) Muller’s scholarship and publications were also attracting the attention of a little known West African based scholar who was also engaged with the dialectic of race, religion, language, and culture as experienced within the African milieu.

The works of Muller likely came to the attention of Blyden during the late ’60s, as he became increasingly familiar with the responses of the British academic, intellectual, and religious communities to the currents of modernity. A growing interest and research in West African languages and cultures paralleled that of Muller and other European scholars focused on the growing numbers of non-European peoples coming under the sway of European domination. Muller’s studies focused on Sanskrit and the Vedas, and his contributions to the founding of “comparative philology” likely proved both inspirational and instructive to the West African focused studies of the linguistically gifted Blyden. And within a decade, his own philological efforts and contributions would be acknowledged by scholars in both Britain and the United States by invitation to become a member of the American Philological Association*.*[[274]](#endnote-274)

However, Muller’s related contributions to the development of the “science of religion” would be much more critical to Blyden as he became familiar with several publications that solidified Muller’s status as the “Father of the Science of Religion.” [[275]](#endnote-275) The comparative methodology and perspectives fostered by the emergent discipline would play an increasingly crucial role in Blyden’s study of Africa’s religions and cultures. More significantly, his appropriation of the insights and methodological orientations of the emergent “science of religion” would make it an especially valuable tool in his intellectual, ideological, and missiological arsenal as he engaged in a pioneering interrogation and mediation of modernity’s religious, racial, and cultural corollaries and their impact within Africa and the African diaspora.

By the mid-1870s, several of Blyden’s publications attested that he was familiar with Muller’s formative works and he was regularly referencing them and the findings of “the science of religion” in his comparative analysis of religious, cultural, and missiological developments within West Africa. His 1876 essay titled “Islam and Race” included quotations from Muller’s influential “Lecture on Missions,” which was delivered in Westminster Abbey in December 1873 at the invitation of Blyden's friend and supporter Dean Stanley. [[276]](#endnote-276) Muller’s 1867 collection of essays titled “Chips from a German Workshop,” which “sketched out his vision of what a science of religion should be,” was also referenced by Blyden.[[277]](#endnote-277) Throughout the next decades, Blyden would critically and selectively appropriate the methodology and orientation of the “science of religion” in his own studies of race, religion, culture, and the missionary enterprise in West Africa and the Atlantic diaspora. [[278]](#endnote-278)

Notably, in 1908, in his last major publication titled African Life and Customs, Blyden appreciatively cited an extended excerpt from Muller which illuminated Muller’s pioneering contributions to the development of the “science of religion” and his continued influence upon Blyden and other scholars engaged in the “scientific” study of African religions.[[279]](#endnote-279) In testimony of Muller’s impact, Blyden noted that “Thirty years ago . . . Professor Max Muller pointed out as theory what” he and other contemporary scholars now attempt “to demonstrate as a fact” and it is “not difficult to believe that” they “owe their inspiration largely to the philosophical and scientific disquisitions of . . . [Muller’s] Hibbert Lectures.”[[280]](#endnote-280)

Blyden also pointed out that Muller played a groundbreaking role in the validation of African religion with his rejection of prevailing mid-nineteenth century theories that identified African religion with “fetishism” and “superstition.” Instead, Muller had insisted that “the Negro is capable of higher religious ideas than the worship of Stocks and Stones, and that many tribes who believe in fetishes cherish at the same time very pure, very exalted, very true sentiments of the Deity.” Moreover, Blyden argued that Muller had offered an even more direct refutation of the era’s prevailing religious, racial, and cultural chauvinism with his confession that “I claim no more for the Religion of the Negro than for our own, when I say that it should be judged not by what it is but by what it can be and by what it has been in its most gifted votaries.”[[281]](#endnote-281)

Over the decades, additional concerns and positions embraced and advanced by Muller would parallel and intersect those of Blyden as he gradually appropriated and synthesized the findings and methodologies of both comparative philology and comparative religions with his own African and diaspora focused studies. Included among their shared beliefs and interests were an expansive ecumenical and inter-religious orientation and sensitivity; belief in an ongoing process of religious reform leading to a “universal religion”; the conviction that non-Christian religions held lessons and truths of value to Christianity and its emissaries; that the comparative and scientific study of religion was not detrimental to an informed faith; belief in the concept of “Divine Providence” which could “be discerned in the religious history of theworld as a whole and was not confined to the Judeo-Christian revelation.”[[282]](#endnote-282) Additionally, their studies and experiences led both to increasingly distinguish between the “Christianity of Christ” as reflected in Scripture and that which was less authentically manifest by nineteenth-century Christianity and its adherents.[[283]](#endnote-283)

Despite his ready embrace, Blyden was not oblivious to the fact that the emergent “science of religion” was inherently rooted in the genealogy of European and Western modernity. Thus he was aware that much of its theoretical and methodological orientation, as well as its concerns and agenda, often contributed to, reinforced, and legitimated the exploitation and domination of African and other non-white populations.[[284]](#endnote-284) In this regard, some of Blyden’s critical insights and concerns regarding the emergent discipline anticipated those of contemporary religious studies scholars such as David Chidester and Jonathan Z. Smith who have analyzed the genealogy, lineage, and impact of comparative religions as it emerged within the colonial and imperial context forged by the bludgeon of modernity. Chidester notes that “the discipline of comparative religion emerged . . . not only out of the Enlightenment heritage but also out of a violent history of colonial conquest and domination.”Jonathan Z. Smith similarly opined that the development and practice of the comparative study of religion was “by no means an innocent endeavor.”[[285]](#endnote-285)

Nevertheless, notwithstanding its problems and liabilities, the emergent discipline of comparative religion as interrogated, adapted, and applied by Blyden proved to be compatible with his contributions as a pioneering “indigenous comparative” engaged with religiously diverse and pluralistic African and diaspora African communities. Amid his studies of Christianity, Islam, and, eventually, West Africa’s more indigenous religions, Blyden found the emergent discipline’s comparative methodology and approximation of religious relativism both appealing and useful.[[286]](#endnote-286) It would also provide intellectual and academic legitimation for his increasing challenges to the presumed superiority of Western Christianity and its culture. Of related importance for Blyden was an awareness shared with Muller that the emergent discipline might contribute to a "new scientific treatment of Christian missions" which would alter and advance the missionary enterprise.[[287]](#endnote-287) Moreover, the legitimation which it offered to versions of Christianity more sensitive and responsive to the history, culture, and aspirations of Africans on both sides of the Atlantic was also not lost on Blyden.

The methodology, precepts, and agenda of comparative religion additionally resonated with and further inspired profound changes that were taking place in Blyden’s personal and professional religious orientation. As was the case of Muller and numerous other adherents of the emergent discipline, he increasingly found that in its wake, his maturing theology, ministry, and missiology were more compatible with the tenets of theological liberalism than those of traditional Reformed orthodoxy. Consequently, throughout their lives and careers, Muller and Blyden experienced similar personal and professional tribulations related in part to their embrace of the iconoclastic tenets and precepts of both comparative religion and theological liberalism. The dissemination of their iconoclastic views in numerous lectures and publications ensured that the two would be targets of ongoing criticism and opposition from more traditional academic and religious circles who were not reluctant to suggest that their views and findings were “blasphemous” and “nothing less than a crusade against Divine revelation, against Jesus Christ, and against Christianity.”[[288]](#endnote-288) These parallels extended into the academy and pedagogical realm, as reflected in the response of religious and academic conservative to Muller’s potential appointment to Oxford and the alarm of Blyden’s West African colleagues to his efforts to foster the study of Arabic and, subsequently, the methodology and tenets of comparative religion at Liberia College. Conservative criticism directed at Blyden from members of the Presbytery of West Africa would also echo those made against Muller a decade earlier when the Presbytery of Glasgow contended that his teachings were “subversive of the Christian faith and fitted to spread pantheistic and infidel views amongst the students and others.”[[289]](#endnote-289)

Notwithstanding his awareness of the problems and challenges inherent to the “Science of religion” and emergent discipline of comparative religion, Blyden’s persistent synthesis of its methodology, and perspective with his “eye-witness” research of Islam, Christianity, and African indigenous religions would make him arguably one of Africa’s most important and prominent “indigenous comparativist.”[[290]](#endnote-290) His application of the tenets of both comparative religion and comparative philology to the study of race, religion, culture, and language within the African context would also earn him recognition and acknowledgment from fellow comparativist as attested by invitations to become a member of both the American Philological Association and the American Society of Comparative Religion. Notably, he would also be invited to give a paper on “comparative religion” in 1893 at the Columbia Exposition held in conjunction with the famed World’s Parliament of Religions.[[291]](#endnote-291) Muller was also invited to visit Chicago and address the Parliament, which has been described as the first popular institutional expression of the discipline of comparative religion. However, the intriguing possibility of a meeting between Muller and Blyden in Chicago was precluded when neither could accept their invitations to participate in the era’s most significant conclaves of religious scholars.[[292]](#endnote-292)

**Part III West African Nurture**

**Chapter 6: First Fruits**

By the early 1870s, Blyden’s publications indicate that the insights, perspectives, and methodologies associated with not only the findings of “the science of religion” but also historical and biblical criticism were being cautiously interrogated and selectively appropriated. Augmented by the insights of his African based studies and his lived experiences as a person of color in the late Victorian era, they were becoming crucial components of his intellectual, religious, and racial orientation. This synthesis would contribute to an intellectual, religious, and racial dialectic that would lead him to question and gradually discard many of the traditional tenets of the era. The resulting intellectual, religious, and racial metamorphosis was chronicled in the expanding corpus of publications and addresses that flowed from his pen and tongue in the following decades. [[293]](#endnote-293)

Among the initial indicators and products of Blyden’s interrogation of modernity and its accompanying intellectual and religious metamorphosis were his early comparative assessments of the role and impact of Islam and missionary Christianity in West Africa. A lecture on “Mohammedanism in Western Africa” delivered in Sierra Leone in early 1871 hinted at the consequences that his maturing intellectual, religious, racial, and missiological views posed for the African colonial context. Despite its iconoclastic trajectory, the lecture, attended by European missionaries, native clergy, colonial administrators, Creole merchants, “several Mandingos,” and even the colony’s governor was reportedly well-received.[[294]](#endnote-294) In its wake came invitations to relocate to Sierra Leone and affiliate with Fourah Bay College, which was founded in 1827 to provide "training for ministers and catechists" in the tenets of Anglicanism and Christian civilization. [[295]](#endnote-295) Rev. James Quaker, principal of the colony’s Church Missionary Society’s (CMS) Grammar School and an attendee at his lecture, enthused that Blyden had been divinely prepared to take up the mantle of professor of “Oriental languages” at the school in preparation for more expansive missiological work among Sierra Leone’s interior population.[[296]](#endnote-296)

The invitation to relocate to Sierra Leone and affiliate with the premier institution for West African higher education was especially attractive to Blyden since it appeared to provide an opportunity for the realization of academic, racial, cultural, and missiological fruits of his new studies. It was also timely in the wake of Blyden’s increased difficulties in Liberia with fellow members of the presbytery and his colleagues at Liberia College. Although rooted in several factors, Blyden attributed his difficulties to increasing conflict between Liberia’s “Blacks” and “Mulattoes” which he fueled as he expressed his personal and professional disdain of most mulattoes. He opined that the colony's mulattoes were primarily the descendants of American slaveholders and were not only physically and mentally inferior to “Blacks” but also consumed by self-interest and self-hate. Consequently, he concluded that they contributing to Liberia’s national malaise by nurturing a self-serving and debilitating pigmentocracy that was intended to ensure their political, economic, cultural, and even religious dominance even at the cost of the nation’s health and security.[[297]](#endnote-297)

Liberia’s intra-racial conflict was mirrored within the mulatto dominated presbytery whose members were additionally alarmed by Blyden’s increasingly unconventional missiological and theological views as well as by persistent rumors of his unethical behavior with women. His comportment with women, long whispered about and even cryptically alluded to in mission reports, and private correspondence, was an increasing embarrassment to not only members of the presbytery but also the leadership of the American based Board of Missions[[298]](#endnote-298)

The intermix of intra-racial, professional, and personal tensions proved to be a combustive and almost fatal combination when Blyden was accused in 1871 of having an affair with the wife of Liberia's President, Edward J. Roye; dragged through the streets in Monrovia on a noose, and nearly lynched by what he described as a “Mulatto” mob.[[299]](#endnote-299) The response of the presbytery to the scandal was immediate, and no doubt reflected some of its member’s jealousy and racial animosity. Forgoing an investigation of the charges or a trial, they summarily suspended Blyden from his ministerial privileges and functions. A traumatized Blyden, having fled to sanctuary in Sierra Leone, denied the allegations and attributed the ordeal and the response of the presbytery to a cabal of mulatto enemies that extended into the presbytery.[[300]](#endnote-300) Shortly thereafter, he departed for London, where he spent the summer preparing for the next chapter of his life—a chapter that would witness his more intensive engagement with the intellectual, academic, theological, and missiological corollaries of modernity.

Blyden’s sojourn in England during the summer of 1871 provided an opportunity for him to expand his contacts with influential leaders of the British ecclesiastical and academic establishment, many of whom were deeply embroiled in the era’s intellectual, theological, and missiological realignment.[[301]](#endnote-301) In the wake of his perceived betrayal by fellow members of the presbytery, Blyden may have been especially receptive to the progressive and liberal currents reshaping the British religious and academic landscape. The dynamic that was gradually distancing him from the conservative and defensive orthodoxy exhibited during his defense of Gladstone and critique of Mills and Colenso in the previous decade was suggested in his account of an evening spent "in theological discussions—not polemically, but philologically" with two ministers "fresh from the schools in England."[[302]](#endnote-302) Foreshadowed was his axiom that theological, hermeneutical, and missiological discourse and study should be an occasion for more than the extension of worn dogmatic polemics. The resultant process and synthesis—dynamic, creative, and uniquely organic—would become characteristic of Blyden’s intellectual and religious maturation. His ongoing interrogation and selective appropriation of the scientific, academic, intellectual, and religious corollaries of modernity would provide potent resources that he would use to challenge and mediate both the old and new nexus of race, religion, and culture in West Africa and beyond.

Although there is no known record of their meeting, Blyden’s stay in London provided an opportunity for him to increase his familiarity with the research and scholarship of Muller. Moreover, his own philological studies focused on Arabic and Fulah, attracted the attention of British scholars similarly engaged and fascinated by the intellectual talents and acumen of this dark-hued scholar from Africa.[[303]](#endnote-303) Members of a growing cadre of British acquaintances eagerly facilitated his studies of Arabic and Islamic religion in West Africa and with the assistance of Gladstone, Blyden obtained a ticket as a "private reader" at the British Museum where he met Dr. William Wright, the distinguished orientalist and professor of Arabic at Cambridge, as well as “Dr. Rice,” an officer at the Museum, who offered its facilities for examination of the Arabic manuscripts brought with him from West Africa.[[304]](#endnote-304)

Blyden’s race, scholarship, and increasingly nontraditional intellectual and religious orientation helped to make him a figure of interest particularly within liberal and progressive British circles. Prominent members of his growing list of acquaintances included not only Gladstone but also Arthur Penrhyn Stanley who was Dean of Westminster and one of Britain’s leading liberal theologians and also the author of an impressive corpus of critical ecclesiastical studies; Stopford A. Brooke, Chaplain to the Queen and biographer of the life and ministry of Frederick William Robertson; Frederick Temple, the broad churchman, nominated by Gladstone to the See of Exeter; Dr. James Fraser, recently appointed Bishop of Manchester by Gladstone; Henry Melville, Bishop of Oxford; Dr. William Thompson, Bishop of York; and Henry Venn, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society. Most were enmeshed in varied ways and degrees with the issues and controversies reshaping the British intellectual and religious landscape.[[305]](#endnote-305)

Amid the varied inflections of British liberalism and progressivism being shaped in response to various currents of modernity, Blyden was discovering much that proved useful in buttressing the insights regarding the intersection of religion, race, language, and culture that he had already begun to discern during his pioneering studies from West Africa. “Mohammedanism in West Africa,” published during his London sojourn, was one of the first of a series of articles that previewed both his selective appropriation of the era’s new academic and intellectual currents and the trajectory of his intellectual and religious metamorphosis.[[306]](#endnote-306) “Mohammedanism in West Africa,” also foreshadowed the important role that he and his publications would play in the heated missiological and academic discourse about the comparative merit and contributions of Christianity and Islam in West Africa.[[307]](#endnote-307)

Notably, “Mohammedanism in West Africa” was published in the Methodist Quarterly Review whose editor, Daniel E. Whedon, was a Methodist minister, theologian, biblical scholar, and former professor of classical languages and literature. Progressive and nontraditional in his theological and racial orientation, Whedon was appreciative of Blyden’s iconoclastic religious and racial views. He had published Blyden's initial scholarly study, "The Negro in Ancient History," and heralded it as "the first by a Negro to appear in a literary quarterly."[[308]](#endnote-308) Whedon's editorial patronage was extended with the publication of "Mohammedanism in West Africa," and his proclamation that Blyden was "a man of genius, and of singular acquirements" in possession of a "grace of English style rarely surpassed, a fine imagination, a linguistic erudition, and...a Christian enthusiasm for the good of his race, [which] mark him as a man who ought to be furnished with ample scope for his talents."[[309]](#endnote-309)

“Mohammedanism in West Africa” introduced the core arguments that Blyden would refine, cultivate, and expound for the next forty years in publications and lectures focused on the Islamic influence in West Africa, its implications for African adherents, and its impact on the Western missionizing and civilizing enterprise. In summary, the article laid the foundation for his thesis that there was much about Islam and its adherents that was worthy of serious study and even emulation by Christians and that Islam's influence upon indigenous cultures and inhabitants of West Africa had been more beneficial than that of traditional missionary Christianity. [[310]](#endnote-310)

Despite Blyden’s vigorous concern to mediate popular religious and cultural stereotypes of Islam and its adherents, his insights and efforts remained cast within a missiological framework and agenda that reflected his continued adherence to many of the biases of nineteenth-century orientalism.[[311]](#endnote-311) Nevertheless, “Mohammedanism in Africa,” effectively previewed Blyden’s pioneering philological research and the broader synthesis of his indigenous studies and insights with those of prominent European scholars of Islam such as Weil, Noldeke, Muir, Sprenger, and Emanuel Deutsch whose writings, he opined “have taught the world that ‘Mohammedanism is a thing of vitality, fraught with a thousand fruitful germs.” [[312]](#endnote-312)

“Mohammedanism in West Africa” also clearly designated its author as an important and uniquely informed scholar of Islamic influence in West Africa. It elicited immediate interest among Blyden’s growing cadre of progressive British friends and colleagues curious about his research on Islam, and it was eagerly “sought after by those who are anxious to know something of that system among negroes.”[[313]](#endnote-313) Prominent among those reportedly clamoring for the article was Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Dean of Westminster, and a friend of Gladstone and Muller. Stanley, who applied the tenets of critical historiography in his ecclesiastical studies, became one of Blyden’s “closest English Friends” with whom he “managed to spend long hours with . . . on each of his nine subsequent visits to England before Stanley died in 1881.” [[314]](#endnote-314)

While the unconventional views expressed by Blyden in “Mohammedanism in West Africa” were generally well-received by religious liberals and progressives on both sides of the Atlantic*,* they proved disconcerting within more conservative evangelical circles. Illustrative was the reception given Blyden’s more iconoclastic sentiments within the African Repository, which, was the official medium of the American Colonization Society. [[315]](#endnote-315) Although its editor William Coppinger was a confidant of Blyden and frequently defended his writings and activities, even he saw fit to sound a cautionary note.[[316]](#endnote-316) The religious and missiological views expressed in the article were described as "novel," and therefore demanding "more attention." Specifically cited as problematic were Blyden’s unflattering comparisons of Christianity’s impact with that of Islam and his suggestion that “Christian missionaries . . . endeavoring to civilize Africa, [might] learn some profitable lessons” from the adherents of Islam. Also deemed worthy of “more attention” was Blyden’s broader critique of the traditional goals and methods of misguided and misinformed Christian civilizationists, who attempted “to impose suddenly a foreign civilization upon a people” but failed to realize that they “must be civilized [and Christianized] upon the basis of their own idiosyncrasies.”[[317]](#endnote-317)

Blyden’s iconoclastic views also attracted the attention of conservative leaders of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the powerful mission arm of the Anglican Church. As the most prominent advocates of British Christianity in the West African mission arena, they were troubled by his positive assessments of Islam relative to Christianity and his broader criticisms of the missionary enterprise within West Africa. They also found especially ominous his warning that they “must not expect to make European Christians of Africans, but [rather] African Christians” and his related prophecy that within both church and school, "the day is fast approaching when Africa will be represented by her own sons.”[[318]](#endnote-318) The fears that Blyden’s studies elicited among conservatives within the CMS proved prophetic when he returned to West Africa and relocated to Sierra Leone. Ironically, the British Colony rather than Liberia would be the most important matrix of his comparative religious and philological studies and his efforts at mediation of modernity and its religious, racial, pedagogical, and ideological corollaries.

**Chapter 7: West African Ferment**

Blyden’s sojourn in England during the summer of 1871 which facilitated the publication of his initial comparative studies, as well as his interaction with an expanding circle of progressive British scholars and acquaintances, also served to congeal and confirm the trajectory of his intellectual, theological, and missiological metamorphosis. He returned to West Africa equipped with intellectual and religious gleanings culled from his most protracted encounter with the myriad currents of British modernity. He also returned harboring a heightened awareness of modernity’s less positive aspects as manifest in late Victorian Britain and its problematic implications for Africa and its descendants on the continent and in the diaspora.[[319]](#endnote-319) The experience bolstered Blyden’s growing conviction that replication of a European or Eurocentric version of modernity with its religious, racial, cultural, and pedagogical corollaries was not a viable or desirable option in the West African context. West Africa, he opined, would have to engage and respond to modernity along its own paths rather than those envisioned, advocated, and advanced by Europe’s traditional agents of modernity—church, school, and colonial administration.[[320]](#endnote-320)

However, Sierra Leone, rather than Liberia, would be the site of Blyden’s initial effort to mediate modernity’s nexus of race, religion, and culture in West Africa. As he prepared to depart London for self-exile in Sierra Leone, Blyden nevertheless found it difficult to give up on what he described as two decades of commitment rooted in “passion as well as principle” to “the upbuilding of Liberia.” Before the Presbytery of London, he reiterated his belief in the critical role to be played by "Liberia as the means for the evangelization of Africa."[[321]](#endnote-321) But, in the still raw and painful aftermath of his recent public humiliation in Liberia, it was Sierra Leone that he now envisioned as the key to the “vindication,” development, and uplift of the race. He rationalized: "if light penetrates into Africa from Sierra Leone, it will be just as beneficial to Africa and just as acceptable to God as if it went from Liberia." Intellectually, spiritually, and ideologically reinvigorated by his British sojourn, Blyden proclaimed that he was prepared to once again assume the mantel of self-sacrifice on behalf of his “suffering and much-traduced fatherland,” albeit from Sierra Leone rather than Liberia.[[322]](#endnote-322)

Hailed as the most “modern” of Britain’s African colonial possessions, Sierra Leone provided a vibrant matrix for the applied first fruits of Blyden's on-going intellectual and religious metamorphosis and his related scholarly, missiological, and pedagogical efforts. There he would begin to embrace in earnest the role of interrogator and mediator of modernity and its myriad implications for Africa and her descendants. It was a role that he would assume with increased focus and intensity throughout the remainder of his life.[[323]](#endnote-323)

Embracing the expansive ministerial model and agenda advocated in The Pastor’s Work, Blyden immersed himself in the religious, intellectual, pedagogical, and political life of Sierra Leone. In so doing, he became the major catalysis of an incipient nationalism and proto-pan-Africanism rooted in the intersection of race, religion, and modernity that would impact church, school, and colonial administration far beyond Sierra Leone.

Seeking support for a missiological agenda that emphasized the religious and pedagogical needs of Africa and Africans, Blyden sought encouragement and assistance from Henry Venn, the venerable Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).[[324]](#endnote-324) Central to Venn’s missiological agenda was the assumption that there were "irrepressible race distinctions" in the mission arena that inevitably took on a national cast. Thus, he advised CMS missionaries to facilitate this development by ceasing to be "reckless iconoclasts"; by studying the local languages, culture, and "national character of the people"; and by "show[ing] the utmost respect for national peculiarities." Venn also cautioned that their continuation of a paternalism that insisted that African churches and converts be modeled after European patterns of ecclesiastical and theological development was "apt to create a feeble and dependent native Christian community.[[325]](#endnote-325)A more fruitful missionary agenda, he advised, was CMS assistance in the establishment of "self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating" national churches under the leadership of indigenous clergy.[[326]](#endnote-326) To facilitate this process, Venn also called for the development of an educational curriculum that would broaden the narrow religious and often sectarian focus of most mission schools.[[327]](#endnote-327)

Blyden was delighted to discover that Venn's culturally and racially sensitive missiology not only closely paralleled his own evolving missiological and pedagogical thought but was also compatible with his broader agenda.[[328]](#endnote-328) Thus, in Venn, he felt that he had found a kindred spirit. The ailing but still influential CMS secretary also recognized Blyden as a fellow traveler. Consequently, with Venn’s active support and that of other influential friends and acquaintances, Blyden was hired by the CMS "on very liberal terms" to join Fourah Bay College as a linguist and Arabic teacher.In the wake of his appointment, an optimistic and enthusiastic Blyden wrote to inform Coppinger that the CMS, "led by a remarkable chain of concurring providences," had accepted his offer to transfer "his labors from Liberia to Sierra Leone" and that he was now fully persuaded that Sierra Leone offered “a wider field . . . among the Mohammedans” than he could “possibly enjoy in Liberia."[[329]](#endnote-329)

Sierra Leone appeared to be ideally suited for Blyden’s initial efforts at adjudication and mediation of modernity and its corollaries. The colony, rooted in the transatlantic dialectic of late eighteenth-century modernity, had been founded in 1787 as a showcase of the British Christianizing and civilizing mission in Africa. The decisive impetus for this effort came in 1772 when British evangelical and humanitarian forces led by Granville Sharp scored a victory over proslavery forces with the ruling of Lord Mansfield in favor of the slave James Somerset. The ruling freed approximately 15,000 slaves in England, and their ranks were swelled after the Revolutionary War when thousands of former American slaves who had fought as British loyalists settled in Britain. However, the dilemma posed by the growing number of ex-slaves and "Black poor" in England provided the impetus for the collusion of evangelical, humanitarian, and commercial interests in an ambitious scheme that would not only rid England of what was deemed a public nuisance, but also establish an outpost of Christianity, civilization, commerce, and modernity on the west coast of Africa.[[330]](#endnote-330)In 1808 Sierra Leone became a crown colony and, with Parliament’s subsequent abolition of the British slave trade, provided the West African naval base necessary for its enforcement. It also became the place of liberation for more than 40,000 “recaptured” Africans.[[331]](#endnote-331) The convergence of British humanitarian, antislavery, colonizing, and missionizing efforts with the cultural, religious, and racial dynamic provided by Africans from England, throughout West Africa, and the Atlantic diaspora would make Sierra Leone the most dynamic laboratory of modernity and modernization in West Africa.[[332]](#endnote-332)

However, modernity’s tripartite agenda of civilization, Christianization, and commerce, as fostered in Sierra Leone, was compromised by factors that became more ominous in the last half of the nineteenth century.[[333]](#endnote-333) In the wake of these developments, British administrators and missionaries embarked on a more self-serving imperial agenda bolstered by racialist and racist interpretations of emergent scientific and academic theories associated with the findings and claims of late Victorian modernity which ridiculed as “futile” all “efforts” to uplift Africans to the cultural, religious, and moral level of Europeans.[[334]](#endnote-334)

By the early 1870s, these developments were provoking profound cultural shock and identity crisis, particularly among Sierra Leone’s more westernized and acculturated Creole population. The result was an incipient cultural nationalism whose locus and focus would be the two agencies through which Western modernity was most potently disseminated—church missions and schools.[[335]](#endnote-335)

With Blyden’s relocation to Sierra Leone in 1871 and his increasing commitment to a more Africanized model of modernity, he quickly became the catalyst and flashpoint of two interrelated controversies—one focused on Sierra Leone’s “native pastorate” and the other on the establishment of a West African university. Both would convulse Sierra Leone’s European-dominated ecclesiastical establishment and contribute to the straining of its relationship with the colony’s indigenous clergy and its alliance with the colonial administration.

The Church Missionary Society, which assumed primary responsibility for the task of Christianizing, "civilizing," and educating Sierra Leone’s inhabitants, was firmly ensconced at the pinnacle of the colony’s pedagogical and missiological landscape. Its premier institution was Fourah Bay College, whose primary agenda was the training of natives as ministers and missionaries.[[336]](#endnote-336)Although hired to help facilitate the CMS and college’s traditional pedagogical and missiological agenda, Blyden envisioned his employment as an opportunity to realize his own more progressive agenda—an agenda consistent with his developing vision of an Africanized version of modernity. Even before settling into his new position, he was writing to Venn and enthusiastically outlining an ambitious program that not only included studying and teaching Arabic and Fulah at the college but also relocating into the interior where he hoped to establish Christian schools in the major Islamic centers.[[337]](#endnote-337)

Freetown’s rapidly growing and increasingly influential Muslim population provided both inspiration and a template for Blyden’s progressive agenda. Most, he opined, had been “converted from paganism to Islam by the intelligence, zeal, and energy of the Fulahs,” who, he informed Venn, had been “the great propagandists of the Mohammedan faith in Central Africa.” They were now actively engaged in the successful expansion of Islam in Sierra Leone and wider West Africa and seeking to emulate and build upon their success. And it was from its ranks that located and announced his hire of “a good Arabic scholar,” to help “begin translation of the Gospel of Matthew into Fulah from the Arabic text.”[[338]](#endnote-338)

Blyden’s outreach to Sierra Leone Muslims was bolstered by his earlier Arabic and Islamic studies and the amiable reputation that he had developed with Muslims in Liberia. His respectful demeanor toward them and their faith, so unlike that of traditional Christian missionaries and ministers, had induced Liberian Muslims to honor him with the title "Abd-al-Kerim”—loosely translated as “one who subordinates his life as a worshiper to God or Allah.”[[339]](#endnote-339) Sierra Leone Muslims also perceived him as a very different type of Christian minister and missionary.[[340]](#endnote-340)

A report to Venn from Blyden on his interaction with "a deputation of leading Mohammedans" from Fulah town, not long after he arrived in Freetown, contrasted his approach to the Islamic community with the attitudes of most missionaries, both “native and European,” who “have been accustomed to look with contempt upon the Mohammedans.”[[341]](#endnote-341) Illuminated during their visit were not only the fruits of Blyden’s philological studies but also the missiological implications of the discipline of comparative religion as applied within the West African context.

The visit had an auspicious beginning as members of the delegation extended Blyden "a formal welcome" that included a series of prayers and blessings in Arabic for his “long life, prosperity and usefulness in Sierra Leone.” Blyden, in turn, presented each with a copy of the Arabic Bible and informed them of his plan to “teach the Arabic language to young men who are to be the future teachers and missionaries, that they may be able to understand the Moslem Ulemas and carry the work of God to Futah, Jenne, and Timbuktu in the Arabic language—the loghat essherifat.” Blyden’s visitors were not only impressed by his facility with Arabic but also by his quotation of “several passages from the Koran showing the testimony which their own books bear to the divine origin of the Christian Scriptures.” They were additionally impressed by his emphatic assertion “that all truth came from God, who is the Fountain of truth, and that whatever is true in their Koran good and wise men would not ignore.” It was a provocative and revealing statement—clearly at odds with the prevailing sentiments of traditional mid-nineteenth-century missiology and mission outreach—a fact not lost upon his visitors. Blyden was especially pleased to report that his actions and comments induced the eldest among them to proclaim that “of all the missionaries they had seen here, they had never seen one like me, and that they believed God had sent me to this colony.” As the meeting culminated, Blyden reported that his Muslim visitors saw fit to honor him with the name “Mukhtar—the chosen one” and that upon taking leave, the delegation pronounced a “series of blessings” and promised, “to pray that God may grant me long life that I may be able to accomplish all my desires for the good of Africa.” Blyden’s missiological epistle to Venn concluded with a gush of evangelical piety complete with appropriate references to Scripture and a request for prayer: " ‘Behold, then, the land which the Lord our God has set before us. Shall we go forward and possess it ?. . .’ Pray for me that I may be armed for the fight, strengthened for the various trials that must befall me.”[[342]](#endnote-342)

Continued efforts by Blyden to legitimate his missiological strategy and the value of his hire by the CMS were also reflected in a subsequent report to Venn of the visit of another deputation of Sierra Leone Mohammedans. Reportedly, its members were similarly impressed by his unfeigned respect for them and their religion and by his unconventional missiological agenda and methods. His visitors were also especially enthralled by Blyden’s account of his travels to Palestine, and the narration of his visit was repeatedly punctuated with the exclamation “Allah Akbar . . . God is Great. There is no strength or power but in God" as they expressed wonder and appreciation that “one of their own race should have been permitted by the Almighty to visit the Holy Land and to return and tell them all about it in the Arabic language.”[[343]](#endnote-343) Blyden’s report to Venn concluded with the proclamation that “there is a wide field open before me here, and I trust that God may give me strength to discharge my duty faithfully therein.” Prematurely, he dared to profess that “the storm which myenemies and the enemies of Africa . . . wickedly raised against me has, I am thankful to say, dispersed.”[[344]](#endnote-344)

Despite Blyden’s optimistic account of the start of his labors in Sierra Leone, all was not well.[[345]](#endnote-345) Ominously, his relationship with many of his European counterparts was less than cordial. Especially hostile was Henry Cheetham, the Anglican bishop of Sierra Leone. Unlike Venn, the theologically conservative Cheetham possessed "a low opinion of African ability” and had “no patience for the 'pretensions' of the African pastors toward ecclesiastical independence."[[346]](#endnote-346) Cheetham quickly perceived the threat that Blyden’s views presented to the Christian and colonial status quo. Especially alarming was evidence that Blyden’s iconoclastic religious and racial views were already impacting indigenous members of the Sierra Leone missionary community.

Illustrative of rising ministerial and missiological tensions in Sierra Leone was Blyden’s report to Venn of a Freetown meeting of black and white ministers and missionaries. The topic, “the Duty of the Church in relation to the Mohammedans and Heathen Population,” was probably inspired by Blyden’s Freetown lecture the previous winter on “Mohammedanism in West Africa.” Although aware that he might have added much of value to the discussion, Blyden confessed that he did not feel “at liberty to say anything,” since he did not want to be “intrusive” and had “been treated in such an unchristian manner by the European missionaries.”

While appreciative of the attention given to the conference theme and the confession of past neglect, he was frustrated that most of the participants, black and white, still adhered to traditional missiological and cultural perspectives regarding Islam and its adherents. Disappointed that “no method was suggested which appeared . . . likely to meet the necessities of the case,” he complained that “most of the suggestions seemed to proceed upon the understanding of maintaining the usual distance from the Mohammedans.” Consequently, Blyden lamented that “few” of the conference participants appeared to appreciate “the importance of going among them—meeting them at their homes and talking and reading with them.” Moreover, racist assumptions magnified erroneous information and strategies as ill-informed Europeans were “frequently appealed to by [other] Europeans present as an authority on the subject” even though there was an obvious “feeling of contempt in the European missionaries generally for these Negro-Mohammedans.” Finally, it was to Blyden a compounding of error and insult that European missionaries had succeeded in communicating “this contempt” to “some of the native clergymen who only recently have begun to examine for themselves.” [[347]](#endnote-347)

Even as Blyden assured Venn of the missiological potential of his hire, Cheetham and his allies, emboldened by salacious rumors from Liberia, were orchestrating his dismissal from the CMS. An ailing Venn would soon warn Blyden of “the tide running strongly against” him in London and shortly after that wrote to reluctantly announce the termination of his connection with Fourah Bay College and the CMS. [[348]](#endnote-348) Filled “with great pain and forebodings for the future,” a forlorn Blyden replied to Venn’s "kind and fatherly letter” and this latest disappointment by evoking comparisons of his trials and tribulations to those of Job. Clinging to belief in the mysteries of an inscrutable Providence, he lamented: “A series of strange providences is attending me. But I do not murmur or complain. 'He bringeth the blind by a way that they knew not.'"[[349]](#endnote-349)

To the consternation of Cheetham, Blyden’s termination from the CMS and Fourah Bay College did not temper his critique of their policies nor his growing influence among segments of the colony’s African populace. Instead, his iconoclastic racial, pedagogical, and missiological ideas and ideals helped to stoke smoldering embers that focused on Sierra Leone’s key institutions—church and school. Cheetham and his colleagues looked on in growing alarm as Blyden's increasingly strident critique of traditional mission practices and indiscriminate Europeanization in church and school, coupled with his assertion of African pride and identity, struck a responsive chord among key segments of Sierra Leone’s population.[[350]](#endnote-350) Casting his campaign for pedagogical, missiological, and racial reform within the context of his increased sensitivity to the progressive currents of the era, Blyden contended that the “advancing spirit of the age” had overtaken not only the outworn missiological and pedagogical theories and the “old maxims and policies” of the past but also their reactionary champions. With implied reference to Cheetham and his colleagues and the impact of new currents of modernity, he noted that “the owls and brickbats of the past are getting startled while the crude, nebulous and pernicious atmosphere in which they have delighted to shelter themselves is being penetrated by a fresh and searching light.”[[351]](#endnote-351)

As Blyden marshaled support from the colony’s indigenous clergy and leveraged his wider contacts, he also had at his disposal another important and new byproduct of the colony’s engagement with modernity and modernization, a bi-weekly newspaper. A coalition of prominent Sierra Leone merchants and political and civic leaders had sought his assistance in its founding and Blyden who was convinced that the “power of the press” would “revolutionize the continent” was eager to participate as editor of this “all Negro venture,” which essentially captured his racial and ideological orientation in its provocative title—The Negro.[[352]](#endnote-352) In rebutting objections by those who perceived its title as derogatory, the paper’s prospectus boldly explained: “It has been called the *Negro* (if explanation be necessary) because it is intended to represent and defend the interest of that peculiar type of humanity known as the Negro, with all its affiliated and collateral branches whether on this continent or elsewhere. . . . to recognize and greet the brotherhood of the race wherever found.”[[353]](#endnote-353) Professing that it would be devoted to "subjects pertaining to social life, literary matters, missionary intelligence, interior news, etc.," the journal and its editor immediately became embroiled in the intertwined controversies related to the Native Pastorate, the campaign for the establishment of a West African University, and the broader meaning and manifestation of modernity in the West African context.[[354]](#endnote-354)

Not incidentally, Blyden’s appreciation of the significance of the founding of The Negro and other West African newspapers such as the Sierra Leone Weekly News anticipated the work of several contemporary scholars who note that the establishment of African and diaspora African newspapers and journals were essential to the black encounter with and response to modernity. In fact, Ntongela Masilelap insists that “the intellectual [and cultural] construction of a New African modernity was forged or theorized on the pages of the New African newspapers.”[[355]](#endnote-355)

Although its re-emergence coincided with Blyden’s relocation to Sierra Leone, the "native pastorate controversy” had roots in the longstanding desire of African clergy for more ecclesiastical independence. It had also been nurtured by the progressive missiological and racial policies of Henry Venn, which advocated the creation of "self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating native churches." In response to this dual impetus, the Native Church Pastorate was established in 1861. However, owing to a lack of adequate indigenous leadership and support, coupled with the reluctance of European missionaries to adhere to Venn’s counsel, this progressive experiment failed to live up to the expectations of Venn and its indigenous supporters.[[356]](#endnote-356)

The bittersweet celebration of the Pastorate’s tenth anniversary in the spring of 1871 provided an occasion for Africans to reassert their desire to establish an “independent church under the direction of native clergy.” In a commemorative sermon, Rev. J. H. Davies explicitly linked this agenda to the broader vision being encouraged by Blyden: “We are pleading for an institution . . . which alone can bring true liberty to the soul and body of man . . . .We request you to aim at establishing at Sierra Leone a pure Native Church . . . not only for our own and children's use, but for the use of Africa at large."[[357]](#endnote-357) The reassertion of this expanded agenda sparked long-smoldering tensions between European missionaries and supporters of the Native Pastorate that erupted into open controversy and assumed a broader racial significance. Africans led by James Johnson and emboldened by Blyden's presence and writings charged European missionaries with fostering sectarian divisions among them, showing contempt for African customs and institutions, and destroying the wholesome base of African society.[[358]](#endnote-358)

Consistent with his ongoing theological, pedagogical and missiological metamorphosis, Blyden called for the development of a native pastorate that would unambiguously nurture a “Native Church” and an indigenous expression of Christianity. Drawing upon the insights gleaned from his selective appropriation of comparative religions and critical historiography, Blyden argued that imported European creeds "rest on certain deep convictions which are present to the consciousness of the people among whom they arose." Consequently, "European formularies unmodified," which are “constructive as records of religious growth and development in Europe,” should not be imposed upon Africa. While they “may be of great suggestive use in guiding us in the development of the African Church . . . .it is evident that to make these creeds in all their details, authoritative in Africa, the intellectual and spiritual growth of the people must be checked or distorted by the introduction of the bitterness of theological rancor, and the harshness of conflicting sects.”[[359]](#endnote-359) Moreover, Blyden lamented that Africans “have been torn into discordant and unprofitable sectaries by our pretending to understand the different elaborate creeds brought to us from Europe, and confusing ourselves with ecclesiastical quarrels handed down from a remote antiquity, which even in Europe only those who are learned in a particular department can grasp and comprehend.”[[360]](#endnote-360) Also sounded in Blyden’s critique was the theological mandate that not only formed the core of his mature ministerial and missiological orientation but also anticipated the subsequent development of contemporary black and African theologies of liberation—that Africans and their descendant’s should have the freedom to forge their own theologies.[[361]](#endnote-361)

Blyden’s role in the campaign for the establishment of a West African university was similarly rooted in the conviction that the most important institutional prescription for the "free and healthy development" of Christianity and civilization in Sierra Leone and throughout Africa was a pedagogical system that was freed from the warping influence of religious, racial, and cultural dogmatism, particularly as fostered by existing Eurocentric missionary institutions. Thus, under Blyden’s influence, the demands of the native clergy and their lay supporters expanded to include not only the call for the formation of an independent, nonsectarian African church but also a secular West African university. Both were to be staffed by Africans and intended to foster African cultural and ecclesiastical independence.[[362]](#endnote-362)

Although Blyden originally envisioned Liberia College playing the seminal role in the higher education of West Africans, he now argued that Sierra Leone was the ideal location of an institution that would provide Africans with an education that was reflective of their particular racial, cultural, and intellectual needs. Notably, Blyden’s subsequent campaign for a Sierra Leone–based secular West African university also entailed reappraisal of the essentially Eurocentric and Western-based pedagogical paradigm that he initially promulgated a decade earlier as a professor at Liberia College. Since his delivery a decade earlier of an inaugural speech that had encouraged the implementation of a curriculum that was essentially Western, Blyden had become convinced that much of Western-based education—especially as provided by missionary institutions (the predominant form of education throughout West Africa)—was counter-productive. Effective education, like effective missionary outreach and theological and ecclesiastical development, he now argued, must be adapted to the African’s unique history, culture, and even racial personality.[[363]](#endnote-363)

As was the case with his evolving missiological orientation, Blyden’s pedagogical thesis was also informed by his engagement with and appropriation of the era’s new scientific, academic, intellectual, and social thought, including the controversial theories of Darwin and Muller. Interrogation, adaptation, selective appropriation, and creative synthesis of their thought and theories with his own, encouraged the formation of what became a fundamental and foundational conviction. He would argue that each race including the African, was endowed by the Divine with inherent and distinctive attributes, and therefore each had a unique personality.[[364]](#endnote-364) Consequently, the African race should receive an education designed not to hamper or obscure but to "bring out. . . [race] individuality and originality."[[365]](#endnote-365) Blyden’s concept of an African Personality and demands for an accompanying and complementary pedagogy, theology, and missiology would be presented with increasing urgency throughout the remainder of his life.

Not surprisingly, Sierra Leone’s European-led missionary establishment was shocked and incensed by Blyden’s lengthening catalog of their pedagogical and missiological sins. His indictment included the charge that traditional missionary education, rooted in the conviction that all things African were “to be destroyed, and replaced with something new and foreign," had yielded pathetic results—most conspicuously, that it had produced Africans with “a cringing and servile spirit,” content to mimic their European mentors in dress, thought, speech, and even religion—in effect Africans intellectually, culturally, and spiritually crippled.[[366]](#endnote-366)

Additionally, alarming for Blyden’s critics was the fact that his pedagogical critique reflected his deepening appreciation of Islam’s racial, pedagogical, and religious influence in West Africa. Islam’s adherents, he noted, had taken the lead in fostering West African education and literacy, as well as the establishment of centers of learning such as those that he had recently visited in the Sierra Leone interior. Moreover, Islam’s educational practices and policies were free of many of the liabilities fostered by Western missionary education. In particular, it did not foster wholesale denigration and destruction of traditional African customs, therefore, unlike missionary Christianity, Islam and its pedagogy produced West Africans proud of their race, free of inferiority, and at home in their culture. [[367]](#endnote-367)

As he enlisted the support of Africans and aggressively employed The Negro in his campaign for the establishment of a West African university, Blyden was aware that success was dependent upon the support of the colonial administration. To this end, he engaged in an extraordinary exchange of correspondence with the colony’s governor Pope-Hennessey and his successor. His goal was to enlist their endorsement and assistance by pointing out that the proposed university was necessary for the realization of their program of colonial development.[[368]](#endnote-368)Aware of the colonial administration’s professed interest in fostering “native agency” and “self-government,” Blyden argued that if Africans were “ever to become fit to be entrusted with the functions of self-government if they are ever to become ripe for free and progressive institutions, it must be by a system of education adapted to the exigencies of the country and race; such as shall prepare the intelligent youths for the responsibilities which must devolve upon them, and without interfering with their native instincts and throwing them altogether out of harmony and sympathy with their own countrymen.”[[369]](#endnote-369)

Although many of the colony’s indigenous ministers and educated laymen embraced the idea of a West African university, the majority of European missionaries were incised by Blyden’s indictment of their pedagogical efforts and motives, criticism of their racial attitudes and sectarian proclivities, and ridicule of them as “owls” and “brickbats of the past.” In response, Cheetham and his Wesleyan Methodist counterpart Rev. Benjamin Tregaskis would take the lead in organizing opposition to Blyden and the campaign for African ecclesiastical and pedagogical independence. Both had long been suspicious of Blyden’s missiological agenda and alarmed over his influence with native clergy. They had also watched with concern his growing influence within the colonial office and were shocked by the apparent collusion between Blyden and the colony’s governor in a campaign that was perceived as a direct threat to their power, prerogatives, and institutional legacies.

That Fourah Bay College became the institutional focus of the expanding controversy over education in Sierra Leone as well the call for the creation of a secular university was of additional concern and alarm to Cheetham and the CMS. Although the college had long been hailed by the CMS and its supporters as proof of their commitment to the higher education of West Africans, Blyden perceived the college as inculcating all the pedagogical evils that he identified with faulty, outdated, and destructive education in West Africa. European missionary-based opposition to a “godless West African University under government and Negro control” further coalesced when they became aware that Blyden insisted that the proposed institution not only employ African professors but even “a Negro–Arabic professor from Egypt, Timbuctoo or Fatah” and include Arabic and the study of Islam in its curriculum.[[370]](#endnote-370)

In response to the implicit threat presented to the primacy, power, and prerogatives of the European ecclesiastical establishment, Cheetham and Tregaskis orchestrated a vigorous counter-campaign aimed at neutralizing Blyden’s influence within the colonial office and among the indigenous clergy.[[371]](#endnote-371) Their combined efforts proved successful, and by the fall of 1873, Blyden’s dream of Sierra Leone as the center of racial, missiological, and pedagogical reform had been effectively stifled by the collusion of ecclesiastical power and colonial realities. Adding to Blyden’s dismay was the failure of the colony’s black inhabitants to provide the support and sacrifice necessary to ensure the success of not only the Native Pastorate, and the West African University, but also The Negro, which had ceased publication in 1874.[[372]](#endnote-372)

**Chapter 8: Return of the Prodigal**

In the fall of 1873, Blyden, suffering from chronic ill health, exhaustion, and frustration, finalized plans to depart Sierra Leone and return to Liberia.[[373]](#endnote-373) As he resettled in Liberia, he remained hopeful that the British colonial office might still address and even support some of the concerns attendant his vision of a more Afrocentric version of modernity in Sierra Leone. Educational reform and particularly the establishment of a West African university were still perceived as critical for its realization, and Blyden would continue his campaign for reform in Sierra Leone from Monrovia. In correspondence with Sierra Leone’s new Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberly, he rehearsed recent events in Sierra Leone and advised him of the potential of an enlightened educational policy and particularly the advantages to be accrued to both the native population and the colonial administration by the establishment of a West African university. In reference to the ecclesiastical opposition organized by Cheetham, Blyden cryptically noted that his proposal "to afford the Natives access to the means of superior education in their own country” had not been “received with favor by some on the coast who seem to think that such an institution would conflict with their prerogatives and diminish their influence.” The latter, he added, had “by various misrepresentations raised a storm of persecution at Freetown against the propounders of the scheme." Nevertheless, he expressed “hope that Your Lordship will give your powerful support to the scheme and thus weaken the opposition which may become so formidable as to crush out every aspiration to such facilities for progress among the Natives."[[374]](#endnote-374)

Seeking support to counter ecclesiastical opposition in Sierra Leone, Blyden referred the Colonial Secretary to more enlightened positions “bearing upon these important matters” advocated within progressive academic and missiological circles in England. Citing sermons by “leading Divines of the Church of England,” such as that recently preached by his friend Dean Stanley, as well as recent publications on Islam by prominent scholars, he opined: “The principles of dealing with foreign tribes and races enumerated here . . . are indispensable to the success of civilizing agencies on this coast; but as these principles are more or less ignored in the present missionary system, a far less amount of good is done than might otherwise be effected.”[[375]](#endnote-375)

Blyden also cautioned Sierra Leone’s new governor, Lord Berkely, not to embrace the error of those perpetuating the belief that the natives of West Africa "cannot grow up and become prosperous and happy without having suddenly imposed upon them European institutions." Alluding to scripture, Blyden warned that "to mold African institutions after the English model would be to give the people a garment, which not having been made for them, and of which they do not feel the necessity, would not only not fit them, but hang extremely awkwardly upon them, and like David in Saul's armor, [would] render them useless for the purposes of life—a sort of caricature.”[[376]](#endnote-376)

In response, a wary and cautious Berkely requested an evaluation of the state of education in Sierra Leone from Cheetham. With preemptive intent, the latter’s report cited the provocative "correspondence between Blyden and Pope Hennessey” and expressed disgust at Blyden’s influence upon him. Particularly insightful was Cheetham’s allusion to Blyden’s ties to modernity’s transatlantic history of both racial oppression and resistance as he warned that "the presence here of West Indians and American Africans from time to time has seemed to be the reverse of beneficial to the people, and there is no more remarkable instance of this than is afforded by the brief career of Mr. Blyden.”[[377]](#endnote-377)

With strategic finesse, Cheetham undermined Blyden’s campaign for educational reform in Sierra Leone by co-opting and redirecting it. In what amounted to at least minimal acknowledgment of the validity of Blyden’s criticisms of limited educational opportunities for West Africans, Cheetham professed to have long supported the idea of expanded opportunities for native youth; and to have "strongly advised the committee of the Church Missionary Society to open Fourah Bay College to other than those who were being trained . . . . for the sacred ministry.” He alleged, "Long before either Mr. Hennessy or Mr. Blyden arrived . . . we had endeavored to procure for this coast something approaching to a university education" and to have advised that the college be given “more of the university aspect." Finally, with the intent of pre-empting future calls for the establishment of a West African university, Cheetham announced that the CMS was prepared to endorse the recommendation and free the colonial government from any economic and administrative responsibilities associated with the establishment of a university. [[378]](#endnote-378)

Although Cheetham’s skillful campaign effectively circumvented and preempted most of the demands made by Blyden and his supporters, the latter could claim a pyretic victory of sorts. Concessions were made by ecclesiastical and colonial authorities to supplement the missiologically focused curriculum of Fourah Bay College by its affiliation with another institution of higher learning. However, the intense debate that followed regarding which British institution the college should be affiliated with directly linked the West African controversy to broader conflicts regarding modernity’s impact that were roiling the British academic and ecclesiastical establishment.[[379]](#endnote-379)

This dynamic was reflected by the reception given the recommendation that Fourah Bay College be affiliated with London University, which had been founded amid the initial stages of the British establishment’s engagement with modernity and its corollaries. Amid controversy over the relationship between religious and secular education, it was established in 1820 as an institution that sought to keep theology and religious dogmatism out of a curriculum rooted more in the "new science than in the old humanities." Its curriculum, described as free from the “stagnating influence of religious control” and “imbued with the modern spirit,” continued to reflect this agenda amid the myriad changes being induced within the pedagogical and religious arenas.[[380]](#endnote-380) A linkage to both Blyden and subsequent developments within West Africa was revealed in a tribute to the university’s founding and agenda provided by Orishatukeh Faduma, one of its first West African alumni and a subsequent protégé of Blyden. He recalled that “the older universities of England required a religious test and closed their doors for centuries against those who did not and would not subscribe to it. When London University was granted the charter, a new life and inspiration came upon English intellectual life. Without any religious test, men and women drank from the fountain of knowledge including Jews and Mohammedans.”[[381]](#endnote-381)

Given the University of London’s history and continued nonsectarian and pedagogical orientation, it was not surprising that British defenders of orthodoxy summarily rejected the proposal that Fourah Bay be affiliated with it. In search of an institution more compatible with a religious, racial, and pedagogical agenda rooted in traditional Eurocentric notions of modernity, conservatives approved Fourah Bay’s formal affiliation with Durham University in 1876. Founded in 1832 under the auspices of the Anglican Church, Durham required a religious test for admission and was perceived as doctrinally "safe” and relatively immune to the era’s broader conflicts regarding the intersection of race, religion, and modernity.[[382]](#endnote-382)

Although intended as a significant concession by Cheetham and the CMS establishment, Fourah Bay’s affiliation with Durham University did not alter Blyden’s perception that it remained "too clerical, foreign and elitist," and too rooted in and aligned with traditional and conservative currents of Victorian modernity.[[383]](#endnote-383) It was an assessment that would continue to fuel Blyden’s unceasing quest for the establishment of a West African institution of higher learning that would provide Africans and diaspora Africans an education compatible with a version and vision of modernity adapted to the history, culture, needs, and “personality” of people of African descent.

In effect, the battle for a West African University lead by Blyden and the resulting Fourah Bay compromise by CMS conservatives illuminated competing efforts to mediate and control the African encounter with modernity’s new academic, intellectual, racial, and religious currents. It was also a harbinger of the intense conflict regarding the African and diaspora African encounter with modernity and its corollaries that would pit a younger generation of Africans seeking higher education against Western missionaries and colonial authorities in the early decades of the next century.[[384]](#endnote-384)

Despite apparent failure to achieve key aspects of his ambitious agenda in Sierra Leone, Blyden’s efforts as an advocate of a more Africanized version of applied modernity nevertheless helped to bequeath to the colony a potent legacy that would germinate and bear fruit among later generations of West Africans.[[385]](#endnote-385) Moreover, notwithstanding the relocation of his person and vision to Liberia, Sierra Leone would continue to play a central role in Blyden’s personal and professional life. In subsequent decades, it would serve not only as a sanctuary but also arguably the most important milieu for nurture and extension of his evolving theological, pedagogical, missiological, and ideological thought. As such, it would continue to be the most dynamic matrix of his efforts to adjudicate and mediate modernity and its corollaries in West Africa and throughout the diaspora.

Blyden’s resettlement in Liberia, likened by some of his supporters to the “return of the prodigal,” had been facilitated by internal and external developments that contributed at least temporarily to public rehabilitation of his name and reputation. Consistent with these developments, the Presbytery of West Africa, which had acted so precipitously in suspending his membership in the wake of the scandal, fully restored his privileges. However, Blyden would be increasingly critical of it and the general state of Presbyterianism in Liberia. Of particular concern was the presbytery's "habit of licensing young men to enter upon missionary work, with hardly any preparation." Alluding to similar alarm about the dilution of Presbyterian standards being expressed in the American Presbyterian community, Blyden warned that this practice was "continually lowering the character of [the]Presbytery and opening the door wider and wider for incompetence." As a corrective, he suggested that "no applicant under thirty years of age should be examined by Presbytery with a view to licensure who does not produce a certificate of his having pursued a course of liberal studies corresponding to that laid down in our Form of Church Government."[[386]](#endnote-386)

Blyden's concerns about the quality of Presbyterian ministerial and missionary training in West Africa and the dilution of standards were justified. However, there is evidence to warrant the suspicion that some of his harsher assessments of the presbytery and Presbyterianism in Liberia had a personal motivation. In a self-serving letter to John C. Lowrie of the Presbyterian Board, Blyden suggested that the long-term solution to the lack of proper education and educational facilities undermining the quality of Presbyterian clergy and the unique mission of the Presbyterian church in Liberia was the establishment of a Presbyterian college where candidates for ordination would have "good training . . . under competent instructors." The result, he predicted, would be that "in a few years, we shall have in Liberia the interesting and effective spectacle witnessed everywhere else, of Presbyterian clergymen as Christians, gentlemen, and scholars."[[387]](#endnote-387) Given his increasing awareness that theological and missiological education was on the cutting edge of the mid-nineteenth-century encounter with modernity, Blyden no doubt additionally envisioned this institution and its implicitly “liberal” curriculum as a potent allay in his continued efforts at mediating modernity’s racial, religious and pedagogical influence in West Africa.

In closing, Blyden disclosed his more immediate agenda, which was the reopening of Alexander High School under his direction. Allusions to Princeton and the legacy of Presbyterian divines who had contributed to its development were eloquently evoked as he opined “that a great many of the important enterprises religious, moral and political in the United States, can be traced to Princeton College and what Princeton College has been to the United States the Alexander High School in a much humbler degree, will be to Liberia.”[[388]](#endnote-388) Since his days as a budding minister and educator, Blyden had effectively employed his skills in the influence and manipulation of various American Boards. In the wake of his entries, the Presbyterian Board of Missions again proved susceptible to his persuasive combination of arguments, accompanying flattery, and manipulation of Presbyterian history by reappointing him principal of Alexander High School.[[389]](#endnote-389)

The political astuteness, scholarship, and long-cultivated friendships that allowed Blyden to exercise such influence upon the Board of Foreign Missions and its American supporters were not lost upon critics within the presbytery. Robert A. M. Deputie, an influential member of the presbytery, unabashedly charged the Board with partiality in its treatment of Blyden and complained directly to its corresponding secretary that "there appears to be a degree of favoritism manifested towards . . . Dr. Blyden, that such liberty be allowed him to go when and where, to travel and preach as he may deem proper, and to be allowed special and private letters which we are never permitted to see, but which he circulates among his friends to the detriment of the Church."[[390]](#endnote-390) Blyden, in turn, expressed growing disillusionment and impatience with the presbytery, whose members frequently misunderstood, resented, and labored to frustrate his agenda.[[391]](#endnote-391) Presumably, it was a combination of vocational and personal frustration that induced Blyden, heralded as the champion of indigenous African ecclesiastical leadership and the West African independent church movement, to inquire in *private* correspondence with John Lowrie: "Has not the Board the power under certain circumstances—especially such exceptional circumstances as characterize the work in Liberia—to resume the management of its operations once committed to a Presbytery on missionary ground?" He continued, "It would be better, rather than leave matters as they are, for the Board to resume direct control of its operations here."[[392]](#endnote-392) The request highlights the too often quixotic, inconsistent, and occasionally self-serving nature of Blyden’s thoughts and activities.[[393]](#endnote-393) Nevertheless, the Board’s generally positive responses to Blyden’s various overtures and requests remained illustrative of the significant influence that he continued to wield upon their membership. It also helps to explain the cordial welcome that he continued to receive from various segments of the American Presbyterian community during subsequent tours of the United States.

It was primarily as an advocate of colonization and the Presbyterian mission in Liberia that Blyden initially came to the attention of the American Presbyterian community and African American secular and religious leaders during his visits in the 1860s. However, by the mid-1870s, his expanding vita included service as Liberia’s Secretary of State, professor at Liberia College, and authorship of a growing corpus of groundbreaking scholarly publications that extended his reputation and influence in the Americas. His emergence as an acclaimed public intellectual and religious scholar was celebrated during his next lecture tour of the United States, which took place in the spring of 1874. Coming after a twelve-year absence, it was sponsored by the American Colonization Society. Throughout the tour, Blyden delivered numerous lectures, preached in the university chapel at Howard University, and participated in commencement exercises at what was formerly Ashman Institute—now renamed Lincoln University. The decision of Lincoln’s Trustees to award him an honorary degree not only acknowledged his impressive scholarly accomplishments but also underscored the school’s historic relationship with Presbyterianism, the American Colonization Society, and Liberia.[[394]](#endnote-394) His visits to Howard and Lincoln University may have also marked the initial intersection of his life and career with that of a not yet twenty-five-year-old Francis Grimke who had academic ties to both institutions.

**Part IV Trans-Atlantic Matrix**

**Chapter 9: Francis Grimke and the American Milieu**

As West Africa based Blyden was undergoing the intellectual and religious metamorphosis in response to modernity and its corollaries that would distance him from Reformed orthodoxy, Francis Grimke, eighteen years younger and on the American side of the Atlantic, was beginning a series of educational and religious experiences that would induce a very different response. Grimke’s education and experiences would cement his ties to Reformed Orthodoxy and forge him into a fervent critic of much that was associated with modernity. Nevertheless, the two Presbyterian ministers would strike up an unlikely trans-Atlantic friendship even as they responded in almost diametrically opposite ways to the myriad challenges posed by modernity and particularly its religious corollaries. Examination of their personal and professional relationship and their divergent responses provide critical insight into the transatlantic role that Blyden would play as he explicitly and publically assumed the mantle of interrogator, adjudicator, and mediator of modernity to blacks on both sides of the Atlantic.

Unlike Blyden, Grimke (1850-1937) had been born a slave. He and his older brother Archibald (1849-1930) were the sons of the owner of their mother, Nancy Weston.[[395]](#endnote-395) Although they early benefited from the relative privileges and protections afforded by their owner-father, his death, and their inheritance as chattel by their white half-brother exposed them to the more harrowing vicissitudes of southern slavery.[[396]](#endnote-396) Over the following decade, Archibald and Francis struggled to overcome the particulars of their birth into slavery and the attendant trials posed by the Civil War. At war’s end, both enrolled in Lincoln University originally founded in 1854 as Ashmun Institute but newly renamed in honor of the slain president.[[397]](#endnote-397) The school’s historic ties to Presbyterianism remained intact, and both excelled in a curriculum that included religious instruction of strict Reformed orientation. Having imbibed the school’s religious ethos, upon graduation in 1870, the two contemplated legal careers as vocational expressions of their piety.[[398]](#endnote-398)While Archibald proceeded to Harvard Law School, Francis opted to continue his legal studies at Lincoln and, subsequently, Howard University.

Archibald was one of the first black students to attend Harvard Law School, and following his graduation in 1874, he became an acclaimed lawyer, author, and civil rights, activist. [[399]](#endnote-399) Francis, however, would pursue a different route to acclaim and racial activism. Upon reconsideration of his vocational path, he decided to begin preparation to become a Presbyterian minister. It was a decision that coincided with Blyden’s 1874 tour of the United States, which included high-profile visits to both Howard and Lincoln universities. Notably, at the latter institution, Blyden was awarded an honorary “Doctor of Laws.”[[400]](#endnote-400) Given Francis’s membership in the Presbyterian Church and his ties to both universities, it was unlikely that he was not at least aware of the visit of the already acclaimed West African Presbyterian minister, scholar, and “defender of the race.” Consequently, it was perhaps more than mere coincidence that Grimke announced his decision to turn his “thoughts to the ministry” in the wake of Blyden’s tour. [[401]](#endnote-401)

While the expansive ministry modeled by the lionized visitor from Liberia may well have been a factor in Grimke’s decision to pursue a career in the Presbyterian ministry, of more immediate and sustained influence were the ministerial examples of the small cadre of well-educated and more theologically traditional African American Presbyterian ministers with whom he was familiar. Especially influential was Reverend John B. Reeve, the Oberlin and Union Theological Seminary–educated pastor of Philadelphia’s Lombard Street Presbyterian Church and organizing dean of Howard University’s Department of Theology.[[402]](#endnote-402) Grimke had become a parishioner of Reeve’s while studying at Lincoln, and it was upon prayerful consultation with him that Grimke decided to forgo his legal studies in preparation for the ministry. It was also under Reeve that Grimke was recommended and taken under the care of the Presbytery of Philadelphia as a candidate for the Presbyterian ministry.[[403]](#endnote-403) Reeve was also acquainted with Blyden. Although not a supporter of colonization, he thoughtfully engaged the broader issue of the African American relationship with and responsibility to Liberia and wider Africa and allowed Blyden to deliver his pro-colonization sentiments from his church’s pulpit. Blyden, in turn, admired Reeve and expressed hope of eventually enticing his immigration to Liberia. [[404]](#endnote-404) Thus, it is plausible, and indeed likely, that the cordial relationship shared by the two older Presbyterian ministers occasioned the initial meeting between Blyden and Grimke.

Grimke’s active preparation for the Presbyterian ministry was facilitated by his admission to Princeton Seminary. As a student at American Presbyterianism’s premier seminary, he had educational opportunities unavailable to Blyden who had been denied both the benefits and liabilities of formal theological education. Moreover, his previous study at Lincoln had well prepared Grimke for academic success at Princeton since Lincoln’s exclusively white faculty included a significant number of graduates of Princeton College and Princeton Seminary. At Lincoln, they labored to impart to their students the theological, doctrinal, pedagogical, and ethical principles advocated by the twin fonts of Presbyterian orthodoxy. Their zeal and success earned Lincoln the title of “the Black Princeton.”[[405]](#endnote-405) Not to be underestimated, however, were the complimentary influences of the sermons and counsel of Reeve and the succession of black clergy whom he invited to share his pulpit at Philadelphia’s Lombard Street Church.[[406]](#endnote-406) Through their efforts, Grimke and fellow students at Lincoln were provided with ministerial models and pastoral applications of the tenets of Scripture and Reformed orthodoxy adapted to the complexities of black life in the post-war era.

Long before the matriculation of Grimke, Princeton Seminary had been at the forefront of American seminaries allowing enrollment to students of African descent. Among its first black enrollees was Theodore S. Wright, who graduated in 1829 en route to becoming an activist minister and important mentor of black New School clergy in the aftermath of the Presbyterian Schism of 1837. Ironically, while still a student Wright was linked to a critique of the America Colonization Society that incised Princeton professor Samuel Miller and resulted in a bitter public controversy which was indicative of the posture which the Princeton-led wing of the Presbyterian Church would assume in the impending Old School/New School controversy when the issues of doctrine, polity, benevolent reform, and slavery were explicitly joined. Among black New School clergy subsequently inspired by Wright’s anti-slavery and anti-colonial activities was Henry Highland Garnet, who succeeded him as pastor of New York’s influential Shiloh Presbyterian Church. [[407]](#endnote-407) Tragically, increased racial tensions at the seminary, which Grimke and later generations of black students would also experience, resulted in Wright being brutally assaulted upon a return visit to the seminary.[[408]](#endnote-408)

With his matriculation in 1875, Grimke joined Matthew Anderson and eventually two other black students (Hugh M. Browne and Daniel Culp) for formal grounding in Princeton’s version of Reformed orthodoxy, often referred to as the “Princeton theology.”[[409]](#endnote-409) There, exclaimed Anderson, they “had the honor of sitting at the feet of those giants of intellectual and moral strength, Drs. Charles Hodge and James McCosh, and felt the thrill of joy and satisfaction produced by the thought of being at the very fountainhead of Presbyterianism.” Testimony to the extended legacy of study at the “Gibraltar of Orthodoxy” was reflected in Anderson’s description of himself as “a Presbyterian of the Presbyterians.” It was a description also aptly applied to Grimke as he emerged from Princeton Seminary firmly committed to Presbyterianism, the Presbyterian Church, and Reformed orthodoxy.[[410]](#endnote-410)

Ironically, Grimke’s seminary education coincided with the waning health of Charles Hodge, Princeton’s esteemed Professor of Exegetical, Didactic, and Polemic Theology. Nevertheless, Grimke and his classmates experienced a seminary still dominated by Hodge’s aggressive defense of traditional Reformed doctrine and hermeneutics in the wake of the challenges posed by modernity and its corollaries.[[411]](#endnote-411) Supplementing and complementing Hodge’s efforts were those of colleagues such as James C. Moffat, William Henry Green, and Hodge’s sons, Alexander and Casper. All cooperated to steep seminary students in Princeton’s approach to the study and application of Christianity and the Bible in response to what was perceived as the intellectually and spiritually corrosive acids of modernity and its religious corollaries as embodied by the emergence of Darwinism, biblical and historical criticism, and comparative religion.[[412]](#endnote-412)

In 1874 Charles Hodge published an analysis and refutation of Darwinism titled What is Darwinism? which unambiguously pronounced the theory to be contrary to the teachings of biblical Christianity and “Atheism.”[[413]](#endnote-413) William Green, Grimke’s professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature, was similarly adamant in his rejection of both Darwinism and the findings of biblical criticism.[[414]](#endnote-414) Two decades earlier, Green had provided a trans-Atlantic rejoinder to Bishop Colenso and other emergent biblical critics with his publication of The Pentateuch Vindicated from the Aspersions of Bishop Colenso (1863). His critique of the new school of biblical studies was continued in later texts such as Moses and the Prophets (1882) and The Higher Critics of the Pentateuch (1895).[[415]](#endnote-415)

James C. Moffat, who taught Church History at the seminary, similarly refuted the orientation and findings of historical criticism with his insistence that the history of the Church was “the narrative of a spiritual Progress of Human Society.”[[416]](#endnote-416) Moffat also challenged the more liberal precepts of the emergent discipline of comparative religion by producing an appropriately conservative Princetonian version in his two-volume work titled Comparative History of Religions.[[417]](#endnote-417) Moffat’s effort induced Sydney Ahlstrom to sarcastically describe his text as “an imposing monument” to a “sort of historical-yet anti-historical dualism” that illuminated how the comparative methodology of the emergent discipline in conservative hands “could be held away from the sensitive areas of the Bible and the Christian Church as if by an impenetrable curtain” that in effect required “a kind of methodological hari-kari.” [[418]](#endnote-418)

However, Grimke and his classmates were additionally exposed to the more moderate and mediating theological and philosophical influences of Princeton College president, James McCosh. The Scottish-born and European-educated McCosh introduced Grimke, and other students enrolled in his popular History of Philosophy course to a less defensive expression of Reformed orthodoxy in response to the challenges of modernity. While no less pious than Hodge, McCosh was especially concerned to make clear to students that the findings of Darwinism and its corollaries were not necessarily incompatible with the tenets of Christianity. In contrast to Hodge’s pronouncement of Darwinism as atheistic, McCosh noted “the religious aspects of evolution” and emphasized an appreciation of the religious and pedagogical implications of “evolution properly limited and explained.” A fundamental commitment to both piety and enlightened pedagogy was reflected in his confession that “in showing . . . [students] evolution in the works of God, I showed them that this was not inconsistent with religion, and thus enabled them to follow science and yet retain their faith in the Bible.”[[419]](#endnote-419)

While studies of Grimke have justifiably noted the “lasting imprint of Hodge,” McCosh’s influence upon his developing ministry has not received the attention that it appears to warrant.[[420]](#endnote-420) Although Grimke appears to have been minimally impacted by McCosh’s perspectives on evolution and its corollaries, his pastoral views and activities about the intersection of piety and racial prejudice proved to be much more influential. McCosh’s principled applications of the tenets of Christianity, as exhibited in his refusal to concede to white students who demanded that he exclude black seminarians from his courses, was well known and appreciated among black students. McCosh’s “noble stand” was even more impressive since it defied the university’s official policy of racial exclusion, which banned the formal admission of black students until almost the midpoint of the next century. In the face of wider denominational and societal racism, McCosh also provided pastoral encouragement and support to former black students in their post-seminary ministerial and educational endeavors, thus further justifying Anderson’s description of him as a colossus of both intellectual and moral strength.[[421]](#endnote-421)

Grimke was a direct beneficiary of McCosh’s professorial, pastoral, and racial largess. Following the death of Charles Hodge shortly before his graduation, it was McCosh who joined Archibald Hodge in attesting to Grimke’s mastery of the seminary curriculum and his fitness to advance “Princeton Confessionalism” in the pastoral context. In a letter of recommendation penned in conjunction with Grimke’s formal call to Washington’s Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, McCosh reported that he “became acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Grimke when he was a student in the theological seminary” and that he concurred with the assessment of the “late Dr. Hodge,” who“reckoned him equal to the ablest of his students.” Grimke’s mastery of hermeneutical skills that allowed him to produce sermons that were scholarly and reasoned was also lauded by McCosh, who exclaimed: “I have heard him preach and I feel as if I could listen to such preaching with profit from Sabbath to Sabbath. I rejoice to find that the Colored people of Washington have such a man to minister to them.”[[422]](#endnote-422) The forging of a cordial relationship that was not only pedagogical but also personal and pastoral was further implied by McCosh’s acceptance of Grimke’s invitation in 1880 to baptize the only child born to him and his wife.[[423]](#endnote-423) While Grimke’s subsequent theological and hermeneutical response to modernity would be much closer to that of Charles Hodge than McCosh, the latter’s more moderate influence may have had significant implications for the relationship that he would develop with colleagues such as Frederick Douglass and subsequently Blyden who were less orthodox theologically and increasingly evidencing a critical orientation toward modernity and especially its religious and racial corollaries that were more compatible with the views of McCosh than Hodge.[[424]](#endnote-424)

The recommendations of McCosh and the seminary’s faculty corroborated the wisdom of Grimke’s call to the prestigious pastorate of Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. Organized in 1841 “with a view to the more orderly and intelligent worship of God,” the church was “attended mainly by the more intelligent and well-to-do class of colored peoples” and “occupied an influential position in the community.”[[425]](#endnote-425) Thus, the decision to install the Princeton seminary graduate as its pastor was thoroughly consistent with Fifteenth Street’s history, theological orientation, and the status of its members. Ordained and installed on July 7, 1878, Grimke would labor for more than fifty years to adapt and apply key tenets of Presbyterianism as mediated by his Princeton studies and “Princeton Theology” to the peculiar demands of black life in post-Reconstruction America amid the myriad of challenges posed by modernity and its religious and racial corollaries.[[426]](#endnote-426)

Grimke’s socially engaged ministry and reasoned sermons, which were testimony to Princeton’s success in producing “Pastor-Theologians,” quickly attracted Washington’s black elite.[[427]](#endnote-427) Frederick Douglass was among those frequently in attendance despite his critiques of and estrangement from traditional evangelical orthodoxy. Differences in religious orientation appear to have been transcended as Douglass and Grimke shared a commitment to racial uplift and adherence to an ethical code that abhorred racial, religious, and moral hypocrisy, whether emanating from black or white religious leaders.[[428]](#endnote-428) The evolving friendship between Grimke and Douglass was also attested by the latter’s attendance at Grimke’s wedding in 1878 to Charlotte Forten, the “accomplished writer, educator, and activist.”[[429]](#endnote-429) It was an act of both religious and social intimacy reciprocated and magnified when Grimke later officiated and defended the controversial marriage of Douglass to Helen Pitts.

Following Douglass’s death in 1895, Grimke delivered a heartfelt commemoration that respectfully acknowledged Douglass’s less than orthodox religious sensibilities.[[430]](#endnote-430)Consequently, Douglass, the outspoken critic of evangelical orthodoxy, and Grimke, the advocate and defender of Reformed orthodoxy, forged a relationship rooted in a commitment to racial uplift, mutual respect, and theological forbearance that foreshadowed the relationship that Grimke would eventually share with Blyden.

**Chapter 10: Prelude to a Transatlantic Relationship**

Upon the conclusion of his triumphant 1874 visit to the United States, Blyden returned to Liberia to assume more expansive religious and secular labors consistent with the model of an engaged, informed, and activist ministry delineated almost a decade earlier in The Pastor’s Work. His scholarly efforts primarily focused on comparative analysis of the influence of Islam and Christianity in West Africa reflected his now sustained engagement with the intellectual, academic, and theological by-products of modernity and its corollaries. Blyden’s efforts were a prelude to his auspicious and controversial return to the United States in the spring of 1880.

The six years that elapsed between Blyden’s visits to the United States in 1874 and 1880 were, in fact, both personally and professionally checkered. The period’s highpoints included his tenure as Principal of Alexander High School from 1875 to 1877 and his appointment as Liberia's first Ambassador to "the Court of St James” in 1877. This historic and groundbreaking appointment as “the first ambassador in Europe from an African country” entailed residence in London and afforded Blyden the opportunity to again scrutinize both the positive and negative impact of late Victorian modernity and its corollaries from the proximity of the British metropole.[[431]](#endnote-431)

It was an era also marked by recurrent conflict between Blyden and the Presbytery of West Africa over a variety of related and intersecting issues. These included ongoing discord with the presbytery’s mulatto members, continued domestic scandal, and increasing suspicions regarding his theological and religious orientation. Questions about the latter were fueled by the rapidly growing corpus of works from his pen that compared the impact of Islam and Christianity in West Africa. Publication of "Mohammedanism in West Africa" in 1871 had been followed by "Mohammedanism and the Negro Race" (1875), "Christianity and the Negro Race” (1876), and "Christian Missions in West Africa” (1876). All chronicled Blyden’s increased engagement with the religious and racial implications of modernity and its corollaries even as they advanced his controversial thesis that Islam's influence upon Africans was salutary while the impact of traditional Western Christianity upon both Africans and Diaspora Africans was often negative.[[432]](#endnote-432)

Given heightened suspicions over his theological orientation and religious allegiance among traditionalists and conservatives within Liberia and Sierra Leone, Blyden was pleased that his intellectual and theological metamorphosis, as well as his ongoing studies and publications, elicited increased favor among progressive and liberal British clergy and scholars with whom he continued to cultivate personal and professional relationships. Ironically, Blyden’s sojourn in Britain as ambassador also provided an opportunity for him to meet James Theodore Holly, the first black Episcopal bishop of Haiti. Holly, who was in London to attend the Lambert Conference of 1878 was among the surprising number of African and diaspora based black clergy that visited Europe during the late Victorian era. Five years older than Blyden, Holly was a “race man,” who also shared Blyden’s passion and advocacy of colonization—but to Haiti rather than Liberia. Ordained in 1856, he served as rector and parish priest for almost five years at St Luke’s Episcopal Church located in the shadows of Yale University and Yale Divinity School.[[433]](#endnote-433) Educated and well-read, Holly also had in common with Blyden, a growing awareness of the academic and ecclesiastical challenges posed by modernity's religious corollaries. Relatedly, the teachings, publications, and status of Bishop Colenso which had been of concern at the first Lambeth Conference held in 1867, and the problem of increasing religious “skepticism” in the wake of modernity were of prominent concern for Holly and other attendees of the 1878 conference.[[434]](#endnote-434)

Notwithstanding increased theological, missiological, and ecclesiastical tensions manifest during the conference, Holly and Blyden established a cordial relationship and they were lavishly hosted and entertained by liberal scholars and churchmen such as Dean Stanley. Moreover, it was at Stanley’s invitation that Holly became the first descendant of Africa to preach in Westminster Abbey. [[435]](#endnote-435) Blyden was also impressed with Holly and in his capacity as president of Liberia College, arranged for him to be awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the college in acknowledgment of his efforts on behalf of the descendants of Africa.

Notwithstanding their shared support of colonization and broader efforts as defenders of the race, Blyden and Holly were not in accord in their responses to modernity’s religious corollaries. Holly found many of the theological and hermeneutical precepts forged in response to modernity and embraced by liberals and progressives to be incompatible with his more traditional biblical orientation and faith. Thus, for example, in contrast to Blyden’s increasing critical embrace and advocacy of biblical criticism, Holly vigorously refuted it as "hypercriticism" and dismissed its findings as "mere literary recreation, or intellectual speculation."[[436]](#endnote-436)

It is also be noted that despite Blyden’s increased interaction with an expanding list of British secular and religious acquaintances who were variously responding to currents of modernity, he was selective in his appropriation of their work and often critical of their findings, especially as applied within the African context and to her descendants. This tendency was attested in his narration of an encounter with famed pioneer sociologist Herbert Spencer in London’s Athenaeum Club.[[437]](#endnote-437) Blyden was surprised to find that the renowned philosopher and pioneer sociologist indicated that he had read his recent article published in Fraser’s Magazine in which Blyden had critiqued much of what purported to be contemporary scholarship on “Africa and the Africans.”[[438]](#endnote-438) Spencer had commended his scholarship and noted “It is quite a new thing to find members of your race writing as you have done on questions of race, and I consider it very useful” and Blyden was “extremely gratified” and flattered “to have the imprimatur of one of the leading thinkers of Europe.” [[439]](#endnote-439) However, Blyden in turn was familiar with Spencer’s pioneering descriptive sociological studies and although finding them interesting and useful, pointed out that his thesis and methodology were flawed in their reference and application to Africa and Africans. Flawed, in part, Blyden opined, because, like that of most of the era’s religious and cultural theorists, Spencer’s “facts” about Africa had “been drawn . . . largely from second-hand sources, and from the writings of travelers whose observations were confined to very small localities.”[[440]](#endnote-440)

Despite Blyden’s critique and “qualified assessment of Spencer’sPrinciples of Sociology,” in their application to the African context, the latter’s work evidently helped to prepare the foundation for his own pioneering contributions to “African Sociology.”[[441]](#endnote-441) Similarly, Blyden would increasingly employ his own research and scholarship to challenge both the absence of adequate attention to the African context as well as purported “knowledge” about Africa and Africans by “armchair” scholars which was often methodologically and theoretically inadequate and frequently inaccurate and as such generally perpetuated intellectual and academic racism.[[442]](#endnote-442)

Notably, despite his critique of the blatantly racist applications of Darwinism made by some of their contemporaries, Blyden found Spencer’s social interpretation to be more compatible with his own maturing religious, social, and racial theories. He concluded as early as 1876 that “through the labours of Mr. Herbert Spencer and other thinkers in that line, it has now come to be regarded as an elementary fact among scientific men that societies are determined in their growth by their environment, whether physical or human.”[[443]](#endnote-443) Subsequently, variations of evolutionary thought advanced not only by Darwin and Spencer but also Benjamin Kidd, John Tyndall, and even John Huxley would be evoked and appropriated by Blyden in support of his own religious, missiological, pedagogical, and racial concerns.[[444]](#endnote-444) Application of evolutionary thought in support of his call for cultural and religious indigenization was apparent in his argument that while “foreign teachers of the African race are able to deal with accidental and external peculiarities—like the names and dress of the people,” they “have no means,” ultimately, “of shaping a healthful evolution.”[[445]](#endnote-445) Consequently, he opined that despite vigorous labors by foreign missionaries and teachers to achieve African conformity to their decrees and standards, the laws and process of evolution inevitably undermined their efforts. As appropriated and adapted by Blyden, the theory of evolutional development provided what he deemed to be an irrepressible truth that could not be ignored by missionaries, educators, or government bureaucrats: “Nature even if suppressed . . . will make an outlet for itself, and there is no telling the shape it will take when once it has found or made that outlet. But it certainly will not conform to the regulations of those who would keep it down.”[[446]](#endnote-446)

Blyden’s critical appropriation and application of the theory of evolution was indicative of his willingness to embrace and creatively adapt and apply other perspectives, findings, and methodologies emergent in response to modernity despite their rejection by a majority of his white and black ministerial contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic.[[447]](#endnote-447) Revealed within his growing corpus of publications, public addresses and correspondence was an openness and receptivity that fostered critical appreciation and application of the findings and influences of modernity’s academic, intellectual, scientific, and religious corollaries even as he challenged and rejected their less palatable cultural and racial implications especially as applied to African and her descendants. Thus, in contrast to ministerial colleagues who summarily rejected Darwinism and the findings, perspectives, and methodologies, of related emergent disciplines such as historical and biblical criticism and comparative religion as inconsistent with the Bible and their allegiance to biblical Christianity, Blyden increasing found them, when correctly understood and applied, to be supportive of not only his more expansive and increasingly liberal understanding of the history, development, and contemporary demands of biblical Christianity but also supportive of his related religious, racial, and ideological agenda.

As he cautiously and critically engaged the era’s new intellectual and academic theories, Blyden was acutely aware of the seismic theological shifts that were taking place as lines were drawn and hardened within the British and American ecclesiastical communities between those who defended the tenets of religious orthodoxy against the perceived onslaught of modernity and those more open to its perspectives and findings. Counting himself among the latter by the end of the ’70s, Blyden was cognizant of the strenuous and often personal and professional trauma—an “ordeal of faith” and intellect—experienced by acquaintances and others challenged to reconcile their faith and ministries with the era’s new scientific, intellectual, and academic currents.[[448]](#endnote-448) This dilemma, as exemplified in the life and ministry of his “friend” Stopford Brooke, proved predictive of Blyden's own personal and professional response. Having served as Chaplain to Queen Victoria, Brooke upon “wide reading in reading in science and literature, of which books by Darwin and Huxley formed a part” found that he was no longer able to accept the doctrines of the Church of England and in 1880 seceded in a “controversial and widely publicized defection."[[449]](#endnote-449)

Blyden was also aware of a similar dynamic on the far side of the Atlantic, particularly among fellow Presbyterians as Darwinism, historical and biblical criticism, and the findings associated with comparative religion were also being vigorously contested.[[450]](#endnote-450) Of both personal and professional concern for Blyden was the plight of fellow Presbyterian clergy such as Rev. David Swing, who embraced the liberal theological currents that emerged in modernity’s wake even as prominent defenders of orthodoxy such as Rev. Francis Patton denounced them as incompatible with the doctrines of both Presbyterianism and wider Christianity and charged that those who embraced them were guilty of “heresy.”[[451]](#endnote-451)

Blyden was not the only member of the Presbytery of West Africa aware of these developments and related controversies within the American Presbyterian community. Their airing in the religious press, numerous monographs, and a series of well-publicized heresy trials ensured that the presbytery’s more conservative members were also cognizant of these developments and their implications.[[452]](#endnote-452) Blyden was directly and personally implicated when Robert Deputie, a "mulatto" member of the Presbytery of West Africa, a graduate of Lincoln University, and opponent of Blyden, opined that the presbytery was in danger of being infected with the heresy of liberalism and that Blyden was the source of potential infection. Writing to Walter Lowrie of the American Board in 1876, Deputie explicitly associated Blyden with the heterodoxy of Rev. David Swing, who had been charged with "defection from Westminster Standards" by a conservative faction of the Chicago Presbytery led by Francis Patton. Deputie intoned, "Dr., the ‘Interior,’ a few years ago, expressed grave doubts as to the soundness of Dr. Swing's preaching and I will assure you that they were no more serious than mine are, as to the orthodoxy of Dr. Blyden."[[453]](#endnote-453) Eager to emulate Patton's vigilance and defend Presbyterian orthodoxy in the West African mission arena, Deputie expressed frustration that "Dr. Blyden designs his articles for the literary world—the reading world, and we have not the means of securing them and consequently we cannot bring charges against him. But Sir, it is true as truth can be 'He that is not for us is against us.'"[[454]](#endnote-454)

A related source of doctrinal suspicion was Blyden’s increased interaction with West African Muslims and his growing corpus of works sympathetic to them and their faith. Criticism from fellow members of the presbytery was voiced in 1876 in a letter to the Presbyterian Board from Reverend John M. Deputie (brother of Robert) that complained of Blyden’s apparent religious priorities: "It was a source of deep regret that Dr. Blyden was not present with us [at a meeting of the Presbytery]. From our point of view, it appears that he is more interested in the success of Mohammedanism than that of the Presbyterian Church . . . .There have been no gatherings of the followers of Islam in our midst from which he has absented himself. This is passing strange!”[[455]](#endnote-455)The following week Robert Deputie, from his position as” Stated Clerk of the Presbytery,” informed the Board that "at present, the Presbytery does not see its way clear to recommend to the Board that Dr. Blyden should be sent to the interior [for work among the Muslims] under care of our Board of Foreign Missions, because it would not be conducive to the interests of the Presbyterian Church."[[456]](#endnote-456)

Undaunted, Blyden continued to argue with increased vehemence, and the support of evidence gleaned from his West African studies and the insights of the emergent discipline of comparative religion, that members of the presbytery and Christian missionaries, in general, had much to gain from the study of Islam and its adherents. A growing awareness of and challenge (albeit inconsistent) to the biases and limitations of the era's prevailing Orientalism were also reflected in Blyden’s contention that "instead of being treated in the off-hand and contemptuous manner adopted by some, who seem to have gathered all their knowledge of the religion from the Arabian Nights . . . [ Muslims] ought to be approached with earnestness and respect; for there is much in it which Christians may profitably study, and from which they might glean important lessons."[[457]](#endnote-457)

By the start of the '80s, despite continued missiological, theological, and intra-racial conflict with fellow members of the Presbytery, Blyden's star was clearly in assent as evidenced by his appointment as President of the College of Liberia, election as moderator of the Presbytery of West Africa, and designation as its commissioner-elect to the 1880 Presbyterian General Assembly. Although only one of two representatives "of the continent of Africa" present at the General Assembly, which opened on May 20 in Madison, Wisconsin, Blyden was an active commissioner and reportedly presented the "best speech" on missions at a session of the Foreign Mission Board.[[458]](#endnote-458) The highpoint of his attendance was the delivery of "a noble sermon" on “Africa's Service to the World" before the packed Assembly the following Sunday. The sermon, subsequently published and presented before audiences in Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York, was the latest exposition of one of his favorite texts—Psalm 68:31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." Often elicited to rally support for African missions and colonization, Blyden now employed it to provide scriptural context for an elaborate and far-ranging exposition that highlighted the multiple historical and contemporary contributions that Africa and her offspring had rendered in “Service to the World.”[[459]](#endnote-459)

Evidenced throughout the published version of the sermon was Blyden’s still cautious appropriation of liberal scholarship. Conspicuous were his evolving biblical and hermeneutical skills as he expounded upon the identity of the “Ethiopians” and proclaimed that “Africans were not unknown, therefore, to the writers of the Bible.” Also evident was his increasing appropriation of the findings of the discipline of comparative religion and its missiological implications. Anticipating the insights that he would flesh out in his last major publication titled African Life and Customs, he challenged the stereotypes and ignorance of many of his fellow delegates regarding African religion and religiosity with his insistence that:

There is not a tribe on the continent of Africa, in spite of the almost universal opinion to the contrary, in spite of the fetishes and gree grees which many of them are supposed to worship . . . which does not stretch out its hands to the Great Creator. There is not one who does not recognize the Supreme Being. . . .They believe that the heaven and the earth, the sun, moon, and stars, which they behold, were created by an Almighty personal Agent, who is also their own Maker and Sovereign, and they render to him such worship as their untutored intellects can conceive.[[460]](#endnote-460)

Consequently, Blyden argued, “The work of the Christian missionary is to declare to them that Being whom they ignorantly worship. There are no atheists or agnostics among them.”[[461]](#endnote-461)

The significance of Blyden’s attendance at the General Assembly and his contributions were acknowledged by the denomination’s preeminent journal (The Presbyterian), which hastened to pronounce him missiologically and theologically sound. It was an assessment reportedly based upon the contention that during his sermon Blyden had "unconsciously defin[ed] his own position" in allegiance to doctrinal orthodoxy with his assertion that "while some claim to have outgrown the Shorter Catechism, he deemed it one of the most potent powers for the world's evangelization."[[462]](#endnote-462) Arguably, The Presbyterian’s hasty assessment of Blyden as a champion of Presbyterian orthodoxy was less revealing of Blyden’s actual theological orientation and more revealing of increasing doctrinal and missiological tensions and controversy within the American and international Presbyterian community related to challenges posed by various currents of modernity.[[463]](#endnote-463)

Blyden’s purported reference to the Shorter Catechism before the assembled delegates may also have been indicative of one of his less flattering but more effective characteristics —a willingness to manipulate controversial positions and passions to his immediate personal and professional advantage. It was a tendency evidenced two years earlier by Blyden in a reference to John Tulloch, the Scottish Presbyterian minister and professor of systematic theology who had argued that the Westminster Confession of Faith should not be read dogmatically but "studied both historically and philosophically."[[464]](#endnote-464) Blyden’s censorious reference to Tulloch’s theological and confessional orientation had come in the context of a letter crafted to appeal to the conservative theological and confessional leanings of the Presbyterian Board of Missions as he sought support for his newest and most quixotic educational enterprise by professing that the proposed institution would have “the Westminster Catechism” as its foundation.[[465]](#endnote-465) Genuflecting to the Board’s doctrinal conservatism, as well as its racial and cultural chauvinism, Blyden opined that while the value of the catechism was being debated in liberal and progressive circles, it had continued relevance, particularly within the West African context: “We are not far enough advanced—I may say in passing—to dispense with those means of intellectual and spiritual culture by which the greatest minds in the American Church and State have been trained." West Africa, he noted, “had not raised up … Tullochs to the position where they now feel that they have outgrown the necessity for the ‘pure and sincere milk’ which is adapted to babes.”[[466]](#endnote-466)

It is probable that Blyden’s comments addressed to both the Board and General Assembly were reflective of a sense of professional and economic vulnerability amid increasing doctrinal controversy on both sides of the Atlantic. It was a sense of vulnerability that must have been heightened in the context of a General Assembly that he described as “the largest since the Reunion.”[[467]](#endnote-467) Aware of the advantages of being perceived as theologically and doctrinally safe by the predominantly conservative assembly such an audience, Blyden may have exaggerated his continued allegiance to the central tenets of Presbyterian orthodoxy.[[468]](#endnote-468) A more perceptive and accurate assessment of Blyden's actual doctrinal orientation at this stage of his career was made five years earlier by Robert Deputie, who insisted that Blyden, like David Swing, had exceeded the doctrinal boundaries of Presbyterian orthodoxy.

In the wake of his impressive appearance before the General Assembly and reports of his continued theological and doctrinal orthodoxy, Blyden was inundated with invitations from the Presbyterian community as he made his way to the coast for departure to West Africa. En route, he preached before the congregation of First Presbyterian Church in Chicago and “Dr. [William P.] Breed’s West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church" in Philadelphia, where he also addressed Philadelphia's Presbyterian Alliance. He also attended the commencement of the Collegiate Department of Lincoln University, where, in acknowledgment of his heightened status within the Presbyterian Church and the growing corpus of religious and missiological publications that marked his emergence as a religious scholar of note, its Board of Trustees awarded him a second honorary degree—that of "Doctor of Divinity."[[469]](#endnote-469) It is also noteworthy given his critical appropriation of the tenets and methodology of comparative philology in his West African based linguistic studies that Blyden found time to attend the annual session of the American Philological Association. In recognition of his linguistic skills, classical studies, and pioneering philological research, he was elected a member of the prestigious association, which was founded in 1869 as one of the nation’s first learned societies.[[470]](#endnote-470)

Blyden's 188o tour was not without controversy and drama. It was marred by tensions with black leaders related to his ties to the American Colonization Society, his anti-mulatto sentiment, and his increasingly cynical attitude about the black struggle for equality in the United States. These factors elicited a boycott at the General Assembly by a handful of "mulatto" delegates in attendance and intra-racialtensions manifest at theAssembly were more broadly evident in its aftermath. Several black clergy and congregations reportedly “refused to hear him,” charging that he was under hire by colonizationists and other “enemies of the race.”[[471]](#endnote-471) However, amid the controversy, Blyden’s relationship with leading northern-based black Presbyterian clerics appear to have remained essentially cordial. Notable among the latter was Henry Highland Garnet, who made his pulpit available to Blyden for delivery of a departing sermon. Blyden, in turn, held the venerable religious and racial leader in especially high esteem and wistfully commented on the impact that “men like Garnet” might have in Liberia.[[472]](#endnote-472)

Blyden’s wish appeared close to being realized when Garnet migrated to Liberia the following year as the newly appointed Minster Resident and Consul-General of the United States. An elated Blyden was among Liberians who warmly welcomed him upon his arrival at Monrovia in late December and feted him with a formal dinner early the following month. Garnet was a fervent advocate of black education, and Blyden who proudly escorted him on a tour of Liberia College no doubt envisioned him as an important ally in support of his new presidency.[[473]](#endnote-473) It was not to be. On February 13, 1882, Garnet passed away, and instead, Blyden was called upon to officiate at his funeral. Indicative of his admiration for the stricken leader and heartfelt sense of loss for the race was the text selected for Garnet's funeral oration, 2 Samuel 3.38: "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"[[474]](#endnote-474) Garnet’s death left Blyden with a painful personal and professional void that would eventually be partially filled by the relationship that he soon developed with the minister of Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church.

Of related importance during Blyden’s 1880 tour was a meeting with Frederick Douglass which also anticipated Blyden’s pending relationship with Grimke and provides further insight into the complicated intra-racial, religious, ideological, and personal dialectic accompanying the black encounter with modernity and its corollaries. En route from the Presbyterian Assembly in Madison, Blyden dined in Chicago with Douglass and other prominent black leaders. Most were mulattoes whom Blyden privately denounced “as light and empty as men professing to lead a race could well be.”[[475]](#endnote-475) Notably exempted from Blyden’s intemperate critique was Douglass, with whom he had obliquely traded insults about theology, ideology, and colonization in the early 1860s.[[476]](#endnote-476) However, their face-to-face encounter in Chicago two decades later revealed altered perceptions of each other that were rooted in the subsequent convergence of their religious, racial, and ideological responses to modernity.

Although their respective positions on colonization remained largely unchanged, the elapsed decades had fostered parallel changes in the theological, hermeneutical, and broader religious orientations of Blyden and Douglass. In the aftermath of his escape from slavery, Douglass had evidenced an embrace of black evangelical orthodoxy during brief service as a licensed AME Zion preacher. His professed allegiance to the “religion of Christ,” which he associated with evangelical antislavery, was explicitly manifest in an 1847 address in which he indicated that he did not wish to be “class[ed] with those who despise religion” or were “identif[ied]” as “infidel.”[[477]](#endnote-477) Moreover, Douglass’ continued reading and study of the Bible has been noted as providing inspiration and source material for his antislavery and broader reform efforts throughout the antebellum era.[[478]](#endnote-478)

Less well documented are the factors that would distance Douglass from the theological and hermeneutical precepts of both black and white evangelical orthodoxy in subsequent decades. His religious metamorphosis was influenced by his association with anticlerical abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and New England transcendentalist clergy such as Theodore Parker. It was also influenced by his increased disgust with the racial and religious hypocrisy of white evangelicals and what he perceived as the hyper-religiosity, intolerance, ignorance, and faulty theology of most black clergy.[[479]](#endnote-479) However, often overlooked amid the factors that induced both his intellectual and theological metamorphosis was Douglass’ increased awareness of and response to the academic, intellectual, scientific, and religious currents of modernity by mid-century. It was an awareness that fueled his disdain for the racist implications of both old and new interpretations of Scripture as these were being fused with the blatant racism of emergent “scientific” disciplines such as ethnography and anthropology at the hands of pseudo-scholars such as Josiah Nott and George Gliddon.[[480]](#endnote-480) The latter’s popular and influential synthesis of academic and religious racism, titled Types of Mankind, would help to inspire and shape the emergent American school of anthropology and ethnography. However, Douglass would provide a refutation of the racist presuppositions of both the text and its authors in a forward-leaning 1854 address and publication titled “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered.”[[481]](#endnote-481)

Douglass’s intellectual and religious metamorphosis was reflected in his gradual embrace of a more liberal and "humanistic theology," being articulated and embraced by a number of his New England allies.[[482]](#endnote-482) Notably, however, in the aftermath of John Brown’s raid of Harper’s Ferry in 1859 Douglass made a second visit to Britain where he was also directly exposed to some of the transitions related to modernity that were fueling changes in Britain’s religious, academic, and social orientation. Upon his return to the United States in 1860, Douglass’ continued religious metamorphosis was illuminated in his aggressive indictment of the hypocrisy and intolerance of evangelical orthodoxy and its adherents especially in relation to their support of slavery and colonization. Ironically, Blyden was prominent among the “colonization theologians” publically denounced and ridiculed by Douglass. [[483]](#endnote-483)

In the spring of 1870, Douglass delivered several speeches in Philadelphia that publically reflected his embrace of key tenets and perspectives of an emergent American version of theological liberalism.[[484]](#endnote-484) The “liberal opinions” articulated in his addresses evoked the criticism of conservative black clergy, who professing to “admire Frederic Douglass” but “lov[ing] God more” were enraged by what was described as his “blatant apostasy.” Meeting at historic “Mother Bethel Church,” the flagship of the AME denomination, they proceeded to rebuke his religious views. Although outraged, Douglass was not dissuaded by their criticism and he proclaimed that he was perfectly willing if necessary to risk being ostracized by former friends and banned from previous venues in defense of “new truth” as he experienced it: “I have no doubt that the avowal of my liberal opinions will drive many from me who were once my friends and even exclude me from many platforms upon which I was a welcome speaker, but such is the penalty which every man must suffer who admits a new truth into his mind.”[[485]](#endnote-485)

The well-read Blyden was likely aware of Douglass’s alleged religious apostasy in vindication of “truth,” as well as his literary challenges to the racist synthesis of science, religion, and academics advanced by American and European scholars. It is also likely that Douglass was aware of the ongoing religious and intellectual transitions of Blyden, as reflected in recent publications that similarly distanced him from many of the presuppositions of evangelical orthodoxy which Douglass rejected.[[486]](#endnote-486) Consequently, by the date of their encounter in Chicago, much of the theological and hermeneutical gulf that initially separated the two in the early 1860s appears to have been largely mitigated by the parallel trajectories of their respective intellectual and religious metamorphosis.

In the aftermath of their meeting, intellectual, religious, and racial rapprochement helped to nurture a relationship between Douglass and Blyden that decades later resulted in Blyden being offered and accepting the hospitality of Douglass’s home.[[487]](#endnote-487) In its library, which contained a broad variety of texts on religion and religions, including Blyden’s Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, as well as busts of Douglass’s two “favorite philosophers”—David Friedrick Strauss, author of The Life of Jesus and Ludwig Feuerbach, author of The Essence of Christianity, Blyden found additional evidence of their shared religious orientation.[[488]](#endnote-488)

Notably, when Douglass was viciously criticized in the wake of his marriage to Sarah Pitts in 1884, Blyden provided from West Africa an iconic religious rejoinder that had comparative theological and ethical overtones. “Frederick Douglass,” he opined, “as a Mohammedan, would have been a *waleess*—a saint of the religion, an athlete of the faith”; and yet, “as a Christian, his orthodoxy is suspected, and his very presence is deprecated in a church in the capital of the nation; and further south, his domestic relations would probably earn him a home in the penitentiary.”[[489]](#endnote-489)

While religious and theological rapprochement was an important aspect of the budding friendship between Blyden and Douglass, equally, if not more important, was Blyden’s selective application of his animus against mulattos. Douglass had been among the “immoral” and “half-white” leaders of "confused race instincts" whose opposition to colonization had been alluded to by Blyden in his role as “colonization theologue” and apologist during the early 1860s.[[490]](#endnote-490) However, upon encountering Douglass in person in Chicago in 1880, an awed Blyden later enthused to a West African audience that Douglass’ “manner and bearing” were reminiscent “more of some aristocratic African chief such as I have seen in the distant interior, rather than of any cultivated European I have ever seen.” He added, "although of mixed blood," Douglass "is strongly Negro," and the "genius and power" of the mulatto leader "came evidently from the African side of his nature."[[491]](#endnote-491) A similar appraisal, largely based on an inconsistent application of ideological rather than racial or biological criteria, was applied to the handful of other mulattoes on both sides of the Atlantic that Blyden came to trust and admire. Soon to be included among their ranks was Francis Grimke.[[492]](#endnote-492)

**Chapter 12: Mediating Pedagogy and Modernity at Liberia College**

Blyden’s 1880 tour of the United States concluded with the confirmation of his election to the presidency of Liberia College by its American trustees. Two decades earlier, as a young professor at the college, he had argued that the education of Africans should not entail a separate set of standards or expectations and should be based upon the same requirements as the best of Western pedagogy. However, he now clearly viewed his 1880 appointment as an opportunity to develop the college into an institution that would provide Africans with an education uniquely adapted to their particular needs amid the myriad challenges posed by modernity. Consequently, Blyden proposed a pedagogical model that had been recontoured by two decades of pioneering African historical and cultural studies, his ongoing interrogation of modernity, and selective appropriation of its academic, intellectual, pedagogical, and religious insights and perspectives.[[493]](#endnote-493)

Central to Blyden’s new pedagogical model was his thesis of an “African Personality” which was intellectually and academically rooted in his West African research and selective adaptation and synthesis especially of the racial and religious insights of comparative religion and Darwinism. The three provided support for his core conviction and argument that the Divine endowed each race with peculiar and inherent attributes and that each should, therefore, receive an education designed not to hamper or obscure but to "bring out. . . [race] individuality and originality."[[494]](#endnote-494)

The ideological contours of his new pedagogy had been previewed during the campaign for a West African University in Sierra Leone a decade earlier, and he now cogently articulated its broader justification and implications in a presidential address provocatively titled “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans.”[[495]](#endnote-495) In it, Blyden sketched out the parameters of a pedagogical, theological, and missiological orientation in response to modernity and its corollaries that was to the left of reactionary conservatism and the right of more radical expressions of theological liberalism. The key pedagogical note sounded throughout the address was consistent with refrains he was now advancing in his missiological writings--that “the African must advance by methods of his own” and that “things which have been of great advantage to Europe may work to ruin to us.”[[496]](#endnote-496) Similarly, African education was to be based upon African rather than foreign principles and thus “suited to the necessities of the country and race. . . [and to] development of the individuality and manhood of the African.”[[497]](#endnote-497) Blyden asserted, “We must not suppose that the Anglo-Saxon methods are final . . . and that we have nothing to teach the world.”[[498]](#endnote-498) Accordingly, rather than reflect a wholesale adoption, an African pedagogy should appropriate from the Western and European pedagogical models only what was consistent with the peculiar needs of the African and the nurturing of his unique gifts and talents.

Blyden’s inaugural address revealed that his new pedagogical agenda was decisively informed by his ongoing interrogation of modernity and it's academic, intellectual, and scientific corollaries. Within it, he shared some of his most insightful musings on modernity’s genealogy and influence—including, most notably, his pained assessment of modernity's historical and contemporary impact on people of African descent. In an appraisal of various developmental epochs, Blyden gave special attention to the “modern epoch,” which had nurtured the advent and spread of Western modernity. Although conceding that the "modern epoch" was "the Age of social and popular development of modern science and industry," Blyden lamented that it had also given rise to much of the era’s most vicious institutional, cultural, and religious expressions of racism. During it, he noted, “the transatlantic slave-trade arose,” and “theories—theological, social, and political—were invented for the degradation and prescription of the Negro” and even more recently, the era was fostering the emergence of what he described as a “tribe of declamatory Negrophobists” whose scientific, intellectual, religious and racial theories were producing a broad range of racist scholarship. Of heightened pedagogical concern for Blyden was his assessment that such theories nurtured a debilitating sense of inferiority and self-hate among black youth at a stage in which they were most vulnerable.[[499]](#endnote-499)

As corrective, Blyden proposed a curriculum at Liberia College that was intended to protect his young charges from the most debilitating acids of the “modern epoch” while nurturing their intellects, confidence, and “manhood”—in effect, providing them with intellectual “nourishment…. without taking in any race-poison” often fostered by “modern studies and scholarship.”[[500]](#endnote-500) His goal was to prepare them to function in the modern world while at the same time inoculating them from what he felt to be one of Western modernity’s most egregious impacts upon people of African descent—the perpetuation of a sense of self-hatred and inferiority.

Like much of Blyden’s evolving thought, his inaugural address betrayed numerous contradictions fostered in part by his often-conflicted assessment of modernity and inconsistent appropriation of its intellectual, academic, and religious corollaries. For example, despite his call for the development of a uniquely African approach to pedagogy, replete within his address were references to the findings of "modern" European and Euro-American “scholars” whose ideas had proved valuable to his own development. Prominently referenced were T. H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and even Harvard professor Andrew P. Peabody, author of Christianity and Science and a leader in the effort among American religious scholars "to state the evidences of Christianity in the terms of modern thought."[[501]](#endnote-501) While appreciative of their creative engagement with modernity and its corollaries, Blyden’s address reflected his alarm that much of the era’s most racist scholarship and literature had also emerged in conjunction with modernity’s scientific, intellectual, academic, and religious corollaries. Singled out by him as an example were the “Negrophoboi[c]” writings of Dr. Alexander Winchell.[[502]](#endnote-502)

Winchell, an American professor of geology, paleontology, zoology, and botany, was influential among scholars attempting to reconcile the theory of evolution, racial differences, and “the new approach to Scripture.” To this end, he had recently published Adamites and Preadamites (1878) which purported to advance a new version of the theory of polygenesis that was corroborated by the “science” of evolution, the insights of comparative religion, as well as “Divine Revelation and a proper reconstruction of the Scriptures.”[[503]](#endnote-503) As advanced in its most racist interpretation by Winchell and a number of his cohorts, polygenesis posited that people of African descent were too inferior to have come from the biblical Adam and were thus products of a separate creation.[[504]](#endnote-504) That the new intellectual, scientific, and hermeneutical findings emerging in conjunction with modernity could be so readily appropriated to assert the inferiority of people of African descent and even deny their basic humanity was both concern and disappointment to Blyden. It was a cautionary tale about the potential dangers of modernity, and it's academic, intellectual, scientific, and religious corollaries lost neither to him nor an emerging cadre of black ministerial and intellectual elites on both sides of the Atlantic.

Although acutely aware of the racist genealogy and impact of early and late modernity, as well as recent racist appropriations of its academic, intellectual, and religious corollaries by purported scholars such as Winchell, Blyden, in his role as President-elect of Liberia College, was nevertheless committed to preparing his charges to positively and creatively engage and cope with modernity’s myriad influences. Concerned to protect and nurture the intellect, confidence, and “manhood” of his charges, Blyden proposed a curriculum that would not be initially focused on the problematic modern era. Rather, earlier epochs that were "full of suggestive energy, both physical and intellectual." and less contaminated by the poison of racism and theories of Negro inferiority would be their initial focus. In justification, Blyden made the claim—ironic, paradoxical, and inconsistent, given his own admitted appropriation of much of the findings associated with modernity—that there was "nothing in the domain of literature, philosophy, or religion for which we need be dependent upon the moderns. Law and philosophy, we may get from the Romans and the Greeks, religion from the Hebrews." Turning to what had proved foundational to his early education and intellectual development, he proposed that at the core of the curriculum of Liberia College would be the “Classics”— “the Greek and Latin language and their literature.” From these, he opined, students could “get nourishment . . . without taking in any race-poison" fostered by modernity's modern studies and scholarship. Finally, he opined that such a curriculum would “perform no sinister work upon his [students’] consciousness and give no unholy bias to [their] inclinations.”[[505]](#endnote-505)

Although Liberia College was ostensibly a "secular" institution, Blyden envisioned a key role for the study of religion in its curriculum and proposed that "the Bible will be our textbook." Its exposition, initially "without note or comment,” was intended to protect his young charges from old and new manifestations of hermeneutical and theological racism. Consequently, he proposed the study of the New Testament in the "original language in which....[it] was written," while both Hebrew and Arabic would be employed "to study the Old Testament."[[506]](#endnote-506) Additional insight into the place, status, and approach to religion at the college was provided as Blyden indicated that the study of Christianity would be engaged critically rather than dogmatically, because, he opined, while the “teachings of Christianity are of universal application . . . we cannot but be struck with the amazing dissimilitude and disproportion between the original idea of Christianity as expressed by Christ, and the practice of it by his professed followers,” particularly as reflected in the “treatment which our own race and other so-called inferior races have received from Christian nations.” Thus, he insisted that “we must gather its doctrines not from the examples of some of its adherents but from the sacred records.” With this proposal and explanation, Blyden additionally signaled his awareness and critical appropriation of the foundational presuppositions of the historical-critical method.[[507]](#endnote-507)

Having ensured that his charges would be shielded at least initially from the more pernicious psychological, racial, and cultural liabilities attendant the “modern epoch” and modernity, Blyden envisioned the college providing a more permanent inoculation by the “training of Negro youth upon the basis of their own idiosyncrasy, with a sense of race-individuality, self-respect, and liberty.” With characteristic self-confidence and idealism, Blyden concluded that under his leadership and application of his proposed curriculum, Liberia College would be “unique in the history of Christian civilization.”[[508]](#endnote-508)

As he sought support for Liberia College and the innovative “liberal” curriculum proposed in his inaugural address, Blyden arranged to have a circular containing his curriculum prospectus forwarded to presidents of prominent American institutions.[[509]](#endnote-509) A year later, the opportunity to solicit both aid and faculty for the college in person was made possible by his return to the United States.[[510]](#endnote-510) The American Presbyterian community’s historic and influential ties to Liberia College were emphasized as Blyden courted support for the college from its members and institutions. He was especially elated that the college’s “liberal” curriculum was endorsed by James McCosh at a meeting for "the promotion of Christian Education in Liberia, West Africa," held in New York City’s Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church.[[511]](#endnote-511) Efforts to extend and solidify a Presbyterian and Princeton connection with the college were formalized with the recruitment of Princeton Seminary alumni, Revs. Hugh Browne and T. McCants Stewart to join the college’s faculty. Browne, born in Washington, attended Howard University before enrolling at Princeton Seminary. Notably, after graduation, he studied philosophy at Edinburgh for two years and took advanced linguistic training in Germany before accepting the call to the pastorate of Shiloh Presbyterian Church in New York City.[[512]](#endnote-512) Stewart, born in Charleston, South Carolina, attended Avery Institute, Howard University, and the University of South Carolina. The decision in 1877 to become a minister of the AME Church lead him to enroll in Princeton Theological Seminary where he was among black students who attended McCosh’s graduate philosophy course. However, he would leave the seminary before graduation upon his call to Bethel AME Church. [[513]](#endnote-513)

Blyden was explicit in his hope that Browne and Stewart would not only lend academic strength to the college but also solidify its relationship with Princeton and the wider American Presbyterian community. In announcing their appointment, he proclaimed, "The gentlemen being both Princeton men enjoy the confidence of Dr. McCosh and the Professors there and have a large acquaintance among Presbyterian clergymen."[[514]](#endnote-514) Blyden also supported an additional overture intended to solidify ties to a Princeton and Presbyterian community that was still mourning the death of Charles Hodge--establishment at the college of the "Charles Hodge Professorship of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy" and the appointment of Browne to it.[[515]](#endnote-515)

As he prepared to return to Liberia, the successful recruitment of Revs. Browne and Stewart as well as the accomplished Jennie E. Davis to head the school’s female division seemed to portend an auspicious start of Blyden’s presidency of Liberia College and his plan to make the West African institution an important component of his efforts to engage in a trans-Atlantic process of adjudication and mediation of modernity. It was not to be.

Blyden’s presidency of Liberia College was mired in turmoil from its onset. Unexpectantly contributing to Blyden’s escalating troubles at the college was the delayed arrival of his Princeton educated recruits, Browne and Stewart. Upon leaving the U.S. for Liberia, they took a circuitous route that included weeks spent traveling through parts of England, France, Germany, and Holland before finally arriving to take up their duties at the college.[[516]](#endnote-516) By the time of their belated arrival, the college had become “one of the battlegrounds for the Negro-mulatto conflict in Liberia,” and the two found themselves immersed in the bitter struggle.[[517]](#endnote-517)

Although they were mulattos, Blyden had hopes that his two Princeton recruits would solidify his alliance with the American Presbyterian community, advance his progressive curriculum, and thus become important allies in his struggle with local critics of the college and his presidency.[[518]](#endnote-518) Instead, his relationship with his new professors quickly soured, and Blyden reported that his “labors instead of being lessened by the arrival of the Professors[?] had been much increased—my anxieties intensified.”[[519]](#endnote-519) The escalating conflict became an unsavory public and trans-Atlantic dispute that proved disastrous for Liberia College and all of the principals involved.[[520]](#endnote-520)

By the spring of 1884, the breach between Stewart, Browne, and Blyden had become irreconcilable. Although their conflict has usually been perceived as a clash of egos and racial ideologies, the likelihood that it also reflected some measure of theological controversy should not be discounted.[[521]](#endnote-521) Blyden's often criticized administrative style was rooted at least in part in a theologically rooted perception of himself as a "Providential agent" of Liberia and the race's redemption. Lynch notes that the resultant sense of divine favor, privilege, and responsibility meant that Blyden "was always convinced about the rightness of his ideas," and it assured that he usually "reacted to opposition by assuming a Martyr-complex." [[522]](#endnote-522) Both informed his understanding of the significance of his presidency of Liberia College as well as his perception of and response to the growing chorus of critics that soon included his African American professors.[[523]](#endnote-523)

However, Blyden’s complaints to the American Board about Browne and Stewart and the fact that both would soon demit their ordination and leave the ministry suggest a deeper level of religious and theological conflict.[[524]](#endnote-524) The decision by the two American professors to leave the ministry shortly after their return to the United States was consistent with the response of a small but growing number of black and white clergy on both sides of the Atlantic who in response to challenges posed by the encounter with modernity found their continuation within the traditional Christian ministry no longer tenable. Afflicting some who exercised this option was a crisis or “ordeal of faith” rooted in their inability to reconcile their traditional faith and ministry with modernity’s new intellectual and religious challenges.[[525]](#endnote-525) Close examination of the theological orientations of Browne and Stewart suggests that these and related factors magnified by their intra-racial and personal conflict with Blyden may have spurred their decision to leave the ministry and continue in other vocational paths.

Although both Browne and Stewart received theological training at the citadel of American orthodoxy during the waning tenure of Charles Hodge, their embrace of the defensive orthodoxy of the “Princeton Theology”seems to have been mediated by less conservative influences such as that of James McCosh. The latter not only instructed both but also endorsed their decision to join Blyden in the realization of his innovative and “liberal” pedagogical agenda at Liberia College.[[526]](#endnote-526)

Upon completion of his studies at Princeton, Browne, like an increasing number of white seminary graduates, traveled to Europe for post-graduate study in Scotland and Germany.[[527]](#endnote-527) His two-year European sabbatical directly exposed him to contemporary and controversial trends in biblical scholarship and theology emanating and spreading in Europe. Although his recall to the United States to assume the pulpit of Garnet’s historic Shiloh Presbyterian Church would curtail his post-graduate studies, they undoubtedly impacted his subsequent theological and vocational orientation.

Given Browne’s theological and ecclesiastical pedigree, it is not surprising that Blyden seems to have anticipated that the two would form a compatible and successful pedagogical, theological, and ecclesiastical alliance in Liberia.[[528]](#endnote-528) Such an alliance failed to take place, and upon returning to the United States from Liberia, Browne would leave the ministry and become a distinguished educator. Unfortunately, little is definitively known about the specific factors—racial, theological, or personal—that induced his decision to leave the ministry. However, he would remain a lifelong friend and parishioner of Francis Grimke. Ironically, upon Browne’s death in 1923, Grimke penned a memorial tribute that included only a terse reference to the unsavory episode at Liberia College.[[529]](#endnote-529) Nevertheless, Browne was probably among the growing number of educated elites within his church and the wider black community who alarmed Grimke as they questioned the continued relevance of theological and hermeneutical orthodoxy in the face of resurgent scientific, intellectual, racial, and religious challenges posed by modernity in the opening decades of the twentieth century.

Stewart, at first gaze, appears to have been more theologically conservative than either Blyden or Browne.[[530]](#endnote-530) He had aborted his theological education at Princeton Seminary after only two years of study upon accepting appointment to the pulpit of historic Bethel AME Church.[[531]](#endnote-531) Also, unlike Browne, he was not the beneficiary of the often theologically liberalizing post-graduate European sabbatical. However, and perhaps more importantly, he, like Blyden, seems to have been engaged in a continuing disciplined regime of self-education through wide reading and study. This regime appears to have similarly fostered an iconoclastic theological, hermeneutical, and ideological orientation centered around the racial and religious impact and influence of modernity and its corollaries that likewise distanced him from traditional Reformed orthodoxy.

Upon his return to the United States from Liberia, Stewart abandoned his ministerial career and returned to the legal career that he had deserted for the ministry.[[532]](#endnote-532) The prevailing explanation of Stewart’s decision to leave the ministry is that the AME Church offered fewer opportunities for his advancement. However, it is also likely that Stewart’s decision was influenced by his growing estrangement from evangelical orthodoxy amid heightened theological conflict within the AME Church between defenders of orthodoxy and liberals who responded more positively to the challenges posed by modernity and its religious corollaries. In the wake of increasing theological vigilance by denominational elders such as Bishop Campbell and other defenders of orthodoxy, Stewart would have found being a target of suspicion and discord within the AME ministry, especially unappealing.

Stewart and Blyden may have had more in common theologically, hermeneutically, and ideologically than traditional accounts of their clash at Liberia College suggest. In addition to being more inclined toward liberalism than orthodoxy in his theological and hermeneutical orientation, Stewart, like Blyden, also perceived himself as a champion and defender of the race and was similarly interested in the intersection of race, religion, and modernity. It was a synthesis of interests that continued after his formal departure from the ministry and as he became a frequent speaker on related topics in educational and church-related forums.[[533]](#endnote-533) In an 1884 address delivered before the Hampton Institute Alumni Association, Stewart revealed the extent to which his thought was often influenced by the ideological and religious views of Blyden.[[534]](#endnote-534) Blyden’s broader influence on Stewart’s hermeneutical as well as historical and theological orientation appears to have also may been evidenced in Stewart’s authorship of a four-page introduction to Reverend Rufus L. Perry’s pioneering 1893 text titled The Cushite or the Descendants of Ham, which Blyden had been asked to review.[[535]](#endnote-535) Although Blyden appears not to have provided a public review of the text, Stewart’s introduction and Perry’s text shared Blyden’s basic thesis that the ancient Ethiopians and Egyptians were Cushites or “Negro descended from the race of Ham.”[[536]](#endnote-536) Ironically, Stewart’s legal career would eventually entail a return to Liberia, where he remained from 1906 to 1914, serving as a prominent legal counsel and judge. Moreover, he would die on Blyden's home island of St. Thomas on January 7, 1923.[[537]](#endnote-537)

Although ignored by religious studies scholars, the education and subsequent careers of Browne and Stewart provide additional evidence of and insight into the conflicted personal and professional responses to modernity’s ubiquitous racial, religious, and intellectual impact as experienced by increasing numbers of black men and women of both sides of the Atlantic in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, Blyden’s ambitious dream of forging a race-conscious, progressive, and liberal pedagogy at Liberia College that would provide an antidote to some of the less savory aspects of modernity ended at least temporarily in June 1884 with his resignation from the college and flight once again into Sierra Leone exile.[[538]](#endnote-538)

**Chapter 14: Donning a Trans-Atlantic Role**

Although Blyden’s efforts to pedagogically engage modernity and its varied currents from his position as president of Liberia College would not prove successful, subsequent tours of the United States in 1881-82 and 1883 provided an opportunity for him to share with American audiences his increasingly iconoclastic responses to modernity and its racial and religious corollaries. Like most of his previous tours, his 81-82 tour was largely funded by the American Colonization, which continued to expect him to provide lectures and sermons supportive of its efforts in Liberia. However, Blyden’s perceptions of the colonization movement were not immune to his increased sensitivity to the impact of modernity. In his sermon before the Presbyterian Assembly in 1880, he had made an oblique reference to the intersection of modernity, Africa, and the colonization movement. “Africa,” he had insisted, “is no vast island separated by an immense ocean from other portions of the globe and cut off through the ages from the men who have made and influenced the destinies of mankind.” Rather, the continent and its inhabitants had “been closely connected, as both source and nourisher, with some of the most potent influences which have affected for good the history of the world.” [[539]](#endnote-539) Blyden’s heightened awareness of and response to this dynamic was more evident in a discourse titled “The Origin and Purposes of African Colonization,” which was delivered in 1882 at the 66th-anniversary meeting of the American Colonization Society.[[540]](#endnote-540)

In the wake of momentous developments on both sides of the Atlantic, Blyden’s presentation of the history and “purpose” of the colonization movement included more than recitation and affirmation of the society’s traditional evangelical roots, orientation, and agenda. His introductory paragraph noted the colonization movement’s inexorable intersection with modernity and the potential impact of its new academic, intellectual, and religious corollaries. Referenced within his address were the “misty phraseology of modern criticism” and the fact that “men are now constructing the science of History, the science of Language, the science of Religion, the science of Society” and the “Science of Sociology.” To an audience that was traditionally evangelical in its religious orientation and perspective, Blyden implied that these new developments had momentous consequences for the future of the Colonization Society as well as for Africa and her descendants on the continent and in the Atlantic diaspora. [[541]](#endnote-541)

Even more reflective of Blyden’s conscious and public assumption of the role and mantle of interrogator and mediator of modernity and its religious and racial corollaries were several additional addresses delivered before a variety of secular and religious audiences throughout his tour. These not only advocated his more progressive perceptions of Liberian colonization but also introduced his listeners, black and white, to insights associated with his new pedagogical, hermeneutical, theological, and historical synthesis.[[542]](#endnote-542) Although the full implications of Blyden’s intellectual, theological and missiological metamorphosis would not be explicit until more iconoclastic revisions of these addresses were published five years later in Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, his discourses nevertheless offered colleagues and critics what for some would be a troubling preview of the intellectual and theological metamorphosis that Blyden was undergoing and the widening gulf between his theological, hermeneutical and missiological orientation and that of the vast majority of the nation’s more traditional black and white Christians and clergy.

Illustrative of the iconoclastic nature of these addresses was Blyden’s presentation in Boston’s famed Park Street Church of a discourse titled “Philip and the Eunuch—or The Instruments and Methods of African Evangelization.”[[543]](#endnote-543) As he engaged in a radically nontraditional exegesis and reinterpretation of Acts VIII: 26-39, Blyden heralded the text as a scriptural model of “the method and instruments of Africa’s evangelization.” Drawing upon his classical, historical, and biblical research as augmented and informed by his critical appropriation of the insights and perspectives of the comparative and historical-critical method, he presented a version of both sacred and secular history that implicitly challenged prevailing misinformation and images traditionally fostered in sacred and secular history about Africa and its inhabitants. The findings and assertions of a later generation of black biblical scholars were also anticipated as he informed those assembled: “There is no people, except the Hebrews and other ancient inhabitants of Palestine, more frequently mentioned in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament than the Ethiopians; and there is no country more frequently referred to then Ethiopia” and that “the record of no people. . . in sacred history or in ancient secular history, has less of the discreditable than the record of the Ethiopians.”[[544]](#endnote-544) More familiar to both his black and white audiences, he noted, were racist redactions of the “Curse of Ham” and various other biblically-rooted pseudo-scientific arguments of African inferiority and backwardness that not only denied Africa a place of respect and honor in both sacred and secular history but also often questioned the origins of her inhabitants and descendants.

"Sacred history" as manifest in the Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New—was deftly excavated by Blyden in support of Africa’s participation in and contributions to Christianity’s theological and ecclesiastical developments—contributions that were conveniently missing from most nineteenth-century hermeneutical efforts. After citing numerous valorizing references to “Ethiopians” in the Old Testament, Blyden similarly noted the role of Africa and her inhabitants in events at the core of the New Testament:

When the Saviour of mankind, born in lowly circumstances, was the persecuted babe of Bethlehem, Africa furnished the refuge of his threatened and helpless infancy. African hands ministered to the comfort of Mary and Joseph while they sojourned as homeless and hunted strangers in that land. In the final hours of the Man of Sorrows, when his disciples had forsaken Him and fled...; when Asia, in the person of the Jew, clamored for His blood, and Europe, in the Roman soldier, was dragging Him to execution, and afterwards nailed those sinless hands to the cross, and pierced that sacred side. . . [Africa] furnished the man to share the burden of the cross with the suffering Redeemer.[[545]](#endnote-545)

Blyden was also adamant in his refutation of popular and academic orientalism that denied Egypt’s and Ethiopia’s association with the African continent and its inhabitants. Specifically denounced were the arguments rooted in what he described as “superficial criticism” and “prejudices” advanced by contemporary writers and modern scholars such as the German novelist “Dr. George Ebers” which “attempted to deny the intimate relations of the Negro with the great historic races of Egypt and Ethiopia.”[[546]](#endnote-546) Citing his travel from “West Africa to Palestine,” Blyden argued that “No one who has traveled in North-eastern Africa, or among the ruins of the banks of the Nile, will for a moment doubt that there was the connection, not of accident or of adventitious circumstances, but of consanguinity between the race of inner Africa of the present day, and the ancient Egyptians and Ethiopians.”[[547]](#endnote-547) Also refuted as “beneath the level of scientific criticism” was the even more fanciful and dangerous purported scholarship of an unnamed “American Professor” who, “in an elaborate work, claims. . . [for] the tropical African a pre-Adamite origin.”[[548]](#endnote-548) The latter statement was a cryptic reference to Alexander Winchell and his racist text, which had been roundly critiqued and denounced by Blyden in his inaugural address at Liberia College two years earlier.[[549]](#endnote-549)

In addition to illuminating Blyden's enhanced hermeneutical and exegetical skills, “Philip and the Eunuch” also showcased his complementary appropriation of the insights and sensibilities of the historical-critical method as applied to theories about the ecclesiastical, theological, and doctrinal development of the Christian church. Before black and white audiences unfamiliar with claims of Africa’s historic role, Blyden boldly proclaimed that the African continent had nurtured the "two most wonderful and productive of all the primitive Christian Churches... namely, the Greek-speaking Church in North-Eastern Africa, and the Latin-speaking Church in North-Western Africa." Moreover, he noted that the latter church had produced "those three great Latin-Africans—Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine" who profoundly impacted the history and theology of Christianity. "The African Tertullian," he proclaimed, had "Latinised the theological and ecclesiastical language of the West;” while “in all controversies on the constitution of the Church, the appeal has been by Western Christians to the African Cyprian;” and that “no one has contributed so much to Western theology as the African Augustine.” “Through them,” he insisted, the “African Church had permanently affected all Western Christendom-Protestant as well as Roman Catholic, [in] the New World as well as the Old World.”[[550]](#endnote-550)

Also indicative of Blyden’s embrace of the perspectives and findings of the era’s new historical studies was his assertion that “‘Africa, not Rome . . . gave birth to Latin Christianity.’” It was an assertion that he acknowledged as having been informed by the ecclesiastical studies of Henry Milman -- Dean of St. Paul’s and one of “the first” British churchmen and scholars to “break loose from the narrow methods of biblical study" and pioneer in the application of the historical-critical method to both Scripture and ecclesiastical history.[[551]](#endnote-551)

Even more momentous, given his audiences, was Blyden’s admittedly more speculative account of the history and legacy of the “third African Church—the Abyssinian or Ethiopian.” Returning to his title and theme, he synthesized the new hermeneutics and ecclesiastical history in support of the thesis that it was “the nameless Ethiopian eunuch” who after his encounter with Phillip, “returned to his country with his heart full of joy and peace and love. . . . and became the founder, it is believed, of the Abyssinian Church.”[[552]](#endnote-552)

Important contemporary missiological and racial truths, he opined, were to be gleaned from the long obscured and ignored history of the Abyssinian Church, “[f]ounded by a native,” and which unlike its predecessors did not “wither away” but “struck its roots deep into the soil.”[[553]](#endnote-553) With pointed reference to his own missiological strategy and agenda, Blyden proclaimed, that it was the Abyssinian Church’s distinctive origins and openness to indigenization-- to “taking root among the people of the country” --which allowed it to remain, “the only African Church which had held fast its Christian faith, century after century, against the successive onslaughts of Heathenism and Mohammedanism” and “through various trying vicissitudes, [it] continues to this day. . .. [as] the only real African Church yet founded whose priests and people are all of the African race.”[[554]](#endnote-554)

Consequently, Blyden insisted that this often-obscured narrative of Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch continued to hold profound and unmistakable spiritual, missiological, and racial lessons for their contemporary descendants. Decreed as first among the lessons to be gleaned was that “Ethiopia and Ethiopians have ever been connected with the Divine administration and manifestations, and that that great country and its people are not left out of the beneficent purposes of the Almighty.” The second lesson was one that had even more direct implications and meaning for contemporary efforts aimed at the missionization of Africa and the role of her descendants in the process: Simply put, it was “That the gospel, to be successfully carried into Africa, must be carried by Africans” (a principle, which he noted, Muslims had acted from the beginning and was “the chief secret of their widespread and increasing influence” on the African continent).[[555]](#endnote-555) The obvious missiological directive to contemporary Christians was that the instrument of African evangelization was to be “the African himself.” The more specific lesson to the American and African American religious community was that it was the “Negro missionary, born and brought up in foreign countries,” yet retaining “the unfailing and indelible instincts of race” and able to “more fully enter into sympathy with the people . . .” who was best positioned to ensure the "evangelization and civilization of the land of their fathers.”[[556]](#endnote-556)

Ironically, given his unconventional and iconoclastic interpretation and application of scriptural and ecclesiastical history, Blyden concluded his discourse with a more familiar scriptural reference and appeal: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This, he added, “is the teaching that will save men of all races and climes. . . .”[[557]](#endnote-557) Whether intended as such or not, it was a reassuring evocation of scripture that probably mediated some degree of concern and anxiety among his traditionally evangelical audiences about much that was likely perceived in the course of his discourse as not only theologically, hermeneutically, and racially unconventional, but also for many as alarming.[[558]](#endnote-558)

As he presented “Philip and the Eunuch” and related discourses throughout his tour, Blyden was not oblivious to the increasing gulf between his theology, ecclesiastical history, and missiology and that of most members of his American audiences. In an interview conducted upon his recent arrival in the United States, he had predicted that many Christians, both black and white, would find his new religious and missiological analysis, insights, and conclusions “very serious and by no means agreeable...to contemplate.” [[559]](#endnote-559) Nevertheless, Blyden was hailed by his interviewer as a public intellectual who “Probably, in a greater degree than any man living . . . presented the possibilities of the African race.”[[560]](#endnote-560) It was an assessment that helps to explain the continued measure of esteem still afforded Blyden by key leaders of the African American religious and intellectual community despite his increasingly iconoclastic views.

Additional testimony to the esteem to which Blyden and his scholarship were held was evidenced by an invitation to deliver an address in the most important intellectual venue of the African American community--the Bethel Literary and Historical Society. Inspired and founded in 1881 by Bishop Alexander Payne and a group of clergy that included Francis Grimke, the society provided an ecumenical forum for scholarly, religious, and literary discourse by leaders of the African American community.[[561]](#endnote-561)

As Blyden took the podium before members and guests of the Bethel Society assembled in Washington's Metropolitan AME Church, he joined the ranks of what would become an august company of invited lecturers that eventually included Frederick Douglass, Anna J. Cooper, Richard Greener, Mary Church Terrell, and Mary Ann Shadd. [[562]](#endnote-562) It was a list that would also eventually include Francis Grimke, who was likely among the assemblage of prominent black clerical leaders that listened attentively as Blyden expounded upon a favorite topic, “Christianity and the Negro Race.”

Blyden’s lecture, intended “to trace the influence of Christianity upon the Negro Race, and to enquire how far the method of its dissemination has affected their reception of it” was a revision and update of his signature article on the topic published almost a decade earlier.[[563]](#endnote-563) Like revised versions of other post-60's publications and addresses, his 1882 address reflected his ongoing intellectual and theological metamorphosis and his selective appropriation of many of the scientific, academic, and intellectual corollaries associated with modernity that had become prominent and controversial in recent decades.[[564]](#endnote-564)

Blyden was aware that his iconoclastic views, particularly regarding Islam and its relation to Christianity and the African race, were disconcerting and troubling for most members of the black Christian community. Hence, he opened his Bethel lecture by addressing rumors about his religious orientation and refuting the “charge. . .by critics" that he "was disposed to disparage Christianity in favor of Mohammed." After reaffirming his commitment to Christianity which he described as "the highest form in which God has been pleased to reveal himself to man," Blyden explained that the purpose of his writings and lectures had “not been to disparage Christianity” and that his criticisms had “not been in relation to the system in the abstract, but in reference to the professors of the system.” [[565]](#endnote-565)

In the wake of his disclaimer, Blyden proceeded to expound upon the failures of Christianity as taught to people of African descent by Europeans and Euro-Americans in contrast to the “Christianity as taught by Christ.” The latter, he argued, had been betrayed by an insidious cultural and racial chauvinism that fostered notions of inferiority that handicapped the spiritual, intellectual, institutional, social, and overall “manhood” development of the black race on both sides of the Atlantic.

Also reiterated was Blyden’s argument that the offerings and influence of Islam were superior to those of Christianity, especially as the latter was modeled by most whites and blacks. The “Mohammedan Negro,” he contended, unlike the typical black convert to Christianity “has a wide sphere for the free play and development of his moral and spiritual nature [and] moves about without these encumbrances and obstructions—those sores and irritations---which afflict his brother in Christian lands.” In an addendum that no doubt additionally shocked and offended some members of his audience, Blyden further opined that “not only Mohammedan Africans, but Africans who have been trained under the influence of Fetishism, have displayed intellectual and moral qualities” and provided “greater evidence of a true and proper manhood” that was generally superior to that of their Christian counterparts.[[566]](#endnote-566)

The broader implications of his address and thesis became evident as Blyden rhetorically queried: “Can European or white Christians give the gospel to Africa?” “The experience of the past warrant,” he opined, an emphatic no! Thus despite labors by "European missionaries. . . for the last three hundred years” their efforts have met "with very little success," and there is "no indigenous community in Africa. . . which has become Christian through the efforts of [European] missionaries.” The “racial obstacle” and a related “want of sympathy between the European and the African,” he charged, had all but negated their labours.[[567]](#endnote-567)

Shifting his attention to the United States, Blyden pointed to a similar racial and religious problematic and dynamic since “Leading American minds, in all the past, and to some extent in the present have preached *ad nauseam* on Negro inferiority.” The result was that white efforts at Christianization in the United States, have also “met with no greater success among Negroes,” especially as measured by what Blyden considered to be the normative measures of successful black evangelization—the fostering of a sense of worth and self -respect. Rather, “Everything in the practice of Christianity” taught to American blacks “has tended to impress upon him the feeling that in this world, his soul is not wanted.” [[568]](#endnote-568) The result, he opined, was a sense of inferiority that undermined one of Christianity’s most valuable assets, especially for a subjugated race—the nurturing of manhood rights and independence.[[569]](#endnote-569)

Nevertheless, Blyden acknowledged that some American blacks had resisted the accommodated Gospel offered them and embraced the full message and meaning of Christianity. Moreover, they had expressed its manhood stimulus by “withdrawn[ing] from among [whites], and sett[ing] up organizations of their own.”[[570]](#endnote-570) Identified as “the most remarkable and successful illustration” of this dynamic was the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which “with its 430,000 members, with its Bishops and preachers and machinery of government,” had become a virtual “ecclesiastical Liberia in the United States.” The denomination’s “success,” he opined, was even more remarkable since it had been achieved although “The politics, literature, and even theology of the country have been against the Negro. . .. [And] Every step towards a real manhood made by him has been made against terrible odds.” [[571]](#endnote-571)

As was the case with most of his post-1870 writings and discourses, Blyden's more recent version of “Christianity and the Negro Race” was framed within the context of his heightened perception and analysis of the problematic intersection of race, religion, and modernity. His willingness and ability to critically engage resultant religious and racial heresies was evident as he singled out as representative the resurgent theory of polygenesis. The theory’s current racial and religious implications, he noted, was even more insidious than the crude hermeneutical racism of “former times” by which the black man “was taught that he was under a curse and destined, by divine decree, to be a ‘servant of servants’” and thus “made to believe that he was created to be at the bottom of the social scale.” Moreover, unlike his cryptic reference to polygenesis and its formulators made in his discourse on” Philip and Eunuch,” which was delivered before a predominantly white New England audience, Blyden, before Bethel’s predominantly black audience, was more explicit in his denunciation of both the theory and its most prominent American promoter. "The latest and most assiduous advocate of this theory” he announced, was “Dr. Alexander Winchell, professor at the University of Michigan," according to whom " ‘The origin of the Negro. . . must not be sought in Noah . . . nor in Adam . . . but in some humble progenitor living on earth many thousand years before Adam.’” [[572]](#endnote-572) Playing to his audience, Blyden scornfully mocked and dismissed Winchell, his thesis, and text and proclaimed that "every thinking Christian Negro . . . must read Dr. Winchell's book with something of the amazement which Lord Macaulay expressed when commenting upon Southey's attempt at humor: ‘That any human being after having made such a joke, would write it down, and copy it out, and transmit it to the printer, and correct the proof-sheets, and send it forth into the world, is enough to make us ashamed of our species.'" [[573]](#endnote-573)

The broader and more personal and professional challenges and dilemmas that such misinterpretations and misappropriations of the religious and racial corollaries of modernity posed for a new generation of blacks possessing impressive “intellectual gifts” was also addressed by Blyden. In what may have been one of the few explicit expositions of the trials facing black intellectuals and their ministers amid the confusing currents of late Victorian modernity, Blyden pointed out that as a result of pervasive and often religious rooted racism which had stymied their development and progress, most black had “neither stimulus nor space for the growth and expansion of . . . mind” necessary to adequately engage and address the myriad challenges of the era. It was, he noted, a dilemma having an especially tragic impact upon blacks “brought up for the ministry” since their “calling” was often compromised by the severe educational, intellectual, and theological limitations and restrictions under which most were prepared to exercise their ministerial responsibilities. With thinly veiled reference to some of his more conservative ministerial colleagues and critics, Blyden lamented that the unfortunate result was that most “fall under the control of certain conservative instincts which tend to narrow their sympathies, and . . . confine them to stereotype methods of thought and activity.” [[574]](#endnote-574)

This dynamic and dilemma, he observed, had even broader implications given the myriad confusions and contradictions fostered by modernity which “the thoughtful Negro” –both clergy and laity—was increasingly called upon to engage with severely limited intellectual and educational resources. Consequently, he opined that when faced with the increasing flood of questions and doubts posed by modernity and especially its religious and racial corollaries, their attempts to turn for "light and leading" to "the scientists and philosophers of the day” are met with “such a discrepancy of opinions . . . that he is understandably bewildered"--while "some present him with the principles of an elaborate sociology as to the scientific basis of moral conduct; . . . others persuade him that positivism furnishes the desired guide; . . . others still, endeavor to inspire belief in the doctrine of Christian Metempsychosis . . . while others [such as Winchell and fellow advocates of polygenesis] would deprive him of his connection with Adam, and consequently of any interest in, what appertains to Adam’s posterity." Little wonder, Blyden noted, that "under such circumstances, some thinking Negroes select one course, others another, but nearly all move in the miasmatic atmosphere of doubt and contradiction, under the influence of *der Geist der stets verneint.[i.e.: the spirit of denial*]”[[575]](#endnote-575) Consequently, in anticipation of what would become a key concern of Francis Grimke and a later generation of black clergy conservatives, Blyden concluded that it was little wonder that one could already discern among some members of the race an increasing “skepticism” and “disregard for the teachings” of Christianity.[[576]](#endnote-576)

In the aftermath of his troubling analysis of the inexorable complications, complexities, and challenges fostered within the black community and especially within the ranks of black clergy by late Victorian modernity and its religious and racial corollaries, Blyden proposed a solution. “The progress of events,” he argued, was obviously “producing” a need for “intelligent and effective mouthpieces” who could adequately respond in defense of both Christianity and the race. Consequently, Blyden presented himself as uniquely prepared to meet this need. In effect, in the era’s leading black intellectual forum and before an audience made of many of the nation’s leading black intellectuals, Blyden justified his assumption of the role and mantle of the race’s best-qualified interrogator and mediator of modernity and its racial and religious corollaries. [[577]](#endnote-577)

The forums of the Bethel Literary Society were known for the energetic and animated discussions and “criticisms” which often followed presentations by its esteemed guests. At times these were “merciless, unsparing and scathing.” [[578]](#endnote-578) Ironically, no accounts of such a reaction to Blyden’s provocative lecture have been located. Nevertheless, it is likely that most members of his audience still harbored concerns regarding his continued allegiance to Christianity. Many were also undoubtedly shocked by the related theological, missiological, and hermeneutical implications of his observations regarding modernity and the overt and mounting challenges which its intellectual, religious, and racial corollaries posed to both evangelical Christianity and the race.[[579]](#endnote-579)

**Chapter 14: African American Clerical Rejoinder**

Some sense of the varied responses of prominent African American clergy to Blyden’s views as presented in his expanding corpus of iconoclastic publications and the lectures and sermons delivered throughout his early 1880 tours may be gleaned from his more intimate interactions with black ministers from across the theological and ideological spectrum. These interactions confirm that several members of the African American ministerial community were already aware of and alarmed by the perceived challenges and threats that modernity and its academic, intellectual, theological, and missiological corollaries presented not only to the welfare of the race but also to traditional interpretations of the Bible and Christianity which they held dear.[[580]](#endnote-580)

During his lecture before the Bethel Literary and Historical Society, Blyden noted that many black clergy were uneducated and the majority of others were inadequately trained in schools that were theologically “conservative.” Thus, he opined that most African American clergy were ill-prepared and ill-disposed to adequately respond to either the challenges or contributions posed by modernity and its religious and racial corollaries. In fact, most perceived their role to be that of defenders of evangelical orthodoxy and its traditional interpretations of the primacy and authority of the Bible. [[581]](#endnote-581) However, there also existed a small though influential minority of black clergy, usually better educated who selectively and critically embraced to varying degrees the academic, intellectual, scientific, and theological corollaries associated with late Victorian modernity. [[582]](#endnote-582) Blyden’s efforts to interrogate and mediate modernity and its religious and racial corollaries would take place amid the ensuring struggle between the defenders of orthodoxy and the emergent cadre of black liberals and progressives.

Ironically, the clash between the two wings of clergy within historic black denominations was most fervid within the AME Church—the denomination frequently lauded by Blyden as the exemplar of black ecclesiastical and racial independence. Within it “a small cadre of liberals,” that included Theophilus Gould Steward, A. W. Upshaw, and Reverdy Ransome, selectively embraced the findings of modernity and its religious corollaries and attempted to forge a theology, pedagogy, and social agenda consistent with the spirit of the era and the needs of the race. Like their white counterparts—and perhaps with even more intensity, given the racial prescriptions under which they lived—they felt "the compelling demand that living faith come to terms with the modern world."[[583]](#endnote-583) A larger cadre of more conservative clergy led by figures such as Benjamin Tanner, Levi Coppin, and Jabez P. Campbell invoked and defended traditional interpretations of Scripture and theology in opposition to modernity’s intellectual, scientific, theological, and racial presuppositions. Consequently, the tenets of Darwinism, biblical criticism, historical criticism, and comparative religion were rejected as threatening to both biblical Christianity and the race.[[584]](#endnote-584)

Blyden’s post-1870’s writings and his lecture tours undoubtedly heightened awareness within key segments of the African American community about the religious and racial implications of modernity and its corollaries. His publications and addresses also served to foment increased controversy among black clergy between those who sought an accommodation with the religious and racial implications of modernity and its corollaries and those more moderate and strident in their rejection. Consequently, Blyden would find himself and his message intertwined with theological tensions among AME clergy

Increased theological, hermeneutical, and racial tensions and factions among AME clergy likely occasioned Blyden’s invitation to be guest of honor at a dinner hosted in Philadelphia at the home of AME Bishop Jabez Pitts Campbell. While ostensibly paying homage to Blyden, the enclave attended by “twenty-two leading colored men and ministers” of the city was also indicative of growing concerns among African American clergy about the trajectory of Blyden’s theological, missiological, and pedagogical views. Notably, its host, Bishop Campbell, was reputed to be “the theologian of the [AME] denomination” and one of its most aggressive defenders of orthodoxy.[[585]](#endnote-585) A decade earlier, he had also rallied Philadelphia’s black clergy in protest against perceived expressions of religious “liberalism” and “heterodoxy” by Frederick Douglass.[[586]](#endnote-586) Campbell’s continued vigilance in defense of religious orthodoxy would also be manifest two years after the conclusion of Blyden’s tour with his authorship of “A Scriptural View, or The Statement Concerning Paradise That Was Lost Regained" which has been hailed as one of the earliest defenses of Scripture from the perceived assaults of modernity’s religious and racial corollaries by a black minister. Published in the AME Review, it rejected the assertions by proponents of the historical-critical method which contested traditional assumptions regarding the authorship of scripture and the literal accuracy of the Genesis account of creation and humanity's fall.[[587]](#endnote-587) Given Campbell’s theological and hermeneutical vigilance, Blyden’s critical and selective appropriation of the theological, missiological and hermeneutical findings associated with modernity and its corollaries would not have escaped the notice of the attentive bishop. It was probably the inspiration for his hosting the ministerial enclave with Blyden as its guest. Unfortunately, no detailed account of the dinner appears to be available even from the pen of Blyden who usually was eager to share the news of such events. The lack of such a report may suggest that the gathering was not without tension or conflict.

Additional insight into Blyden's relationship and interaction with African American clergy during his 1882-83 tour of the United States is provided by the report of what must have been a more cordial engagement with a less theologically conservative segment of the African American clergy. Notably, it was held in the home of another AME Bishop—Henry M. Turner.[[588]](#endnote-588) Unlike the older and more theologically focused Campbell, Turner was a more politically and ideologically engaged leader of the AME Church and known to be one of its strongest advocates of African colonization and the African missionary enterprise. Like Blyden, Turner was also unabashedly a “race man,” and although conflict would later emerge between the two, they initially admired and respected one another.[[589]](#endnote-589) Joining Blyden at the “elegant” and “sumptuous dinner” hosted by Turner were fellow AME Bishops Brown and Ward, and Reverend James A. Handy. Notably, Handy would subsequently join Turner, Brown, and Ward in the AME episcopacy and would soon also present a less dogmatic though no less orthodox refutation of Darwinism and biblical criticism in an article published in the A.M.E. Church Review.[[590]](#endnote-590) Also present at the dinner was Reverend Francis L. Cardozo. Of “Presbygational” affiliation, Cardozo had been educated at the University of Glasgow and studied theology in seminaries in London and Edinburgh.[[591]](#endnote-591) Additionally in attendance among the prominent clergy gathered at Turner’s Washington residence to honor “the noted Liberian scholar” was Francis Grimke, the new pastor of Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, recently steeped in Princeton Seminary’s defensive response to the dialectic of religion and modernity. Moreover, following a toast by Turner lauding Blyden as a "scholar, philosopher, statesman, philanthropist, explorer, and Christian missionary—and an honor to his race," "Rev. Mr. Grimke . . . spoke in the highest terms of his personal friend, Dr. Blyden, and the deep interest he had in the Doctor's work in Africa...."[[592]](#endnote-592)

Although the time and place of the initial meeting of Blyden and Grimke is unrecorded, Grimke’s response suggests that he and Blyden had already begun nurturing what would evolve into a remarkable personal and professional relationship. Evidence of an already “warm friendship” between the two was also hinted at by Grimke’s suggestion that “perhaps” he might “join the Doctor himself in his great Africa work at some future time” as well as by the offer of his closely guarded pulpit the following Sunday to Blyden for delivery of a farewell sermon.[[593]](#endnote-593)

Even though Grimke was a mulatto, Blyden was “delighted” by his well-educated, articulate, urbane, and dedicated younger admirer and colleague, perhaps especially so in the wake of his grief over the recent death of Henry Highland Garnet. Although Grimke’s biracial parentage must have been occasionally awkward given Blyden’s general disdain and denunciation of mulattos, his racial status seems never to have become a source of conflict within their personal or professional relationship. Like Douglass, Turner, and a handful of other mulatto’s, Grimke was granted immunity from Blyden’s inter-racial animus and was readily accepted into his pantheon of mulatto’s possessing “strong” and dominate “negro instincts” that overruled the liabilities of their white biological heritage.[[594]](#endnote-594) In turn, the pastor of Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, obviously respected and admired the older, more well-known, and cosmopolitan Blyden and throughout their personal and professional relationship, provided valued intellectual, cultural, and even spiritual companionship to Blyden. Grimke and his wife Charlotte additionally afforded the often financially strained Blyden with crucial material support and aid during his subsequent tours of the United States.

Surprisingly, given his innate conservatism and Princeton Seminary education, Grimke was uncharacteristically tolerant of what may have initially appeared to be simply Blyden’s theological, ideological, racial, and even ethical idiosyncrasies. Moreover, even as it became increasingly apparent that many of these were manifestations of a more radical intellectual, theological, and ideological metamorphosis, Grimke continued to exhibit his personal friendship, professional respect, and collegiality by withholding public criticism and even continuing to allow Blyden to express his increasingly iconoclastic theological, missiology and ideological views from his zealously guarded church pulpit.

It might also have been expected that the controversy at Liberia College would have been a source of conflict between Blyden and Grimke given the latter’s personal and pastoral relationship with Browne.[[595]](#endnote-595) Such was not the case. Notwithstanding the personal dimensions of the fiasco at the college and even the increasingly iconoclastic tenor of Blyden’s publications and the addresses delivered on his recent tour of the United States, personal encounters and correspondence shared between the two throughout the next quarter-century testify to an intimate personal and professional relationship that would overcome, but not obfuscate, their increasing theological, ideological, racial, and even ethical differences.

It may well be that in the first blush of their evolving friendship, Grimke perceived Blyden to be a kindred spirit in terms of his vocational, racial, ideological, ecclesiastical, and even basic theological orientation. Preoccupied with a demanding pastorate, he may have been inclined to accept the imparter of “orthodoxy” provided Blyden by The Presbyterian in the wake of his appearance before the 1880 General Assembly.[[596]](#endnote-596) Conjecture on the part of Grimke that he and Blyden shared a similar loyalty to Presbyterianism and Reformed orthodoxy would have been afforded added credence as a result of the foundational theological and pedagogical influences that they shared—albeit indirectly and from a distance via Blyden’s secondary education and preparation for his ordination examination under the guidance of Princeton Seminary graduate John Wilson. As a newly ordained Old School Presbyterian minister, Blyden had also exhibited his fidelity to Reformed orthodoxy with unprecedented critiques from West Africa of British responses to the varied currents of modernity that would have pleased Charles Hodge and Princeton Seminary colleagues such as Greene. Moreover, Blyden’s recent election to the presidency of Liberia College and his explicit overtures for support from the Presbyterian establishment and Princeton Seminary, which included the establishment of the “Charles Hodge Professorship,” as well as his profession before the Bethel Society that Christianity was “the highest form in which God has been pleased to reveal himself to man,” might have additionally confirmed to Grimke’s satisfaction the theological, doctrinal, and racial bona fides of Blyden.[[597]](#endnote-597) Thus, Grimke may have perceived the inklings of a nontraditional theological, hermeneutical, missiological, and pedagogical orientation previewed in Blyden’s recent publications and addresses before U.S. audiences as reflective of an acceptable “latitudinarianism” relative to Reform and Presbyterian orthodoxy. This conclusion is further suggested by Grimke’s invitation to Blyden to share Fifteenth Street’s pulpit, which he would later insist was never fouled by the heresy of theological heterodoxy during his tenure as pastor. In effect, a shared commitment to vindicating the race and defending its members from the onslaughts of the era’s resurgent racism in church and society and a willingness to apply their skills and knowledge in this endeavor may have taken precedence over theological and even intra-racial disparities between the two. As was the case with Grimke’s relationship with a similarly unorthodox Douglass, this shared commitment seems to have afforded Blyden and his increasingly nontraditional and iconoclastic religious and racial views a surprising measure of toleration from Grimke. And, while the following decades would solidify the friendship and professional relationship shared by Blyden and Grimke, they would also illuminate a variety of issues that would reflect their increasingly divergent responses to the challenges posed by modernity and especially its religious corollaries.

**Part V: Mediating Change and Conflict**

**Chapter 15: Ministerial Colleagues in Transition**

Even as Blyden and Grimke forged their trans-Atlantic friendship, the last half of the 1880s witnessed momentous transitions in the personal and professional lives of both. Some of these transitions would nurture their budding relationship; others would sow seeds of future friction. On the far side of the Atlantic, the disastrous events related to Blyden’s presidency of Liberia College had been followed and amplified by his failed campaign in 1885 for the presidency of Liberia and renewed exile in Sierra Leone.[[598]](#endnote-598) All three events reflected the increasingly expansive and controversial dimensions of Blyden’s ministry as intra-racial, political, and ideological issues intertwined with heightened theological, missiological, and ethical concerns in the wake of his ongoing interrogation, appropriation, and mediation of modernity's intellectual, racial and religious corollaries.

Blyden’s tenuous relationship with the Presbytery of West Africa also reached a new low when charges of "gross immorality" were again made public.[[599]](#endnote-599) The presbytery’s sense of embarrassment and indignation was heightened by the fact that the woman involved was Anna Erskine who was not only a former student of Blyden but also the eldest daughter of Rev. Hopkins W. Erskine, a fellow member of the presbytery.[[600]](#endnote-600) In correspondence to the Presbyterian Board and the Colonization Society, Blyden vigorously denied rumors of an illicit romantic involvement and charged that they were slander wholly “invented by the mulattoes at Monrovia” to undermine his influence and the reputation of Anna.[[601]](#endnote-601) However, his admiration for Anna, who was twenty years his junior, intellectually gifted, and described as “Black and Comely,” was evident. Raised in the rural village of Clay-Ashland, she had managed to gain an impressive education despite the sparse resources available for female education in Liberia. In Clay-Ashland, she was exposed to and developed a rare appreciation of indigenous African peoples and cultures to the point of “learning their language” as well as “informing herself about their religion.”[[602]](#endnote-602) She had also interacted positively with neighboring Muslims and developed some proficiency in Arabic.[[603]](#endnote-603) Thus, in Anna, Blyden seems to have “found a kindred spirit.”[[604]](#endnote-604) In recognition of her unique skills and interests and their pedagogical and missiological potential, Blyden lobbied the Board of Missions for her employment as a teacher, informing J. C. Lowrie, that she was "of first-rate intellect . . . of remarkable energy and industry, [and] in fact the leading Female mind on the river.”[[605]](#endnote-605) The fact that a woman as gifted as Anna was not a mulatto also seemed to confirm Blyden’s racial thesis as well as his intra-racial paranoia. Thus as rumors of their relationship began to circulate, Blyden felt compelled to explain that because Anna was “black,” she was “therefore the legitimate object of persecution and slander—especially in connection with a name[as] odious to mulattoes as mine.”[[606]](#endnote-606)

Notwithstanding Blyden’s vigorous denial of an illicit relationship with Anna, "allegations and rumors" proved irrefutable when she departed Liberia in 1877 and gave birth in Freetown, Sierra Leone to the first of their five children. Notably, all except a son who died young were reportedly given “Muslim-Christian” names.[[607]](#endnote-607) Not surprisingly, Blyden’s relationship with Anna and the names given to their offspring were perceived by many of his critics as not only an egregious flaunting of Victorian religious, social, and ethical conventions but also as confirming rumors that his religious allegiance was to Islam rather than Christianity.

Little information is available which provides insight into how Blyden reconciled the personal, professional, and ethical issues related to his domestic relationship with Anna and their offspring. However, it was obvious that his marriage to Sarah Yates had become unsatisfying and even traumatic.[[608]](#endnote-608) A poignant but thoroughly self-serving letter to Lowrie written in 1875, provides insight into Blyden’s state of mind as he graphically described his domestic and marital agony: “My wife seems entirely unimprovable. . .. Uncongenial, incompatible, unsympathetic my wife makes the burden of my life sore, very sore, and heavy. And if anyone outside . . . shows any kindness or sympathy, she stimulates a scandal which she knows will readily be believed and circulated in this community.”[[609]](#endnote-609) It was a description of Sarah and their unhappy marriage intended at least in part to justify his quest for solace in the company of more congenial female companions such as Anna. Forgoing the option of divorce, Blyden and Sarah continued in an estranged marriage; and while Sarah retained the title “Mrs. Blyden,” Anna increasingly assumed the role of companion and spouse.[[610]](#endnote-610) After Blyden’s exile from Liberia in 1901, he and Anna would spend the remaining eleven years of his life in Sierra Leone in a publicly acknowledged relationship. Although abhorred by some Sierra Leone Christians as “bigamous” and illicit, their relationship was tolerated and even respected by other segments of the West African community. Anna, courteously addressed as “Madam Erskine,” would occupy a position of respect in Sierra Leone as she became an accomplished educator and served for forty years as an esteemed teacher to generations of Sierra Leone’s Muslims in government-sponsored Muslim schools.[[611]](#endnote-611)

Although Blyden and Anna managed to overcome much of the social stigma associated with their unconventional domestic relationship, it nevertheless had implications that negatively impacted their private and professional relationships. For example, it fostered tensions between Anna, her father, and other members of her family, which probably contributed to her eventually leaving the Presbyterianism of her youth for affiliation with Freetown’s Zion Methodist Church.[[612]](#endnote-612) Their relationship also contributed to Blyden’s eroding status within the Presbytery of West Africa and was a factor influencing his subsequent decision to demit his Presbyterian ordination. It would also distract from an appreciation of the importance and validity of Blyden’s pioneering contributions as a scholar of West African Islam and “indigenous comparativist” by continuing to fuel speculation in certain circles that his research and publications about Islam emanated less from a scholarly and missiological impetus and more from a concern to legitimate his purported “polygamy habit.”[[613]](#endnote-613)

Upon the relocation of Blyden and Anna from Liberia to the more cosmopolitan environment of Sierra Leone, their unconventional relationship and Blyden’s increasingly iconoclastic beliefs were better tolerated. Over the decades, the colony had often served as a source of intellectual stimulation and nurture and the place to which he frequently fled to recover his physical, spiritual, and emotional health. And as evident during his sojourn in Sierra Leone in the early ’70s, Blyden had cultivated a unique relationship with key members of its religious and secular elite. Sierra Leone would also be the site from which he unambiguously assumed the role and mantle of the foremost black interrogator, adjudicator, and mediator of modernity and its intellectual, academic, pedagogical, racial, and religious corollaries.

It was from self-imposed exile in Sierra Leone that Blyden publicized his decision to demit his Presbyterian ordination in 1886 and become what he described as “a minister of truth.”[[614]](#endnote-614) It was also from Sierra Leone that his "magnum opus," Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, was prepared for publication less than a year later. The two events were not unrelated—both reflected the intellectual and theological metamorphosis that he had been undergoing for more than a decade.[[615]](#endnote-615) Although Blyden’s extended analysis of the African race’s engagement with Islam and Christianity was the major focus of Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, an often ignored but important subtext of the work and its methodology was Blyden’s interrogation, selective appropriation, and subsequent efforts at mediation of modernity and its intellectual, academic and religious corollaries. The findings and perspectives of methodologies and disciplines emerging or being reshaped in the wake of late Victorian modernity-anthropology, comparative philology, comparative religion (the “science of religion), ethnography, sociology, the new biblical studies (biblical criticism), and critical historiography were interrogated, tested, selectively appropriated and forged into a creative and dynamic scholarly synthesis with his own West African based studies.

A number of the anthology’s fifteen essays were revised versions of essays penned over two decades.[[616]](#endnote-616) Read as a whole; they chronicle Blyden's intellectual and religious metamorphosis as he gradually engaged and selective appropriated many of the perspectives and findings associated with modernity and its corollaries. The significance of this developmental process was acknowledged in the introduction to Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race by long time Blyden admirer and supporter Samuel Lewis of Sierra Leone. Its contents, he pointed out, “though written at different times,” will appear, when read carefully, to be linked together” and while “many of the thoughts are new, . . . they are such as will be read with profit by all who are interested in the solution of the great problems which beset the work of the civilization of Africa and the genuine progress of humanity.” Together, he added, they present “not only the sentiments of a careful observer and diligent student, but [also]. . . the patriotic purpose of a lover of his race,” who, in them, was “giving eloquent expression and emphasis to the sentiments and aspirations of every enlightened member of the race.”[[617]](#endnote-617)

The editorial history of “Christianity and the Negro Race,” one of the text’s signature articles readily illuminates its process of development and revision. It was originally published in 1876, but a revised version previewing Blyden’s ongoing intellectual and theological metamorphosis was presented in the United States before the Bethel Historical Society in 1882 and published the following year.[[618]](#endnote-618) However, the version subsequently published in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race was more explicit in its illumination of Blyden’s critical and selective appropriation of the insights and perspectives associated with modernity and its academic and intellectual corollaries. For example, the findings of the historical-critical method as applied to the developmental history of Christianity were obvious in his inclusion and application of the "kernel and husk" thesis subsequently popularized by German liberal historical theologian Adolf von Harnack.[[619]](#endnote-619) Its contention that the essence of Christianity could and should be separated from many of the cultural and doctrinal accruements that had become attached to it over the centuries was of special importance to Blyden. It provided additional legitimation for his seminal critique of the assumed primacy, superiority, and hegemony of the history, theology, ecclesiology, and missiology of Western Christianity and its collusion with the process of modernity. It also provided crucial support for his subsequent advocacy of the relative theological, doctrinal, and ecclesiological freedom of Africans in efforts to re-create an African version of Christianity, an African Church, and a theology “with the smell of Africa upon it.”[[620]](#endnote-620)

Importantly, Blyden’s reference to the controversial thesis was introduced with a quote from William Gladstone that reflected his continued monitoring of the religious orientation of the British statesman whom he had early adopted as his mentor. He noted that the thesis as appropriated by Gladstone supported the latter’s affirmation of the “exhibit[ion] and “adaptation” of “Christian dogma. . . to human thought and human welfare, in all the varying experience of the ages” and his accompanying disclaimer: “But with respect to the clothing which the gospel may take to itself, mankind had a large measure of indulgence, if not of laxity. . . .Much is to be allowed—I can hardly say how much—to national, sectional, and personal divergences.”[[621]](#endnote-621) While acknowledging that such a stance might lead some, as in the past, to “brand” Gladstone “a latitudinarian and unsafe guide,” Blyden, added a missiological addendum as he argued that the failure of Christianity’s emissaries to adhere to this tenet was “one chief reason why the progress of the Gospel among races foreign to the European has been so limited.”[[622]](#endnote-622)

Blyden’s appropriation of the “Kernel and Husk” thesis supported his contention that Christianity was a “living organism” and that it was possible to move beyond the accumulated husk of European doctrines and interpretations and recover its “timeless essence.” In effect, von Harnack's thesis provided critical intellectual and historical support for Blyden’s frequent reiteration of the dangers and limitations of African adoption of Western Christianity’s accruement of cultural, racial, intellectual, and even psychological casings.[[623]](#endnote-623)

Other often overlooked historiographical contributions by Blyden were showcased in his 1886 version of “Christianity and the Negro Race.” His role as a pioneering scholar of both American and African American religious history was displayed within the context of a historiographical narrative that illuminated his awareness of the geographical expanse and genealogy of European modernity and its complicity in the formation, impact, and aftermath of the Atlantic slave trade. Starting from the “mistaken Philanthropy” of Bishop de las Casas, Blyden provided a history of the intersection of Atlantic slavery and North American Christianity. Continuing into the colonial era, he pointed out that most of America’s “most eminent divines” and “distinguished figures” were slaveholders who forged a self-serving biblical and theological justification for slavery by which “generations descending from Huguenot and Puritan ancestry were trained to believe that God had endowed him with the right to enslave the African forever.”[[624]](#endnote-624) Equally insidious, he noted, had been the efforts by “Christian divines of all shades of opinion,” who preached sermons and wrote “books prepared specially for the instruction of the slaves” and which were intended to convert them to a bastardized version of Christianity.[[625]](#endnote-625) “Nor,” lamented Blyden were “such teachings confined to divines” since, in the wake of the new intellectual, academic and scientific insights and findings of the modern era, “philologists and scientific men brought contributions from their peculiar fields to strengthen and adorn the infamous fabric which corner-stone was slavery.” Specifically referenced were “Messers. Nott and Gliddon,” whom he charged had “contributed to the same honorable worship the results of their scientific researches.”[[626]](#endnote-626)

Although proclaiming that “such were the circumstances, under which the Negro throughout the United States received Christianity,” Blyden extended his narrative to an insightful analysis of the origin and development of African American Christianity that anticipated at key points the insights of later generations of American and African American religious historians.[[627]](#endnote-627) Despite the introduction of blacks to a "Gospel of Christ . . . travestied and diluted . . . to suit the ‘peculiar institution,'" Blyden pointed out that this process had not proved definitive for the development of the African American Church and its particular interpretation and practice of Christianity since more positive “influences of direct Christian doctrine were silently infiltrating themselves into the Negro minds.” These, he noted, fostered a discernment “that the conduct pursued by their teacher towards them was not only not dictated by the religion they professed, but was in opposition to its teachings.”[[628]](#endnote-628) Blyden opined that it was this process of discernment that was largely responsible for the successful nurture of a more authentic version of Christianity among blacks and the subsequent development of distinctive black churches. Cited as unique among the latter was *“the African Methodist Episcopal Church*,” which Blyden described as “the only ecclesiastical organization developed among the Negroes in the United States, which nearly copes in numbers, wealth and aggressive power with the most favored religious sects of the land.”[[629]](#endnote-629)

Far in advance of the late twentieth-century historiographical debate regarding the influence of African religious and cultural “survivals,” Blyden also noted the influence of African retentions in the shaping of African American Christianity.[[630]](#endnote-630) Africans, he argued, had “carried away” and retained as best they could “the traditions of their country.” Consequently, “in the midst of their sorrows in a strange country, they constructed out of their dim recollections of what they had seen at home, a system of religion and government for themselves, which they curiously combined with what they received from their new masters.”[[631]](#endnote-631)

The 1886 version of “Christianity and the Negro Race” made more explicit Blyden’s own “latitudinarian inclinations” and his embrace of the key tenets of evangelical liberalism, which provided a theological and hermeneutical orientation much more compatible with the intellectual, scientific, racial, and religious corollaries of modernity that he was appropriating. The text additionally illuminated a seminal factor that helped to explain Blyden's growing appreciation of liberal expressions of Christianity. Despite his indictment and refutation of the overtly racist implications of much of the purported academic and intellectual accruements accompanying liberalism, Blyden opined that in the main, religious liberals had been more supportive and respectful in addressing the plight of Africa and her descendants than “professors of Orthodox Christianity.”[[632]](#endnote-632)

Convinced that religious and academic liberals could be important allies in the development and welfare of the race, Blyden insisted that black clergy and scholars should not summarily dismiss them nor their scholarship. Thus he understood that an essential part of his role as a mediator of modernity was that of encouraging and helping more conservative black clergy to be at least knowledgeable and discerning of the new perspectives and insights fostered by liberalism and its scholarship. It was counsel that he shared personally with Francis Grimke as he encouraged him to critically and constructively engage the thought and writings of Ernest Renan, the controversial comparative religionist, biblical scholar, and historian, who exemplified much of modernity’s impact upon Western religious scholarship in the last half of the nineteenth century.[[633]](#endnote-633)

Ironically, Blyden ended his revised and more iconoclastic version of “Christianity and the Negro Race” with an important concession. Notwithstanding his qualified appreciation and allegiance to liberalism, and his counsel to black clergy that they refuse to summarily dismiss it and its adherents, he conceded that neither theological nor missiological liberalism would be embraced anytime soon by the majority of diaspora blacks.[[634]](#endnote-634) Most, he acknowledged, would remain wedded to “orthodox denominations” and orthodox expressions of theology and hermeneutics. Consequently, he confessed to being “persuaded that the form of Christianity which will be introduced into Africa by Christian Negroes from abroad will be Protestantism of the orthodox stamp.”[[635]](#endnote-635)

In several additional essays written specifically for inclusion in Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, Blyden was even more revealing and explicit about his critical appropriation of the findings of comparative religion, historical criticism, and especially biblical criticism as he engaged the intersection of race, religion, and modernity within and beyond the missionary arena. Among these was “The Mohammedans of Nigritia,” which presented one of his most comprehensive analyses of the missiological impact of modernity consistent with his belief that the expansive missionary enterprise was not immune to the impact of modernity and it's academic, intellectual, and theological corollaries.[[636]](#endnote-636) Notable also was his argument that while the impact of modernity and its corollaries, particularly the findings of biblical criticism, had often left Western formulators and adherents of missionary Christianity mired in intellectual, theological, and cultural confusion, Islam and its adherents had more successfully avoided their most debilitating effects.[[637]](#endnote-637)

It was not surprising that the provocative views expressed by Blyden in Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race elicited caustic critiques from conservative circles. Among these was a critique penned by the editors of The Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record, the primary organ of the Church Missionary Society, which took affront at Blyden's perceived valorization of Islam at the expense of Christianity and Christian civilization.[[638]](#endnote-638) However, the text was favorably reviewed in other religious and scholarly journals on both sides of the Atlantic. One reviewer proclaimed, "I am not sure but that Dr. Blyden's book, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, may not yet prove the greatest contribution of the age on the gigantic subject of Christian Missions."[[639]](#endnote-639) Among those who commented favorably upon the text were Rev. Canon Isaac Taylor, the Anglican missiologist and Islamic scholar; Dr. Benjamin T. Tanner, AME minister, bishop, and founding editor of the AME Church Review; Professor Martin Hartmann, Professor of Arabic and Oriental Languages at the University of Berlin; and no doubt to the chagrin of Robert Deputie, David Swing, who reported that Blyden was "a pure first-class scholar and thinker . . . educated, learned, and an acute and broad reasoner," whose text "merits a wide popularity among both the races."[[640]](#endnote-640)

Given Blyden’s demittance of his ordination just months before the publication of Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race and its comparative assessment of the impact of Islam and Christianity, generally to the disfavor of the latter, many of his critics, as well as supporters, viewed the text as confirmation of the rumor that he had deserted Christianity and become a convert to Islam. On the far side of the Atlantic, The Christian Recorder, the official organ of the AME Church, boldly but incorrectly announced to its readers that “Dr. E. W. Blyden, L. D. one of the best Negro scholars, has left Christianity and joined himself to the Mohammedans.”[[641]](#endnote-641) Rev. J. R. Frederick, among the growing legion of Blyden disciples in Sierra Leone, felt compelled to refute the charge. In a subsequent edition of the Recorder, under the heading “Has Dr. Blyden Gone Over to Mohomet?” Fredrick defended Blyden’s allegiance to Christianity while offering an informed and nuanced exposition of his engagement with Islam and its adherents. “Dr. Blyden,” he insisted, “has not left Christianity, the Christianity that you and I believe in, that Christianity which teaches that God is no respecter of persons . . .. [nor] joined himself to the Mohammedans." Rather, “he is doing a unique work among them . . .. striving to make them understand Christianity as it is taught in the New Testament, and not as it is exemplified in the lives of its representatives from Europe.” Citing Blyden's credentials as a scholar of religion and his pioneering approach to Muslims, Frederick added, "His knowledge of the records of their religion in the original language and his peculiar method of dealing with them give them confidence in him. Old and young Mohammedans listen to his teachings." However, argued Frederick, this did not mean that he had “joined himself with the Mohammedans, nor . . . left the religion of Christ.'" Rather, such charges were "misconception[s]" by "those who only take a superficial view of the important questions which he has brought before the world." In contrast, Fredrick pointed out that the text had been "favorably reviewed by the leading English journals" and that it had "inspired . . . most serious discussion . . . by prominent thinkers on . . . important questions" about the problems attendant Christianity's expansion in Africa. Frederick’s proclaimed, in conclusion: “For my part, I wish the book could be put into the hands of every intelligent and thinking Negro youth and adult in the United States and the West Indies.”[[642]](#endnote-642)

Blyden’s decision to demit his Presbyterian ordination of more than a quarter-century was almost simultaneous with the publication of Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, and it elicited additional confusion and alarm among friends and critics about his religious orientation. It was a decision that shocked the Presbyterian community in Liberia, while Presbyterian colleagues in the United States were puzzled and dismayed as news that “Dr. Blyden had given up the sacred ministry” was reported in the pages of The Presbyterian. The journal editorialized: “It is sad that such a step was taken by so learned a divine as the Doctor. The cause of such action no one can divine. The Presbytery was amazed but granted his request. . . . Liberia is in a sad condition.”[[643]](#endnote-643) Among the cadre of colleagues, acquaintances, and friends troubled and confused by the news and rumors accompanying it was Francis Grimke.

Speculation on both sides of the Atlantic about the reasons for Blyden’s action usually alluded to his suspected conversion to Islam. However, the factors influencing his decision were much more complicated and reflected the convergence of personal, ideological, theological, missiological, and intra-racial factors. In his letter of resignation dated December 8, 1886, and addressed to "Dear Brethren in the Presbytery of West Africa," Blyden explained: "In view of circumstances entirely beyond my control, I have come to the conclusion, after much thought and earnest prayer, that I can no longer be useful or happy in the exercise of my ministry and am compelled to ask the Presbytery to release me from the sacred office and allow me to return to the condition of a private member of the church."[[644]](#endnote-644) The stunned members of the Presbytery reluctantly complied with his request and resolved: "that this Presbytery take advantage of the present occasion to express their high appreciation of the services of Dr. Blyden as rendered to both church and state for the past 28 years and in releasing him from his sacred office they commend him most earnestly to the Father of Mercies to keep him safe from the wiles of the evil one until his life's end."[[645]](#endnote-645)

Longtime friends, such as Coppinger, editor of the African Repository, were especially disturbed by the news of Blyden’s demittance of his ordination and the accompanying rumors. Writing in "profound astonishment and grief," Coppinger evoked and intoned the traditional evangelical roots of the American Colonization Society as he inquired: "Is it true that you have demitted the Gospel Ministry, and if so what are the causes of so serious a step?" Referencing rumors that alleged Blyden's conversion to Islam, Coppinger confessed, "I cannot believe that you prefer Mohammedanism to Christianity." Importantly, Coppinger also saw fit to warn Blyden that "the Christian world has neither respect nor patience with anyone raised and educated in the Christian faith who turns to Mohammedan or who becomes the friend and apologist of Islamism."[[646]](#endnote-646)

Compelled by both friends and critics to explain his decision, Blyden alluded to personal factors, which included tribulations engendered by an unhappy domestic life, as well as theological and intra-racial tensions within the presbytery.[[647]](#endnote-647) In an extensive reply to Coppinger, marked "private," Blyden also confessed that he demitted his Presbyterian ordination "from my deep love of Africa and for the truth and for freedom." He additionally offered reassurances to Coppinger and other friends and supporters on both sides of the Atlantic that he would continue in what he considered to be a more authentic and expansive ministry: "Because I have severed my connection with the Presbyterian ministry, I shall none the less be a minister of truth. The spirit of God is not confined to place or office."[[648]](#endnote-648) Nevertheless, allegations persisted that attributed the demittance of his Presbyterian ordination to a clandestine conversion to Islam. In subsequent refutations, Blyden professed, "No one who knows my habits, tastes, and studies, or who had carefully read any of my writings, would conclude that I had turned Mohammedan." He added in further explanation: "I do not 'prefer Mohammedanism to Christianity.' But I prefer what is good for my people in the method of its propagators to what is evil in the methods of Christian teachers."[[649]](#endnote-649)

Although the exact meaning and scope of Blyden’s “ministry of truth” remained largely undefined, it held obvious theological, missiological, pedagogical, and even ideological implications. It boldly suggested that he would no longer be bound by confession or creed, doctrine or dogma, racial or even gender convention in his subsequent quest and advocacy of “truth.” It also implied an ecumenism and interfaith sensibility that extended beyond Christianity and would be characterized by toleration of the spiritual truths and cultural realities of other religious traditions—including Islam, Judaism, and eventually indigenous African traditions (and even esoteric expressions of Christianity such as Swedenborgianism). Additionally, suggested by Blyden’s explanation was an openness to the scientific, intellectual, and academic “truths” of modernity— an openness felt to have been stifled within his previous ministry. Nevertheless, the theological and ideological core of his new ministry—an allegiance to the “essential” tenets of Christianity, a love of Africa and her descendants, and an expansive commitment to “Africa’s regeneration”—still firmly linked it to the central concerns of his prior ministry.[[650]](#endnote-650)

The breadth and scope of Blyden’s new ministry were further hinted at in correspondence with Rev. John Miller of Princeton, New Jersey. Born in Princeton in 1819, Miller graduated from Princeton Seminary in 1842. Ordained as a Presbyterian minister, he pastored congregations in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. However, after serving as a Confederate officer during the Civil War, he began to exhibit theological inclinations that alarmed more conservative colleagues. After authoring several controversialtheological works, he was dismissed in 1877 from his presbytery for holding unorthodox theological views but upon appeal to the Synod of New Jersey was allowed “to withdraw as an independent clergyman.”[[651]](#endnote-651)

Miller’s support of the colonization movement and his purported interest in advancing missionary and educational work among Liberia’s Muslims attracted the attention of Blyden.[[652]](#endnote-652) Presumably, an additional factor eliciting Blyden’s attention was Miller’s unorthodox theological and missiological orientation. Having discovered Miller to be a fellow traveler, Blyden admitted to him that his own decision to demit his Presbyterian ordination had been influenced by anticipation of conflict-related to his iconoclastic views expressed in Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race. He also confessed that because of fear “that the Presbyterian Church should be held responsible for any views I might feel called upon to express in my published writings,” he felt it necessary to “withdraw” in order to pursue his new work and ministry in peace and “in comfort.”[[653]](#endnote-653)

Importantly, in further explanation of theological and ecclesiastical factors influencing the demittance of his Presbyterian ordination, Blyden cited the work of Presbyterian minister and scholar Dr. Charles Briggs, whose advocacy of the new biblical studies and the corollary findings of modern scholarship would lead to his controversial departure from the Presbyterian Church and its ministry.[[654]](#endnote-654) Blyden professed to having “been long of the opinion expressed by Dr. Briggs at the close of the preface to his *History of American Presbyterianism*, that while ‘Presbyterianism is in advance of all other Christian denominations in the realization of the ideal of Christianity, it is not a finality. It is the stepping stone to something higher and grander yet to come.’”[[655]](#endnote-655) Blyden’s admiration of Briggs as a "champion of liberty and unfettered scholarship against stubborn traditionalism" extended beyond the latter's challenge to "assumptions" concerning the doctrinal orthodoxy of Presbyterianism. It was also rooted in his appreciation of Brigg’s more well-known and controversial appropriation and advocacy of the methodology of biblical criticism that in 1892 would lead to his trial for heresy, suspension of his ministry, and ultimately the demittance of his Presbyterian ordination.[[656]](#endnote-656)

Blyden's correspondence with Miller reveals that he was acutely aware of increasing controversy within the American Presbyterian Church and that he envisioned himself and his new ministry as theologically and hermeneutically aligned with liberals such as Swing, Miller, and Briggs, who were being persecuted by defenders of orthodoxy. A further indication of his frustration with the theological and doctrinal controversy raging within the Presbyterian Church was his sharing with Miller the naïve hope that the recent appointment of Francis Patton to the presidency of Princeton University would have an ameliorative effect on conflict within the denomination. Suggestive of his embrace of a moderate version of evangelical liberalism was his contrast of the respective theological perspectives of David Swing and Patton. The two personified the liberal and conservative divide within the denomination, and both Blyden conceded, were earnest "seekers after truth" but limited in their view of "its many-sided aspects."[[657]](#endnote-657)

However, it quickly became apparent that Blyden’s naïve hope for the amelioration of conflict within the denomination would not be realized, and it was a more despondent Blyden who subsequently announced: "I do not propose to resume my connection with the Presbyterian Church. The bigotry of ignorance prevails in that body. They *know* that the Confession of Truth, in every word of it, is true. Men in that state of mind are dangerous to deal with. Argument with them is out of the question."[[658]](#endnote-658) The economic consequences of Blyden’s new theological orientation and ministry were also hinted at as he proceeded to compare the cost of his own commitment to religious “truth” to that of Swing, who had been harried out of the Presbyterian ministry: "I have been forced,” he lamented, “owing to my views and aspirations, to sever my connection with all Missionary Societies and therefore from the assistance to meet my temporal wants which such connection brings. For more than four years now I have had no salary or support."[[659]](#endnote-659) Noting that he was “living from hand to mouth,” Blyden also compared his financial plight to that of Jonathan Edwards, another Presbyterian minister who “in his old age” and “with a large family” was “turned off [out]” and shorn of his pulpit as a result of his theological and ecclesiastical views.[[660]](#endnote-660)

With Blyden's demittance of his ordination, the Presbytery of West Africa lost its most famous, most controversial, most scholarly, and arguably most theologically gifted minister. His departure also came on the cusp of a crucial period for the presbytery. Though subsequent events were not directly related, in the decade that followed, mission reports and personal correspondence between members of the presbytery and the Board of Missions chronicle an unabated decline in funding and membership of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia.[[661]](#endnote-661) They also narrate an increasing lack of patience, trust, and understanding between the Board and the members of the presbytery.[[662]](#endnote-662) By 1893, the Board had begun rigorous implementation of a policy that would eventually terminate the Presbyterian mission in Liberia.[[663]](#endnote-663) At the turn of the century, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, with the approval of the Assembly, would effectively end almost seventy years of Presbyterian foreign mission efforts there.[[664]](#endnote-664) And despite indignant disclaimers to the contrary, it was obvious that the policies of the Board of Foreign Missions, which included restrictions on black appointments to its foreign mission posts, reflected the hardening of racial attitudes within the American Presbyterian Church in the post-Reconstruction era.[[665]](#endnote-665)

Blyden would comment on the overall problem of the missionary enterprise in Liberia in several post-1890 addresses and works. However, his perception of the changing policies of the Board and the eventual fate of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia is ambiguous especially given his advocacy of a self-sustaining church in Liberia.[[666]](#endnote-666) Unclear also is the subsequent response of the presbytery and more traditional members of the Board of Missions to Blyden’s increasingly iconoclastic missiology and new ministry.[[667]](#endnote-667) It is notable, however, that decades later, Eugene Stock, in his magisterial history of the Church Missionary Society, would uncharitably and incorrectly charge that Blyden’s views and activities were responsible for the “failure” of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia.[[668]](#endnote-668)

However, Blyden’s bonds with Presbyterianism would not be completely sundered as he evolved his new ministry.[[669]](#endnote-669) Despite his increasingly iconoclastic views and the demittance of his ordination, he maintained cordial if strained relationships with several American supporters and organizations with which he had a long association. Notably, his longstanding relationship with the American Colonization Society—a relationship sustained in part by his long friendship with Coppinger—remained intact even as his new intellectual and religious orientation put him at odds with the theological and missiological beliefs of most of its more traditionally evangelical leaders and members.[[670]](#endnote-670) Similarly, even as he increasingly distanced himself and his new ministry from Presbyterian orthodoxy, he maintained cordial relationships with Grimke and other Presbyterian ministers and associations. The continued importance of these relationships would be illuminated during a new lecture tour sponsored by the American Colonization Society less than two years after the tremors occasioned by the demittance of his ordination and publication of Christianity Islam and the Negro Race.

As Blyden was exhibiting and defending the controversial personal and professional results of his intellectual and theological metamorphosis, Francis Grimke was expanding the scope of his ministry and becoming one of the era’s most influential black clergymen. In addition to addressing the plight of the black community, he was also increasingly troubled by related racial developments taking place within the Presbyterian Church. However, unlike Blyden, Grimke’s primary focus was not theological, doctrinal, or missiological controversy. Rather, of immediate concern was the campaign for ecclesiastical reunion within the fractured Presbyterian community and what increased tolerance of ecclesiastical racism portended for Presbyterianism in general and black Presbyterians in particular.

Paradoxically, while Blyden openly critiqued the "bigotry of ignorance" within the American Presbyterian community related to doctrinal and theological controversy, he failed to give as much attention to the "bigotry" manifest in the readiness of some of its members to sacrifice black Presbyterians on the altar of denominational reunion. It was not a lapse rooted in ignorance. As reflected in oratorical and published versions of his analysis of “Christianity and the Negro Race,” Blyden’s visits and wide readings of American journals made him an astute student of America’s historical and contemporary ecclesiastical developments. Thus, he was aware of and often noted the role played by race and racism in contouring the American religious landscape.[[671]](#endnote-671)

Although sharing with Grimke, the view that the Christianity practiced by America’s whites, particularly in reference to the nation’s black population, was “in striking contrast to the Christianity of Christ,” Blyden’s apparent public silence regarding the racial controversy induced by Presbyterian reunion efforts was in conspicuous contrast to the response of Grimke.[[672]](#endnote-672) Outraged by the willingness of fellow Presbyterians to compromise Christian tenets for the sake of reunion, Grimke took the lead in opposition to the “theological heresy” and racial subordination that ecclesiastical reunion portended for African American Presbyterians. In doing so, he essentially redefined his ministerial and public career—in effect transitioning from the scholarly pastor of a “silk-stocking” and elitist congregation to one of the black community’s and Presbyterian Church’s most outspoken proponents of racial justice and ecclesiastical equality.[[673]](#endnote-673)

Grimke’s emergence as a major critic of racial and religious hypocrisy paralleled other changes in his professional and personal life that reflected the stresses of a demanding ministry. It was also punctuated by family tragedy occasioned by the birth of his daughter, Theodora Cornelia. Her death six months later left Grimke and his wife Charlotte in a state of prolonged grief.[[674]](#endnote-674) Adding to Grimke's personal and pastoral distress was criticism occasioned by his officiating at the 1844 marriage of Frederick Douglass to his white secretary, Helen Pitts. In the face of excoriation from both blacks and whites and the suggestion by one white correspondent that he deserved "prison for life," Grimke adamantly defended Douglass's prerogative to select a wife of his choice and his own right, as a Christian minister, to conduct the service.[[675]](#endnote-675) Ironically, the situation induced a more sarcastic defense of Douglass penned from West Africa by Blyden that had comparative religious as well as ethical overtones: “Frederick Douglass,” Blyden opined, “as a Mohammedan, would have been a *waleess*—a saint of the religion, an athlete of the faith,” and yet, “as a Christian, his orthodoxy is suspected, and his very presence is deprecated in a church in the capital of the nation; and further south, his domestic relations would probably earn him a home in the penitentiary.” [[676]](#endnote-676)

The accumulating demands and stresses of Grimke’s ministry contributed to his decision to resign from Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, ostensibly for "health reasons," and accept the call to Laura Street Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, Florida. However, the relocation of his ministry to a small congregation in the Deep South did not entail retreat from the wider struggles besetting the Presbyterian Church or the black race. It was a testimony to both his courage and commitment that in the far more vulnerable post of his Jacksonville pastorate, Grimke continued to forcefully denounce racial bigotry and hypocrisy within his denomination and the wider church. For example, in a missive titled “Mr. Moody and the Color Question in the South,” he dared to publicly admonish one of the era’s most acclaimed ministers for his disregard of the basic tenets of Christianity by his acquiescence to segregation while conducting revivals in the South. “Perhaps in the future,” he hoped, “Mr. Moody may learn that God is no respecter of persons; that of one blood he has made all races of men; that Christ died for all alike, and that the soul of the Negro is as precious in his sight as that of the white man.” Moody would not be the only minister to experience Grimke’s wrath as he frequently evoked the persona of the Old Testament prophets while excoriating other clergy, black and white, who compromised the tenets of Christianity by sanctioning various forms of oppression and especially racism through either their actions or silence.[[677]](#endnote-677)

The lingering issue of ecclesiastical reunion within the Presbyterian Church also continued to elicit Grimke’s attention. Thus, he joined former Princeton Seminary classmate Matthew Anderson in rallying opposition by black Presbyterians to any reunion plans that entailed racial subordination and ecclesiastical segregation. Displaying the synthesis of pastoral and prophetic tones that characterized his maturing ministry, Grimke insisted that while "organic union is a good thing . . . it is by no means the most important thing; It is better to do right than to be organically united with any branch of the Church. . . .Let the right be done, though the heavens should fall." Echoing an earlier generation of black Presbyterian clergy lead by another Princeton Seminary graduate (Theodore Wright) who, on the cusp of the 1837 schism, had similarly witnessed and lamented the racial hypocrisy of their denomination, Grimke added, “As I love the old Church, I pray God it may be saved from the shame of such an act.”[[678]](#endnote-678)

Perhaps because he remained more pastorally focused, Grimke seems to have initially perceived the intersection of ecclesiastical reunion and racial bigotry as demanding more immediate redress than the simultaneous “bigotry of ignorance” relating to doctrinal and theological issues that preoccupied Blyden. Ironically, it was the latter issues rather than concerns for racial justice that ultimately undermined the 1888 reunion effort. They were also among the issues that contributed to Blyden’s discomfort with and departure from the Presbyterian ministry even as Grimke forged an increasingly prophetic and activist ministry within, rather than outside, the Presbyterian fold. Nevertheless, despite personal and professional differences related not only to race, theology, missiology, and ideology that were becoming increasingly apparent, Blyden and Grimke continued to value and nurture a personal and professional relationship that would be tested, reaffirmed, and even expanded throughout Blyden’s next visit to the United States.

**Chapter 16: Race, Religion, Gender, and Modernity**

The role and status of women within church and society were among the myriad issues being adjudicated under the press of modernity and its corollaries during the late Victorian era. Relatedly, the well-being of women of color was of special interest and concern to both Blyden and Grimke and provided an additional area of overlap in their personal relationships, ministries, and respective responses to modernity. Common to both was a belief that the uplift of the race was directly related to the opportunities afforded their female counterparts amidst the era’s widespread racial and gender repression.

Grimke and Blyden also shared awareness of and sensitivity to the role often played by fellow black clergy in perpetuating the subordination and exploitation of black women. Grimke explicitly and publically denounced African American clergy's ethical lapses related to women and listed it prominently among the "defects," which he enumerated in his controversial expose of 1886 that was titled "The Defects of Our Ministry and the Remedy."[[679]](#endnote-679) His blistering critique of fellow ministers and call for reform was seconded by Blyden, who wrote from West Africa to assure him that he endorsed his “terrible indictment against the colored clergy.”[[680]](#endnote-680)

Blyden’s endorsement of Grimke’s critique was ironic. Although he had long been a champion of expanded opportunities for West African women in the face of active opposition by both white and black ministerial colleagues, his efforts rung hollow to many supporters as well as detractors in light of persistent allegations regarding his own problematic relationships with women.He had early earned a reputation as a “ladies’ man,” and salacious rumors of inappropriate relationships with women continued after his marriage to Sarah Yates and ordination were persistent sources of tension with members of the presbytery and clergy of other denominations. The public and unconventional domesticity that he subsequently shared with Anna Erskine absent a divorce from Sarah was also an ongoing source of embarrassment to many of his supporters and was perceived as scandalous by many of his opponents.[[681]](#endnote-681) The contrast with Grimke, whose reputation of ethical and moral decorum earned him the title "Black Puritan," could not have been more stark. Not only was Grimke a consistent defender of black women from clerical abuse, but he was also a fervent champion of “traditional” marriage, which he considered to be “divinely instituted.” Consequently, his marriage to Charlotte was exemplary of Victorian-era Christian domesticity.[[682]](#endnote-682)

United States-based friends such as William Coppinger, the long-serving secretary of the American Colonization Society, were painfully aware of Blyden’s rumored and real indiscretions with women, and they labored hard to minimize publicity about them. Despite their efforts, it is improbable that Grimke, hypersensitive to ethical lapses among fellow American clergy, was not aware of his friend’s salacious reputation and domestic irregularity. Nevertheless, Grimke seems to have eschewed public criticism or commentary on Blyden’s flaunting of Christian and Victorian morality even as he served as an exemplar and vigorous defender of both. Other ministerial colleagues were less tolerant of Blyden’s behavior and it was a factor in the rupture of Blyden’s personal and professional relationship with Alexander Crummell, whose ethical orientation and reputation matched that of Grimke.[[683]](#endnote-683)

Although Blyden’s interaction with women has been perceived as among the less savory dimensions of his life and work, closer examination suggests that his complex and often inconsistent and contradictory interaction with women and the broader issue of gender should be examined within the context of his reaction to and efforts at mediating the intersection of race, religion, and modernity. A generally progressive attitude toward women in general, and black women in particular, was influenced by the example of his mother, Judith. Her unusual status as an educated black woman on St. Thomas and the role that she played in shaping his educational and spiritual development appears to have also nurtured awareness and appreciation of the intellectual and spiritual gifts of women of African descent and the importance of their contributions to the well-being of the race amid the challenges posed by late Victorian modernity.[[684]](#endnote-684) Consequently, his early efforts in Liberia, which included supporting women’s literary and educational efforts by encouraging organizations such as the Ladies Monrovia Literary Institute and Ladies Liberian School Association Ladies, were consistent with his often-stated conviction that "educated women are needed in Liberia as well as educated men."[[685]](#endnote-685) It was a conviction that induced Blyden to lobby for female admission to Alexander High School and the College of Liberia. Moreover, as he prepared to accept the presidency of the latter institution in 1880 and critically engage the dialectic of pedagogy, race, and modernity Blyden passionately argued: "I cannot see why our sisters should not receive exactly the same general culture as we do…… progress of the country [and race] will be more rapid and permanent when the girls receive the same general training as the boys." [[686]](#endnote-686) Thus during his brief initial tenure as president of the college, he supported the establishment and advance of its female department under the capable leadership of American recruit, Jenny E. Davis.[[687]](#endnote-687)

Blyden’s ongoing intellectual, theological, and ideological metamorphosis would help to foster a heightened awareness of the role, responsibility, and liabilities of women amid the myriad changes fostered by modernity and especially its corollaries of race and religion. It was an awareness that figured prominently in his critiques of the failings and abuses of modernity relative to European women and his broader comparisons of the impact of Christianity and Islam on the role, status, and treatment of women. It fueled his controversial repudiation of the popular allegation that Christianity “in opposition to Mohammedanism . . . has elevated woman." Rather, Blyden opined that this was a "questionable assertion" even in reference to Christianity's impact on "white women" and that it was patently not true in reference to its impact on black women.[[688]](#endnote-688) It is also notable that Blyden’s perception of the deleterious impact that Christianity and Christian civilizationism were having upon black women was cited as a causal factor in the demittance of his ordination. He also alluded to it in defining the scope of his new ministry “of truth” as he professed that he was “determined to do all in my power” to see that women of African descent in West Africa and beyond “shall not be subject to the social and educational proscription which has degraded and now degrades them.”[[689]](#endnote-689) Despite Blyden’s pledge to make female uplift a focus of his new ministry, his efforts were hampered by both his very real frailties and those simply attributed to him.

Blyden’s unhappy marriage to Sarah Yates and his unconventional relationship with Anna Erskine was reflective of his often problematic and inconsistent response to the intersection of race, religion, gender, and modernity. In contrast to his wife, Blyden described Anna as “black and comely,” well educated, and accomplished. She also challenged and publicly defied the traditional constraints of Victorian domesticity, evangelical religion, and gender. Given her representations and expressions of independence, self-respect, and agency, Anna has with justification been described as “a woman ahead of her time,” and as epitomizing a pioneering model of late-nineteenth-century black femininity. Consequently, she seems to have closely approximated Blyden’s ideal of the “Black Woman” who was consciously and creatively engaged with the currents, challenges, and changes attendant late Victorian modernity.[[690]](#endnote-690) Notably, in Britain’s Mary Kingsley, who was independent, well-read (if not conventionally educated), broadminded, and passionate about her concerns and causes, Blyden appeared to have found another approximation of his ideal of late-Victorian femininity. [[691]](#endnote-691)

Blyden was also impressed by progressive, enlightened, and accomplished black women whom he met during his visits to the United States who were similarly engaged to various degrees with the dialectic of race, religion, gender, and modernity and its corollaries. Among the latter were Mrs. Fannie S. Smythe, whom he described as a "friend, counselor, and inspirer”; Ella Barrier, "modest, gentle, winning, tantalizing" and possessing "sound judgment”; Ella Somerville, "full of energy, mental alertness, and information . . . in spite of her eccentricities”; Anna J. Cooper, perceived as "brilliant, thoughtful,[and] entertaining”; and Charlotte Forten Grimke, whom he lauded as “scholar, teacher, adviser” and “towering above all, with her brilliant genius.”[[692]](#endnote-692) They, in turn, like many of their less accomplished sisters of various social, class, and religious affiliations, were generally appreciative of Blyden’s intellectual accomplishments and his commitment to racial uplift.[[693]](#endnote-693)

Francis Grimke was also a beneficiary of the respect and praise of some of the era’s most accomplished black women. His supportive, protective, and progressive view of women also appears to have been initially fostered by the example of his mother and furthered by belated association with his activist aunts, Angelina and Sarah Grimke.[[694]](#endnote-694) His subsequent marriage to the well-educated and accomplished Charlotte Forten, who “served” as his “ideal of femininity” in conformity to the biblical model of “true womanhood,” as well as close friendships with pioneering womanists such as Anna J. Cooper were also influential in shaping Grimke’s perception of women and encouraged him to make the plight of black women a key focus of his expanding ministry.[[695]](#endnote-695)

Blyden and Grimke’s growing awareness of and mutual concern with the intersection of race, religion, modernity, and gender was illuminated by their joining with some of Washington’s most prominent black females in a “Reading Circle” that was intended to stimulate intellectual and social edification as well as racial uplift.[[696]](#endnote-696) A membership that included Charlotte Forten Grimke, Fannie S. Smythe, Ella Barrier, and Anna J. Cooper justified Blyden’s assertion that the Circle was “composed. . . of the choicest spirits” in the District.[[697]](#endnote-697)

Blyden was especially active with the Circle during his 1889 extended tour. And while his participation and that of Grimke and presumably other prominent black clergy was valued by their female colleagues, their membership inevitably perpetuated vestiges of the paternalism and chauvinism that traditionally accompanied their ministerial roles and status. This pattern was especially apparent in the case of Blyden, who, upon his return to West Africa, presumed to share, particularly with the Circle’s female members, “instruction,” advice, and even recommendations of “worthwhile” religious and philosophical readings.[[698]](#endnote-698) Invariably, his recommendations were consistent with his own theological, intellectual, and ideological predilections. However, despite Blyden’s declaration that “with every member,” he felt himself to be “in complete rapport and absolute content,” it was apparent that not all of them were in accord with his ideological, theological, missiological, or intra-racial views. Furthermore, Blyden’s reputation and pattern of interaction with women proved problematic. What often seems to have been construed as flirtatious overtures by Blyden apparently annoyed and even offended some female members of the Circle. They registered their displeasure by a reluctance to engage him in protracted correspondence that would elicit aggrieved complaints from Blyden to Grimke.[[699]](#endnote-699)

Although critical of the racism, paternalism, and even misogyny fostered by much of traditional evangelical orthodoxy, most of the Circle members were closer in theological orientation to that of Grimke. However, Blyden’s less than orthodox theological views did find various degrees of support among some members of the Circle. More broadly, some of Blyden’s concerns also resonated with those of several leaders of the emergent Black Women’s Club Movement who were also engaging and publically addressing the problematic intersection of race, religion, gender, and modernity from their unique perspective as black women.[[700]](#endnote-700) For example, Fannie Barrier Williams, the feminist activist, Chicago Woman’s Club member, and sister of the Reading Circle’s Ella Barrier embraced an expansive theological and ecumenical perspective that resulted in the abandonment of her Baptist lineage for Unitarianism. Lamenting “the tendency of creeds and doctrine to obscure religion, to make complex that which is elemental and simple, to suggest partisanship and doubt in that which is universal and certain,” she encouraged black women to exercise their agency in exploring “ the many different religions, ‘from the Catholic creed to the no-creed of Emerson.'" Sensitive to the broader intellectual and theological currents fostered by modernity, Williams expressed regret that both black women and men were adapting only slowly to "the growing rationalism in the Christian creeds." Moreover, she opined that the black race as a whole was sorely "hindered" by the intellectual failings of its traditional ministerial leadership and she chastised the traditional black church and clergy for not having "caught up with the age of science and reason that characterized the late nineteenth century."[[701]](#endnote-701)

While Williams's intellectual and religious views in response to modernity more closely resonated with those of Blyden, the religiosity of Anna J. Cooper (1858-1964) initially appeared to be more consistent with Grimke’s theological orientation and reaction to modernity.  However, Cooper’s life and work, which extended deep into the twentieth century, would prove to be much more responsive to the myriad challenges posed by the dialectic of race, religion, gender, and modernity. The widow of an Episcopal priest and a graduate of Oberlin, Cooper was mentored theologically by both Grimke and Alexander Crummell.[[702]](#endnote-702) In 1886, she delivered a discourse before “the convocation of the colored clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church at Washington, D. C.” Titled "Womanhood: A Vital Element in The Regeneration and Progress of a Race." It presented an assessment of Islam and the relative status of women in Christian and Islamic cultures that reflected her embrace of the tenets of both traditional nineteenth-century evangelicalism and the era’s prevailing Orientalism. Presented in the same year as the publication of Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, her comparison of women’s status and treatment in Christian and “Oriental” cultures, directly and vehemently refuted Blyden’s contention that the status of women in general and black women, in particular, was enhanced within Islamic cultures.[[703]](#endnote-703)

Echoing the era’s prevailing Orientalism, Cooper contended that in “Oriental countries . . .[the] woman has been uniformly devoted to a life of ignorance, infamy, and complete stagnation” since “customs, laws, and social instincts” have effectively “enervated and blighted her mental and moral life.” Neither “Mohomet” nor the “Koran,” she opined, takes account of the woman “[a]s a personality, an individual soul, capable of eternal growth and unlimited development, and destined to mold and shape the civilization of the future to an incalculable extent.” Moreover, she pointed out that within Islam, a woman’s subordinate role as a servant to men in this world was extended into the next since consistent with the misogynous dreams of her divinely appointed superiors, “There was no hereafter, no paradise for her. The heaven of the Mussulman is peopled and made gladsome not by the departed wife, or sister, or mother, but by houri—a figment of Mahomet's brain, partaking of the ethereal qualities of angels, yet imbued with all the vices and inanity of Oriental women. The harem here, and— ‘dust to dust’ hereafter, this was the hope, the inspiration, the summum bonum of the Eastern woman's life!” Cooper concluded by evoking a romanticized image of the purity and sanctity of the Christian home in contrast to that fostered by Islam and Islamic culture. The latter she insisted has “a worm at the core! The home life is impure! And when we look for fruit, like apples of Sodom, it crumbles within our grasp into dust and ashes.” Cooper’s analysis also advanced another conclusion that stood in stark contrast to that of Blyden. In refutation of the latter’s often cited claim that the Koran, Islam, and Islamic civilization enhanced black “manhood,” Cooper emphatically described Muslim males as “effete and immobile.” [[704]](#endnote-704)

By 1892, Cooper’s writings indicated that she was more directly and critically engaged with the challenges posed to traditional intellectual, religious, and ethical beliefs by modernity. In the often-overlooked concluding chapter of her pioneering treatise A Voice from the South, she explicitly referenced the thought of philosophers and theorists such as “Voltaire,” “Hume,” and “Huxley” regarding “science” and “God” and issues of “skepticism” and “agnosticism.” A personal struggle with the tensions posed by modernity and its religious corollaries appears to have been hinted at by her poignant query as to how the often confusing and painful struggle between “speculative unbelief . . . and blundering unscientific faith” might be reconciled.[[705]](#endnote-705)

In the opening decades of the twentieth century, Cooper was displaying a heightened sensitivity to the intellectual, academic, and ethical dictates of a liberal and progressive Christianity that was increasingly critical of the presupposition, tenets, practices, and methodologies associated with the evangelical orthodoxy of her religious mentors. Despite her continued friendship with Grimke, she was beginning to embrace and model an intellectual, theological, and ideological metamorphosis that more closely paralleled that of Blyden. A broader convergence of her racial, religious, and ideological views with those of Blyden was also attested by her attendance at the 1900 Pan-African Conference where she delivered a paper entitled “The Negro Problem in America.”[[706]](#endnote-706)

Cooper’s lifelong commitment to the formation and sharing of a progressive pedagogy adapted to the uplift of the race illuminates another area in response to the intersection and dialectic of race, religion, gender, and modernity that paralleled that of Blyden. Their shared pedagogical interest and commitment was not lost upon Grimke, who in 1890 suggested that Blyden read Cooper’s provocative paper on the “Higher Education of Women.”[[707]](#endnote-707) Delivered before the American Conference of Education, her paper argued for the extension of black women’s educational opportunities. It also previewed Cooper’s critique of the anachronistic and paternalistic attitudes embraced by the vast majority of black men and especially black clergy regarding “the woman question” as articulated in A Voice from the South.[[708]](#endnote-708) The text’s trenchant analysis of "race and womanhood" and prescriptive call for action anticipated the seminal role that Cooper would subsequently play in the formation of the Black Women's Club Movement and her lifelong efforts at female and racial uplift.[[709]](#endnote-709)

Given the increasing resonance of their responses to the intersection of race, religion, gender, and modernity, Blyden and Cooper appeared to be “fellow travelers.”[[710]](#endnote-710) He described her as "brilliant, thoughtful, [and] entertaining.” Cooper, in turn, was impressed with Blyden and appears to have been the only female member of the reading circle to have engaged in transatlantic correspondence with him.[[711]](#endnote-711) The interests and activities of Cooper and Blyden further aligned when Blyden’s return to the United States in the summer of 1895 coincided with the historic Boston convention of “colored women.” Cooper was among the female members of the Reading Circle who played a role in the subsequent formation of the National Association of Colored Women. [[712]](#endnote-712) In correspondence with Grimke, Blyden endorsed its organizers’ commitment to racial responsibility and uplift: “No one,” he argued, “can look with indifference upon such a movement among ‘Afro-American’ Women or whatever else they choose to call themselves in this land of conglomerate nationalities.”[[713]](#endnote-713)

Like Cooper, most of the prominent leaders of the Black Women’s Club Movement were well educated and well-read and were similarly concerned to varying degrees with the challenges posed to black women and the race by the intersectionality of race, religion, gender, and modernity. However, as within black ministerial ranks, there was considerable disagreement and dissension regarding both their assessment and responses to modernity and its corollaries. While diverse in terms of their personal and corporate assessment and responses to the intersection of race, religion, gender, and modernity, most still perceived and publicly touted evangelical Christianity as essential to their multifaceted campaign of racial uplift even as they articulated a “prophetic hermeneutic” that often included a stinging critique of the racism, paternalism, emotionalism, anti-intellectualism, and ethical hypocrisy of both black and white clergy.[[714]](#endnote-714)

As with the female members of the Reading Circle, Blyden’s embrace and advocacy of theological liberalism and its intellectual and academic corollaries in response to the challenges posed by modernity appeared to elicit only minimal support among most leaders of the emergent Black Women’s Movement. Theology aside, many members of the movement already divided by their own struggles with colorism, caste, and class, no doubt took issue with Blyden’s divisive intra-racial views which often pitted “blacks” against “mulattos.” Moreover, as reflected in Cooper’s forceful critique before the before “the colored clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church at Washington, D. C.”, Blyden’s valorization of Islam and comparative assessment of the role and status of women of color under Islam and Christianity, also proved to be a source of contention for a movement firmly rooted in the tenets and ideals of “Christian Civilizationism.”[[715]](#endnote-715)

Nevertheless, in the case of Cooper a continued intellectual, ideological, pedagogical, and religious metamorphosis was stimulated and punctuated by international travel, graduate study at Columbia University, and an earned doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1925. Consequently, notwithstanding her continued close friendship with Grimke and his wife, Cooper’s life, work, and study exhibited a trajectory and dynamic that increasingly paralleled that of Blyden. Grimke was also acutely aware of and troubled by Cooper’s ongoing intellectual and religious metamorphosis and its theological and hermeneutical corollaries. Their carefully nurtured and valued relationship of religious mentor and mentee would be increasingly strained as Cooper’s metamorphosis distanced her from the defensive evangelical orthodoxy that Grimke espoused in the early decades of the twentieth century with growing alarm in response to the perceived onslaught of modernity and an accompanying “modernism.” [[716]](#endnote-716)

Notwithstanding the varied ways in which black women on both sides of the Atlantic diversely responded to the intersection of race, religion, gender, and modernity, female intellectuals, activists such as Charlotte Forten Grimke, Fannie S. Smythe, and Anna J. Cooper were experienced and valued by both Blyden and Grimke as confidants, allies, and at time critics.[[717]](#endnote-717)

The shared concern and efforts of Blyden and Grimke as well as contemporaries such as W. E. B. Du Bois in support of black women amid, and in response to the intersecting currents of race, religion, gender, and modernity would bequeath an important legacy to subsequent generations on both sides of the Atlantic.[[718]](#endnote-718) Blyden’s influence on the far side of the Atlantic was reflected, for example, in the support and inspiration provided to Anna Erskine and West African female intellectuals and activists such as Adelaide Casely Hayford. His legacy was also manifest in the emphasis given to female education by the Blyden-inspired leadership and agenda of the National Congress of British West Africa.[[719]](#endnote-719) Arguably, a more contemporary manifestation of the transformative impact of his legacy was the election in 2006 of Liberia’s first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Moreover, during Liberia’s national celebration of the 175th anniversary of Blyden’s birth, Sirleaf explicitly evoked the legacy of Blyden as she confessed that “one of the greatest compliments ever paid to her was when she was told that she was the reincarnation of Blyden of Liberia.”[[720]](#endnote-720)

Grimke’s contributions and legacy would be similarly manifest and appreciated on the opposite side of the Atlantic. Amid the increasingly complex challenges posed by the intersectionality of race, religion, gender, and modernity, he continued to insistently champion respect for womanhood and engage in an unrelenting campaign from pulpit and press in support and defense of women’s educational, social, economic, and political rights and opportunities.[[721]](#endnote-721)

**Chapter 17: Emergent Ministerial Controversy**

# Notably, Blyden’s 1889-90 visit to the United States was the first since the eruption of controversy evoked by the publication of Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race and the demittance of his Presbyterian ordination. It would be his most controversial lecture tour since during it Blyden made it evident that a key component of his new “ministry of truth” entailed increased efforts to share the findings of his interrogation and mediation of modernity’s religious and racial corollaries with the American religious community. His agenda was both facilitated and complicated by the cordial relationship that he still enjoyed with a broad section of the black and white Presbyterian community. Invitations from venues as theologically diverse as Dr. Stryker's Fourth Presbyterian Church and Dr. Withrow's Third Presbyterian Church in Chicago, Matthew Anderson's Berean Church in Philadelphia, and Grimke’s Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, attested to the interest in his scholarship and the esteem that he still enjoyed within the Presbyterian community.[[722]](#endnote-722)

# Blyden’s insights regarding theological, hermeneutical, and missiological issues roiling the Presbyterian community were also solicited and shared in various other denominational venues. He was invited to share a version of his controversial essay “The Koran in Africa” at a meeting of the Presbyterian Ministerial Association of Philadelphia and before the students and faculty of Chicago’s McCormick Theological Seminary. [[723]](#endnote-723) In attendance at a Chicago "Minister's Meeting," he was invited to comment on what was described as a "most able and discriminating" review by Rev. Thomas Hall of a controversial new book titled Whither? A Theological Question for the Times.[[724]](#endnote-724) The unexpected request illuminates the precarious position that Blyden often found himself in during his tours of the United States amid increasing theological strife since the book being reviewed was authored by Dr. Charles Augustus Briggs, Davenport Professor Hebrew and Cognate Languages at Union Theological Seminary and its reviewer, Thomas Hall, was the son of the Presbyterian conservative Dr. John Hall who pastored the Fifth Avenue Church of New York. The senior Hall was also a director of Princeton Seminary and a defender of Presbyterian orthodoxy against Darwinism, higher criticism, revision of the Westminster Confession, and other liberal currents. However, his conservative views were not shared by his son, who graduated from Princeton and Union Theological Seminary, studied in Berlin and Gottingen, and would subsequently join Briggs on the faculty of Union Theological Seminary in 1899.[[725]](#endnote-725) Blyden’s response to Hall’s review of Brigg’s scholarly but polemical text is not recorded. However, his comments were likely politically and theologically temperate, but also consistent with his earlier concurrence with Briggs’s call for the revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith since "the profound discoveries of modern science in geology, astronomy, chemistry, biology, and archaeology, have opened up new problems for the doctrine of creation that were not in the minds of the Westminster divines."[[726]](#endnote-726)

The religious, racial, and missiological implications of Blyden's still often conflicted and inconsistent responses to “modern science” and especially the “science of religion” would be expressed more explicitly as he lectured students and professors at McCormick Theological Seminary on “The Koran in Africa.”[[727]](#endnote-727) His appropriation of insights from comparative religion was apparent as he attempted to dispel common myths about the Koran and to emphasize potential missiological contributions to be gleaned from its study by Christians. To this end, Blyden referenced in support Dr. Ellinwood of the American Presbyterian Board and "one of the [eras] foremost. . . missionary secretaries." Ellinwood was also the founder of the American Society of Comparative Religion, and Blyden noted that he was “grappling with historical and racial problems” illuminated by the profound impact that the comparative study of religions was having on the modern missionary movement. In reference to this development, Blyden cited Ellinwood’s conclusion that “during the last twenty-five years the study of the histories of religions [comparative religion] has profoundly modified missionary methods. Between the missionary conceptions of the beginning of the century and those of the present-day, there is all the difference that there is between St. Peter at Joppa and St. Paul at Mars’ Hill.”[[728]](#endnote-728)

To a seminary audience unaccustomed to challenges to their prevailing cultural and confessional orientalism, Blyden emphasized that as “the sacred book of the Mohammedan,” the Koran “is to them what the Bible is to the Christian” and that “more than two hundred million of the human family receive and venerate it as a divine revelation, complete and final, inspired in its every word and syllable.” More broadly and comparatively, “The Rig-Vedas, the Zendavesta, the sacred books of Confucius,” he opined, “have never exercised the influence over their followers which the Koran does over its adherents.”[[729]](#endnote-729) Blyden also reiterated his romanticized assessment of the status of blacks within the Koran and Islam in comparison with traditional interpretations of their status in the Bible and Christian culture —that while the Bible is used to teach “the Negro Christian. . . to disparage himself and his race . . . the Negro Muslim” is guarded and protected by his “sacred book from self-depreciation.”[[730]](#endnote-730)

Despite its iconoclastic tone and message, Blyden reported to his friend Grimke that his lecture on the Koran was reportedly well-received by McCormick’s students and faculty.[[731]](#endnote-731) However, his theological and missiological views, particularly pertaining to his claims of “the wonderful influence” of the Koran “on the Negro race,” elicited alarm and censure upon their reiteration in some black venues.[[732]](#endnote-732) Indicative of increasing theological, racial, and ideological dissonance within the African American religious community related to the impact of modernity, conservative black clergy charged that the views expressed by Blyden were threatening to both Christianity and the race.[[733]](#endnote-733) Ironically, in acknowledgment of his close personal relationship with Blyden, Grimke was designated the task of alerting his friend to the rumblings of discord among black clergy and of conveying an “invitation” for him to appear before them to explain his views.[[734]](#endnote-734)

While no stranger to conflict with black ministers and leaders, particularly over his views on colonization and race, Blyden appears to have been distressed and disturbed by their censure of his views related to Islam and the Koran and even more so by their implied criticism of his broader intellectual, theological, and missiological perspective and orientation. His ire was perceptible as he responded to Grimke’s warning and summons with a missive that was condescending in its contrast of the reaction of his black critics with the students and faculty at McCormick:

I regret to learn of the impression which has been received from my lecture, ‘The Koran in Africa’. . .. I read the same lecture last Saturday to the students of McCormick Theological Seminary, 158 in number, and their Professors. . .. I think it will be found that on a closer examination of my views, neither the interests of Christianity nor of the race are threatened—but there is a difference between comprehension and non-comprehension.[[735]](#endnote-735)

Blyden further emphasized the implied theological divide between informed and uninformed listeners of his views by mentioning that “from the Seminary several persons have been sent to get me to speak in schools etc.—showing that *there* at least they don't think me heterodox.” He also pointed out that at the dinner following his lecture, “there was ample opportunity for the Professors to have warned me against heretical opinions, but not a single critical remark was made.”[[736]](#endnote-736) Added in closing were sentiments that reiterated Blyden’s belief and regret, expressed seven years earlier before the Union Bethel Literary and Historical Association, that the majority of African American clergy were ill-equipped intellectually or educationally to engage the issues pertaining to modernity and its religious and racial corollaries posed in his lectures and writings.[[737]](#endnote-737) Thus, he lamented, "I feel my disadvantage among my own people in this country. They mean well, but their advantages have been limited."[[738]](#endnote-738)

Although Grimke was excluded from Blyden’s angry disparagement of the intellectual and educational endowments of his clerical critics, he undoubtedly shared some of their concerns, particularly regarding Blyden’s valorization of Islam and the Koran seemingly at the expense of Christianity and the Bible. However, as was the case with other issues (theological, racial, and ethical) that might have readily undermined their relationship, Grimke’s response to Blyden’s lecture and the heated controversy that it engendered was at least publically subdued and muted.

Blyden was not unmindful that his unconventional views about Islam and its adherents continued to fuel suspicions on both sides of the Atlantic about his allegiance to Christianity and even rumors of his clandestine conversion to Islam. Yet, he persisted in his insistence that criticisms of his views regarding Christianity, Islam, and the Koran were rooted in ignorance and sectarian intolerance and “have no foundation but in the prejudice of those who have not fully understood Christ or the true purport of Christianity, but believe that religion is just and only what they have interpreted it to be—that it cannot exist outside the narrow pale which circumscribes their party.”[[739]](#endnote-739)

Blyden’s continued embrace of an evolutional and developmental view of religion and its application to both Christianity and Islam (and subsequently Judaism) was apparent in his reaffirmation of the validity and importance of his work among Muslims: “I believe Christianity to be the ultimate and final religion of humanity. Indeed, I believe that it has always been and always will be the system which raises mankind to the highest level. ‘Before Abraham was, I am,’ said Christ; and my labours and efforts among Mohammedans are to assist them to understand Him which the Koran describes as the ‘Spirit of God.’” However, he also confessed his belief that “Islam has done for vast tribes of Africa what Christianity in the hands of Europeans has not yet done [and] I do not believe that a system which has done such things can be outside of God’s beneficent plans for the evolution of humanity.” Parenthetically, Blyden added, “Jesus Christ I believe to be what the apostle described Him— ‘the fullness of the Godhead bodily’, but I do not think that Europe has as yet fully grasped that most fruitful of all conceptions. . ..”[[740]](#endnote-740)

Notwithstanding the stinging rebuke of his views by fellow black minister’s Blyden defiantly included versions of his address on the Koran in the repertoire of lectures that he delivered in a variety of ecclesiastical and educational venues as he embarked on the southern wing of his tour.[[741]](#endnote-741) And despite increased knowledge of his controversial religious and racial views and the criticism which they elicited, Blyden continued to be celebrated in numerous venues as one of the race’s foremost scholars.[[742]](#endnote-742) This status was reiterated by an invitation to address the influential South Carolina Conference of the theologically embroiled AME Church. There he was introduced by Bishop William Arnett “as one of the most distinguished Negro scholars of the age, who by his learning and devotion to the cause of science and literature, occupies a position upon three continents in the republic of letters attained by no other Negro in the world.” An even more exuberant appreciation followed from future AME Bishop Reverend William Derrick, who noted that although their guest had been the recent target of “cruel criticisms,” a man of Blyden’s “gigantic intellect and worldwide reputation” could not “afford to notice the impediments of inferior men, which may be placed in his path.”[[743]](#endnote-743)

Blyden was the beneficiary of additional accolades and even exceptional expressions of racial and religious appreciation and unity with his return to the North. Upon delivery of an address before Mathew Anderson’s Philadelphia congregation, he was joined in the pulpit by Bishop Henry M. Turner. The following morning he was escorted to a meeting of the Presbyterian Ministerial Association by a delegation of prominent black clergy, which included “Bishops Turner and Tanner, Drs. Embry and Coppin and other colored Methodist dignitaries.” Before the Association’s “large gathering” of black and white clergy, Blyden reiterated his views regarding the Koran and Islam in West Africa and was pleased to report to Grimke that upon its conclusion a “vote of thanks was unanimously carried” and that he “received several personal congratulations on the literary treat and information . . . given the Association.”[[744]](#endnote-744)

The attendance of such an august body of black clerics at Blyden’s lecture, particularly from an increasingly theologically diverse and missiologically sensitive AME church, signified something other than support or endorsement of Blyden’s iconoclastic views. Especially notable in this regard was the attendance of Bishops Tanner and Turner. As one of the more theologically and hermeneutically engaged moderates within the AME Church, Tanner’s theological and hermeneutical views relative to the religious and racial findings accompanying modernity were significantly divergent from those of Blyden. However, Tanner was also a “Race Man” and in works such as The Negro’s Origin and The Descent of the Negro, he joined Blyden in rejecting the theory of polygenesis by offering a vigorous defense of the scriptural account of the black race’s origin and humanity. The broader hermeneutical and theological challenges posed by the intersection of race, religion, science, and modernity was also addressed by Tanner as he affirmed that “the Negro is a man. He is of Adam. He is of Noah. . . .and will be until science can demonstrate the Bible is more than a fable—that Moses made mistakes, and the divine Son of God who men hitherto supposed to be inspired, endorsed them.”[[745]](#endnote-745)

Of related significance was the presence of the more missiologically oriented Turner, who was also “a Race Man.” Although an early admirer and friend of Blyden, their friendship had been strained by Blyden’s changing views related to African emigration and colonization.[[746]](#endnote-746) Undoubtedly, the presence of such a distinguished and diverse group of black clergy lead by Tanner and Turner in an apparent exhibition of ecumenical support and racial solidarity was significant. Presumably, it was an orchestrated show of black clerical unity and support in response to the critique by more conservative black clergy of Blyden’s religious and racial views. Whatever its origins and meaning, it was additionally suggestive of the theological, racial, and ideological complexities that influenced and complicated black ministerial relations amid and in response to the challenges posed by late Victorian modernity and its religious and racial corollaries.

This complex and sometimes surprising ecumenical and intra-racial dynamic remained apparent in the relationship shared by Blyden and Grimke. Usually, anything but reticent in defending the sovereignty of Biblical Christianity, as well as his own theological and ideological views, or in expressing his criticism of those of others, Grimke's responses to the views of Blyden and the controversy that accompanied his 1889-90 tour appear to have been at least publicly muted. More evident was the theological, racial, ideological, and even ethical latitude that he and Blyden continued to afford one another as both friends and professional colleagues. An insightful example of this shared personal and professional latitude amid Blyden’s heightened efforts to serve as a mediator of modernity’s religious and racial corollaries was demonstrated by his presumptive counsel to Grimke regarding Renan’sHistory of the People of Israel. Obviously, he felt at liberty to advise one of the era’s best-educated and most intellectually engaged members of the African American clergy that he should read Renan’s text as a “professional exercise” and not summarily dismissed it because its author was one of the era’s most prominent adherents of modernity’s intellectual, academic and religious corollaries. [[747]](#endnote-747)

An additional indicator of the apparent theological and ideological tolerance and comity that Blyden and Grimke afforded one another was evident as Blyden’s tour drew to its close. From the pulpit of Grimke’s church, he delivered an ecumenically and theologically expansive farewell discourse titled “The Elements of Permanent Influence” that was “dedicated to Rev. Francis J. Grimke.” In it, Blyden affirmed his belief in "the unfailing stimulus of progress," "science," and "development" and exhibited his creative synthesis of the era's new comparative, historical, and hermeneutical insights.[[748]](#endnote-748) A farewell dinner hosted by Grimke accompanied the lecture. It occasioned Blyden’s expression of appreciation to him and his congregation for the “courtesy” of having “allowed me the opportunity of saying a few words to you before I leave the country” and “for the kind reception and cordial welcome which you have always accorded to me.”[[749]](#endnote-749) A heartfelt goodbye and request that Grimke keep him informed about the Reading Circle and its members followed from the ship’s library and en route Blyden was assured by Grimke that he was already “missed” and that he remained “as ever your sincere friend.”[[750]](#endnote-750)

Over the course of Blyden's longest and most controversial lecture tour of the United States, he and Grimke, amid accompanying religious and racial controversy, had reaffirmed their friendship and professional relationship. Foreshadowed, however, were pending theological, hermeneutical, and ideological tensions as Blyden more consciously and aggressively embraced his mantle as the most prominent black emissary and mediator of modernity and its intellectual, academic, scientific, religious, and racial corollaries. Simultaneously, Grimke, in contrast to Blyden, would more consciously and aggressively undertake the role of defender of both black America and Christianity from what he perceived to be erosive and dangerous religious, racial and cultural acids posed by the same intersection of race, religion, gender, and modernity.

**Chapter 18: Emissary of the “Scientific Study of Religion”**

Infrequent correspondence between Grimke and Blyden continued across the Atlantic over the five years that intervened between Blyden’s controversial 1889-90 visit and his final trip to the United States in 1895. For Grimke, the interval witnessed his emergence as one of the deans of the African American clergy. The extension of his ministerial leadership far beyond his Washington pastorate was facilitated by the frequent publication of his sermons and occasional papers, as well as his activist support of various educational, religious, and social organizations. For Blyden, the period was punctuated by the application and expansion of his scholarship and unique ministry. Its ecumenical and interreligious implications came to the fore upon his visit in 1892 to Lagos, where he was enthusiastically welcomed as an interreligious emissary by representatives of the colony's diverse religions. It was also from Lagos that Blyden delivered one of his most consequential lectures. Titled "The Return of the Exiles and the West African Church," it challenged the presumed normative and authoritative status of European and Western Christianity and was one of his most celebrated and effective appeals for the indigenization of Christianity and the establishment of an independent African church in Africa.[[751]](#endnote-751) In its wake, “the first independent native African Church in West Africa” was founded under the leadership of Majola Agbebi (1860-1917). [[752]](#endnote-752) Agbebi, originally baptized as David Brown Vincent, was among a younger generation of West Africans who exchanged their “Christian names” for more indigenous names under the inspiration of a Blyden inspired cultural reform movement. Blyden’s influence was also reflected in Agbebi’s establishment and leadership of the African Independent Church Movement and numerous related cultural, ecclesiastical, ecumenical, and humanitarian efforts. [[753]](#endnote-753) Lynch identifies Agbebi as one of Blyden’s “staunchest disciples” and the two spent time together in London where Agbebi was introduced to many of Blyden’s progressives friends and acquaintances.[[754]](#endnote-754) In 1901, Agbebi delivered a sermon on the anniversary of the formation of the African Church of Lagos which echoed Blyden’s critique of the cultural and ritual accruements of Western Christianity as well as the latter’s call for the establishment of “a united West African Church ‘untrammeled by the trappings of European sectarianism.” The sermon reportedly “delighted” Blyden who “conveyed to Agbebi “his whole-hearted approval” and appreciation that he had “uttered views so…intrinsically African and so valuable for the guidance of his people.” Agbebi’s embrace of Blyden’s signature concept of a unique “African Personality” induced the complementary assertion that “No one can write on the religion of the African as an African can. . . and you have written thoughtfully and with dignity and impressiveness . . . ‘Africa is struggling for a separate personality’ and your discourse is one of the most striking evidences of this” “The African,” he added, “has something---a great deal to say to the world. . . .which it ought to hear.”[[755]](#endnote-755)

The legacy of Blyden’s broader efforts at mediation of modernity’s religious, racial corollaries was also prominently reflected in Agbebi’s presentation of an address before the attendees of the First Universal Races Congress held in 1911 at the University of London.[[756]](#endnote-756) The official Call of the Congress noted its intent to address several issues related to the intersection of race, religion, and modernity that had long been of central concern to Blyden. Those in attendance were expected to:

To discuss, in the light of science and modern conscience, the general relations subsisting between the peoples of the West and those of the East, [and] between the so-called "white" and the so-called "colored" peoples, with a view to encouraging between them a fuller understanding” [that will] further the cause of mutual trust and respect between the Occident and Orient, between the so-called "white" peoples and the so-called "colored" peoples.[[757]](#endnote-757)

Although an ailing Blyden was not in attendance at the Congress, Lynch notes that “in Pastor Agbebi he could not have had a more faithful representative of his viewpoints.” [[758]](#endnote-758) His paper titled “The West African Problem” enthusiastically presented his mentor’s perceptions of the intersection of race, modernity, religion, and their impact on African peoples and culture.[[759]](#endnote-759)

In 1892, Blyden was reappointed as Liberia’s ambassador to Great Britain. His return to Britain provided an opportunity for him to renew and even expand his acquaintance with scholars similarly engaged with attempting to adjudicate and mediated both the benefits and the increasingly manifest excesses of modernity. Among his new acquaintances were Dr. J. H. Bridges and Frederich Harrison, “two of Britain's leading Positivist Philosophers.” His cordial relationship with the two philosophers helps to delineate the margins of Blyden’s theological and philosophical thought as he confessed that their more rationalistic responses to the intersection of modernity, religion, and science extended beyond and transcended his own intellectual, theological, and spiritual boundaries.[[760]](#endnote-760) Equally telling was his confidant conclusion that their views and that of fellow rationalists would not have appeal to his fellow Africans since, he opined, the intensely spiritual nature of the African helped to make them all but immune to “the tide of skepticism or so-called rationalism which now threatens to bear away the European mind.”[[761]](#endnote-761) Instead, Blyden implied that the less radical responses to the currents of modernity and its corollaries espoused within his own scholarship and “ministry of truth” offered both Africans and their New World descendants an alternative more consistent with their own history, culture, and “personality.”[[762]](#endnote-762)  Consequently, the final decade of the century would witness Blyden even more aggressively embracing the combined roles of interrogator, mediator, and emissary of modernity and its especially its intersecting religious and racial corollaries to Africa’s descendants on both sides of the Atlantic.

Ironically, it was in a letter penned from West Africa in 1894 to Booker T. Washington and subsequently published in the New York Age that broadcast Blyden’s most unequivocal call for black religious leaders and scholars to critically engage the disciplines and perspectives attendant the “scientific study of religion” that had followed in modernity’s wake. It presented his most insistent warning that the black Christian community could neither ignore nor evade the profound religious impact of modernity. Cited by Blyden in support was Dr. John H. Barrows, one of the era’s most prominent “liberal” Presbyterian ministers and a key organizer of the recently concluded World’s Parliament of Religion’s impressive but flawed public exhibition of the findings of the “scientific study of religion” in general and comparative religion in particular.[[763]](#endnote-763) Blyden confessed to having “been struck” by Barrows’ remarks delivered “ before the University of Chicago” that endorsed the “scientific study of religion” and proclaimed that "one of the inevitable effects of [its] study will be the re-writing of Christian theology. . . . [which] must have a restatement under the guiding principle of evolution and in the light of these comparative studies.” Blyden also noted that he found “suggestive” and heartening Barrows’ confident conclusion that Christians “need not fear the results” because “Christ will be exalted while our conceptions of his activity are widened.”Barrows’ proclamation, he insisted, was especially pertinent to Christians of African descent because it was imperative that “the Negro should take a prominent part” in the “re-writing of Christian theology” in the wake of findings of “the scientific study of religion” and the wider currents of modernity’s religious and racial corollaries.[[764]](#endnote-764)

Interrogation, selective appropriation, and synthesis of the findings and methodologies associated with the “scientific study of religion” with his African based research had been key to Blyden’s intellectual, theological, and missiological metamorphosis. It had also been foundational to his efforts for more than two decades at forging a restatement of Christianity attuned to both the dictates of modernity as well as to the history, culture, and needs of Africa and her descendants. However, notwithstanding his call for other black religious leaders and scholars to engage the “scientific study of religion,” Blyden was far from espousing a naïve and wholesale appropriation by them of its findings and perspectives. In fact, in numerous writings and lectures, he evidenced his acute awareness of its problematic potential and that of its corollary disciplines --Darwinism, historical and biblical criticism, and the era’s new anthropological studies—as reflected in their racist and heretical interpretation and application by pseudo-scientific scholars such Professor Alexander Winchell.

In 1895, three years after his missive to the black religious community, via correspondence to Washington, Blyden embarked on what would be his final trip to the United States. It provided him the opportunity to undertake for the last time his self-appointed role as interrogator, mediator, and emissary of modernity and its religious and racial corollaries to an increasingly alarmed African American Christian community. The theological and missiological controversy that had accompanied his previous tour, as well as his subscription to black religious journals such as the AME Church Review, ensured that he was well aware of the religious and racial concerns that the purported findings of disciplines associated with the “scientific study of religion” were evoking among African American religious leaders. American and African American religious historian David Wills has accurately noted that during this era, many African American religious leaders were not only exhibiting heightened alarm about perceived threats to the authority and legitimacy of Christianity and the Bible but were also fearful of the related resurgence of a virulent racism. [[765]](#endnote-765) In the eyes of many, the two pernicious threats were inherently linked since they perceived that the findings and perspectives of the “scientific study of religion” and its corollaries, provided ready academic, intellectual, scientific, theological, and hermeneutical support for theories that challenged and refuted biblical accounts of the origins of the African race and its descendants that in effect denied their very humanity.

Blyden attempted to directly address and ameliorate such concerns. For example, during his 1882 address before the Bethel Literary and Historical Society, he dismissed and ridiculed the theory of polygenesis as espoused by "modern," "scientific," and "Negrophobic" scholars such as Alexander Winchell.[[766]](#endnote-766) Notably, his scholarly and cogent critique of polygenesis and other manifestations of religio-scientific racism anticipated the more hermeneutical and theological critiques and condemnations subsequently voiced by leading African American clergy such as Bishop Tanner and Francis Grimke. [[767]](#endnote-767)

Grimke’s response to the “science of religion” and its religious and racial corollaries was rooted in his unwavering perception of the Bible “as the inspired word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice.” Amid perceived attacks by liberals, racists, and rationalists on the authority of the Bible, Grimke affirmed “I accept, and accept without reservation, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as God’s word, sent to Adam’s sinful race and pointing out the only way by which it can be saved. Without the Holy Scriptures and what they reveal, there is no hope for humanity. To build on anything else is to build on sand.”[[768]](#endnote-768) In response to the theory of polygenesis, Grimke was equally adamant as he insisted that the positing of a “Pre-Adamite” creation of blacks was definitively refuted by the “statement in Genesis” that affirmed that the black race and “all races now upon the earth have descended from the family of Noah.” Consequently, he argued that “if the Bible is to be accepted as authority, the equality of the Negro race in the great human family, with all other races, is thus put beyond all cavil or doubt. From the same parent stock as all the other races, he has come.”[[769]](#endnote-769)

Grimke’s argument was essentially rooted in the thoroughly orthodox theological and hermeneutical orientation that he imbibed as a student at Lincoln University and Princeton Seminary. His broader rejection of the controversial findings associated with the “scientific study of religion” was illuminated by a similar Scripture-based response to the threat seemingly posed by the theory of evolution. Thus, in contrast to Blyden, who, like McCosh, accepted the validity of the evolutionary thesis “as properly interpreted,” Grimke echoed Charles Hodge and no few of his black ministerial colleagues with a vigorous assertion that evolution was inconsistent with the Bible and the tenets of Christianity.[[770]](#endnote-770) Throughout his long ministry, he would be unwavering in his conviction that

There is no evidence anywhere to show that man was ever anything but what he is now, human, pure and simple. The Bible teaches in Genesis that all forms of life on the globe were created; and that each form was to propagate itself after its kind. There is not the scintilla of evidence, in spite of the pretensions of Science, to show that such is not the case. All the species that exist on the globe today or that are found in the fossil remains in the rocks, confirm this great law as disclosed in the Genesis chapter. . . . Nowhere are to be found any missing links, any evidence of that kind of growth or development. Man, e/g. is not the result of evolution; he has not been evolved from some inferior animal.[[771]](#endnote-771)

Even amid the twentieth century’s accumulating scientific and religious claims to evolution’s validity and the possibility of its reconciliation with Scripture and the tenets of Christianity, Grimke would persist in his insistence that evolution remained “a pure assumption without any foundation in fact.”[[772]](#endnote-772) Grimke’s rejection and denunciation of evolution were also consistent with his rejection of biblical criticism in tones that echoed not only Hodge but also Ashbel Green, his former Princeton Seminary professor, who also vigorously defended traditional views of the authorship and authority of the Bible. Almost thirty years earlier, Green presented an American based refutation of the views expressed by Bishop Colenso and a decade later, Hodge famously reaffirmed that “the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and therefore infallible, and of divine authority in things pertaining to faith . . . and consequently free from all error, whether of doctrine, fact, or precept.” [[773]](#endnote-773) Grimke’s adamant rejection of the new biblical scholarship was also consistent with that of fellow black clergy such as Bishop Benjamin T. Tanner who pronounced “the German higher critics . . . descendants of the defeated skeptics of earlier ages,” and James Theodore Holly, the Episcopal Bishop of Haiti, who dismissed biblical criticism as “mere literary recreation, or intellectual speculation.”[[774]](#endnote-774)  Similarly, the findings and implications of “Comparative Religion” were also garnering attention and being critically discussed within segments of the black religious community. Blyden’s critical and selective appropriation of the emergent discipline was evident in his later lectures and publications. George William Cook, an acquaintance of both Blyden and Grimke, who was born in slavery in 1855 and graduated from Howard University, also helped to publicize the emergent discipline with a critical assessment that was published in the AME Church Review in 1887.[[775]](#endnote-775) Grimke was surprisingly tolerant of Blyden’s appropriation and application of the discipline to his comparative studies of Islam and Christianity in West Africa. However, his basic orientation was presumably influenced by the thoroughly orthodox version of the discipline that was formulated and presented by his Princeton Seminary Professor James Moffit. [[776]](#endnote-776)

Underscored by Grimke’s condemnation of Darwinism and biblical criticism was his broader refutation of modernity’s related perspectives and findings, especially as these were perceived as challenging the validity and superiority of the Bible and Christianity, as well as the welfare of the race. Ironically, similar concerns about the integrity of Christianity and the well-being of the race were among the factors that compelled Blyden’s own efforts at interrogation and mediation of modernity and its corollaries as well as his insistence that blacks be fully abreast of developments associated with the “scientific study of religion” not only to “take a prominent part” in the “re-writing of Christian theology” but also so that they might join him in effectively contesting heretical and racist theories associated with it.

While both Blyden and Grimke continued to affirm a common agenda in defense of the race amid varied hermeneutical, theological, comparative, and even biological interpretations of Christianity, their increasingly divergent responses to modernity and its corollaries would position the two clerical colleagues on opposing sides of the major issues that would fuel the explosive theological, hermeneutical, and missiological controversies in the opening decades of the next century.

Importantly, despite the growing chasm between their respective positions regarding the threat posed to traditional Christianity and the race by modernity and its corollaries, the two clergymen found common cause in agreement and opposition to other aspects of modernity. For example, Blyden shared with Grimke alarm that modernity too often fostered crass materialism and an unsavory insensitivity to life’s highest ideals. As he embarked on his final tour of the United States in 1895, it was to Grimke that Blyden confessed his fear that “Gilded Age America,” like the “modern” European nations, had embraced, at considerable intellectual and spiritual cost, many of modernity’s worse attributes.[[777]](#endnote-777) Consequently, he opined that America’s “great statesmen, scholars and poets of the past,” the “originators of thought and the prophets of the unseen” had “given place to the Vanderbilts, Astors, and Goulds,” with the result that millionaires had become the nation’s “prophets, priests and kings.” Such men, he lamented, “think very little of the moral greatness of their country—the elevation of its ideals—the purification of its politics, the establishment of justice and the diffusion of truth and righteousness.” Rather, “the power to get on and acquire money . . . is the main thing sought after, even though it be unaccompanied and unsupported by any other great quality whatever.”[[778]](#endnote-778)

Notably, Blyden directed a similar critique at the era’s most prominent black exemplar of Gilded Age materialism—Booker T. Washington---to whom he had been introduced by Grimke. Impressed with Washington’s pragmatic pedagogical and racial policies, Blyden applauded him as being on “God’s line for the race.” Nevertheless, he also saw fit to caution Washington on the dangers of an excessive valuation of the material aspects of life in place of attention to the spiritual.[[779]](#endnote-779)

Ironically, Blyden was scheduled to be in Atlanta to attend the missionary-oriented “Congress on Africa” held in conjunction with the Atlanta Exposition and would likely have been in attendance at the oration that occasioned widespread acclaim of Washington and his racial policies. However, his trip to Atlanta was canceled when he was unexpectedly summoned by the British colonial office to assume a diplomatic post in Lagos as “Agent of Native Affairs.”[[780]](#endnote-780) The appointment, which entailed serving as an emissary for Muslims and their concerns, was an explicit acknowledgment by both the colonial office and Lagos Muslims of the unique interreligious orientation and cultural sensibilities long cultivated and exemplified by Blyden in conjunction with both his ecumenical ministry and inter-religious scholarship. [[781]](#endnote-781)

Although unable to attend the Congress of Africa or Washington's Atlanta Exposition address, Blyden’s final visit to the United States was nevertheless punctuated by two major appearances before African American audiences. A reception held in his honor in New York’s St. Mark’s Church was attended by more than eight hundred admirers gathered “to demonstrate their appreciation of the greatest scholar, linguist, and diplomat of the Negro race.” Conspicuous in attendance was the “department of divinity,” which “presented a formidable array” as clergy of various denominations turned out for what was described as “a memorable occasion in the social and intellectual history of Negroes in New York.”[[782]](#endnote-782) Also indicative of the esteem that he continued to elicit among black religious and secular leaders was an invitation to deliver a second address before Washington’s prestigious Bethel Literary and Historical Association—an honor extended to only the most distinguished luminaries of the race. In 1882, he had used it as a forum to introduce an African American audience to his views regarding the problematic intersection of race, religion, and modernity. Now, more than a decade later, he employed the forum as the venue for what would prove to be his farewell discourse to the African American community. Turning out to hear him was “an unrivaled aggregation of Negro Talent, wealth and culture” and Francis Grimke was likely among the ecumenical array of black clergy in attendance.[[783]](#endnote-783)

Appropriately titled “The Future of the Negro,” Blyden’s address was a timely final personal communiqué to an African American religious and intellectual community that he had inspired, counseled, cajoled, and critiqued for almost half a century.[[784]](#endnote-784) As he expounded on the future of the race, Blyden reiterated his now persistent argument that blacks could ill afford to ignore or summarily dismiss modernity and its myriad corollaries, including in particular the views associated with the “scientific study of religion.”He made the latter’s relevance explicit as he appropriated recent findings in historical and biblical studies to aggressively refute the so-called "Hamitic Myth" and its thesis that "the Negro belongs to an essentially and perpetually inferior race"—a thesis which, he opined, "had done more to promote the oppression of the Negro and to interfere with the harmony of the race in America than anything else." Alarmed by the tenacious potency of this "racial heresy," which had shocked him as an eighteen-year-old new to the United States, Blyden delivered an address that was in part practical demonstration that critical appropriation by blacks of the findings of biblical criticism might serve as a valuable corrective in “eliminating from Christian teaching . . . [this] mischievous doctrine” which continued to foster a “lingering feeling among Christians, and . . . [even] among some Negroes, that perhaps after all the present condition of the African in his ancestral country and in the lands of his exile is to be attributed to the curse of Noah.” [[785]](#endnote-785)

The reception held in Blyden’s honor in New York and the invitation to again share his iconoclastic views in Washington with members and guests of the Bethel Society were additional proofs that the West African scholar still garnered considerable esteem from across the African American religious and ideological spectrum. Both events also suggest that much of this esteem was rooted not only in appreciation of his long-standing role as a champion of the race but also his simultaneous roles as one of modernity's most important black advocates and one of the black community's best-informed critics of its less savory aspects. It was an assessment shared by Grimke, to whom Blyden concluded his abbreviated final visit to the United States with a farewell note expressing appreciation for his hospitality and reaffirming a bond that henceforth would be both nurtured and increasingly strained from across the span of the Atlantic Ocean.[[786]](#endnote-786)

As the nineteenth century drew to its turbulent end, trans-Atlantic correspondence between Blyden and Grimke continued to reveal a close personal and professional relationship despite their divergent orientations regarding modernity and its religious corollaries. Ministerial advice (including sermon ideas), personal counsel, frustrations, and concerns, as well as future hopes and aspirations, were still mutually shared.[[787]](#endnote-787) Even humor related to their acknowledged theological differences remained an important component of their relationship as illustrated by Blyden’s tongue-in-cheek query to Grimke concerning “our friend” Stopford Brooke. The insider joke being that Brooke, one of Blyden’s oldest British acquaintances, had served as chaplain to the Queen before demitting his ordination and becoming one of Britain’s most prominent religious liberals.[[788]](#endnote-788) Theological differences were also likely alluded to as Blyden teased Grimke about the latter’s recent reception of an honorary doctorate from Lincoln University, an honor which Blyden had earlier enjoyed.[[789]](#endnote-789) Shared mirth, often at the expense of less-educated and refined colleagues, additionally revealed an ecclesiastical elitism and cultural chauvinism that was displayed for example when Rev. George W. Lee, Grimke’s ecclesiastical neighbor in Washington, was sarcastically described by Blyden as “that eminent colossus of theology who presides with such dignity, learning, and affection over the illustrious congregation which think they worship in Vermont Ave.”[[790]](#endnote-790)

An analysis of missives between Blyden and Grimke suggests a mature relationship in which neither chose to obfuscate the myriad issues upon which they differed nor to publicly challenge one another even as criticisms and negative characterizations by others were noted and shared.[[791]](#endnote-791) Each was intimately familiar with the other’s personal and professional idiosyncrasies and weaknesses and yet remained comfortable in the assurance that they would not be judged by the other—as illuminated by Blyden’s sophomoric confession to the straitlaced Grimke of flirtatious relationships with British women referred to as "ladies whose names, of course, [I] must not be mentioned."[[792]](#endnote-792)

Anna J. Cooper's description of Grimke as a “curious study in psychology” was an assessment readily applicable to Blyden as well. The older, more cosmopolitan, and worldly Blyden appears to have occupied a role in their relationship that might arguably be described as that of an older, impish, mischievous, and occasionally roguish alter-ego. Consequently, Blyden’s theological and racial heterodoxy and even ethical foibles and idiosyncrasies were uncharacteristically tolerated by Grimke, who, as one of the most respected elders of the African American religious community, was famed and even feared by both friends and enemies for his defense of ethical and evangelical orthodoxy and a puritanical public persona that did not suffer fools.

The complex and unlikely trans-Atlantic relationship that the two ministers still shared at the century’s end continued to be acknowledged by mutual friends and admirers. Among them was prominent Atlanta educator and Methodist layman William J. Crogman, who wrote to Grimke in 1899, assuring him of “lay [ing] aside very readily whatever I am reading, when a production of yours or of Blyden’s makes its appearance.”[[793]](#endnote-793) Additionally revealed by Crogman’s comments were their mutual contributions at century’s end to the era’s increasingly heated religious, racial, and gender discourses via an impressive corpus of publications, addresses, and sermons that regularly issued from their respective pens.[[794]](#endnote-794)

**Part VI: Into the Twentieth Century**

**Chapter 19: On the Cusp of a New Century**

As the nineteenth century drew to its turbulent close, Blyden and Grimke would continue to celebrate a personal and professional relationship characterized by a surprising measure of shared theological, ideological, intra-racial, and even ethical tolerance and forbearance. Yet, foreshadowed were developments that would highlight and exacerbate increasing differences related to their perceptions of and responses to the intersectionality of race, religion, and modernity.

The close of the century witnessed Grimke's emergence in the wake of the deaths of Daniel Payne and Alexander Crummell as “the most influential figure in the Negro ecclesiastical world.” [[795]](#endnote-795)  It was a status accompanied by his more resolute embrace of the role of defender of both evangelical orthodoxy and the race from increased assaults.Meanwhile, on the far side of the Atlantic, Blyden persisted in his role as the foremost ministerial advocate of a version of modernity adapted to the needs of the black race in Africa and the Diaspora. As he undertook this role more resolutely, Blyden did not hesitate to share his iconoclastic racial, religious, and cultural views with Grimke, members of the Reading Circle, and the wider African American community via correspondence, published articles, and even occasional papers presented by surrogates in venues such as the newly founded American Negro Academy.

The founding president of the Academy upon its organization in 1897 was Blyden’s former colleague at Liberia College and colonization advocate, the venerable Episcopal minister Alexander Crummell.[[796]](#endnote-796) Crummell’s more conservative and cautious response to modernity and its corollaries which were centered around the benefits and theme of Christian civilizationism had been forged during his sojourn and classical studies in England. Although subsequently advanced, advocated, and defended during his twenty-year career in Liberia as a respected educator, missionary, and author, Crummell’s contributions as a mediator and emissary of the black engagement with modernity have been noted as having had more impact among an emergent cadre of clergy-intellectuals in South Africa than in West Africa. The latter thesis is advanced most cogently by Ntongela Masilela, who contends that Crummell’s engagement with and response to Victorian modernity made him the major progenitor of a “New African Modernity” in South Africa. [[797]](#endnote-797)

Upon his return to the United States from Liberia in 1873, Crummell’s more conservative response to modernity and its religious and racial corollaries was expanded as he joined and achieved leadership within the ranks of an African American religious and intellectual elite that was also increasingly engaged in various ways and degrees with the challenges and needs of the race under the press of modernity at the cusp of the twentieth century. Consequently, the establishment of the American Negro Academy under Crummell’s leadership provided an important forum for scholarly reflections and discourse on the myriad implications of the black engagement with late-Victorian modernity. It was a theme addressed before the Academy’s membership by Crummell in his inaugural lecture as president of the academy which was titled “Civilization: The Primal Need of the Race and the Attitude of the American Mind Toward the Negro Intellect.”[[798]](#endnote-798) Amid rehearsals of white cynicism regarding the intellectual and cultural capacities of the race that were being reinforced by proliferation of the claims of “scientific racism” in church, academy, and the wider culture, Crummell, true to his classical roots, presented what David Lewis has described as a “manifesto of high culture” as he called upon leaders of the race to embrace, and extend late Victorian “Civilization” (“the *secondary* work of God”) and by implication late Victorian modernity with their participation in the production of “letters, literature, science, philosophy, poetry, sculpture, architecture, yea all the arts” which are then laid “in the lap of religion.” [[799]](#endnote-799)

Notably, during the same inaugural session of the Academy, a Crummell admiring and genuflecting W. E. B. Du Bois presented his own racialized call for a black engagement with modernity and particularly its racial corollaries in terms that were not conceptionally inconsistent with Blyden’s notion of the “Negro Personality.” “The history of the world,” he noted, “is the history, not of individuals. . . but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history.” Moreover, offered as part of the “Creed” of the Academy, was his conviction “that the Negro people, as a race, have a contribution to make to civilization and humanity, which no other race can make.”[[800]](#endnote-800)

The Negro Academy would replace Bethel Literary and Historical Society as the most prominent African American intellectual venue and be defined by its constitution as "an organization of authors, scholars, artists, and those distinguished in other walks of life, men of African descent, for the promotion of letters, science, and art." It also sought "to aid, by publication, the dissemination of truth and the vindication of the Negro race from vicious assaults."[[801]](#endnote-801) Although attracting non-clergy scholars such as W. E. B. Du Bois, the founding membership of the Academy was predominately made up of ministers.[[802]](#endnote-802) Grimke, firmly ensconced among the nation’s black clerical and intellectual elite, was active in the Academy’s organization and he likely played a role in Blyden’s invitation to join a membership that included some of the era’s most prominent African and African American religious and secular leaders.[[803]](#endnote-803)

Although Blyden accepted membership in the Academy, he would not have an opportunity to return to the United States to share his increasingly iconoclastic views with its members. However, a distillation of some of his more radical religious, racial, and cultural views would be presented in absentia by his foremost North American–based protégé—Orishatukeh Faduma. Elected to the Academy in 1899, Faduma was born to Yoruba parents rescued from a slave ship by the British anti-slavery squadron and subsequently indentured in British Guyana where Faduma was born and given the baptismal name William J. Davis. Upon the family’s return to Sierra Leone, he came under the influence of a Blyden-inspired cultural reform movement and in 1887 adopted the more “indigenous name” Orishatukeh Faduma. [[804]](#endnote-804) His matriculation at the University of London and subsequently Yale Divinity School in the early 1890s ensured that he was thoroughly introduced to the new academic, intellectual, and religious developments emerging in response to late Victorian modernity. Indicative of his awareness of the importance of his pedagogical pedigree in relation to religious and intellectual changes being fostered in Britain by currents of modernity, Faduma celebrated the fact that his alma mater, the University of London, had been founded in the early 19th century free from the stagnating control of religious orthodoxy, “imbued with the modern spirit,” and with a curriculum rooted more in the “new science than in the old humanities.” Consequently, he opined that in the wake of its establishment, “a new life and inspiration came upon English intellectual life. . . . men and women drank from the fountain of knowledge, including Jews and Mohammedans.”[[805]](#endnote-805)

Faduma was also aware that Yale Divinity School was one of the fonts of the academic, theological, and missiological liberalism that had emerged in the United States in the wake of the intellectual and religious currents of late Victorian modernity. His mastery of the school’s curriculum and subsequent critical application of the methodology, perspectives, and findings evolution, biblical and historical criticism, and comparative religion were attested in publications which bore such titles as “Materials for the Study of World Religions”(1896) “Africa or the Dark Continent”(1893) “Religious Beliefs and of the Yoruba People of West Africa”(1895), “Success and Drawbacks of Missionary Work in Africa by an Eye-Witness (1896),” and “The Pastoral Epistles” (1894).[[806]](#endnote-806)

Notably, Faduma’s responses to modernity’s intellectual, academic, and religious currents closely paralleled that of Blyden. Thus in contrast to the defenders of orthodoxy who regarded “science" and the scientific study of religion” as "antagonistic to religion," he echoed Blyden in arguing that "true science" and "true religion" could never be in opposition: "The seeming conflict between them is a conflict between the old theology and the new--a conflict between the old systems of thought and the new." Consequently, he argued that “The Church gains not a whit by placing herself in direct conflict with science” since “Science is not per se an enemy of religion.” [[807]](#endnote-807) Faduma also shared Blyden’s qualified appreciation of the findings and perspective of biblical criticism and affirmed that “Interpretation of Scriptural truths once considered perfect and final, will often in our Christian and intellectual progress be found out to be partial.” However, he also echoed Blyden in his insistence that the findings of biblical criticism should not be allowed to distract from the deeper significance and meaning of Scripture:

It is of small account that we have mastered all the schools of New Testament criticism, that we can place every incident in its right setting, and give the true interpretation of every text: our real lesson is what we find at the heart of the Gospel of Christ, and is recorded for us in the imagery of the Baptism, the Temptation, the Transfiguration and the Cross. [[808]](#endnote-808)

Like Blyden, Faduma also appreciated and touted the importance of the theory of evolution and the new critical historical studies which were reexamining and revising the developmental history of Christianity. Echoing the reflections expressed by “Professor Auguste Sabatier,” the French theologian heralded as one of the major formulators of a "thoroughly liberalized Protestantism," Faduma noted that “Christianity . . . has followed the law of adaptation. It was Hebrew in Palestine; in passing into the Hellenic world it received a Greco-Roman coloring."[[809]](#endnote-809) Blyden’s central argument about the religious implications of the “Negro Personality” was more explicitly affirmed as Faduma opined:

The fundamental principles of Christianity will ever remain the same, while in their application to meet the necessities of the human race, adaptation is a desideratum. This is as fair as it is scientific. Upon the Hebrew mind, there is and ought to be a Hebrew coloring; upon the Negro mind, a Negro coloring; upon the European mind, a European coloring.[[810]](#endnote-810)

Faduma additionally echoed Blyden in selective appreciation of the perspectives and findings of the “science of religion.” Similarly, he acknowledged the important contributions that “Max Muller” and colleagues such as “[George ] Rawlinson, and [Archibald H.] Sayce made to the understanding of the “evolution” of the world religions.[[811]](#endnote-811) Moreover, he insisted that such studies should not be limited in their application and scope to Western and Near Eastern religions and that “the study of religion in all of its forms ought to be important to the student of comparative religion.” Echoing Blyden, he insisted that such studies should also be applied to Africa’s religious traditions whereby they might shed valuable light on them and their relationship to Christianity. And as had been the case for Blyden, Faduma’s interrogation and selective appropriation of the perspective and findings of the “scientific study of religion” would become foundational for his comparative studies of Christianity and Islam and advocacy of missionary theories and policies sensitive to the ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural propensities of Africa and Africans.[[812]](#endnote-812) And, long after Blyden’s death in 1912, Faduma continued as Blyden’s foremost disciple in the United States—presenting in numerous forums, publications, addresses, and activities various appropriations and combinations of his own and Blyden’s views regarding race, religion, pedagogy, missiology, Islam and Christianity, African emigration, and ideology--in effect succeeding Blyden, as interrogator, adjudicator, mediator, and emissary of old and new currents of modernity’s religious and racial corollaries to North American and international audiences.[[813]](#endnote-813)

While serving after his 1884 graduation from Yale as a Congregational minister and educator in rural North Carolina, Faduma was invited to become a member of the American Negro Academy. The synthesis of his studies and scholarship with that of Blyden was apparent in a paper which he presented before fellow members of the Academy in 1908. Titled “Social Problems in West Africa from the Standpoint of an African," it was obviously influenced by Blyden's recent and most comprehensive appropriation of comparative religion in defense of traditional African religious and cultural institutions titled African Life and Customs.[[814]](#endnote-814) Faduma’s paper also included advocacy of Blyden’s provocative and controversial thesis that polygamy was among the indigenous African institutions with which Christianity and its adherents and advocates must be willing to coexist.[[815]](#endnote-815)

Although lauded as "a revelation to many for the scholarship shown and the novelty of the arguments on behalf of polygamy,” Faduma’s presentation was deemed too controversial for publication as one of the Academy’s occasional papers.[[816]](#endnote-816) Grimke, a staunch defender and exemplar of traditional marriage as a divinely instituted “union between one man and one woman” and a critic of polygamy as an “evil” and “iniquity” which is “contrary to the words of God,” was likely among members who found the paper—and by implication Blyden’s broader thesis regarding the value of African religion and culture—far too challenging of traditional Christian and Victorian conventions for dissemination by the Academy.[[817]](#endnote-817)

As the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century revealed new and exacerbated old points of difference between the responses of Blyden and Grimke to modernity and its corollaries, it was ironic that the most conspicuous of these appeared, at least at first glance, not to be directly related to their different theological, hermeneutical, missiological, or even ethical orientations but rather divergent views regarding the appropriateness and efficacy of direct protest and activism in response to expanding racial repression and exploitation. An increasing dissonance was apparent in their stances relative to Booker T. Washington and his accommodationist strategies of racial development and uplift. Washington had been introduced to Blyden “through the courtesy of our mutual friend, Dr. Grimke,” during his 1889-90 tour of the United States, and both ministers had endorsed Washington’s pedagogical policies and his 1890 critique of the black church and clergy.[[818]](#endnote-818) Both also initially echoed the general acclaim that followed in the wake of Washington’s famed “Atlanta Compromise.”[[819]](#endnote-819) However, by the turn of the century, Grimke had joined the ranks of black leaders publicly denouncing Washington and his apparent accommodation to the heresy of racism as "cowardly" and "hypocritical."[[820]](#endnote-820)

In contrast, Blyden persisted in his support of the accommodationist policies and pedagogical strategies of Washington and even advocated their application in colonial Africa. He also campaigned for the creation of a West African version of Tuskegee Institute as a more pragmatic and accommodationist version of his long-held dream of a West African University.[[821]](#endnote-821) Importantly, Blyden expressed a desire to minimize religious conflict related to “distracting dogmatic views” and “denominational prejudices” at the proposed institution. However, the expectation that it would intellectually and academically engage modernity was reflected in his insistence that its students become familiar “with the laws of the moral and physical world as they are being unfolded by contemporary discoveries.”[[822]](#endnote-822)

Ironically, while both Blyden and Grimke continued to share the conviction that racism, racial oppression, and racial exploitation were incompatible with the authentic teachings of Christianity, the latter's literal and pastoral application of the tenets of the Bible and Christianity nurtured a more prophetic criticism and activist response to racial oppression within church and society. By the turn of the century, Grimke’s biblically grounded social and political activism was reflected in his support of the Niagara Movement and subsequently the National Association of Colored People. In contrast, Blyden's less pastoral orientation appears to have contributed to his generally more cerebral, ambiguous, and less activist responses to the racial, religious, economic, and political oppression accompanying the policies of colonialism, imperialism, and apartheid being forged and applied amid late Victorian modernity.[[823]](#endnote-823)

Additional insight into and explanation of Blyden’s more passive response to race-based oppression might be found upon closer examination of his core theological beliefs. Paradoxically, despite his appropriation of many of the tenets and perspectives of theological liberalism, the notion of “Divine Providence” active in human history remained one of the most important and frequently recurring concepts in his theological corpus long after he had rejected other precepts of Reformed Orthodoxy.[[824]](#endnote-824) While the concept was also foundational to the theological and even ideological and racial orientations of Grimke and their ministerial colleagues, Blyden appears to have embraced the concept and clung to it with exceptional rigor and passion. Blyden’s foremost biographer, suggests that it nurtured a “theocratic determinism,” which fostered or contributed to many of the glaring inconsistencies manifest in his life, work, and responses to modernity.[[825]](#endnote-825) Among the more obvious and problematic of these was Blyden’s tendency to imply that slavery and its extended aftermath on both sides of the Atlantic were consistent with the decrees of a “Providence that makes no mistakes.” Consequently, this thesis contributed to his rationalization that "The deportation of the African [via the slave trade] was the Providential prelude to Africa's regeneration."[[826]](#endnote-826) Relatedly, in the face of the exploitation and brutalization accompanying the “Scramble For Africa” and the expansion of European colonialism and imperialism at century’s end, Blyden linked it to his concept of an “African Personality” to dissuade black political protest and agitation as inconsistent with the providentially assigned calling of "the Negro." And, in keeping with Blyden’s belief that the distinguishing characteristics of the "African Personality" were spiritual and not political, Africans and their new world descendants were counseled that they “must sympathize with and assist the powers that be, as ordained of God” and that they should remain confident and patient in the assurance that God himself “will hold [their oppressors] to a strict accountability.” [[827]](#endnote-827)

Not surprisingly, amid the emergence of the era’s more activist, and even militant Pan-African and nationalist sensibilities, growing numbers of admirers and critics on both sides of the Atlantic found Blyden’s providentially grounded and theologically tortured apologetics and counsel of patience in response to even the most brutal manifestations of racism and racial exploitation in Africa and the African Diaspora to be embarrassingly reactionary. His position was also perceived by many of his more theologically traditional contemporaries as incompatible with the dictates and demands of Christianity properly understood and practiced. [[828]](#endnote-828)

The latter assessment of Blyden may well have been entertained by Grimke who increasingly encouraged and sanctioned black political activism, militancy, and even retaliatory violence in the face of racial assaults.[[829]](#endnote-829) Ironically, Blyden’s apologetics and counsel of patience would seem to have come close to warranting his inclusion among the ranks of clergy whose “silence and cowardice” on the issues of racism in church and society was denounced as hypocritical and heretical with escalating vehemence by Grimke.[[830]](#endnote-830) Such an appraisal might have accrued additional credence given Blyden’s apparent failure to publically support Grimke, Anderson, and their colleagues in their campaign against policies and plans that nurtured and advanced ecclesiastical racism within the American Presbyterian Church. The painful futility of the latter struggle by Grimke and his colleagues was realized in 1905 upon the denomination's ratification of reunion with Cumberland Presbyterians at the expense of its black constituents. Elicited in its aftermath was Grimke's agonized query: "When will the Church of Jesus Christ cease its hypocritical cant about religion, and begin to live it, in spirit and in truth?"[[831]](#endnote-831) Grimke’s fears that the poison of racism would continue to spread throughout the Presbyterian Church also seemed to be justified by the revised policies and practices of the Board of Missions pertaining to its African missions and missionaries. This development also evoked surprisingly ambivalent and even contradictory responses from Blyden.[[832]](#endnote-832)

Blyden was well aware that by the end of the century, the Presbyterian Board of Missions, despite persistent denials, was "drawing the colour line" and instituting a policy of racial exclusion that restricted the appointment of black missionaries. [[833]](#endnote-833) In 1901, Robert E. Speer, Secretary of the Board and "the most prominent Presbyterian missionary spokesperson of the day," provided insight into the racist attitudes influencing the Board's policy regarding the appointment of African American missionaries to Africa. According to Speer, “Negroes from America have neither proved immune from disease and fever, nor shown those qualities on enterprise, stability, and solidity of work without which a mission cannot be counted as satisfactory. Therefore. . . .the hope that the American Negro would evangelize the continent of his fathers has been abandoned, at least until he shall have been brought by education and long discipline to a tenacity and directness of character he does not yet possess.”[[834]](#endnote-834)

Such assessments embraced by American Presbyterianism's foremost mission experts contributed to an unofficial but effective policy that not only undermined the support of Presbyterianism’s West African mission but also denied African Americans assignments to the denomination’s foreign mission posts from 1896 to 1928. More than thirty years of black exclusion from foreign mission posts ended when the Board appointed Reverend Irwin Underhill to its West African mission in 1928. It was twenty years later, however, before an African American was appointed by the Board to a non-African country.[[835]](#endnote-835)

Given Grimke’s heightened role as a militant champion of both evangelical orthodoxy and black rights after the turn of the century, his apparent toleration of Blyden’s at best ambivalent response to racism and racial exploitation on both sides of the Atlantic begs further analysis. His continued tolerance or at least reluctance to publically challenge Blyden’s increasingly iconoclastic theology, missiology, and ministry also begs further inquiry and analysis.

While not always in agreement or accord with Blyden’s theological, missiological and ideological, or ethical orientation, or his related actions and policies, Grimke, like many of Blyden’s ministerial colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic, continued not only to appreciate him as an imperfect champion of the race but also to respect the legitimacy of his iconoclastic interpretations of Christianity and ministry. Prominent West African religious leaders such as James Johnson, Mark Hayford, J. R. Fredrick, Rev. Charles Marke, Tuboek-Metzger, Majola Agbebi, and Orishatukeh Faduma were also not reticent in acknowledging his religious and missiological contributions and their indebtedness to him.[[836]](#endnote-836) Arguably, their continued tolerance and even support may be attributed in part to their belief that Blyden still retained profound respect for the Bible and Christianity and shared their conviction that when correctly interpreted and practiced, both had special and profound importance for people of African descent even amid the press and bludgeon of late Victorian modernity. It was a position summed up by Blyden’s assertion at century's end that "the Bible is the highest form of literature, and this wonderful Book—not science, not art . . . is the special nurture for those elements of our being which are permanent and involve close and indestructible relations with the Unseen and Infinite—to whom Ethiopia is stretching out her hands."[[837]](#endnote-837)

Albeit from a more liberal intellectual and theological perspective, Blyden continued to offer vindication of the Bible and an evolved Christianity that still affirmed convictions dearly held by Grimke and other black traditionalists. This overlapping agenda was evident in the similar responses by Grimke and Blyden from opposite sides of the Atlantic to the twentieth century’s new generation of religion’s “cultured despisers.”[[838]](#endnote-838) In 1907, Blyden, reminiscent of his critique a half-century earlier of John Stuart Mills, railed against what he described as "a blasphemous lecture" by "Mr. Bernard Shaw" in the course of which "the great English play writer" and agnostic reportedly proclaimed that "God is powerless" and advised his audience "to give up" their view of the Bible.[[839]](#endnote-839) Unabashedly donning the mantle of theologian and the cadence of a preacher, Blyden passionately counseled his African countrymen not to reject the Bible but to "hold on to that sacred volume." Voicing tenets that would be more consistently affirmed by a later generation of African and African American liberation theologians, Blyden rehearsed God's active role in sustaining Africa's offspring and proclaimed, "whatever may be the deficiencies of the God [that] Mr. Bernard Shaw worships . . . we know that our God, the God of Africa, is not powerless." And although appropriately ambiguous before his religiously diverse audience about the specific identity of the “God of Africa,” Blyden was anything but ambivalent in his insistence that

the God who could carry this race through millenniums of vicissitudes of all kinds, and enabled them to survive them all, is not powerless. The God who watched over them, during a period of unexampled sufferings and cruelties, which no other race, except the Jews, has undergone, in all countries and climes. . . —that God is not powerless. . . .The God who, in the house of bondage, in spite of all efforts to exterminate them, still not only keeps them alive, but fills their persecutors with dismay at the rapidity of their increase, that God is not powerless.[[840]](#endnote-840)

Blyden’s fusion of theology, hermeneutics, and ideology, concluded with the prophecy that unlike Shaw and his cultured colleagues, Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora would retain belief in “their God . . . [whose] unwearying and sleepless vigilance over this race, will end only when there is not a man left with Negro blood in his veins.” [[841]](#endnote-841) Blyden’s animated defense of “God” and the Bible and his insistence on their continued relevance for Africa and her descendants may have also reflected his growing frustration with modernity’s unintended consequences and limitations. Six years earlier he had publically affirmed that “neither modernity nor its handmaidens, wealth, science, and technology,” could be “the last word for humanity” and that science is “a dead organism of latent forces” in relationship to “all the really higher purposes of humanity” if it is not “animated by earnest purpose and inspired by a great spiritual idea.”[[842]](#endnote-842) Following the delivery of a poignant and captivating literary snapshot of modernity's contributions to the construction of a world far different from that in which he, Grimke, and most of their colleagues had been born, Blyden mused, but “what avails the genius of man, the resource of wealth, . . . the magic of science” when in their wake “men stand aghast, dumb, helpless, confounded—their money bags worthless, their science forgotten?”[[843]](#endnote-843)

Blyden’s rejoinder to Shaw and his poignant acknowledgment of modernity’s limitations were additional testimony to the trajectory of his theological and intellectual metamorphosis and his mediation of race, religion, and modernity. Publically reaffirmed was what remained a theological and ideological constant and no doubt additional explanation of his continued relationship with Grimke and fellow clergy of varied theological and religious orientations on both sides of the Atlantic—an uncompromised belief in a “God” who remained sovereign and who would continue to protect and empower Africa and her descendants.

A quarter-century later, Grimke, voiced similar alarm about the influence of prominent “cultured despisers” of religion upon a sorely disheartened African American community in tones reminiscent of the by then deceased Blyden. Eliciting special indignation was what he alleged were efforts by Clarence Darrow “to make the Negro believe that there is no God.” An incised Grimke would denounce the famed agnostic as a “fool” and a “scoffing infidel and atheist . . . who ridicules the Bible, makes light of prayers, [and] who looks upon religion as a dope for taking advantage of the ignorant.”[[844]](#endnote-844) Grimke would also second Blyden’s assessment of the often naive illusions and expectations accompanying modernity and “scientificism” with his own explicitly biblical and Christocentric critique as he insisted that “All this talk about science, about biology, anthropology or any other ology,” will “never be able, whatever their revelations maybe, to invalidate a single one of the great principles enunciated by Jesus Christ. All that science has revealed, all that science may yet reveal, already lay within the purview of his omniscient gaze.[[845]](#endnote-845)

**Chapter 20: Ecumenism and Modernity**

An expansive ecumenicity was one of the fruits of Blyden’s engagement with modernity and its religious and racial corollaries. The deepest roots of his ecumenical sensibilities lay in his experiences as a youth growing up within the Caribbean crucible of modernity.[[846]](#endnote-846) There he was exposed to a vibrant religious culture that was as diverse as its indigenous and immigrant populations. Included was a variety of western religious traditions as well as vestiges of the religious traditions of a rapidly dwindling indigenous population and the more recent religious importations from Africa which included Islam.[[847]](#endnote-847)

Notably, Africans, free and enslaved, made up the majority of the island’s population and despite successive efforts at the suppression of their religious beliefs and rituals by government agencies and the zeal of Lutheran, Moravian, and later Dutch Reformed missionaries, these continued to coexist and at times openly contend with those of Christianity.[[848]](#endnote-848) Africa's religious and cultural heritage was especially vibrant in the cosmopolitan environment of Charlotte-Amalie where Blyden lived and these elicited the notice and respect of the family.[[849]](#endnote-849) Thus although Christianity as practiced in St. George’s Dutch Reformed Church, was designated the religion of allegiance within their household, his parents reportedly "kept African traditions alive in the family" as a means of fostering pride in their African ancestry.[[850]](#endnote-850) Importantly, Blyden’s early ecumenical sensibilities were additionally nurtured by his youthful encounters with Orthodox Judaism and its adherents on St. Thomas.[[851]](#endnote-851) Consequently, before he immigrated to West Africa, a youthful Blyden had been exposed to an array of religious traditions that would have profound implications on the breadth of his religious sensibilities and scholarship.

Upon Blyden’s immigration to West Africa, his ordination, loyalty, and allegiance to Presbyterianism and Reformed doctrine were key aspects of his early ministry. However, as he matured intellectually and professionally, a practical ecumenicity quickly became a dominant feature of his roles and responsibilities as professor and president of Liberia College, Secretary of State, Liberian Ambassador, and even advocate of colonization. Subsequently, increasing concerns about divisive, dysfunctional, and destructive sectarian competition among missionary organizations and their adherents relative to each other as well as to Islam and West Africa’s more indigenous religious traditions would effectively expand his ecumenical sensibilities. Undoubtedly, Blyden’s applied and practical ecumenicity facilitated the general ease with which he successfully interacted on both sides of the Atlantic with a diversity of ecclesiastical groups in venues that ranged from denominational assemblies, conventions, local churches, and ministerial enclaves, to church-based colleges and seminaries.[[852]](#endnote-852)

Arguably, however, it was Blyden’s interrogation of modernity and critical appropriation and synthesis of its intellectual, academic, and methodological corollaries that provided key theoretical and theological legitimation for the more expansive ecumenical perspective and orientation subsequently manifest in his unconventional “ministry of truth,” and related efforts as a scholar of religion and as an interreligious emissary.[[853]](#endnote-853) His synthesis of race, religion, and modernity in support of an increasingly expansive ecumenicism and advocacy of religious toleration was reflected, for example, in a lecture delivered in Liberia’s Senate Chamber in which he evoked James Russell Lowell’s famed literary homage to religious liberality:

God sends his teachers unto every age,

To every clime, and every race of men,

With revelations fitted to their growth

And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of Truth

Into the selfish rule of one sole race.[[854]](#endnote-854)

Blyden also readily evoked critical hermeneutical support for his increasingly expansive ecumenicity as reflected in his appropriation of the words and religious insights expressed by the prophet Malachi (1-11): ‘From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, My name is great . . . and in every place incense is offered.'" Thus synthesis of Blyden’s West African studies and experiences with the new perspectives and findings of the emergent “science of religion,” as well as prose and scripture were employed in defense of his conviction that “men everywhere ‘feel after and find’ Jehovah, through calling upon him by different names—Jehovah, Zeus, Allah, Olorun, Nkankupon, Nyesoa, or Tshuku” and that “those who call Him Jehovah or Allah know no more of Him than those who approach him as Oluran or Tshuku.”[[855]](#endnote-855) Critical and selective embrace of the findings of evolution, the historical-critical method applied to both history and scripture, as well as comparative religion were not only crucial in helping to nurture and legitimate the expansive intellectual, theological, missiological, and ideological perspective that was both respectful and appreciative of non-Christian religious traditions which Blyden modeled, advocated, and defended in his final decades. More expansively, this synthesis encouraged his embrace of the perspective, popular among many progressive scholars and adherents of theological liberalism, that non-Christian traditions were “stepping stones” to Christianity and all traditions were engaged in a process of reform and evolution aimed at the eventual manifestation of a “universal” world religion (that looked suspiciously akin to a liberalized version of Christianity) that would embody the best attributes of its varied religious components.[[856]](#endnote-856) It was a concept of religious evolution and reform implied in Blyden's endorsement of Charles Briggs's contention that Presbyterianism was "not a finality" but "the stepping stone to something higher and grander yet to come."[[857]](#endnote-857) It was also consistent with Muller’s belief in a “New Reformation” that “would give life to a New Christianity” and that the “science of religion” would play an important role in this development.[[858]](#endnote-858)

Blyden’s embrace of the concept of religious evolution as applied specifically to Christianity was articulated in a letter that he penned in 1892 to James John Garth Wilkinson. An adherent disciple and principal translator of the religious teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, the eighteenth-century Swedish mystic, philosopher, and theologian, Wilkinson was also enamored by the religious insights and sensibilities expressed by Blyden in Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race. Consequently, he dedicated a book to him that was provocatively titled The African and True Christian Religion.[[859]](#endnote-859) In a missive penned in appreciation of Wilkinson’s tribute, Blyden concluded with an evocation of an evolved Christianity and emergent “New Church” that appropriated the language and vision of Swedenborg and his followers: “I earnestly pray as you do that the good Christians of the Old Church may become good Christians of the New Church, call that New Church by whatever name you please.”[[860]](#endnote-860)

Tributes and expressions of appreciation of Blyden’s inter-religious and ecumenical sensibilities date from his interaction with Muslim communities in the West African interior and their honoring him with Islamic names such as “Abd-al-Kerim” and “Mukhtar.”[[861]](#endnote-861) More recent tributes were expressed during a visit to Lagos in 1892 where he was received as an “interreligious emissary.”  However, Blyden’s ecumenical sensibilities were not always understood or appreciated as attested during his 1889-90 lecture tour of the United States when a contingent of black clergy was offended by his valorization of the Koran and its adherents.[[862]](#endnote-862) Within the West African context, similar critiques and examples of intolerance rooted in what Blyden insisted was religious “ignorance” were also expressed. Moreover, suspicions about Blyden’s religious orientation and agenda, and rumors that he was a clandestine Muslim, continued to be fueled by his domestic situation, scholarly and personal interactions with adherents of Islam, and his sympathetic and often romanticized assessments of Islam and its role in West Africa.

Related suspicions were fueled by Blyden's’ reformist pedagogical efforts. As a professor at the College Of Liberia in the 1860s, his attempts to include the study of Arabic into its curriculum were met with ridicule and lack of support.[[863]](#endnote-863) Similarly, his call in the early 1870s for the hire of an Islamic scholar at his proposed West African university elicited criticism and opposition. This dialectic was also more expansively reflected in his long-running interaction with Liberia College. As a professor at the College in the 1860’s, he attempted to introduce Arabic and by implication provide students with some familiarity with Islamic culture. Subsequently, with his reappointment as professor and subsequently its president at the end of the century, he insisted that the college’s curriculum should include not only the study of Arabic and Islam but also “native law, tribal organization, native languages, native religion, native politics, and the effect of all these things upon their life.” [[864]](#endnote-864) It was a pedagogical agenda, dictated in part by Blyden’s ongoing concern to introduce West African students to the findings and perspectives fostered by the “scientific study of religion.”[[865]](#endnote-865)

Blyden’s pedagogical agenda would inspire and provide the ecumenical and interreligious template for later generations of West African educators, scholars, and statesmen. However, his efforts were less appreciated by his contemporaries. For example, his roughhewn efforts at the incorporation of the methodological and pedagogical insights of the “science of religion” at Liberia College were misunderstood by students, fellow faculty, and overseers of the college and viewed by some as a thinly veiled attempt at proselytization. According to one less than sympathetic account, “Dr. Blyden was teaching the youth at the College the principles of Mohammedanism and polygamy,” and “Rev. Gibson and the Faculty . . . ‘sat down upon’ that kind of instruction.”[[866]](#endnote-866) And, after having offended the orthodox evangelical and pedagogical sensibilities of colleagues, students, and overseers of the college, Blyden’s tenure once again ended in turmoil and resulted in his dismissal less than a year and a half after his reappointment.[[867]](#endnote-867)

Although not without attendant controversy, practical application of Blyden’s ecumenical and interreligious sentiments were arguably more successfully manifest in his employment as “Agent of Native Affairs” in Lagos from 1896 to 1897 and his subsequent appointment from 1901 to 1906 as Director of Muslim Education in Sierra Leone. The latter appointment made notwithstanding his long identification and public career as a Christian minister was compelling evidence of recognition and appreciation of the uniqueness, scope, and import of his religious scholarship and ecumenical orientation. In effect, Blyden was entrusted with serving as a mediator of Muslim religious and educational concerns within a colonial and ecclesiastical establishment often insensitive and even hostile to Muslim interests. In the course of his efforts to develop curricula that would help prepare Muslim youth to engage aspects of modernity, Blyden was also confronted with and successfully overcame the strong objections of Muslim traditionalists fearful that his efforts to reform and modernize Muslim education would have a deleterious impact on the faith of his charges.[[868]](#endnote-868)

Among the more scholarly efforts indicative of Blyden's expansive ecumenical and interreligious orientation and sensibilities was his mature reflections on the intersection of Judaism, Jews, and modernity in an 1898 publication titled The Jewish Question. [[869]](#endnote-869) Although this works’ importance and significance within Blyden’s wider corpus has often been overlooked, it situated his mature reflections on Judaism in particular and religion in general firmly within the broader intellectual, religious, and political discourse of the late Victorian era. An interest in and appreciation of Judaism initially cultivated during youthful play on Synagogue Hill in St. Thomas had evolved over subsequent decades into the disciplined study of the language and history of the Jewish people. His scholarly efforts related to Judaism and its adherents were additionally inspired by his conviction that both the historical and contemporary experiences of Jews paralleled those of people of African descent. Moreover, consistent with his creative synthesis of evolutionary theory, comparative religion, and liberal theology, Blyden also envisioned a critical role to be played by an evolved Judaism as it, like the other “Abrahamic Traditions” (i.e., Christianity and Islam), underwent reform en route to its destined fulfillment. [[870]](#endnote-870)

As Blyden’s life and career moved toward conclusion, his ecumenical and interreligious sensibilities evoked important expressions of appreciation from adherents of various religious traditions. Upon his retirement as Director of Muslim Education in 1906, Sierra Leone Muslims saw fit to present him with an inscribed pen that affirmed: “The Pen is mightier than the Sword”—an especially appropriate tribute given Blyden’s pedagogical efforts on behalf of the West African Muslim community and the pioneering corpus of scholarly publications that had issued from his pen challenging prevailing stereotypes about Islam and its adherents.[[871]](#endnote-871) Blyden’s broader labors on behalf of Islam and its adherents were also acknowledged and praised by Muslims residing outside West Africa. From the podium of a Liverpool mosque in 1905, Blyden was awarded “the decoration of the Imperial Order of the Medjidieh” on behalf of the Sultan of Turkey in appreciation "for the labor expended in pointing out to the better consideration of the world the virtue or true import of their religion [Islam]."[[872]](#endnote-872) An interpretation of the ceremony’s significance was provided to the West African community by H. B. Hayes who, not incidentally, had been one of Blyden’s students at Liberia College. Explicitly acknowledged were the ecumenical and interreligious sensibilities and efforts that had accompanied Blyden’s intellectual, theological, and pedagogical metamorphosis:

For in this demonstration, there appears a Negro—a Christian Negro—who has reached such definite intellectual perceptions, [and] such clear moral vision . . . that he now looks through and beyond the dismal films of theological bickerings and leanings into the true worth of the mission of Christ—the man saving essence of God and the influential relations which this Savior has been pleased to elect for human good, thereby clasping the hands of the propagators of the Theistic views of Isaac and Ishmael.[[873]](#endnote-873)

Additional commentary by H. B. Hayes explicated the broader implications of his mentor’s ecumenical and interreligious sensibilities and teachings as he counseled: “let not the Christian believe that he is the only one that has acceptance with the Creator of the Universe. There are abundant evidence on record leading up to the fact that indeed Christ has sheep which are not of the ‘folds’ denominated Christian, Muslim, or any other specialized clan.”[[874]](#endnote-874) Hayes also evoked another key premise of Blyden’s ecumenicity and “ministry of truth” as he concluded with the hope that his Liberian colleagues might “read, mark and learn,” so thatlike Blyden, “we too may be instruments in furthering the cause of truth to the great brotherhood of mankind.”[[875]](#endnote-875)

Blyden’s ecumenical and interreligious sensibilities and his efforts to foster religious cooperation and tolerance were also confirmed and celebrated at a banquet held in his honor by West African friends in Sierra Leone in 1907. In attendance was a cross-section of West African religious leaders that included Rev. Charles Marke, Rev. John R. Frederick, H. C. Solomon, Hadir ud Deen, Alfa Omaru, Alimami Jamburuga, and Tuboek-Metzger. A report of the proceedings emphasized that it brought together “the Jew, the Mohammedan, the Catholic, the Anglican” and even “the Nonconformist, European and African” to say to the aged and ailing racial and religious warrior “Okasha”—an Ashante term explained as meaning “well done!”[[876]](#endnote-876)

The high point of the proceeding was an address by Blyden that rehearsed his mature interpretation of the genealogy of modernity and its intersection with the fortunes of Africa and Africans. Conceding that the “modern history of Africa may be said to date” from “the discovery of America by Columbus,” he proceeded, with particular attention to the complexities, ambiguities, and unintended consequences of modernity, to address European and African interdependence at the onset of the new century. In prophetic tones, he proclaimed that both “Europe and Africa are mutually dependent" and that "Europe, in a way that she does not herself fully understand, is fitting Africa to be her most effective ally and assistant in the material exigencies which in the future will press upon and [even] embarrass the great centers of civilization and the seats of Empire.”[[877]](#endnote-877) Relatedly, the developmental and expansionary schema of European modernity that had fostered an “imperialism that pulls down” was denounced as Blyden proposed in its stead a new “imperialism”—one “that builds up,” and is characterized by “service [and] not rule.”[[878]](#endnote-878)

In the wake of increased European exploitation and militarism, particularly in northern and southern Africa, Blyden also censured the destructive tendency of Eurocentric modernity’s most honored “handmaiden” as he proclaimed that “science is not the final word for humanity” as evident by its “continually threatening the existence of the mighty offspring to which it gives birth” and “keep[ing] itself armed to the teeth against its neighbor." In a combination of lamentation and prophecy, Blyden opined that European modernity’s “handmaiden” and its "most popular and lucrative inventions” were often “machinery for the destruction of life” and consequently “men wonder when will all this end and whither will it lead."[[879]](#endnote-879)

It was of related significance that Blyden chose on this occasion to affirm in the central metropole of Britain and Europe the importance of the “God” embraced by Africans in their long encounter with modernity and its European couriers. Troubled by rationalistic and secular dismissals of the reality and power of deity by growing numbers of his European contemporaries, Blyden presented, to the cheers of those assembled, a history, genealogy, and future trajectory of the African encounter with modernity that affirmed the past, present, and future role of deity among Africa and its descendants.:

The God who could carry this race through millenniums of vicissitudes of all kinds, and enabled them to survive them all, is not powerless. The God who watched over them, during a period of unexampled sufferings and cruelties, which no other race, except the Jews, has undergone, in all the countries and climes and who, when in America, the time had come to set them free, and men's perversity and greed stood in the way of their deliverance, caused a million of their oppressor to fall in fratricidal slaughter … (like the slaying of the first-born in Egypt, that His people might be set free)—that God is not powerless. (Cheers.) The God who, in the house of bondage, in spite of all efforts to exterminate them, still not only keeps them alive, but fills their persecutors with dismay at the rapidity of their increase, that God is not powerless. (Cheers.)[[880]](#endnote-880)

Unlike many of their European counterparts who had become spiritually jaundiced by the acids of modernity, Blyden insisted that “Africans at any rate,” at the dawn of the twentieth century, had not yielded to modernity’s accompaniments of secularism and skepticism and thus “cannot admit the incapacity of their God.” To escalating cheers from his audience, Blyden evoked the God of Africa’s continued “mighty protective and preserving supervision” and “unwearying and sleepless vigilance, over this race.”[[881]](#endnote-881) Significantly, the “God of Africa” that Blyden acknowledged and hailed before his cheering ecumenical and interfaith audience was of no discernable identity.

By way of contrast, Grimke’s mature ecumenical and interreligious sensibilities, like that of the majority of his black ministerial colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic, did not extend far beyond the borders of traditional evangelical Christianity.[[882]](#endnote-882) Although actively engaged with clergy and constituents of other denominations in a host of ecumenically oriented causes and associations throughout his long ministry, the very different orientations that he and Blyden held regarding non-Christian religions and their adherents were reflected in Woodson’s observation that Grimke “did not care for those friends of the race who did not believe in Christianity.”[[883]](#endnote-883) It has also been noted that an aging Grimke was increasingly intolerant of fellow clergy who did not share his more conservative and increasingly defensive theological and hermeneutical orientation. Still, as was the case with so many of the issues (theological, missiological, racial, and ethical) that intersected the personal and professional relationship of Blyden and Grimke, a more nuanced appraisal is warranted. Grimke's close friendships with Douglass, Blyden, and even Anna J. Cooper suggest that his religious and theological sensibilities were not always as narrow and constricted as generally assumed. Grimke was obviously cognizant of Blyden's theological heterodoxy, accompanying interreligious sensibilities, as well as his heightened valorization of Islam and subsequently even African indigenous religions and culture. Nevertheless, he continued to nurture their personal and professional relationship and even refused to countenance denunciations of Blyden by fellow clergy and detractors.

Like Blyden, Grimke also remained particularly sensitive throughout his mature ministry to the transnational aspects and intersection of Christianity and race. It was an awareness and sensitivity poignantly illuminated by his endorsement of the labors of Japanese Christian and fellow Princeton Seminary alumni Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa during the latter’s tour of the United States in the mid-thirties. Not only did Grimke pronounce Kagawa “the outstanding Christian in our day and generation,” but he also used his visit to offer a timely critique of prevailing presuppositions about Christianity and race that paralleled those of Blyden for whom Christianity devoid of the racial and cultural chauvinism of the West had long been aspirational. Exclaiming, “I thank God that this illustrious visitor is not of the white race,” Grimke opined that Dr. Kagawa was proof “that one ‘doesn’t have to have Caucasian blood flowing in his veins’ to achieve the highest forms of ‘Christian manhood.’” He added, “On this highest plane of noble character and life this man, a Japanese, stands and challenges the attention of the world.” Kagawa’s life and ministry were referenced as evidence that “there are no favorite races with God . . . He is the God of all the nations of the world” and from his example “may the American white man learn that God is no respecter of persons [or nations].”[[884]](#endnote-884) This central theme of Christianity had long been a cornerstone of Grimke’s ministry. It would remain a dominant refrain as he more aggressively engaged the religious and racial challenges posed by new and resurgent expressions of modernity and its myriad corollaries throughout the final decades of his life and ministry.

**Chapter 21: On Africa and Europe**

In the decade and a half preceding his death in 1912, Blyden presented his final reflections on the intersection of race, religion, and modernity. These were made in the context of his conceptualization and explicit advocacy of a more organically African version of modernity. Ironically, several of his ruminations on a version of modernity that would be more consistent with Africa and her descendant’s indigenous history, culture, religion, and future development were presented in association with his active membership in the Royal African Society. The society was established in 1901 as one of several “learned” and professional societies that emerged under the influence and impetus of the conflicting concerns and currents of late Victorian modernity. And, as suggested by its name, its primary geographical focus was Britain’s expansive colonial holdings in Africa.[[885]](#endnote-885) Its impetus and inspiration was the iconic life and publications of amateur British ethnologist and African explorer Mary H. Kingsley (1862-1901). The well-read and largely self-taught Kingsley’s assessments of Africans and African religion and culture were influenced in part by her embrace of the perspectives and findings associated with the “scientific study of religion.”[[886]](#endnote-886) Although familiar with the pioneering anthropological studies of James Frazer, she was especially enthralled by the work of cultural anthropologist Edward Taylor who “hailed Max Muller’s ‘science of religion’ as a welcome sign of the times.”[[887]](#endnote-887) Embracing “Mr. Taylor’s Science,” Kingsley referred to him as “her 'great juju'” and “recommended that any visitor to West Africa learn his Primitive Culture by heart.”[[888]](#endnote-888)

Thus she engaged in a selective appropriation of the works of Muller, Taylor, Frazier and their colleagues in analysis and explanation of African religions and related cultural institutions as the discipline which they were forging was morphing into what Chidester has described as “an imperial science of religion” that offered legitimation for the imperial and colonial agenda of Britain. [[889]](#endnote-889) By way of Kingsley’s popular lectures and publications which emphasized her travels and experiences in Africa as informed by the new ethnographic methodology and perspectives associated with the emergent “science of religion,” she played an important role in familiarizing the British public with the “new science,” particularly as applied in the African context.[[890]](#endnote-890)

Ironically, Kingsley, the unconventional Victorian matron, and Blyden, the “extraordinary” West African scholar would discover that they had much in common and shared their iconoclastic perspectives regarding West African religion and culture as well as British imperial and missionary policy in both publications and private correspondence. Blyden was especially impressed by Kingsley’s insights and confessed to being “astonish[ed] . . . [that] a woman of Scandinavian antecedents and Anglo-Saxon training, . . . [was] able to see so clearly the situation.”[[891]](#endnote-891) Kingsley, in turn, was captivated by her surprisingly informed, articulate, and urbane West African friend and described him as “quite out of the ordinary.”[[892]](#endnote-892) Recognizing that the theoretical and methodological grounding of Blyden’s religious and cultural views made him a “fellow traveler,” Kingsley attempted to arrange a meeting of Blyden with Tylor and the oriental linguist Charles Lyall as well as the influential evolutionist and amateur anthropologist Edward Clodd. The three scholars, she insisted, were “our three best men,” and potentially supportive of their concerns and efforts.[[893]](#endnote-893)

Although both Blyden and Kingsley were influenced by the findings and perspectives of the new scholarship on the intersection of religion, race, and culture, the views and agenda of the “Imperial Adventuress” and the accomplished West African scholar were not identical. Nevertheless, Kingsley’s respect for Africans and African religion and culture approximated that of Blyden and her critique of late Victorian modernity and its imperial and missionary strategy was compatible with Blyden’s call for a more organically African version of and response to modernity.

Blyden and Kingsley also shared disillusionment with orthodox Christianity and its missionary enterprise in Africa.[[894]](#endnote-894) Of non-traditional religious background, Kingsley’s less than orthodox views of Christianity were reflected in her confession that, "I yield to no one in admiration for Jesus Christ, and I believe in his divine origin, but the religion his ministers preach I have never been able to believe in."[[895]](#endnote-895) Kingsley also expressed an appreciation of not only Islam but also Africa’s more indigenous religions. Moreover, like Blyden, she considered Islam to be “less disruptive of African society” than Christianity and professed that “she would very much like to ‘study and live among the Muslims.’”[[896]](#endnote-896)

Missionaries such as American Presbyterian Dr. Robert H. Nassau, who personified much of traditional nineteenth-century Presbyterian mission thought and effort related to Africa, were shocked by Kingsley’s confession that she was “not a Christian” and her contention that “we see the [God](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/God) we are capable of seeing, according to the capacity and nature of our vision.”[[897]](#endnote-897) Kingsley’s religious eclecticism also included claims of “worship[ing] the ‘Great God of Science.’” Even more provocative was her confession that her religion was “a form of Pantheism” not unlike that of “African Bushmen.”[[898]](#endnote-898)

Amid denunciations by British traditionalists of Kingsley’s religious orientation and especially her embrace of “Pantheism,” Blyden hastened to her defense with a statement that was revealing of his own iconoclastic theological views at century’s end. While acknowledging that to “the theological dogmatist there is something repulsive about the word pantheism,” he opined that “as men rise in culture and in genuine spirituality they will get great comfort from the idea,” which “is nothing more than the belief in the Divine immanence.”[[899]](#endnote-899) Suggesting that “Pantheism” was compatible with his own liberalized and expansive theological views, Blyden readily cited in Kingsley’s support an eclectic array of Christian hymns and Scripture, the insights of “eminent theologians,” and even the prose of Tennyson’s “The Higher Pantheism.”[[900]](#endnote-900)

Upon Kingsley’s unexpected death in South Africa in June 1900, a distraught Blyden proclaimed that “Africa is bereaved” and joined with a progressive cadre of British scholars, clergy, and entrepreneurs in the establishment of the African Society "in commemoration of the work of Miss Mary Kingsley."[[901]](#endnote-901) Reflective of the society’s rootage in the era’s new academic and intellectual studies, its founding members affirmed that it was organized for “the purpose of investigating the usages, institutions, customs, religions, antiquities, history and languages of the native races of Africa.” Their additional profession of concern with “facilitating Africa’s “commercial and industrial development,” also revealed the membership’s embrace of a no less Eurocentric version of modernity even as they advocated the goals and agenda of a professedly “enlightened imperialism.”[[902]](#endnote-902)

In acknowledgment of Blyden’s scholarship and his friendship with Kingsley, he was elected as a vice president of the society and promptly hailed the society as a tribute to Kingsley and its orientation toward Africa and its’ study as “an offspring and illustration of the spirit of the times:”

So far as Africa is concerned, Miss Kingsley, whose memory it commemorates, has created a new standpoint for European thought. She has made it possible for African conditions, whether intellectual, social or religious, to be studied by outsiders with patience and without prejudice; and the impulse she has given in that righteous direction will never be spent, because if the human intellect in its investigations can only be made to hold the scale with steady hand, whatever the interests involved, it will arrive at knowledge which will act at once as guide and stimulus to further research; and the more men can be made to look at new and fresh landscapes in the intellectual as in the physical world, the more they see, and the more they see the more they desire to see.[[903]](#endnote-903)

However, Blyden was acutely aware of the society’s theoretical and methodological limitations and agenda and he provided more critical interpretations of the significance and meaning of the society and its concerns. These reflected his continued interrogation and critique of late Victorian modernity and his related advocacy of a more indigenized version of modernity as essential to a more organic development of Africa. His writings also illuminated his increased awareness that the “scientific study of religion” reflected religious, racial, and cultural presuppositions held by its adherents that were problematic in the African context even as he remained convinced that it’s theoretical and methodological insights and perspectives were essential to the formation and legitimation of a more indigenous and organic version of African modernity.

This conviction and related agenda was articulated in several addresses delivered by Blyden before the membership of the African Society and subsequently published. Among these was the provocatively titled and argued “West Africa Before Europe,” as well as “Islam in the Western Soudan,” and “The Koran in Africa.” [[904]](#endnote-904) They reflected Blyden’s acknowledgment and analysis of British imperial expansion into Africa’s predominantly Islamic regions and his insistence that sympathetic and critical study of Islam and its adherents was essential to any professedly enlightened imperial project. It was a task that Blyden felt that he was imminently qualified to accomplish. Accordingly, the editor of the society’s journal was induced to inform readers of Blyden’s 1902 study of “Islam in the Western Soudan” that its author was a “pure-blooded native ” who has argued that "it is only fair to Africa to let one of her sons explain what millions of his people really feel and think, whether it conform to or is antagonistic to European sentiment.”[[905]](#endnote-905)

In “Islam in the Western Soudan” Blyden cited key tropes of modernity as he noted that “civilization, within the last fifty years, has advanced with rapid strides.” In its wake “technological developments such as the ‘steamship and the railway’ as well as ‘the thoughts that shape mankind’ are annihilating distances and reducing differences and distinctions between communities alien to each other and living in various climes and countries.” Consequently, he optimistically affirmed that “the solidarity of humanity is being more and more recognized” and even “religion and race are ceasing to be barriers between man and man,” [[906]](#endnote-906)

Turning his attention to European policy in the Soudan, Blyden opined that “THERE is at the present moment probably no question of deeper practical interest to the European Powers, who for political and commercial objects have partitioned Africa among themselves, than the question of Islam in Soudan. . . . Public attention, in a most unusual degree, has been attracted to that important region, recently brought within the British Empire”[[907]](#endnote-907) However, he insisted that the efficacy of any modernizing or imperial agenda within the Soudan was dependent upon an awareness of the generally unappreciated role of Islam which had been “operating” for “at least a thousand years. ” as “the most effective instrument in molding the intellectual, social, and political character of the millions whom it has brought under its influence." [[908]](#endnote-908)

Notwithstanding Islam’s undeniably unique and “particular work in Soudan,” Blyden lamented that it “has rarely been studied by the foreigner with anything like insight or thoroughness.”[[909]](#endnote-909) The problematic intersection of race, religion, and scholarship was noted as Blyden suggested that contributing to the dearth of studies of Islam in the Soudan were biases associated with an Orientalized and racially construed image of Africanized Islam not unlike those which perpetuated the notion that black versions of Christianity were but distortions of white Christianity. “The generality of European writers on the subject,” he argued, “take it for granted that there is no need for giving special attention to Islam in Africa, for it must only be an imitation if not caricature of Islam in Arabia, just as they allege that Christianity among negroes must always be of a degenerate quality.”[[910]](#endnote-910) By way of correction, Blyden argued that such racially-biased perceptions of Africanized Islam were not only liabilities amid the formation and implementation of successful governing policies within the Soudan but that such perceptions also posed serious liabilities among scholars who claim to embrace the new “science of religion.” He noted, even more broadly, that bias and presupposition attendant the intersection of race, religion, and religious scholarship were among the problems strikingly manifest at the World’s Parliament of Religions held in Chicago a decade earlier. Consequently, at the most prominent international and institutional representation of the era’s new “science of religion” “there were no representatives of Negraic Mohammedanism to tell the story of their faith.”[[911]](#endnote-911) Similar neglect, he argued was also common within progressive missiological circles as was evident at the” Ecumenical Missionary Conference” held more recently in New York. Consequently, while “there were delegates from every part of the mission field, and all the contemporary religions of the world were discussed in their effects upon their votaries. . . . but no one attempted to describe Islam as it exists in Negroland.” [[912]](#endnote-912)

In partial explanation, Blyden suggested most of the participants at both conclaves were ignorant of the phenomenon “because no one. . . knew anything about it at first hand, and very few at second hand.” Moreover, he opined that most participants, “had never themselves been in Africa, and it is presumable had never conversed with any intelligent Negro Muslim on the subject of his faith.”[[913]](#endnote-913) The result of the dearth of informed academic and missionary studies of Islam and its adherents in Africa was an even more racially tinged orientalism which presumed that “Islam in Africa makes, on the whole, for evil and not good” and that "Islam in central Africa is little more than a slightly modified fetishism."[[914]](#endnote-914)

Of related concern to Blyden was the “charge brought against Muslims, [and] especially those of Soudan . . . that their conception of woman and her place is degrading to her and to humanity.” Such an assertion, he contended, “is brought only by those unacquainted with the facts—untraveled and half-educated people.” Cited in his refutation of the charge was “Miss Kingsley” whom he alleged had “shown that honorable homage was paid to women in Africa, both Mohammedan and Pagan, long before Europe understood or appreciated the question.”[[915]](#endnote-915)

Blyden’s rejoinder in defense of Islam also illuminated his selective embrace of critical historical methodology and arguably his anticipation of the contemporary discipline of Comparative Scripture as he assessed the problem of competing creedal authority and interpretation fostered in the Soudan among Christians, Muslims, and other “People of the Book:”

The essence of … [a] creed is not to be judged by the utterances of its ordinary votaries. There is a native dogmatism in human nature caused by fancying for one's self or one's teachers a private monopoly of God. Hence there are Mohammedans, as there are Christians and Jews and Buddhists, who, inferior to the true teachings of their creed, cannot believe that God is . . . reached by such paths as those they have been taught are the only paths that lead to Him.[[916]](#endnote-916)

Blyden also anticipated concerns related to the “gender issue” within contemporary biblical studies as he engaged the “anthropomorphic” issue prominent within the era’s hermeneutical discourse. He opined that “the anthropomorphic tendency would change the which in the Lord's Prayer to who to agree with its ante-cedent Father—a male Being” and while “this would probably be correct grammar,” it was not to his thinking either “sound science or philosophy.”[[917]](#endnote-917)

In conclusion, Blyden disabused both prognosticators and emissaries of late Victorian modernity in the Soudan, be they scholars, missionaries, or imperial agents, of their hope for the gradual disappearance of Islam. Notwithstanding the “cherished idea with certain European writers that the increasing political subordination of Islam means its disappearance as a religious power,” he emphatically insisted that both historical and contemporary developments assured that “there is no earthly prospect of the disappearance of Islam from the religious forces of the world. It will continue as long as Roman Catholicism will, as long as cloud-capped towers, gorgeous palaces, and solemn temples remain.”[[918]](#endnote-918)

In his 1905 article titled “The Koran in Africa,” which was also published in the journal of the African Society, Blyden revisited a theme initially addressed decades earlier in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race and more recently in an 1890 article of the same title.[[919]](#endnote-919) Members of the Royal African Society and readers of its journal were thus presented to a more contemporary and expanded analysis of the impact of Islam and the Koran in Africa in the wake of British imperial efforts that “within the last few years [has] taken under its control large Muhammadan States in Africa.”[[920]](#endnote-920) The importance of Blyden’s comparative insights and pioneering contributions to the contemporary discipline of comparative scriptures were again displayed as Blyden reiterated his contrast of the influence of the Koran upon its adherents with that wielded by other sacred texts:

What is the Koran? It is the sacred book of the Muhammadans. It is to them what the Bible is to the Christian. The Rig-Vedas, the Zendavesta, the sacred books of Confucius, have never exercised the influence over their followers which the Koran does over its adherents. More than two hundred million of the human family receive and venerate it as a divine revelation, complete and final, inspired in its every word and syllable, and it has made its conquests among all the known races of mankind—Semitic, Aryan, Mongolian, Negro—from the western shores of Africa to North-western China. There is never a moment when its pages are not being read. It has a continuous line of students from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It has even crossed the Pacific with the Coolies and the Atlantic with the Negroes and counts its adherents by thousands in some of the West India islands and on the South American continent.[[921]](#endnote-921)

Blyden’s 1905 version of “The Koran in Africa” additionally illuminated not only his continued embrace of the findings of “Higher Criticism” but also his awareness of the discipline’s impact upon Christians and Christian denominations which were being roiled at the start of the new century by renewed controversy over its legitimacy and implications. Ironically the crisis of faith that the findings of higher criticism were provoking among many Christians was wistfully contrasted by Blyden with its lack of impact upon Muslims. Consequently, he opined that:

No “Higher Criticism” interferes with the steadfastness of their belief or impairs the certitude of their conclusions. Undisturbed by the changes and chances which have affected modern life, they sit and talk of “Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Ishmael, and the tribes” as men who not only lived in the early days, but were connected with their tribes and families, and pursued the avocations familiar to them.[[922]](#endnote-922)

Yet Blyden’s romanticized depiction of Islamic life unfettered by the challenges posed by modernity and its religious corollaries was not to be mistaken as a renunciation of “Higher Criticism.” In keeping with his role as the era’s most prominent black mediator of modernity and its religious corollaries, Blyden reiterated his conviction that biblical criticism was of particular importance to the black community for its role as a prescriptive for hermeneutical racism. “The Christian Negro,” he contended, “owes a large debt to the ‘Higher Criticism’” because of its potential “for eliminating from Christian teaching the mischievous doctrine that the African lies under a curse through the anger and mortification of Noah.” The latter, he lamented, was “a belief which has done more to promote the oppression of the Negro and to interfere with the harmony of the races in America than anything else, and one which has exerted and may be still exerting the most sinister influence upon the consciousness of Christian Negro youth in theological schools and colleges.” In contrast, Blyden claimed that “No such racial heresy can be gathered from the theology of the Koran.”[[923]](#endnote-923)

Conspicuously absent from Blyden’s 1905 version of “The Koran in Africa” was the affirmation prominent in his1890 rendition that “the religion of Christ is ultimate and final for humanity” and that “soon by judicious modification of the present missionary methods many of the obstacles to the acceptance of the gospel [by Muslims] will be removed.”[[924]](#endnote-924) In contrast, Islam’s persistence among Africans was the substance of Blyden’s concluding comments in 1905 as he issued a query to religious, governmental, and imperial agencies still chasing the fantasy of displacing Islam with a version of Christianity fatally compromised by its entanglements and complicity with the demands of Eurocentric modernity and its handmaidens:

Is it not possible for those interested in diffusing a nominal Christianity to understand that, as long as there are millions of children daily lisping the sentences of the Koran and reciting the exploits of the Prophet and of their fathers in the schools and in the mosques; as long as the hearts of men and women in every district, in every town and in every hamlet of the Soudan, are thrilled by the sounds of their religious and patriotic songs and by the entrancing memories of the deeds of their ancestors and co-religionists, it is worse than useless to appeal to them on behalf of a religion which they are constantly dogmatically told teaches blasphemy, and which for them, as they look at things, brings no promise either for this world or the next.[[925]](#endnote-925)

It was “impossible,” he concluded, “ to convert people with such antecedents, relationships, and traditions to an alien creed brought by foreigners from across the sea, and how unwise and impolitic the suggestions made . . . ‘that the natives might be induced to embrace Christianity by Government Proclamation’; and that if Christianity were substituted for Islam ‘the natives would not appreciate the distinction.’” [[926]](#endnote-926)

Ironically, one of Blyden’s most concise articulations of his synthesis of race, religion, modernity, and the new imperialism was made in the context of an address delivered at a 1903 banquet held in his honor by West African leaders visiting and studying in London.[[927]](#endnote-927) As the most cosmopolitan and urbane of the Africans gathered, Blyden lectured those whom he described as “Africa’s Children …. assembled in the metropolis of the British Empire,” on both the prospects and perils of modernity. Notably, Blyden compared the “melancholy rumors” of the ongoing brutalization of Africans by Belgians in the Congo with the actions and attitudes of earlier purveyors of European modernity in Africa and the Americas – “foreign invaders” who similarly employed “philosophy and principle” and tropes of “progress,” “civilization,” and “Christianization” to justify their often-inhuman efforts to “enrich themselves and live at ease.” Shamefully, he noted that “in the name of civilization, and blind with covetousness” they and their descendants persist in the “dream of nothing but exploiting the bodies and souls of their weaker fellow-creatures in order ‘to profit by the wealth which nature has bestowed upon them.’”[[928]](#endnote-928)

Blyden made clear to his audience that the more organic and indigenous model of modernity that he was proposing as an antidote to the excesses of Eurocentric modernity would be less alienating, exploitive, and destructive.[[929]](#endnote-929) As early as his 1881 inaugural address as president of Liberia College, he had sounded an alarm about the indiscriminate embrace of Eurocentric modernity by future leaders of Africa and even proposed a curriculum aimed at both protecting and inoculating them from attendant intellectual, psychological and spiritual trauma. Now, more than a generation later, similar concerns dictated his address to banquet attendees---West African leaders and future leaders who “have had access to European culture” and have been exposed to both the positive and less savory aspects of late Victorian modernity.[[930]](#endnote-930) He was especially alarmed that some “owing to the smattering which they received of European culture, thought themselves better and wiser than their aboriginal ancestors” and now “despised the rock [from] whence they were hewn.” Instead of rejecting their African heritage, Blyden called upon them “to school yourselves to look upon life from the standpoint of [their own] nationality” rather than that of Britain and to use their “study of English history and English institutions” to “study. . . institutions and customs of your [own] people.”[[931]](#endnote-931)

To those who aspired to lead Africa and her inhabitants into a new century and a new world, the elderly scholar offered a heart-felt entreaty:

I pray that you may be filled with the moral and mental grace to see clearly and pursue consistently the path of duty, of preservation, of prosperity, of dignity and of genuine respect respectability for your people without reference to any alien theories, especially those which we are now too clearly discovering do not for us make for growth and usefulness, but are beset with perils and attendant with weakness. We must all enter earnestly and intelligently upon the study of alien customs brought among us, comparing them with the customs of our fathers with the view of resisting ….so far as they conflict with our true interests and strengthening the other so far as they conduce to our permanent welfare, always keeping that great truth in mind that “life is more than meat and the body [more] than raiment.” We must strive to cultivate the better sense for Africa which our fathers possessed—a sense superior to transient interest and foreign glitter, which for us are derogatory aberrations. We must not barter the sacredness and veneration which hang over and sanctify the tombs of our fathers for the glamour of alien popularity. All is not gold that glitters. Only by taking these things to heart can you become the guides, the guardian angels, of the people whom, because of your superior advantages you should lead and influence.[[932]](#endnote-932)

In the course of his address, Blyden also revealed some of the more incongruous aspects of his synthesis of race, religion, modernity, and the new imperialism that would prove to increasingly problematic for many members of Africa’s new generation of leaders. Despite his fulsome advocacy of an adapted version of modernity and its progressive and liberal intellectual and theological tenets, he continued to hold firmly to the doctrine of Divine Providence and what he considered to be its historical and contemporary dictates. Religious doctrine and racial ideology fused with his notion of an “African Personality” merged incongruously as he appeared to offer divine justification and rationale for the partition and exploitation of Africa while counseling political quietism in response: “the gift of the African does not lie in the direction of political aggrandizement…..This is why our country had been partitioned among the political agencies of the world—the Japhetic powers—for they can best do the work to be done in the interests of temporal as a basis for spiritual advancement of humanity.” Ironically, Blyden referenced in support the views of “Mr. Renan, the great French agnostic” as he opined that “the African and the Jew are the spiritual races,” and their “political ascendency among the nations of the earth is not promised.”[[933]](#endnote-933) Reiterating his embrace of “providential determinism,” Blyden admonished, even amid knowledge of the brutalities of Belgium and other colonial powers, that “as Africans, we must sympathize with and assist the powers that be, as ordained of God, whom he will hold to a strict accountability for their proceedings.” Fatalistically, he added, “We cannot alter this arrangement, whatever our opinion as to the rudeness and ruggedness of the method by which the human instruments have arrived at it. It is a fact. Let us, then, to the best of our ability assist those to whom has been committed rule over our country. Their task is not an easy one.” [[934]](#endnote-934)

Not surprisingly, Blyden’s sentiments and advice were perceived as inconsistent and especially impolitic amid Africa’s efforts to maintain its territorial integrity and independence from imperial and colonial powers. His views would serve to further the elderly scholar’s estrangement from an emergent generation of African and Diaspora African leaders.

Paradoxically, Blyden’s views would also distance him from a nascent Pan-African Movement whose formative ideology he had helped to inspire, articulate, and model.[[935]](#endnote-935) Although hailed as “the Father of the Pan-African Movement,” which has been described as both product of and rejoinder to the extended bludgeon of modernity--“the reaction of the most advanced, most intensively Europeanized Africans and Afro-Americans to contact with the modern world," Blyden was conspicuously absent from the founding Pan-African Conference which opened in London in 1900 although Anna J. Cooper (1858-1964) and a younger generation of African and diaspora Africa religious and secular leaders who had been influenced by his writings and thought were in attendance.[[936]](#endnote-936) Its president-elect was the progressive African American AME Zion clergyman Bishop Alexander Walter’s (1858-1917) whose welcoming remarks noted that “for the first time in history black people had gathered from all parts of the globe to discuss and improve the condition of their race, to assert their rights and organize so that they might take an equal place among nations.”[[937]](#endnote-937) The conference’s concluding communique “Address to the Nations of the World” reiterated concerns long articulated by Blyden. Its primary author W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963) has been described as a “religious modernist,” and one of the twentieth century’s most insightful interlocutors of the continued problematic of race, religion, and modernity[[938]](#endnote-938) The “Address” offered a twentieth-century amplification of the dilemma posed to a new generation of Africa’s descendants by the intersection of race, religion, and modernity with its famed insistence that “The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the [colour-line](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_line_(civil_rights_issue)):”

In the metropolis of the modern world, in this the closing year of the nineteenth century there has been assembled a congress of men and women of African blood to deliberate solemnly upon the present situation and outlook of the darker races of mankind. The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line, the question as to how far differences of race. . . will hereafter be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing to utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization.[[939]](#endnote-939)

The communique also echoed Blyden as it castigated the Western missionary enterprise for its historic complicity and continued role in the subjugation of people of color in Africa and the world over. It admonished: “Let not the cloak of Christian missionary enterprise be allowed in the future, as so often in the past, to hide the ruthless economic exploitation and political downfall of less developed nations whose chief fault has been reliance on the plighted faith of the Christian Church.”[[940]](#endnote-940)

**Chapter 22: African Religion and Customs under the Gaze of Modernity**

Blyden’s last major publication titled African Life and Customs was authored four years before his death. It presented his most detailed assessment of African religion and culture as viewed from the gaze of his decades-long analysis of the intersection of race, religion, and modernity. As the culmination of his more than fifty years as a minister, missionary, educator, religious scholar, pubic official, and public intellectual in West Africa, African Life and Customs can be read as Blyden’s “last will and testament” to West Africa and those who presumed to understand, rule, convert, and develop it.[[941]](#endnote-941)

The provocative text was originally serialized and disseminated throughout the West African community in the pages of the Sierra Leone Weekly News which was founded with Blyden’s assistance in the aftermath of the demise of The Negro.[[942]](#endnote-942) Fyfe notes that the Weekly News “with Blyden as a regular contributor, tended to approve anything distinctively Africa, and deplored slavish imitation of European ways.” [[943]](#endnote-943) Consequently, the journal was perceived as critical to Blyden’s efforts to interrogate, critique, and mediate Eurocentric currents of modernity and his commitment to forging a more Afrocentric counterpart. Its continued importance in this process was reflected in its service as the initial public forum for Blyden’s presentation of African Life and Customs.

Subsequently published as a monograph in London, African Life and Customs presented to a wider public Blyden’s critical appropriation of intellectual insights and academic methodologies emergent in the wake of modernity in defense of indigenous African institutions and rituals. In it, Blyden argued that these institutions and rituals had not only been foundational to Africa’s historic development but were also of continued importance and compatible with an afro-centric and more organic version of modernity necessary for contemporary Africa’s healthy advance. [[944]](#endnote-944) Moreover, amid ongoing efforts at the denigration, destruction, and replacement of African religions and customs, Blyden, in an important reversal of prevailing intellectual, religious and cultural assumptions, insisted that they had continued relevance not only for Africa but also for Europe and a wider West struggling with the accumulating societal burdens and abuses fostered by and accompanying Western modernity.[[945]](#endnote-945)

African Life and Customs also illuminated the long trajectory of Blyden’s intellectual, religious, missiological, and ideological metamorphosis since many of the concerns, issues, and arguments presented in it had long been in fermentation and even presented in preliminary form by Blyden in earlier forums and venues. As a young minister, educator, and “colonization theologian,” he had echoed European scholars, colonial agents, missionaries as well as black -colleagues such as Alexander Crummell in indiscriminately and summarily condemning many of Africa’s indigenous institutions as “backward”, “barbaric” and incompatible with Christianity and the standards of Western civilization. Now, standing at the twilight of his life and career, in the extending shadow of the European partition of Africa, and the increased societal and cultural disruption which was being fostered under the guise of modernity, Blyden provided a radical reassessment of African religious and cultural institutions. Many of them, he argued, served valuable societal functions and were not to be summarily dismissed.[[946]](#endnote-946) His evolved agenda and priorities were affirmed in a preface that proclaimed that African Life and Custom was “written with the desire, if possible of unfolding the African . . . to himself, through a study of the customs of his fathers and also of assisting the European political overlord, ruling in Africa, to arrive at a proper appreciation of conditions.” [[947]](#endnote-947)

Blyden’s efforts were rooted in the synthesis of his “eye-witness” research in West Africa with the critical and selective appropriation of the insights, perspectives, and methodologies associated with the “scientific study of religion.” He was adamant in his critique of the ill-informed and outmoded academic and intellectual presuppositions and methodologies of the traditional coterie of African “scholars” and “observers” who engaged in the denigration of all things African. Explicitly denounced was what he described as a tradition of racially and culturally biased studies of “the African, his character, possibilities, and destiny” authored by armchair experts whom he identified as “Divines and politicians, physiologists and scientists” who “exhausted the resources of their intellect in the endeavor to prove the Negro only quasi-human…. [and] born to serve a superior race.” [[948]](#endnote-948)

In contrast, Blyden linked himself and his text to an emerging “new school of thinkers on African and racial questions” which consisted of scholars operating with a new theoretical and methodology perspective and who as “conscientious investigators on the spot, have broken through the sinister traditions of hundreds of years, and are teaching their countrymen to judge the Man of Africa by the impartial light of truth, and not from the standpoint of prejudice and preconceived ideas.”[[949]](#endnote-949) He optimistically proclaimed that the agenda of this new cohort of scholars forged amid the scientific, intellectual, academic, and religious changes which had been fostered during Victorian modernity, was to reject the racism, sectarianism, and cultural chauvinism prevalent among previous generations of quasi scholars of Africa and her descendants. Their task was to foster a new school of scholarship that would displace “the theories of the noisy and blustering anthropologists [of] forty or fifty years ago-the Notts and Gliddeons, Burtons, Winwood Reade, Hunt, et id omme genus—who invented all sorts of arguments based upon estimates of physical phenomena as conceived by phrenology or physiognomy,……to prove the mental and moral inferiority of the Negro.”[[950]](#endnote-950) And, notwithstanding often commendable efforts by this new generation of scholars to mitigate biased views and policies, Blyden argued that African Life and Customs was necessitated because there still existed “an ostrich school of thinkers” who “imagine they annihilate facts by refusing to look at them” and continue “even in these days of scientific progress” to “think that Africa must be made to conform to the European idea of religion and society before she can be saved, in spite of all the proofs to the contrary. . . .”[[951]](#endnote-951)

Ironically, as Blyden essayed to affirm the existence and value of an organic African social and cultural system that demanded modern study rather than wholesale dismissal, he had allied himself with authors whose works would be found wanting and roundly critiqued by later generations of African scholars and activists[[952]](#endnote-952) Moreover, despite the text’s call for objective and “scientific analysis” of African life and culture, it suffered from problems that afflicted most of Blyden’s major works. Mingled with his keen observation and theoretical insights were ideologically rooted threads of idealism and romanticism often mixed with theological and teleological remnants of his belief in “Providential Determinism.” And as suggested by the text’s supplemental goal “of assisting the European political overlord, ruling in Africa, to arrive at a proper appreciation of conditions,” it also reflected the contradictions and inconsistencies, inherent to Blyden appropriation of the tenets and perspectives of a “science of religion” which had already morphed into a “science of imperialism” that was legitimating a professedly “enlightened” imperialism and colonialism. [[953]](#endnote-953)

Still, notwithstanding its inadequacies, Blyden’s pioneering defense of “ an African Social and Economic System most carefully and elaborately organized, venerable, impregnable, indispensable. . . which influences every phase of African life, from the cradle to the grave. . . .” is generally acknowledged for its groundbreaking contributions to a variety of disciplines by contemporary African scholars. However, too often overlooked is the text’s pioneering and provocative contributions to the emergent discipline of religious studies and more specifically the study of African religion. [[954]](#endnote-954) Ironically, its final three chapters, titled and specifically focused on “Religion,” indisputably confirm Blyden’s seminal roles as both an “indigenous comparatist’ and a pioneering religious studies scholar.[[955]](#endnote-955) Illuminated within these chapters were Blyden’s expanded critique and selective appropriation of perspectives, methodologies, and disciplines associated with the “scientific study of religion” in service to his conviction that religion was a critical arena of the engagement and mediation of modernity by people of African descent on both sides of the Atlantic.

Blyden revealed the expanse of his analysis of religion as he joined the ongoing discourse among his scholarly colleagues about the definition and defining characteristics of religion. “Religion,” he proposed was “that which makes a man feel that he is not his own guide, judge, or ultimate authority; that he is bound to a higher and irresistible Power that created him and by whose fiat he will cease to live. . .. He knows that a power not himself is working within and around him, and not to offend this power and to gain its favour, he uses various means which appeal to his untutored imagination to effect this object.” In an important addendum, Blyden added “All races. . . without the Bible and even with the Bible have their own method of approaching this Being” and this includes the African who “believes that the great Being can be approached through every object which he has created, whether animate or inanimate.” [[956]](#endnote-956)

Blyden’s definition explicitly rejected the prevailing tendency common among scholars to dismiss African beliefs and rituals as simply “superstition,” “fetishism,” or “jujuism.” Referenced in support was R. E. Dennett’s observation that “there is in Africa a religion giving us a much higher conception of God then is generally acknowledged by writers on African modes of thought.” [[957]](#endnote-957) Significantly, Blyden also cited an extended excerpt from Max Muller that illuminated Muller’s pioneering contributions to the development of the “science of religion” and his continued influence upon the new school of scholars now engaged in the “scientific” study of African religions with whom Blyden felt himself to be aligned. Thus he noted that “Thirty years ago . . . Professor Max Muller pointed out as theory what Mr. Dennett endeavors now after careful study on the spot to demonstrate as a fact.” Moreover, he contended that it was “not difficult to believe that the researches of Mary Kingsley and those of disciples owe their inspiration largely to the philosophical and scientific disquisitions of ... [Muller’s 1878] Hibbert Lectures.”[[958]](#endnote-958) Quotations from the text of Muller’s Hibbert Lectures were incorporated as Blyden pointed out that Muller had played a groundbreaking role in the validation of African religion with his rejection of prevailing mid-nineteenth century theories that devalued African religion by identifying it with “fetishism.” Rather, Muller, he noted, had insisted that “the Negro is capable of higher religious ideas than the worship of Stocks and Stones, and that many tribes who believe in fetishes cherish at the same time very pure, very exalted, very true sentiments of the Deity. . . .” And in an even more direct refutation of the era’s prevailing racial and cultural chauvinism, Muller had professed “I claim no more for the Religion of the Negro than for our own, when I say that it should be judged not by what it is but by what it can be and by what it has been in its most gifted votaries.”[[959]](#endnote-959)

In the pages of African Life and Customs, Blyden also joined the ongoing heated discourse among scholars regarding the “origin” and “source” of “Religion.”[[960]](#endnote-960) Evoking the evolutionary theory of religious development he unambiguously affirmed Africa’s seminal role in the process. “It is certain” he insisted “that Religion originated in Africa. It went from Ethiopia, that is to say, from Negro-land eastward and northward to Egypt and down the Nile, extending to the heart of Asia.”[[961]](#endnote-961)

Blyden’s synthesis of evolutional theory, comparative religion, and ethnography was readily evoked in defense and legitimation of cultural traditions and rituals organically associated with indigenous African religion. These, he noted, included traditions such as polygamy usually denounced as incompatible with Christianity and Christian culture and civilization but which were now being revealed by modern studies as essential to the efficient function of African culture.[[962]](#endnote-962) Given his advocacy of increased opportunities for black women on the continent and in the diaspora and his more recent discourses with Grimke, Anna J. Cooper, and others about the intersection of race, religion, gender, and modernity, it is significant that Blyden also emphasized the important roles played by African women who not only “assist in the functions of Religion” but also have related responsibilities in the “functions of the State.” [[963]](#endnote-963)

The theological, hermeneutical, and missiological implications of Blyden’s broader application of the “scientific study of religion” were also explicitly noted as he reiterated that its findings supported his thesis that Africa had no real need for the theological intervention of Europe: “From our standpoint, we do not believe that Africa needed the theological interference of Europe, for the Theology of Europe is derived from the conceptions of Roman, Celt, and Teuton, which have modified the Semitic ideas promulgated in the Bible.” The insights and perspective of critical historiography were also appropriated as Blyden pointed out that “European Christianity is Western Christianity—that is to say, Christianity as taught at Nazareth, in Jerusalem, and on the Mound of Beatitudes, modified to suit the European mind or idiosyncrasies.” [[964]](#endnote-964) It was this often ignored reality, he opined, that was largely responsible for decades of unsuccessful efforts to root a European version of Christianity in African soil by application of ill-conceived “missionary theory” which not only had been manifestly unsuccessful but had tragically magnified and complicated the challenges faced by Africa “ by creating new problems strange to the people.”[[965]](#endnote-965) Blyden concluded with a warning that African religion and religiosity was a vital and integral part of a holistic social system and “When this system is recklessly and indiscriminately interfered with, the result is what we are witnessing everywhere in West Africa. . . dislocations, degeneracy, death.”[[966]](#endnote-966)

Blyden’s awareness of the destructive dissonance fostered by aspects of modernity had become especially acute amid the increased threat of the eradication of wholesome African customs and institutions and their attempted replacement by customs and institutions already found wanting and dysfunctional in the West.[[967]](#endnote-967) Over the course of numerous British and American sojourns, he had witnessed first-hand Western culture and civilization reeling under the impact of modernity’s less savory influences. He now noted that this was also an experience increasingly widespread among Western-educated Africans who have similarly “discovered all the waste places, all the nakedness of the European system” and now “have[ing] grasped the principles underlying the European social and economic order. . . reject them as not equal to their own” and now recoil from the excesses of Eurocentric modernity.[[968]](#endnote-968)

Indicative of his heightened critique of the excesses and failings of the Eurocentric model of modernity, Blyden, in a reversal of prevailing academic and public precepts, contended that traditional African social and religious customs offered antidotes to many of the less savory by-products of modernity currently being experienced in the West. Anticipating the discourse of a later generation of African leaders regarding “African Socialism,” he referenced the concerns and efforts of “the better class” of European socialists as he contended that the African social system, traditionally socialistic, co-operative, and equitable—contained much that Europe and the West were desperately striving for as prescriptive to societal ills bred by a destructive individualism, secularism, and materialism that had been nurtured in the womb of Europe’s version of modernity. While “the European system bred ‘poverty, criminality, and insanity,’” Blyden contended that “the African system of communal property and co-operative effort,[insured that ]every member of a community has a home and a sufficiency of food and clothing and other resources of life and for life.” [[969]](#endnote-969) Consequently, he opined, that *“*In England at the present moment, there is a fierce struggle to get back to the African ideas and practice in social economy.”[[970]](#endnote-970)

Blyden also insisted that this contrast and quest was not limited to the material or social realms. Amid alarm over secularizing currents that were accompanying European modernity, he insisted that, “We Africans in our pure and simple native state know not any distinction between what is secular and what is religious. With us, there is nothing secular. Religion enters into every department of life with us . . . .” [[971]](#endnote-971) Always attuned to broader religious developments attendant the unintended consequences of modernity, Blyden identified Europe’s increased fascination with *“Spiritualism”[emphasis his]* as evidencethat there were aspects of African religiosity and spirituality now being discovered to be desperately needed in the West where “owing to the intense and increasing materialism of Europe,. . . the people have lost touch with the spiritual world”[[972]](#endnote-972) In contrast, Blyden opined that “The inter-communion between the people of the earth and those in the spiritual sphere is a cardinal belief of the African and will never be uprooted.”[[973]](#endnote-973) Consequently, in Africa, “intercourse with the world of spirits is constantly carried on” while “in Europe, many people are trying by various methods to get back into intercourse with the spiritual world.” [[974]](#endnote-974)

Highlighted were the religious and spiritual implications of Blyden’s thesis regarding the existence of a unique “African Personality.” It’s bold articulation by Blyden decades earlier in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race now appeared prophetic in a world reeling amid modernity’s secular and material acids:

[Africa may yet prove to be the spiritual conservatory of the world. . . When the civilized nations in consequence of their wonderful material development, shall have had their spiritual susceptibilities blunted through the agency of a captivating and absorbing materialism, it may be that they have to resort to Africa to recover some of the simple elements of faith.](http://www.azquotes.com/quote/881704)[[975]](#endnote-975)

Long insistent that the missionary enterprise was not immune to modernity’s myriad influences and developments, Blyden also provided one of his most detailed commentaries on the African encounter with Western modernity and the resultant impact on the missionary enterprise:

The missionary work as pursued at the present day is not the same as that pursued fifty or a hundred years ago. We have now ‘the steamship and the railway and the thoughts that shake mankind.’ We have a multiplication of newspapers and books that reach the native who had learned to read the English language. In former days the missionary had what may be called a tabula vas—an open and uncontested field. What he told the people remained in their mind as absolute truth, based, not only on the Word of God, but coming from a country where the people had reached the perfection almost of angels, and therefore he had a right as one of those who had ‘already attained’ to be the guide of others. But all this is changed now. Natives frequently visit Europe and see things for themselves; and for those who remain at home the effect of what the foreign preacher says on Sunday as to religion and morality is neutralized on Monday by unsavory reports brought by the newspapers from the country whence the teacher came.[[976]](#endnote-976)

Given the pervasive and undeniable influence of various currents of modernity upon the missionary enterprise, Blyden concluded “it is evident, therefore, that without a thorough revision of missionary methods, adapting them to changed conditions, missionary work in West Africa will become more and more impossible.”[[977]](#endnote-977)

Although provoking criticism in certain circles, African Life and Customs was generally well-received.[[978]](#endnote-978) It also elicited varied reflections on the intersection of race, religion, and modernity by erstwhile Blyden associates such as Bishop James Johnson and among ardent disciples such as Joseph Casely Hayford and Orishatukeh Faduma.[[979]](#endnote-979) Notably, Faduma, as had James Johnson, initially opposed polygamy as among the indigenous African traditions incompatible with Christianity. However, influenced by the cogency of Blyden’s argument Faduma not only changed his stance regarding polygamy but also presented a defense of it and Blyden’s broader thesis before the members of the era’s foremost black scholarly and intellectual forum —the American Negro Academy.

The response and reflections of Hayford, the Gold Coast barrister, and activist, often acknowledged as Blyden’s ideological heir are also of special importance. While generally perceived as belonging to an emergent generation of West African nationalists and Pan-Africanists who were primarily secular in their orientation, Hayford’s comments relative to African Life and Customs and other Blyden publications indicate that he embraced views that were decisively shaped by Blyden’s engagement with the intersection of race, religion, and modernity as the late Victorian era drew to its close.

Born on the Gold Coast to Methodist minister, Rev. Joseph de Graft Hayford, Hayford’s primary education was at the Wesleyan boy’s High School at Cape Coast. However, after traveling to Sierra Leone in the 1870s to continue his education at Fourah Bay College, he met Blyden and became as Lynch suggests “probably his most devoted disciple.” [[980]](#endnote-980) Subsequently, journeying to England to train as a lawyer, Hayford became one of the most prominent of the growing number of West Africans who, as Blyden lamented, experienced firsthand a shocking awareness of the myriad social and cultural corruptions accompanying and being nurtured by the excesses of modernity in the British metropole. These experiences would provide the historical context for Hayford’s influential biographically rooted novel titled Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation which poignantly illuminated the African encounter with European modernity in the late Victorian era.[[981]](#endnote-981)

The influence of both Blyden and his recent experiences in England was apparent upon Hayford’s return to West Africa as he effectively employed his legal skills and philosophical and ideological insights in defense of African traditional institutions and customs. Blyden’s influence was illuminated throughout Hayford’s subsequent 1903 study titled Gold Coast Institutions which called for “the retention of wholesome African customs and institutions” and critiqued the “de-Africanizing influence” of the European colonial and missionary establishment.[[982]](#endnote-982)

As Blyden entered the final decade of his life, Hayford provided both inspiration and material support for the ailing and all but destitute scholar. Blyden in turn expressed admiration for Hayford whom he considered an exemplary example of the “African Personality.”[[983]](#endnote-983) In 1905 Hayford helped to facilitate the publication of West Africa Before Europe, the collection of lectures delivered by Blyden in England in 1901and 1903. He also authored an introduction to the text that paid fulsome tribute to his mentor’s contributions to Africans on both sides of the Atlantic. “The claim of Edward Wilmot Blyden to the esteem and regard of all thinking Africans, Hayford argued “ rests not so much upon the special work he had done for any particular people of the African race, as upon the general work he has done for the race as a whole.” And while acknowledging the important contributions of black leaders “like Booker T. Washington and W. E. Burghardt Du Bois” Hayford insisted that their work “is exclusive and provincial” while the “work of Edward Wilmot Blyden is universal, covering the entire race and the entire race problem. . . .” Hayford also pointedly alluded to Blyden’s efforts to mediate the challenges posed to Africa and her descendent by accruements of European and Western modernity which at the close of the Victorian era were proving to be increasingly incongruous and incompatible with valued components of African culture. Blyden’s, he noted, “has been the voice of one crying in the wilderness all these years, calling upon all thinking Africans to go back to the rock whence they were hewn by the common Father of the nations . . . .[and] to learn to unlearn all that foreign sophistry has encrusted upon the intelligence of the African.” Consequently, Hayford decreed Blyden to be “the greatest living exponent of the true spirit of African nationality and manhood.”[[984]](#endnote-984)

Serialization of African Life and Customs in the pages of the Sierra Leone Weekly News five years later presented Hayford with an opportunity to provide another enthusiastic endorsement of his mentor’s racial and religious thought.[[985]](#endnote-985) His comments also provide valuable insight into the influence that Blyden’s religious thought had upon his own religious and philosophical orientation. Inspired by Blyden’s reflections, Hayford offered his own musings on African religion and its importance: “If [religion]. . . is that which links back to the finite to the infinite, the material to the spiritual, the temporal to the eternal—that which inspires an unfaltering faith in a life beyond the grave, then, I maintain that the African, in his system of philosophy, gives place to none….” Hayford echoed Blyden with his own more fulsome contention that Africa had served as progenitor of the major world religions: “while Rameses II was dedicating temples to “the God of gods, and secondly to his own glory, [and] the God of the Hebrews had not yet appeared unto Moses in the burning bush; . . . Africa was the cradle of the world’s systems and philosophies and the nursing mother of its world religions.” [[986]](#endnote-986)

Hayford also identified Africa with a “broader outlook upon religion” that resonated with expressions of religious universalism occasionally sounded by Blyden as he noted that the “Ethiopian need not necessarily see God except through Christ, but is, withal, so catholic that he can speak of the universal. . . .” [[987]](#endnote-987) The resultant synthesis of Pan-African ideology and religious universalism was sounded in Hayford’s wish that “The voice of the ancient universal God” which “goes forth once more. . . May [elicit] a full, free, and hearty response from the sons of Ethiopia in the four quarters of the globe!” [[988]](#endnote-988) “Africa,” he proclaimed, “only asks to be let alone. . .” and if amid the acids and currents of modernity, “It has not pleased the gods to disturb her. Leave her in peace, the slumbering sphinx, until the God of Ethiopia wakes . . . her to explain to the waiting world the faith that is in her and the reason for her being.”[[989]](#endnote-989)

While Blyden’s influence on Hayford’s views of African religion and religious universalism are discernable, less obvious is Blyden’s influence upon Hayford’s specific views relative to Christianity. However, some indication of theological proximity between the aged warrior and his ideological heir—was suggested in Hayford’s decision to quote what he described as “these remarkable words” delivered by Blyden in one of the latter’s last and perhaps most revealing comparisons of “the Christianity of Christ” with a “Christianity” that had been contorted under modernity’s hegemonic and exploitive impulses. Blyden is quoted as saying: “I am sure that Christianity, as conceived and modified in Europe and America, with its oppressive hierarchy, its caste prejudices, and limitations, its pecuniary burdens, and exactions, it's injurious intermeddling in the harmless and useful customs of alien peoples, is not the Christianity of Christ.” Rather, Hayford proclaimed that the Christianity embraced by Blyden was rooted in the ethical and social ministry of Jesus which brought solace to the “poor, ”mended “the broken-hearted,” provided “deliverance of the captive” and was committed to “set at liberty them that are bruised.”[[990]](#endnote-990)

Hayford also saw fit to couple one of Blyden’s most poignant critiques of European mutations of Christ and missionary Christianity with a prediction and prophecy of their rehabilitation in Africa:

We should not be discouraged because the system bearing the name of Christ makes no progress on this continent—that it lingers, halts, and limps on the threshold of a great opportunity. Jesus is lame. He has been wounded in the house of his friends. We must bind up his wounds. Treading in the footsteps of our immortal countryman, we must bear the cross after Jesus. We must strip him of the useless, distorting, and obstructive habiliments by which he had been invested by the materializing sons of Japhet. Let Him be lifted up as he really is that He may be seen, pure and simple by the African, and he will draw all men unto Him.[[991]](#endnote-991)

Identified in these passages was what arguably remained the most critical component of Blyden’s assessment of Christianity and all religions---their ethical orientation and impact rather than ritual and theological dogmatism. They also suggest why Blyden, retained allegiance to Christianity in contrast to those who would dismiss it as a “cunningly devised fable” destined soon to “disappear in darkness and confusion.” Ultimately, his fidelity was to a liberalized version of Christianity which was manifest in an ethically and socially expansive ministry which was especially attuned and calibrated to those whom Blyden’s theological heirs would refer to as the “disinherited.”[[992]](#endnote-992) As Blyden had argued in correspondence with British positives leader Frederick Harrison, “love of mankind” –not monotheism was at the core of Christianity and by implication, all religions properly understood and practiced.[[993]](#endnote-993) Praxis rather than theological and confessional conformity had long been the measure of Blyden’s assessment of “religion” and he often confessed that his appreciation of Islam and subsequently, Africa’s more indigenous religions were to be found not in their doctrines or rituals but their ethical impact.

Hayford shared a similar appreciation of ethics and praxis as key measures of Christianity as practiced in the metropole and Africa. A related disdain for the importation of theological and doctrinal disputes that had convulsed Western Christianity was also reflected in his assertion that “In the philosophy of the West African there is no reason why Christ should not be God; for to him man is half God and half man. . . .” Hayford again echoed Blyden as he suggested that “it is conceivable that [so called] paganism, scientifically and intelligently interpreted, may place the Christ on a higher pedestal than Christianity has yet done.”[[994]](#endnote-994)

Finally, amid the exhausting spiritual, political, intellectual, and cultural maelstrom and bludgeon of late Victorian modernity, Hayford offered a poignant and personal confession: “What the unspoilt educated African feels he wants is, rest—rest to think out his own thoughts, and to work out his own salvation.”[[995]](#endnote-995)

**Chapter 23: Liberian Requiem**

Although Blyden’s influence continued to be felt throughout West Africa, Liberia remained the focus of much of his latter-day interrogation and mediation of modernity. Thus he emphasized that the message and meaning of African Life and Customs had particular and crucial relevance for Liberia’s historical intersection with modernity and its resultant and ongoing political, religious, and social trammel.[[996]](#endnote-996) Amid mounting evidence of the manifest failings of Western modernity in its own metropoles as well as abroad, his efforts were characterized by pleas to an emergent generation of West African leaders to embrace a version of modernity that was more consistent with their own history, culture, and developmental necessitates. Especially significant in this vein were several addresses delivered by Blyden in Liberia’s legislative chambers.[[997]](#endnote-997) Politically and ideologically hard-edged, they lectured Liberia’s leaders in prophetic tones on the problems attendant the nation’s traumatic origins within the cauldron of Western modernity and offered “Blydenesque” solutions to its resulting and ongoing political, economic, and cultural trammels. [[998]](#endnote-998)

Typical of these addresses was “The Three Needs of Liberia, ” a rhetorical polemic that cast the struggling nation as the extended product of trans-Atlantic currents of Western modernity imported by “foreigners” who “brought with them the social, industrial and political trammels” that effectively bound the developing nation to the “fleshpots” of the West.[[999]](#endnote-999) Moreover, the dismal consequences of this historical process were magnified by the estrangement of the nation from its indigenous population which Blyden characterized as “the root, branch, and flower of Africa and of any Negro state in Africa.”[[1000]](#endnote-1000) In so doing, Blyden, employing and sharing the parlance and insights of the “science” of social and cultural evolution, asserted that Liberia’s founders had undermined the natural “evolutionary process by which nations and men normally grow.”[[1001]](#endnote-1001) Furthermore, despite “recent discoveries of theory and science,” their descendants, who make up the present ruling Americo-Liberian plutocracy, have ignored the social, political, and cultural implications of these discoveries and continued the ill-advised strategy of devising policies and “codifying laws made on foreign models.” [[1002]](#endnote-1002)

For Blyden, the fact that Liberia’s present leaders would persist in the disastrous and orchestrated confusion of trying to embrace a destructive model of modernity imported from “Europe and America” which was “entirely incompatible with [Liberia’s] racial and climatic conditions and necessities” was confessedly “baffle[ing].”[[1003]](#endnote-1003) Their ill-advised governing and legislative efforts were all the more inexplicable since it was increasingly obvious that the “systems” and institutions associated with the Western modernity were “the source of constant unrest” even in their own lands with the result that their “guardians of public order are at wit's end” in their efforts to deal with the resultant “problems.”[[1004]](#endnote-1004) Notably, as in African Life and Customs, Blyden took the time and effort to specifically note the impact of this system upon Western women: “under their domestic system thousands of women are thrown out of house and homes so that in London alone, the great center of European civilization there are eighty-six thousand unsheltered women . . . distributors of disease and death.” In contrast, he alleged that Africa “away from foreign interference, has no such problems.”[[1005]](#endnote-1005) Ever attuned to religious developments emerging amid and in response to modernity, Blyden made specific reference to the efforts of William Booth and the Salvation Army in London’s deteriorating East End to address the “abnormal state” of British society resulting from the social, spiritual, and economic disruptions attendant the version of modernity which its advocates were attempting to foster on Africa.[[1006]](#endnote-1006)

In the wake of ample evidence of Western modernity’s failings even in the British metropole, Blyden lamented that Liberia’s leaders persist “in every department of her life to transgress the laws of nature because we think we are supported by precedents laid down by the white man” and continue to insist on “building upon the sand of exploded theories in Europe instead of upon the rock of indigenous knowledge and experiences.”[[1007]](#endnote-1007) He insisted, that a model of modernity more consistent with Africa and Africans was called for: “Our mind runs in an entirely different channel from that of the white man. . . .we have in our schools and colleges been using his text-books on moral, social, and religious subjects but as we learn more and more the kingdom of God within us, we shall find that the political economy of the white man is not our political economy, his moral philosophy is not our moral philosophy, and far less is his theology, our theology and where he has been successful in forcing these upon us there has been atrophy and death.”[[1008]](#endnote-1008)

Consistent with his long-held conviction that “religion” was a crucial sphere of the African encounter with modernity, Blyden referenced missionary Christianity’s problematic dissemination in West Africa where it still served as one of Western modernity’s most successful purveyors of intellectual, cultural, and religious confusion. [[1009]](#endnote-1009) Citing recent findings and insights of critical historiography and hermeneutics, Blyden pointed out that the original “teachings” of the Bible had “been largely diluted by those in Europe who received it from the East,” subsequently adapted it as an effective tool in the extension of European spiritual and cultural hegemony, and then “attempt[ed] to teach it to us.”[[1010]](#endnote-1010) Consequently, the Western Church which in its contemporary form was “nowhere to be found in the Bible,” still functioned in effect as the preeminent example and component of the West’s “creation of elaborate institutions after the Imperial model.”[[1011]](#endnote-1011) “How different,” Blyden opined, “our spiritual and even material condition would be in Liberia to-day if Christ’s method had been followed” rather than that of Western Christianity in alliance with the hegemonic agenda of Western modernity. As the nation entered the new century, he insisted it was incumbent upon “Christians of Liberia and in all West Africa” to “labor to emancipate themselves from the spent spiritual [and institutional] trammels which have been imposed upon them” by African’s “study [of] the Bible for themselves” whereby they might yet “learn from it how they may . . . yet escape from the yoke of a Church conceived on Roman, Teutonic, and Anglo-Saxon lines.”[[1012]](#endnote-1012)

Notably, Blyden was also aware of and sensitive to the parallel struggles of other colonized nations and peoples who were similarly attempting to free themselves from the deleterious impact of Western modernity’s intersecting racial, religious, and cultural corollaries. Cited as exemplary of the corrective process were the responses of Japan’s leaders, who prudently “did not expel the religion of their fathers for a foreign religion” but engaged in “a wise commingling of what is best in their own with what is best in Western civilizations.”[[1013]](#endnote-1013) Their “art of ‘Japanising’ everything,” extended, he noted, even to the forging of a nationalized model of religion with a deity imagined in their own rather than a European likeness.[[1014]](#endnote-1014) Thus Blyden suggested that the Japanese offered a corrective response to Western modernity’s hegemonic intersection of race, religion, and culture which had special relevance to Africa since here too “the Christ we worship must be an African”—all the more so since “the Christ revealed in the Bible is far more African than anything else” and “all the pictures drawn of Europeans professing to represent Him are false for us.”[[1015]](#endnote-1015)

In another address delivered in 1909 in the Liberian State Chamber titled “The Problems before Liberia,” Blyden reiterated with more urgency his call for Liberia and wider Africa to embrace a more Africanized and organic version of modernity. While noting that Liberia had been founded with an ignorance of the insights of modern science, ethnology, anthropology, their subsequent advent revealed a “truth” that “the world is now rapidly arriving at.” According to this “truth”, it was evident that “institutions are not transferable from one race to another at the wish of any individual or society. . . .The institutions and civilization of a people, it is now discovered, must develop themselves with the natural growth of the forces of the people and be the expression of their wants. . . . This is the scientific view, and no other view has ever been or ever will be successful.” According to Blyden, these “truths” and “scientific views” provided an intellectual impetus for Liberia’s leaders to cease to be “slaves to foreign ideas [and] . . . culture.” Reiterated was his advice that Liberians embrace their own culture and institutions and thereby forge and pursue a more indigenous and organic model of modernity. Turning his attention again to the national implications of the intersection of race, religion, and Western modernity, Blyden lamented that Liberia’s government had allied itself with a foreign church and religion, and he warned that “no nation can be built upon religion from across the sea.” [[1016]](#endnote-1016) Reiterating that, “the Japanese” unlike the Liberians “did not expel the religion of their fathers for a foreign religion,” he called for the formation of an indigenous Liberian church as the foundation of a more indigenous organic modernity and progressive nationhood.[[1017]](#endnote-1017)

Ironically, Blyden’s didactic addresses to Liberia’s new leaders often concluded with a message apologetic of European economic and political efforts in West Africa. Despite their obvious failings, limitations, and even abuses, he opined, that Western and particularly British efforts continued to be “a real blessing to Africa.”[[1018]](#endnote-1018) Such views, perceived as impolitic and suspect especially amid Liberia’s heightened concern and desperate struggles to maintain its territorial integrity and independence, increased Blyden’s estrangement from an emergent generation of the nation’s leaders. [[1019]](#endnote-1019) In 1909, angered by Blyden’s public admonitions and chastisements, as well as rumors of his support of an abortive coup, Liberia’s political leaders canceled his meager but much-needed state pension.[[1020]](#endnote-1020) An embarrassed and pained Blyden would again retreat to Sierra Leone for refuge and solace.

On the morning of February 7, 1912, Blyden died at his residence on Rawdon Street in Freetown, Sierra Leone—in self-imposed exile from his beloved Liberia. Ironically, the onset of his final illness had come after a brief return to Liberia the previous month to witness the presidential inauguration of one of his former students. He had spent most of his almost eighty years in West Africa amid never-ceasing controversy and in the often contradictory roles of Presbyterian minister, missionary, religion scholar, educator, politician, diplomat, “Defender of the Race,” “Father” of West African Nationalism and Pan-Africanism, and self-proclaimed “Minister of Truth.[[1021]](#endnote-1021)

Newspapers and journals on both sides of the Atlantic saw fit to acknowledge his demise and the significance of his accomplishments. On the far side of the Atlantic newspapers such as in the New York Daily Tribune and the New York Times reported the death of “Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden, the famous negro author, and lecturer.”[[1022]](#endnote-1022) Black journals like the New York Age informed the African American community while lamenting that “in the death of Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden . . . the Negro race loses one of its foremost scholars, and Liberia its most widely known citizen.”[[1023]](#endnote-1023) The Crisis under the editorial direction of W. E. B. Du Bois also noted and lamented the death of Blyden.[[1024]](#endnote-1024) Similar accounts of Blyden’s passing and the significance of his life and work were carried in papers and periodicals in Britain, West Africa, and the Caribbean. The London Times noted that "Dr. Blyden was the author of several books on the negro question, he himself being a much-respected member of that race."[[1025]](#endnote-1025) Meanwhile, the African World, under the caption “Death of Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden, A Great Negro Savant,” informed its readers that “a great figure of the Negro race, one who with Booker T. Washington must be regarded as a giant among them, both in contemporary and previous times, passes from the human stage in the demise of Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden.”[[1026]](#endnote-1026)

Newspapers and periodicals in the Virgin Islands and on St. Thomas also noted the passing of their long-absent favorite son. Under the caption “An Illustrious St. Thomian,” the St. Croix Avis echoed the St. Thomas Bulletin and St. Thomas Tidende in noting that St. Thomas “has lost one of its outstanding sons and Liberia, one of its most widely known citizens . . .. and [in] expressing hope that the life of this most distinguished of St Thomians . . . may serve as an inspiration and a hope to his people.”[[1027]](#endnote-1027)

In reporting Blyden’s death to the West African community, the Sierra Leone Weekly News noted the broad influence of this repatriate and multitalented adopted son of West Africa:

To West African Negroes everywhere we are sure it will be a matter of genuine regret that Dr. Edward W. Blyden, later Minister Plenipotentiary from the Republic of Liberia to the Court of St. James, has passed away. . .. although not a Sierra Leonean, not even a West African by birth, and we may add, aspiration, yet for more than forty years, not off and on, but in succession, Dr. Blyden prominently figured in West African life and thought both as a patriot, and a scholar of universal repute.[[1028]](#endnote-1028)

In Lagos, a circular written by Reverend Majola Agbebe, founder of the Native Baptist Church, Director of the Niger Delta Mission, and one of Blyden’s most fervent disciples in advocacy of an independent African Church, appropriated Scripture: “How are the mighty fallen in the midst of battle” (2nd Samuel 1:25) as it announced a memorial service “in respect for the renowned Dr. E. W. Blyden, Greatest Defender of the Negro Race who [has] rested from his labours.”[[1029]](#endnote-1029) It was a tribute to Blyden’s legacy and advocacy of an ecumenical and Africanized Christianity, that more than one thousand people from different religious orientations attended the memorial service which included “several ministers” and made use of the “CMS Yoruba hymnal.”[[1030]](#endnote-1030)

It was, however, an editorial titled “The Passing of a Great Figure,” penned by British journalist and reform activist Edmund Dene Morel, that perhaps most starkly and poignantly captured and revealed the enigmatic nature of Blyden’s life, work, and his sometimes quixotic efforts at interrogation and mediation of modernity on behalf of the race:

Negro Africa has suffered irreparable loss in the death of Dr. Blyden, and the world is poorer for the disappearance—of we fear—the only pure-blooded Negro who was capable of applying the knowledge of Europe and White civilization to the needs of Negro Africa and African civilization. More fully versed in the literature and ethics of Europe than any other Negro, Blyden’s studies only made him more of an African—more passionately the upholder of . . . an African soul, an African culture, an Africa of clearly demarcated and peculiar racial needs. His preaching and teaching were ever directed to the same end; that Negro Africa, while taking all that was useful to her from Europe in material things, should, in so taking them, remain African and mold them to her own requirements, retaining her own spiritual life. He laboured to show that Africa had a soul and a civilization—the latter worth preserving in itself, the former, if destroyed, leading to the destruction of the race.[[1031]](#endnote-1031)

Morel also noted that Blyden, “like most prophets, was before his time” and, consequently, was often misunderstood and unappreciated by those whom he most passionately longed to serve:

Although they felt proud of the place he had won and of its reflex action upon themselves, the bulk of educated West Africans did not understand or appreciate him. Some did, of course. “They would crucify me if they could,” he once exclaimed bitterly. But the sentiment to which he thus gave interpretation was confined to the few. Most of them admired him as an intellectual force. Nevertheless, he preached in the wilderness. He was a pathetic figure, and yet a singularly impressive one—for he was so absolutely unique.”

Nor did Morel shrink from acknowledging the less noble and aspects of Blyden’s character and efforts:

In one sense Blyden was extraordinarily courageous. And yet, somehow, he failed to be the power he ought to have been, not so much among his own people—for them he was a misunderstood prophet, or rather, one should say, perhaps, a prophet who pointed along a path strewn with sharp flints and prickly stubble—as a world influence. How much that may have been due to his own defects of character, and how much to the handicaps with which he was surrounded, including lack of means (which he felt poignantly) . . .. In any case, Blyden was a remarkable man, with a wonderful personality—an ornament to the race from which he sprang, and whose blood he was ever proud to own. . .. his words will live, and his figure will grow with the years.[[1032]](#endnote-1032)

In closing, Morel expressed hope that Blyden’s death would end the prolonged controversy evoked by his life and work and elicit a worthy tribute to his memory:

One would fane hope that, now that he is dead, educated West Africans throughout West Africa, and the Mohammedan communities of Sierra Leone and Lagos, will combine to raise a fund to erect a statue to the greatest personality West Africa has produced in modern times, the greatest product of Western culture West Africa has ever produced, to the man whose racial patriotism burned with living fire, to the man who through good repute and ill, concentrated upon the delivery of one message: “Africa be true to thyself.”[[1033]](#endnote-1033)

Despite Morel’s plea for a posthumous reconciliation of Blyden’s distractors and disciples, controversy accompanied him to his grave. Most notably, his death and burial revived widespread speculation that had existed for decades regarding his religious beliefs, agenda, and affiliation.[[1034]](#endnote-1034) A funeral service conducted according to Christian rites was led by one of Blyden’s staunchest admirers, the Reverend J. R. Fredericks of the Wesleyan Methodist Church who had earlier defended him from rumors of conversion to Islam. However, the service was held at the mortuary rather than in one of the many Freetown churches in which Blyden had often preached and displayed his renowned intellectual, oratorical, hermeneutical, and theological gifts. Adding fuel for further speculation and controversy was the final poignant tribute paid the frail remains of the former Presbyterian minister who, en route to becoming a "Minister of Truth," had simultaneously become a voracious critic of traditional missionary Christianity and a formidable champion of Islam and eventually Africa indigenous religions in the course of his pioneering role as the race’s most prominent interrogator, adjudicator, and mediator of modernity and its myriad corollaries. The success of Blyden’s efforts, particularly within the religious and pedagogical realms, inspired the colorful though solemn procession that escorted his worn body to its final repose in the Race Course Cemetery at Cline Town. The Sierra Weekly News records that the procession was headed by the youth of the “Mohammadan schools” and included “all the Alfas and Almamis of Fourah Bay and Foulah Town, with the Chiefs and Headmen of the Mandingoes, Foulahs, Seracolis, Mendes, etc.”[[1035]](#endnote-1035)

**Chapter 24: Twilight of a Friendship**

Ironically, public acknowledgment by Grimke of Blyden’s death is missing. In the wake of the more iconoclastic and controversial racial, cultural, religious, and racial pronouncements that were issued from the pen and tongue of Blyden in his final years, Grimke may have found it convenient to reevaluate the personal and professional relationship that the two had long shared. Correspondence between the two had always been sporadic and it became even more so in the years leading up to Blyden’s death. Blyden’s final trip to the United States concluded in 1895 with a heartfelt goodbye note thanking Grimke for his hospitality and reaffirming their friendship but their last known communique was in the fall of 1908, approximately four years before Blyden's death.[[1036]](#endnote-1036) While the dearth of correspondence, may have been reflective of Blyden’s declining health, other factors may also have been at play. It is likely that among these, was a growing estrangement between the two that was exacerbated by heightened theological and hermeneutical tensions during the opening decade of the new century.

This thesis of belated estrangement is additionally suggested by the fact that Grimke, who regularly noted and often commemorated the life and death of prominent members of the race and especially friends and acquaintances, appears not to have done so upon news of the death of Blyden.[[1037]](#endnote-1037) It is also revealing that one of Grimke’s last known public references to Blyden came in the context of his commemoration of former Princeton Seminary classmate, parishioner, and Blyden adversary at Liberia College, Hugh Browne. Upon Browne’s death in 1923, Grimke delivered a memorial that included only a brief and cryptic reference to “Dr. Edward Blyden, the distinguished African scholar” along with a terse account of the events that culminated in the debacle at Liberia College.[[1038]](#endnote-1038) The brevity and tenor of Grimke's comments suggest that his posthumous recollections of Blyden and their relationship were being filtered in light of longer-lasting friendships and his increasingly alarmed responses to the resurgent and intersecting religious and racial challenges posed by modernity’s academic, intellectual, scientific, and cultural corollaries in the opening decades of the twentieth century.

Evidence Grimke’s embrace of an increasingly selective and even sanitized memory of Blyden and their relationship is gleaned from a public assertion of his vigilance in maintaining the theological and hermeneutical sanctity of his pulpit at Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church. Upon the commemoration of his fifty-year ministry in 1928, more than a decade and a half after the death of Blyden, Grimke professed that there had “never been any doubt expressed from this pulpit as to the inspiration of the Scriptures, and as to their infallibility and sufficiency as a rule of faith and practice.” He also proudly claimed that his pulpit had never “been tainted with rationalism or any leaning toward what is called the Higher Criticism” and that “there has been but one sentiment here during all of our history as a church, on the part of all the men who have occupied this pulpit, either as pastor or stated supply, the sentiment expressed by the Apostle Paul: ‘If any man or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel, let him be anathema.’”[[1039]](#endnote-1039) While consistent with the more aggressive role that Grimke assumed in defense of traditional and orthodox evangelical Christianity from the new acids of modernity popularized in the twentieth century as “modernism,” it was also a recounting of the history of Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church that conveniently ignored the admittedly “latitudinarian” and other than orthodox theological, hermeneutical, and missiological orientation embraced by Blyden who had occupied the church’s pulpit on more than one occasion.[[1040]](#endnote-1040)

Grimke’s profession of pastoral vigilance in response to twentieth-century currents of modernity and the sanitized interpretation of Blyden’s theological and hermeneutical orientation that it implied was all the more incongruous since as Blyden entered the final decade of his life and career, he continued to share with Grimke evidence of his allegiance to theological, hermeneutical, and missiological orientations that were other than orthodox in notices and copies of his increasingly iconoclastic publications.[[1041]](#endnote-1041) For example, in 1905 Blyden informed Grimke of his publication of a more provocative version of “The Koran in Africa,” which during his 1889-90 tour of the United States had evoked heated racial and theological conflict with conservative black clergy.[[1042]](#endnote-1042) Illuminated within the revised article was evidence of Blyden’s heightened embrace and advocacy of biblical criticism. In contrast to the increased disquiet that the newer currents of biblical scholarship were fostering among Grimke and other conservatives, Blyden insisted that black Christians, inexorably immersed in the religious and racial crosscurrents of modernity, could ill afford to summarily dismiss the findings of “biblical criticism.” Despite its still unfulfilled promise, Blyden pointed out that “The Christian Negro,” might incur “ a large debt to the ‘Higher Criticism,’” for its potential in “eliminating from Christian teaching the mischievous doctrine that the African lies under a curse through the anger and mortification of Noah.”[[1043]](#endnote-1043) Moreover, reflecting his lifelong synthesis of theological, hermeneutical, and pedagogical concerns, Blyden argued that black appropriation of the findings of “biblical criticism” was all the more imperative because the “sinister influence” of the Hamitic Myth was being magnified at the dawn of the twentieth century as a result of its impact “upon the consciousness of [increased numbers of] Christian Negro youth in theological schools and colleges.”[[1044]](#endnote-1044)

From the other side of the theological and hermeneutical spectrum, Grimke also sounded a pedagogically rooted alarm. Of major concern for him was evidence that black colleges and seminaries such as Howard University and its School of Religion were already propagating the new theological and hermeneutical orientations among its students at the expense of their faith. He correctly perceived and feared that these institutions and their faculty were not only fostering beliefs that he believed to be inconsistent with Christian orthodoxy but also becoming key arenas in the heightened conflict between black religious traditionalists and progressives about the appropriate response to the era’s resurgent and new currents of modernity.[[1045]](#endnote-1045)

Three years later Blyden also reaffirmed his synthesis of comparative religion, liberal theology, and critical hermeneutics as he informed Grimke of his effort to complete what he announced as “the work of his life” which he described as a study of “Comparative Theology.”[[1046]](#endnote-1046) His theologically and hermeneutically based perception of “comparative theology” may have been influenced by the publication two years earlier of James Freeman Clarke’s study which was published on the American side of the Atlantic and titled Ten Great Religions: An Essay in Comparative Theology.[[1047]](#endnote-1047) Noting the preparatory work having being done in “Germany, France, and England” by scholars such as Muller, Renan, and Maurice, Clarke suggested that Comparative Theology was “yet in its infancy” and the product of “the same tendency in the century which had produced the sciences of Comparative Antony, Comparative Geology, and Comparative Philology.”[[1048]](#endnote-1048) According to Clarke, the task and “work” of Comparative Theology was “to do equal justice to all the religious tendencies of mankind” and “to show how each may be a step in the religious progress of the races.” Thus, as a “science” employing comparative methodology, it would “abstain from …. inference until it has accurately ascertained all the facts to learn what each system contains” so that it “may then…generalize from the facts.”[[1049]](#endnote-1049)

No doubt, Blyden would have been especially interested in Clarke’s insistence that “Comparative Theology” in “pursuing its impartial course as a position science, will avoid the errors into which most of the Christian apologist of the last century fell in speaking of ethnic or heathen religions” as well as feeling that it was “necessary to disparage all other religions.[[1050]](#endnote-1050) Clarke’s definition of Christianity as “a religion of progress and of Universal unity” would have also resonated with Blyden’s progressive conception of Christianity properly understood and applied.[[1051]](#endnote-1051) It is also likely and indeed probable that Clarke’s exclusion of African religious traditions and African expressions of Christianity and Islam from his expansive study may have spurred Blyden’s decision to engage in a more comprehensive and inclusive study of “Comparative Theology” as “the work of his life.”

Blyden continued efforts to keep Grimke informed of his research and publications were also consistent with the advice offered to his more conservative friend two decades earlier about the religious perspective and writings of Ernest Renan.[[1052]](#endnote-1052) It was obvious, however, that by 1908 Grimke was less inclined to entertain the iconoclastic implications of Blyden’s theological, hermeneutical, and missiological orientation and research.

Amid increasing conflict between militant defenders of theological and hermeneutical orthodoxy and their liberal counterparts which would foster the “Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy” and roil the American religious community in the opening decades of the new century, Grimke appears to have belatedly found Blyden’s theological, hermeneutical, missiological orientation and related scholarship increasingly disconcerting. No doubt even more alarming were the broader religious and cultural implications of African Life and Customs which not only championed and modeled application of the “scientific study of religion” but also presented Blyden’s most comprehensive defense of the historical, theological, and cultural integrity of African religious and cultural traditions. Its related thesis that polygamy was also “a vital feature of indigenous West African culture and should not be evaluated and condemned merely in terms of an imported moral standard” was refused endorsement and publication by Grimke and the membership of the American Negro Academy when presented in 1908 as part of a paper by Blyden’s protégé, fellow theological liberal, and comparative religionist Orishatukeh Faduma.[[1053]](#endnote-1053)

The increased theological and hermeneutical chasm between Blyden and Grimke was also subtly illuminated, for example, when Blyden, upon acknowledging that “the Bible is the word of God,” pointedly added, “or rather, to use the modern phrase, *contains* [emphasis his] the word of God.”[[1054]](#endnote-1054) While the rhetorical addendum more accurately attested to Blyden’s theological and hermeneutical orientation, it was a perception of scripture and concession to “modern” sensibilities that was anathema to Grimke and more traditional ministerial colleagues who insisted with heightened fervor that the Bible was literally “the word of God” [[1055]](#endnote-1055)

Blyden's death in 1912 took place on the cusp of the full-scale eruption of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy that roiled the American religious community both at home and within the mission arena in the initial decades of the twentieth century. His response to the firestorm induced within the Presbyterian Church and the wider Christian community was suggested by his reaction to its theological and hermeneutical prologue.[[1056]](#endnote-1056) In fact, the twentieth-century resurgence of issues central to the impending Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy may have been anticipated by Blyden. At the cusp of the new century he had reiterated his appreciation of the applied findings of evolution and “the science of religion” and in 1905 reaffirmed the importance of "Higher Criticism."[[1057]](#endnote-1057) Two years before his death, he also referenced earlier stages of the conflict and prophetically linked it to heightening theological, hermeneutical, and missiological discord. In a letter penned in 1910 to African American journalist and staunch admirer John Bruce, Blyden expressed concern that his more recent and iconoclastic missiological writings would be responded to in the same way that an earlier generation of defenders of orthodoxy had reacted to the perceived threat of biblical criticism: "Of course if what I have written is correct, 'it will cut the nerve of missions' as Prof. Park of Andover once said of the 'Higher Criticism.' The so-called Christian public are not yet prepared for such a catastrophe to their enterprise, which nevertheless, so far as Africa is concerned, is hopeless.”[[1058]](#endnote-1058)

Additional insight into the resurgent dialectic of theology, hermeneutics, and missiology eliciting Blyden’s awareness and concern in his final years can be discerned in The Arabic Bible in the Soudan: A Plea for Transliteration which was also published in 1910.[[1059]](#endnote-1059) It reflected his continued critical engagement with the broader intellectual and religious discourses of the era and illuminated his awareness of the contributions of “learned” and prominent contemporary religious scholars, such as Professor [William] Robertson Smith, Dr. George F. Moore, Dr. Davidson, Karl Marti, and Joseph Jacobs, as they grappled with perplexing biblical passages that were deemed “inconsistent with the idea of the Great Invisible Jehovah” and especially disturbing to adherents of Islam.[[1060]](#endnote-1060) Parts of the Exodus narrative were of particular concern and Blyden quoted Robertson Smith, the accomplished but controversial Scottish biblical scholar and orientalist, as exclaiming, “The perplexities of Exodus xix-xxxiv *have made* these chapters the *locus desperatus of criticism.*”[[1061]](#endnote-1061) With the characteristic assuredness that he exhibited in discourse with other of the era’s prominent religious scholars, Blyden confessed to being “perplexed at the perplexities of the learned critics” and, offered what he perceived as the obvious “solution of the difficulties” posed by the text: “All the misunderstanding, it seems to me, has arisen partly from the mistake of *translating* instead of *transliterating* proper names, and probably partially from the repellent idea of appearing to recognize polytheism in the Bible."[[1062]](#endnote-1062) “The Bible," he noted, "is constantly pointing out that the dispensations of Jehovah are not restricted to the Hebrew course of History—Jehovah makes no distinction. . . .[and] we are also taught that in all parts of the earth Jehovah is worshiped though under different names."[[1063]](#endnote-1063) Appropriated by Blyden to emphasize the inadequacy of the designations of all theological and hermeneutical constructs, as well as an implied religious universalism that had become a stable of his mature theology, were the poetic and spiritual insights of Tennyson:

Our little systems have their day:

They have their day and cease to be:

They are but broken lights of thee;

And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.[[1064]](#endnote-1064)

Significantly, Blyden also saw fit to interject an even more iconoclastic dynamic into the theological and hermeneutical discourse with his affirmation of the soteriological significance of Africa apart from the religious designations of either East or West: “Islam or Christianity for Africa is not the only alternative. Christ told the woman of Samaria that the worship of Jehovah should be confined neither to Mount Gerizim nor to Jerusalem.” Consequently, he insisted that “[t]he ultimate fate of Africa does not depend exclusively upon Jerusalem, Rome or Mecca.”[[1065]](#endnote-1065)

While Blyden’s exhibition of well-honed theological, hermeneutical, and comparative skills were increasingly troubling for Grimke, they were appreciated if not fully understood by an American colleague who upon review of Blyden’s scholarly ruminations in The Arabic Bible confessed that "into the points of scholarship raised we can hardly follow him, and some of his positions must perhaps be controverted by theologians; but like all that Dr. Blyden writes, this little paper bears the marks of wide reading and original thought."[[1066]](#endnote-1066)

Grimke’s reactions to the increasingly iconoclastic theological and hermeneutical orientation demonstrated by Blyden over the final half-decade of his life appeared to be consistent with his alarmed rejoinders to Anna J. Cooper and other members of the small but growing cadre of African American religious liberals emerging during the first decades of the twentieth century.

An aging Grimke was not unaware of Cooper's continued intellectual and religious metamorphosis as she continued to engage the dialectic of race, religion, gender, and modernity in the opening decades of the new century. Her increasingly liberal theological and hermeneutical views, she confessed, “disturbed” Grimke’s “orthodox soul.”[[1067]](#endnote-1067) Heightened theological and hermeneutical tensions between the two were illuminated by Grimke’s agitated response to Cooper’s poem “Simon of Cyrene.” The poem, which illustrated Cooper's creative and nonliteral interpretation of the famed biblical narrative, induced a critique from Grimke, who warned that Cooper was "putting [her] judgment in place of what is plainly written" in Scripture. Consequently, a perturbed Grimke charged that her poem was "pure rationalism” and that she was a “rationalist.” Cooper’s reaction in the wake of such criticism, especially from such a close friend and mentor as Grimke, was equally illuminating. In response to what she perceived to be both ministerial patriarchy and hermeneutical intolerance, she confessed that she felt compelled to contend "for my Bill of Rights, including freedom of thought and freedom of expression." Hermeneutical and literary license and creativity, more akin to that exhibited by Blyden, was claimed as she explained that “in defending my point of view. . . St. Simon was not pictured in my mind as a slave, dumb driven, as an accidental beast of burden happening at the moment to be caught in the denouement of the greatest Drama of the Universe, but as one elected throughout the Ages to play his part in that Drama when Asia betrayed and Europe crucified—[and ]Africa, [was] predestined to come forward humbly and gladly to give Service, [to render] the peculiar contribution of ‘Ethiopia's blameless Race."'[[1068]](#endnote-1068)

Cooper’s relationship with Grimke also provides valuable insight into the clergyman’s relationships with more heterodox figures such as Douglass and Blyden as she explained that despite their theological, hermeneutical, and ecclesiastical differences (“he a Presbyterian and I an Episcopalian”), “Dr. Grimke bore with my “rationalism: quite graciously, I trust, as I with his fundamentalism,” and “neither ever tried to win over the other. We never argued about church dogmas, never discussed theological questions.”[[1069]](#endnote-1069) Cooper offered additional insight into the complexity of Grimke’s personality, his theological orientation, and his friendships with her observation that he “could joke and take a joke at his own expense, provided, mark you, it did not cut across any ‘fundamentals’ of his Calvinistic postulates.” He was, she concluded, a “curious study in psychology” as illuminated by “the contrast” exhibited “in the innocent, almost boyish, abandon of his home and the austere, [and] almost painful-rigidity of Doctor Grimke of the pulpit.”[[1070]](#endnote-1070)

Cooper’s changing relationship with Grimke amid the currents of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy that racked the American religious community for almost two decades provides valuable insight into Grimke’s perception of the more iconoclastic Blyden and his writings in the latter’s final decade. As Grimke donned the mantle of one of the Black community’s most aggressive, learned, and articulate defenders of the “fundamentals” of Christianity under the press of the perceived religious and racial challenges linked to the emergent modernist-fundamentalist controversy, he found much in Blyden’s later works and orientation that clearly “cut across” the newly accentuated “fundamentals” of Christianity that he held to be essential to both the spiritual and temporal wellbeing of the race.

Grimke’s final years would be spent as one of the American religious communities most articulate defenders of what he deemed to be intellectual, theological, pedagogical, and cultural orthodoxy in the wake of the heightened crisis attendant resurgent racism, the intersection of religion and modernity, and the resultant “ordeal of faith” that he feared would be evoked among a younger generation of blacks. Consequently, his aggressive defense of conservative theological, hermeneutical, racial, and cultural standards from the perceived acids of twentieth-century currents of modernity help to explain at least in part, his posthumous response and revisionist interpretation of the theological and hermeneutical orientation of his less orthodox former colleague from West Africa.

**Chapter 25: Amid Fundamentalism, Modernity, and Modernism**

In the fall of 1937, Francis Grimke joined Blyden in death. The quarter-century that separated their deaths had been punctuated throughout the Atlantic World by escalating racism, theological conflict, and even the carnage of “world war.” Intersecting all was the resurgence of controversy attendant the myriad currents of modernity now cloaked in new and more expansive scientific, intellectual, academic, cultural, theological, and missiological garb styled “modernism.”[[1071]](#endnote-1071) By the second decade of the century, new battle lines had been drawn within major denominations between adherents of “modernism,” known as “modernists,” and militant defenders of orthodoxy, who were labeled “fundamentalists.” The resultant conflict came to be known as the “Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy.”[[1072]](#endnote-1072)

The racial aspects of the “Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy” and the responses of black clergy and laity to its multifaceted factors have usually been overlooked by scholars of American and African American religious history.[[1073]](#endnote-1073) However, the implications and impact of this twentieth-century intersection of race, religion, and modernity were not lost upon Grimke who responded with prophetic indignation to the challenges that these presented to his understanding of Christianity and its continued relevance for humanity in general and the black race in particular.[[1074]](#endnote-1074) Ironically, developments at Princeton Seminary elicited one of Grimke's most poignant responses to this new intersection of race, religion, and modernity.[[1075]](#endnote-1075) The immediate occasion was the discriminatory housing of a new generation of black students. Incised by the resurgence of institutionalized racism at his alma mater, Grimke was moved to lament: "It is a shame that, at the very fountain-head of theological training in the great Presbyterian Church, race prejudice should be allowed to assert itself, and to thrive."[[1076]](#endnote-1076) He noted that in contrast to “forty years ago,” when “we all occupied rooms within the dormitory,” now “things have since changed; prejudice has so increased that the color of a man’s skin now shuts him out of these buildings. It is a shame that it should be so.” The inherent issue of Christian theology and ethics were alluded to by an aggrieved Grimke as he conspicuously compared the religious posture exhibited by the present faculty with that of an earlier generation. While noting that their contemporary successors possessed the necessary accruements of academic skills and knowledge, he insisted that they were nevertheless unfit to be seminary professors because they were "sadly lacking” in “the spirit and temper of the great Teacher, without which mere scholarship counts for nothing." [[1077]](#endnote-1077)

Two years later, as the seminary was fully embroiled in attendant issues more clearly focused on the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, Grimke again made clear his refusal to countenance either theological or racial heresy at the seminary or among its alumni. In an open letter to fellow members of the class of 1878, he insisted that the blasphemy of racial prejudice was as much a threat to the integrity of Christianity and Presbyterianism as the “heresy” of modernism: “I have sought with all my might,” he confessed, “to fight race prejudice because I believe it is utterly un-Christian, and that it is doing almost more than anything else to curse our own land and country and the world at large. Christianity, in its teachings, and in the spirit of its founder, stands for the brotherhood of man . . . . Race prejudice, cannot, therefore, find any justification or excuse within the pale of the Christian church." Nor, he proclaimed, should racism “find any justification” within any institution professedly educating its adherents to be ministers and ambassadors of Christianity.[[1078]](#endnote-1078)

Grimke’s efforts to enlist Princeton Seminary faculty and former classmates in the struggle against what he perceived to be the twin heresies of racism and modernism was consistent with his reaction to the broader maelstrom induced by the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. Given his conservative theological orientation, he was sympathetic enough to many of fundamentalism’s theological, hermeneutical and pastoral concerns to earn characterization as a “fundamentalist,” by close friends such as Anna J. Cooper.[[1079]](#endnote-1079) Carter G. Woodson, another confidant of Grimke, similarly testified to his aversion to the era’s new accommodations to modernity and portrayed him as “ever fighting all compromise with the world, especially if there was manifest any tendency toward modernism."[[1080]](#endnote-1080)

However, several contemporary scholars, noting the complexity of Grimke’s response to the intersection of religion and modernity insist that he was “not a fundamentalist.”[[1081]](#endnote-1081) Definitive categorization of Grimke’s theological orientation amid and after the conflict is complicated by the various ways in which theological and hermeneutical issues germane to the controversy inexorably intersected Grimke’s experiences of race and racism. Moreover, while sharing an abhorrence of the theological, hermeneutical, intellectual, and pedagogical presuppositions of modernism and modernists, he pointedly disdained alliance with prominent fundamentalists such as J. G. Machen and William Jennings Bryan. Concluding that their racial views were suspect and deficient, Grimke opted to engage in a vigorous defense of what he considered to be the “whole” and uncompromised teachings of Jesus and the tenets of Christianity. Such a strategy, he insisted, allowed no ignoring, prioritizing, or demarcating the intersecting heresies of racism and modernism.[[1082]](#endnote-1082)

Grimke was also cognizant of and sensitive to the challenges that the new theological, hermeneutical, and racial perspectives associated with modernism posed to the foreign missionary enterprise.[[1083]](#endnote-1083) He had early expressed reservations about the missionary enterprise which he described as tainted by "colorphobia [and] racism" and more recently he was painfully aware that the hardening of racial attitudes within the American Presbyterian Church had induced the Board of Foreign Missions to impose restrictions on black appointments to foreign mission posts.[[1084]](#endnote-1084)

Already familiar with the iconoclastic missiological views and writings of Blyden, Grimke was also no doubt aware of the sentiments and publications of progressive mission enthusiasts such as Presbyterian missiologist and Princeton Seminary alum Frank Ellinwood who was also the founder of the American Society of Comparative Religion.[[1085]](#endnote-1085) By the early 1920s, the ever-vigilant Grimke would have been cognizant of tensions between missiological progressives and traditionalists that had made the foreign mission field a major arena of theological conflict between fundamentalists and modernists. The well-read Grimke would also have been aware of the controversial theological, biblical, and missiological response by fellow Presbyterian minister Harry Emerson Fosdick. The latter’s 1922 sermon “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” marked Fosdick’s emergence as a champion of modernism in response to what he described as the impact, particularly within the foreign mission arena, of an “illiberal and intolerant” fundamentalism. The sermon, which sparked heightened controversy among Presbyterian fundamentalists, moderates, and modernists, led to Fosdick’s resignation under fire from New York’s First Presbyterian Church and the subsequent establishment of Riverside Church as the ecclesiastical citadel of Protestant liberalism.[[1086]](#endnote-1086)

Arguably, given Blyden’s engagement with modernity, his subsequent theological, hermeneutical, and missiological orientation, as well as his long opposition to divisive doctrinal strife within the mission enterprise, it is likely that he would have supported Fosdick’s call for theological toleration within the church and mission arena. No doubt, he would have also enthusiastically endorsed Fosdick’s related advocacy and defense of biblical criticism in The Modern Use of the Bible.[[1087]](#endnote-1087) However, amid the era’s extended theological, hermeneutical, missiological, and racial conflict, Blyden, like many who initially embraced the idealistic claims and promises of theological liberalism and modernism, would have found his ideals chastised by the harsh realities posed by the First World War and its aftermath. Thus, Blyden might well have been among the cadre of liberals and modernists who by the 1930s found that their “minds had been changed” and were endorsing Fosdick’s subsequent post-liberal manifesto which called for the Church to go “Beyond Modernism.”[[1088]](#endnote-1088)

In contrast, Grimke appreciatively cited Fosdick’s passionate evocation of “God” in opposition to war and militarism (“God Damn War!”) in his critiques of the era’s fusion of racism, militarism, and modernism. However, his response to Fosdick’s embrace and defense of liberal theology, missiology, and hermeneutics was consistent with his continued allegiance to a Reformed orthodoxy contoured by the particular realities of black life that had characterized his long ministry. [[1089]](#endnote-1089) In the wake of mounting critiques of the authority and relevance of the Bible at home and abroad by adherents of modernism and liberalism, Grimke reasserted Princeton’s exalted view of the Bible and its vigorous teachings of “verbal inerrancy.” Ever as former classmates such as Henry van Dyke, embraced a theological, hermeneutical and missiological orientation more “attuned to the mood of the age,” Grimke reaffirmed the intrinsic and immutable value of the Bible as the unadulterated word of God. [[1090]](#endnote-1090) Black and white adherents of traditional evangelical Christianity were thus assured by him that they need not be alarmed about challenges to their faith offered by liberal and modernist apologists nor "what infidels, atheists, [or] a godless world think of the Bible, but [rather] what the millions of professed followers of Jesus Christ think of it."[[1091]](#endnote-1091)

After semi-retirement in the mid-1920s, Grimke continued to respond with heightening alarm and vigilance to what he perceived to be the onslaught of a misguided and dangerous modernism manifest in church, school, mission field, and wider society.[[1092]](#endnote-1092) Amid the aftershocks of the famed Scopes Trial, he reiterated a view of evolution that attested to the continued theological and hermeneutical influence of Charles Hodge rather than James McCosh as he opined:

There is no evidence anywhere to show that man was ever anything but what he is now, human, pure and simple. The Bible teaches in Genesis that all forms of life on the globe were created; and that each form was to propagate itself after its kind. There is not the scintilla of evidence, in spite of the pretensions of Science, to show that such is not the case. All the species that exist on the globe today or that are found in the fossil remains in the rocks, confirm this great law as disclosed in the Genesis chapter. There are no species, so far as we know, that have developed out of other species. Nowhere are to be found any missing links, any evidence of that kind of growth or development . . . .[Evolution]is a pure assumption without any foundation in fact.[[1093]](#endnote-1093)

In 1928 Grimke authored a sermon commemorating his fiftieth-year pastorate at Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church which provided additional testimony of the continued influence of his Princeton professors upon his theological and hermeneutical orientation and ministry. Denounced within it were what he characterized as efforts “by the Higher Critics, and Modernists to destroy men’s faith in the Bible as the work of God, given by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” [[1094]](#endnote-1094) Having served as a minister of the gospel during an era so turbulent that it provoked an “ordeal of faith” among no few of his black and white ministerial colleagues, Grimke defiantly proclaimed that the corrosive acids of this latest manifestation of modernity and its religious corollaries had not eroded his fidelity to the tenets and world view of orthodox Christianity. He proudly proclaimed:

The findings of the higher critics, the rationalist tendencies within the church. . . .[nor] The dogmatic and arrogant assumption and declaration for science that would banish God from the universe or limit his power . . . have not affected in the least my perfect faith in the Bible as the word of God, and in the saving power of faith in Jesus Christ.[[1095]](#endnote-1095)

The sermon also occasioned Grimke’s insistence that throughout his fifty-year pastorate the pulpit of Fifteenth Street Church had never been sullied by the taint of heterodoxy and that “doubt” had never been “expressed” from it “as to the inspiration of the Scripture” or “as to their infallibility and sufficiency as a rule of faith and practice.” He avowed that “there has been but one sentiment here during all of our history as a church, on the part of all the men who have occupied this pulpit, either as pastor or stated supply, the sentiment expressed by the Apostle Paul: ‘If any man or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel, let him be anathema.’”[[1096]](#endnote-1096) Notably, it was testimony that was also both dismissive and damning of the theological and hermeneutical orientation of the long-dead Blyden whose iconoclastic and admittedly non-orthodox theological, hermeneutical, and missiological views had often been shared from the pulpit of Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church.[[1097]](#endnote-1097)

In his final years, Blyden expressed hope that the methodologies and disciplines which had emerged in the wake of late Victorian modernity such as sociology, critical history, comparative religion, and even biblical criticism would eventually be incorporated into the curriculum of black higher education and especially black ministerial education.[[1098]](#endnote-1098) The elderly Grimke did not share this optimism and often expressed outright hostility about the dissemination of the new disciplines and their religious, racial, and ethical implications in black colleges and universities. His aggressive vigilance in opposition to any perceived indices of accommodation to modernity, liberalism, or modernism emanating from either blacks or whites in church, society, and especially black schools was displayed in a rebuke directed at Professor William Stuart Nelson of Howard University’s Theological Department. Nelson, a Congregational minister, had studied theology at Union Theological Seminary, earned a degree from Yale Divinity School. With additional studies at the Sorbonne in Paris, and the Universities of Berlin and Marburg in Germany, he was among the surprising number of black clergy who complemented their theological education with studies abroad.[[1099]](#endnote-1099) Upon joining the faculty of Howard University’s School of Religion in 1924, Nelson evidenced his more liberal theological orientation. According to Grimke, who as a long-serving trustee of Howard sought to maintain the orthodox fidelity of its faculty and students, Nelson had dared to suggest that if Christianity is to avoid being irrelevant and “survive” in the modern world, it needed to adapt and “change its method of approach.” Adamantly announcing that he refused “to take any stock whatever in that kind of teaching . . . especially coming from a theological professor,” Grimke insisted that the need of the era was not for accommodationists or mediators but “men who believe firmly in the Scriptures as the work of God, and who faithfully preach the truth therein contained, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit to give efficacy to the truth.”[[1100]](#endnote-1100) It was a stinging reprimand consistent with Grimke’s conviction and counsel to other ministers that “There are no difficulties in this modern, scientific age which cannot be met, and fully met” with “the plain, simple, faithful preaching of the gospel: which “is adequate to the needs of this age and of every age.”[[1101]](#endnote-1101) Although articulated more than a dozen years after the death of Blyden, Grimke's reprimand of Nelson and others who attempted the accommodation of Christianity to the needs, demands, and perspectives of modernity and the modern era, might also have been readily applied posthumously to Blyden.

Grimke’s concern about the religious orthodoxy of Howard was also expressed upon the selection of Mordecai Johnson as the school’s first black president in 1927. Having studied at such fonts of liberalism and modernism as Harvard’s School of Religion, Rochester Theological Seminary, and the University of Chicago, Johnson was representative of a new generation of black clergy and religious educators much more positive and accommodating in response to both the challenges and advantages posed by modernity and modernism and their academic, religious and racial corollaries.[[1102]](#endnote-1102) Even after Grimke’s resignation from Howard University as a long-serving trustee amid changes at the school which he found inconsistent with his orthodox faith and the welfare of the race, he wielded considerable influence. He would hold not only members of Howard’s faculty but also its new president responsible for sentiments that were perceived as disrespectful of the traditional religious and ethical tenets of Christianity.[[1103]](#endnote-1103) Indicative, was President Johnson’s response to a letter from Grimke regarding a speech given by him that purported to express questionable religious views. Amid professions that reports of his comments were “astoundingly inaccurate,” Johnson entreated Grimke to “disregard wholly the purported quotations” that “misrepresent both my spirit and purpose.”[[1104]](#endnote-1104)

Reflective of the broader spectrum of the black response to the new century’s version of modernity and its racial and religious corollaries, Anna J. Cooper also complained to Johnson about the religious and secular views perceived as increasingly emanating from Howard and its faculty. In a letter penned to Johnson in1937, she specifically objected to sentiments expressed by the school’s new professor of sociology, E. Franklin Frazier (1894-1962). Hired in 1934 by Howard after completing a doctorate from the University of Chicago which was the nation’s foremost bastion of academic and intellectual modernism, Frazier early perceived the shifting currents of black religious and secular thought in response to twentieth-century currents of modernity. Thus, in a Master’s Thesis completed in 1920, he noted and investigated the “New Currents of Thought Among the Colored People of America.” Cooper’s complaint may have been occasioned by Frazier’s public expression of “contempt” for the academic and intellectual impact that religious “moralizing that had been passing as science” continued to have upon Howard’s students and faculty and the wider black community.[[1105]](#endnote-1105) The potential influence on Howards students of such sentiments was directly alluded to in Cooper’s letter to President Johnson which concluded: “I sincerely hope that these words of Professor Frazier with all their implications do not represent the principles of our great institution or views that you yourself would like to emanate from Howard University.”[[1106]](#endnote-1106)

Cooper was also acutely aware of the profound shift in the status and influence of traditional black clergy that was also taking place within the wider black community. In a letter to Grimke, she candidly reminded him that more blacks will listen to the “worldly wisdom” of such professors “than will listen to your advice as to what is best for the race.” Ironically, she closed her letter with an optimistic assessment of the impact of Grimke’s belated acquisition of one of modernity’s most influential technological advances. She was happy, she added, that he now had a radio which she hoped would allow him to “select the bill of fare that suits his individual taste without fear of being snubbed.”[[1107]](#endnote-1107)

The waning years of Grimke's life were punctuated by increasing tension and conflict with not only a new generation of more progressive and “modern” black educators and clergy but also a growing number of more secular-oriented leaders. Their responses to the varied challenges created by the intersection of race, religion, modernity, and modernism were often rooted in religious orientations that frequently contrasted and even clashed with those that Grimke still vigorously espoused and defended. The resulting dissonance was evident in Grimke’s increasing concerns and reservation about one of the most prominent members of the era’s new generation of "secular" intellectuals and activists--W. E. B. Du Bois.

Ironically, Grimke had long nurtured a cordial relationship with Du Bois whose engagement with modernity and modernism and their religious, racial, and pedagogical corollaries were frequently reflected in both his racial activism and scholarship.[[1108]](#endnote-1108) Successively exposed to the theological, intellectual, and academic currents of late Victorian modernity during his matriculation at Fisk, Harvard, and the University of Berlin, Du Bois creatively embraced the critical methodologies of history, philosophy, sociology, and "the science of religion" en route to becoming arguably the era’s most prominent scholar of African and Diaspora African history, culture, and religion.[[1109]](#endnote-1109)

Du Bois’s evolving religious and racial orientation was illuminated in 1904 in his famed “Credo” which affirmed his belief in a liberal “God,” and a universal morality rooted in “pride of race and self;” “justice;” “liberty;” “service;” “peace, “patience,” and the conviction “that all men are brothers.”[[1110]](#endnote-1110) Despite its unmistakably heterodox timbre and tone, Grimke, reflective of his response to the religious views of Frederick Douglass and Blyden, was impressed with those expressed by Du Bois. Upon receipt of a personal copy of the “Credo” from Du Bois, he proclaimed that it was a “noble confession of faith” which “ought to receive the widest circulation” and “ be hung in all of our homes, and in all of our schoolhouses.”[[1111]](#endnote-1111) Impressed by Du Bois’s religious and racial orientation Grimke would join with him in several scholarly and reform projects and organizations such as the American Negro Academy, the Niagara Movement, and eventually the formation of the NAACP.[[1112]](#endnote-1112)

However, as the century proceeded, Du Bois became increasingly critical of the traditional precepts and values of evangelical orthodoxy as Grimke in turn become increasingly defensive of not only Christianity but also the traditional role and status of the black clergy. This transition induced Grimke to voice a more qualified and caustic assessment of Du Bois and his leadership: "Men, like Du Bois,” he argued, “maybe safely followed" when they "speak with authority" on issues such as "economics, or on the civil and political rights of the Negro," but "when it comes to religion and morality" they "are in need of guidance themselves" and "are far far out of the way as tested by the word of God and the ideals and principles of Jesus Christ.” Consequently, he warned the black community that the views and strategies of leaders such as Du Bois were often “distorted, perverted, [and] erroneous. To follow them is to be misled, to be facing in the wrong direction. Not being right themselves, they are incapable of pointing the way to others.”[[1113]](#endnote-1113)

Grimke was also especially alarmed about the danger of the spread of the non-traditional views embraced by Du Bois and other “secular” leaders among black youth. He was horrified and livid when the Crisis featured the thought of famed agnostic Clarence Darrow. Characteristically, unsparing in his words, Grimke described Darrow as an “infidel” and a “man who ridicules the Bible, who makes light of prayer, [and] who looks upon religion as a dope for taking advantage of the ignorant.” Moreover, he surmised that Darrow was “trying to make the Negro believe that there is no God, or, if there is, there is no reason why, in view of the things that have befallen him, he should trouble himself in any way about him.” Grimke’s biting critique also extended to those “members of the race who may be fool enough to allow themselves to be misled by this man, who poses as a friend of the race, and yet . . . is trying to undermine their faith in the thing most essential to its highest welfare.”[[1114]](#endnote-1114) Grimke’s concern and critique also eventually extended to the parent organization of the Crisis. Despite having been a founding member of the NAACP and having proclaimed that its “very existence” was “a constant protest of the vile treatment to which we are subjected in this country,” by 1933 he was lamenting that it and its leadership had become too secular and he was advising that “like every other organization laboring for race betterment,” the NAACP’s success would “be greatly helped by prayer.” [[1115]](#endnote-1115)

Grimke's ministry and social views remained grounded in a conservative pre-millennial orientation which unabashedly emphasized "the redemptive role of Christ in societal transformation rather than the actions of men.” His views often clashed with those of a growing cadre of black ministers who were embracing a "social gospel" that was rooted in the post-millennial presuppositions of liberalism and modernism.[[1116]](#endnote-1116) The views and agenda of the latter group were reflected in the founding of the Fraternal Council of Negro Churches in 1934 and the creation of its sister publication, The Negro Journal of Religion in1935. [[1117]](#endnote-1117) Both were indicative of the response of a younger generation of progressive and liberal black clergy to the myriad challenges posed by twentieth-century currents of modernity and modernism and their religious and racial corollaries. Their expressed goal was to forge a black version of the social gospel which would unite the leadership of black churches, “regardless of denomination,” in a concerted assault on the myriad social, economic, and political injustices afflicting the race. Most of the Council’s leaders were by education and theological orientation abreast of and vested in the era’s new scientific, intellectual, academic, and religious developments. Their concern and intent to critically appropriate the new scholarship to advance the uplift and welfare of the race was made explicit in the first edition of the Journal of Religion which affirmed that it intended to induce “trained and gifted race scholars to write on the weightier, sociological, religious, and metaphysical problems."[[1118]](#endnote-1118) Notably, articles published in the journal addressed issues such as the impact of “Modernism” on “Evangelism” and included an editorial section titled “A World View of Religion” which attempted to keep readers abreast of international issues and academic and intellectual developments pertaining to religion.[[1119]](#endnote-1119)

Although the Fraternal Council’s members and agenda elicited racial, social, theological, and soteriological anxiety among religious conservatives, they shared concerns about growing religious skepticism and secularism among black youth and were also similarly alarmed that an increasing number of the latter viewed the black church and its clergy as irrelevant. [[1120]](#endnote-1120) However, in contrast to the more traditional responses advanced by black conservatives and traditionalists, leaders of the Fraternal Council proposed solutions that were grounded in the theological and soteriological tenets of liberalism and modernism. Thus, Reverdy Ransom, one of the Council's founders and one of the AME church’s most prominent theological liberals, argued that "If the Negro Church is to survive it must offer the Negro youth of today, something more than a home in heaven. Faced with the attitude of American Christianity, American business, labor, industry, and the government itself, who shall give them Faith, Hope, and Courage to persevere?"[[1121]](#endnote-1121)

The Fraternal Council’s awareness and sensitivity to the theological implications of the changing religious, racial, and secular sensibilities of the era and their impact upon a new generation of blacks were made explicit in an article published in its first edition which was titled "The New Negro's Attitude Towards Theology."[[1122]](#endnote-1122) Authored by William H. Ferris who had studied theology at Yale and Harvard at the end of the century, the article chronicled the impact of modernity within and upon the African-American community and the resultant evolution of a "New Type of Negro" that rejected many of the old standards of black life and religiosity.[[1123]](#endnote-1123) Related developments in Africa and other parts of the African diaspora similarly inspired by the black encounter with and response to modernity during the opening decades of the twentieth century would contribute to the emergence of a "New Negro Movement" that was trans-Atlantic and Pan-African in its origins, concerns, and agenda.[[1124]](#endnote-1124)

Given the advent and spread of progressive and liberal sentiments among increasing numbers of a younger generation of fellow clergy, educators, and secular leaders, it is not surprising that as Grimke approached the twilight of his life and career, his theological, hermeneutical, and soteriological orientation were viewed by some black secular and ministerial leaders as largely outdated, even as his uncompromised racial and ethical commitments and principles continued to be admired. It was an irony respectfully noted on the fiftieth-year celebration of Grimke’s ministry by Kelly Miller. Amid the material, ethical, and spiritual temptations that accompanied modernity’s “Gilded Age” offerings, the John Hopkins educated mathematician, sociologist, professor, and long-time member of his congregation affirmed that Grimke remained “A Man of God in An Age of Gold”—an “Uncompromising Defender of [the] Race” and an “exemplar of the Gospel which he preached.”[[1125]](#endnote-1125)

Grimke’s final years coincided with a reaction to the excesses of both modernism and fundamentalism. Their liabilities and failings, often noted by Grimke had given rise to an emergent theological, hermeneutical and missiological movement that was known as “Neo-Orthodoxy” in the American context.[[1126]](#endnote-1126) Shaped and contoured in response to the new modernities of the intra-war era, it affirmed a “new orthodoxy” that was more consistent with the theological, hermeneutical, missiological, social, and ethical views embraced by Grimke and other traditional adherents of Christianity. While rooted in a profound consciousness of the failings of both fundamentalism and modernism, neo-orthodoxy specifically rejected the optimistic and idealistic view of human nature and the liberal myth of unending progress toward the realization of the “Kingdom of God on Earth” and the inevitable evolution of a “universal religion” that had intrigued Blyden and an earlier generation of religious liberals and progressives. Emphasized instead by Neo-orthodoxy’s formulators and adherents was an acute awareness of the reality and gravity of both individual and corporate sin that had remained central to the theological convictions and ministry of Grimke.[[1127]](#endnote-1127) Notably, Neo-orthodoxy’s advent and significance for blacks were explored in the pages of the second edition of the Journal of Religion in 1935 in a sympathetic assessment of “Barthianism” and its “theology of crisis” that was authored by Dr. Charles L. Hill, Dean of Turner Theological Seminary.[[1128]](#endnote-1128) The response of the aged and ailing Grimke to this emergent expression of Christianity which reaffirmed many of the theological, soteriological, and ethical tenets that he had embraced and preached throughout his long ministry, is largely unknown. However, friends and colleagues such as Cooper and Woodson attested to his continued embrace of an expression of Christianity definitively shaped by his response to the intersection of race, religion, and modernity.[[1129]](#endnote-1129)

While Grimke remained an esteemed and respected member of the black ministerial and intellectual elite, by the time of his death in the fall of 1937, no few of his religious and secular contemporaries and peers viewed him and his thought as largely out of step with the new era and its challenges, if not wholly anachronistic. Nevertheless, Grimke’s funeral in October 1937 was attended by a large and ecumenical array of ministerial and secular leaders. A eulogy presented by a longtime ecclesiastical neighbor and former Lincoln classmate Rev. Walter H. Brooks of Nineteenth Street Baptist Church was both testament and tribute to the convictions, currents and challenges framed and shaped by the intersection of race, religion, and modernity that had forged his life, ministry, and role as a public intellectual.[[1130]](#endnote-1130) It is also significant that one of the black publications closely aligned with the new currents of modernity which so alarmed Grimke concurred with Brooks’ assessment. In homage, the Crisis proclaimed that Grimke was “a scholar, a gentleman, [and] an upright preacher of the gospel who never forsook his calling and never compromised with evil.”[[1131]](#endnote-1131)

**Part VII: Conclusion**

**Chapter 26: Posthumous Currents and Developments**

The final decades of Grimke’s life witnessed the advent and extension of trans-Atlantic developments that had been anticipated by Blyden and reflected both his pioneering Pan-African influences and his related contributions as an interrogator, adjudicator, and mediator of modernity and its corollaries. Exemplary of this process and its impact was the continued advance of the “science of religion,” popularized as “comparative religion” in the wake of the famed World’s Parliament of Religions, and as the twentieth century proceeded, increasingly referred to as the “History of Religions.” [[1132]](#endnote-1132) It and cognate disciplines such as anthropology and sociology were being reshaped by an enlarged emphasis on ethnographic theory and methodology which purportedly produced more accurate and less biased “knowledge” about non-Western peoples and cultures. [[1133]](#endnote-1133) It was a theoretical and methodological shift anticipated and advocated by Blyden in his 1908 plea for the replacement of armchair scholars with “conscientious investigators on the spot” who would break “through the sinister tradition of hundreds of years” and teach the world “ to judge the Man of Africa by the impartial light of truth and not from the standpoint of prejudice and preconceived ideas.”[[1134]](#endnote-1134)

European scholars who were forging many of the era’s new intellectual, academic, and religious developments were joined on the American side of the Atlantic by counterparts whose perspectives and insights were also being incorporated into the curriculum of the United States’ most prestigious institutions. While these developments were readily incorporated into the curriculum of progressive universities such as Harvard, Boston, Chicago, and Yale, they were also gradually impacting and influencing the curriculum and hires of more traditionally conservative universities and colleges as well as seminaries and divinity schools. [[1135]](#endnote-1135) Historic black educational institutions and their faculty were not immune to this intellectual and academic trend. Their gradual incorporation and appropriation of these, notwithstanding accompanying criticism from religious and cultural traditionalists such as Grimke, would help to extend Blyden’s influence and legacy among African and diaspora African students who were attending these institutions with increased frequency.[[1136]](#endnote-1136)

The growing number of African students studying in the United States during this era was of special significance and importance.[[1137]](#endnote-1137) Many, like Blyden and an earlier generation of Africans that had studied in the metropoles of the West, were shocked as they encountered the disturbing and often painful racialized effects of Western modernity in church, school, and wider society. Nevertheless, many would proceed to interrogate, critique, and selectively appropriate the era’s latest theories and methodologies. Consequently, a new generation of African scholars emerged who sought the production and dissemination of accurate knowledge regarding Africa and her descendants. Some would also forge a cadre of scholar-activists who would play prominent roles in articulating and advancing the ideology and agenda of Pan-Africanism and directly contribute to the liberation and post-colonial development of Africa.

The continued influence and legacy of Blyden during the interwar era was also reflected in the advent of several related racial and cultural developments. Among the more significant of these was the “New Negro Movement” which was explicit in its evocation and nurture of a unique black response to the increased prominence of various currents of modernity in the twentieth century. Although popularized during the mid-1920s in conjunction with “the Harlem Renaissance,” the roots and lineage of the “New Negro Movement” are traceable in part to a trans-Atlantic cadre of black clergy intellectuals who variously responded to modernity’s religious and racial bludgeon during the nineteenth century. While Blyden played a seminal role in the movement’s pre-history, he was joined by other black clergy-intellectuals whose responses to European modernity and its religious and cultural corollaries were generally more ambivalent. Illustrative were the reactions of the University of Glasgow educated South African clergyman Tiyo Soga (1829-1871), and Blyden’s Cambridge educated former colleague Alexander Crummell who are cited as central to the emergence of the “New Negro Movement” in South Africa.[[1138]](#endnote-1138) Also not to be ignored were the less obvious efforts of a host of unnamed and unacknowledged nineteenth- century black clergy-intellectuals and activists whose responses to modernity’s religious and racial corollaries were often masked amid seemingly innocuous expressions of racial pride merged with critiques of traditional Western religious, pedagogical, cultural, and racial truisms and policies. The combined intergenerational and trans-Atlantic efforts of these nineteenth-century clergy scholars and activists provided the seeds and helped to germinate the “New Negro Movement,” which came to fruition in the next century.[[1139]](#endnote-1139)

As the New Negro Movement emerged in the 1920s, it was defined and embraced by an international cadre of black religious leaders, secular activists, scholars, and students. Citing a changing religious, ideological, and cultural temperament that contrasted with popular stereotypes and caricatures of “colored peoples,” they proudly announced and celebrated the advent of a “New Negro.” Not incidentally, no few of the movement’s adherents exhibited and articulated "a characteristic ambivalence or outright hostility toward Victorian conceptions of Christianity and civilization” that induced alarm among traditional religious and social conservatives such as Grimke.[[1140]](#endnote-1140) Reverend William H. Ferris was among the fraternity of liberal and progressive black clergy who embraced and advanced the concept of the New Negro. He also presumed to describe the theological and philosophical roots and concerns of the New Negro Movement and its response to twentieth-century currents of modernity in an article published in the first edition of the intellectually and theologically progressive Negro Journal of Religion. Titled “The New Negro’s Attitude Towards Theology,” Ferris’ article chronicled and explained the continued impact that modernity and its religious and racial corollaries were having within and upon the African American religious community and their contribution to the revolution of a “New Type of Negro” that pointedly rejected many of the traditional standards and markers of black religiosity. [[1141]](#endnote-1141)

Having imbibed and embraced key aspects of modernity’s academic and religious corollaries as a student of theology at Yale and Harvard at the cusp of the new century, Ferris confessed faith in a God “who manifests himself in the laws of reason.” The juxtaposition of God and Darwin was also a frequent topic in his speeches and writings as he expounded on issues such as the “Viewpoint of Science and Religion,” and “What is Religion.”[[1142]](#endnote-1142)

Ferris was also familiar with the discipline of comparative religion and was impressed with its religious and racial implications. However, while noting that it revealed: “how all religions necessarily appeal to some fundamental element in human nature,” he sounded the complaint of Blyden, Faduma, and others who protested that the central tenets of the discipline, were too often “entirely forgotten and lost sight of when we study the Negro's religion.” Consequently, he opined, as had Blyden, that most scholars “approach the Negro's religion as if they were about to enter a curiosity shop or hospital or dime museum. They seem to think that they will only find pathological cases of the aberration of the human intellect, religious freaks who foam at the mouth, go into hysterics, prance, and shout, and faint away, when in reality the truth is the Negro's religion is not outside of the stream of the general religious development of mankind . . . . [and] when we approach the colored man's religion from the comparative point of view, we see that it contains the same psychological elements as do other men's religion.”[[1143]](#endnote-1143) Not incidentally, Ferris’ perception of the “New Negro” and his religious orientation was explicitly linked to the era’s heightened Pan-African concerns and consciousness. This linkage was mirrored among the cadre of liberal and progressive black clergy who supported the “New Negro Movement” and various expressions of Pan-Africanism. It was also illuminated in Ferris’ major publication titled The African Abroad.[[1144]](#endnote-1144)

Like Ferris, many of the formulators of the “New Negro Movement” were influenced by the new disciplines and methodologies associated with modernity and modernism that were not only increasingly prominent at secular universities but also gradually altering the curriculum and culture of traditionally church-supported and religious-oriented black colleges and universities. Many of its advocates and adherents were college and university graduates who, as educators, academics, artists, and activists were “no longer dependent upon the church pulpit” for their theology, ideology, or “livelihood.” Some embraced more radical secular ideologies and impudently challenged the era’s traditional clerical leadership and their more conservative and theocentric program of salvation and racial uplift.[[1145]](#endnote-1145) Of this transition and its implications, Hubert Harrison, the West Indian born Pan-Africanist, opined in 1920 that “ [T]wenty years ago all Negroes known to the white publicists of America could be classed as conservative on all the great questions on which thinkers differ. In matters of industry, commerce, politics, religion, they could be trusted to take the backward view.” He added, “Today Negroes differ on all those great questions on which white thinkers differ, and there are Negro radicals of every imaginary stripe--agnostics, atheists, I.W.W.'s, Socialists, Single Taxers, and even Bolshevists.”[[1146]](#endnote-1146)

Having discovered academic, intellectual, and “scientific” inspiration and support amid the new and revised theories, methodologies, and insights of disciplines that had emerged under the press of late Victorian modernity, formulators and adherents of the “New Negro Movement” not only engaged in a critical re-evaluation of Christianity and Western culture but also “celebrated their rediscovery of Africa and the African cultural heritage."[[1147]](#endnote-1147) Some brought a Blydenesque perspective to bear on the era’s evolving Pan-African sensitivities. This synthesis was articulated in 1924 by Alaine Locke, who has often been described as “the Father of the New Negro Movement.”[[1148]](#endnote-1148) Locke’s orientation toward modernity and its religious, racial, and cultural corollaries was shaped by an undergraduate education at Harvard at the turn of the century and by graduate study at Oxford University and the University of Berlin en route to becoming the first African-American to earn a doctorate in philosophy.[[1149]](#endnote-1149) Locke’s education and lived experiences would lead him to reject his Episcopalian roots and embrace the religious and racial pluralism and humanism of Bahia. His escalating critique of Christianity was illuminated in his rejection of the belief that it was the “only true way of salvation with all other ways leading to damnation."[[1150]](#endnote-1150) Subsequently, hired by Howard University, Locke joined President Mordecai Johnson and colleagues like E. Franklin Frazier in modifying and modernizing Howard’s traditional religious orientation and curriculum.[[1151]](#endnote-1151)

Echoes of Blyden were sounded by Locke as he contended that "the American Negro must reach out toward his rightful share in the solution of African problems and the development of Africa's resources" because "as the physical composite of eighty-five percent at least of the African stocks, the American Negro is in a real sense the true Pan-African.”[[1152]](#endnote-1152) Locke also insisted that while African-Americans had a special role to play in efforts aimed at the uplift and the revitalization of Africa. Moreover, he noted that their efforts must take place in a context significantly different from that of the past.[[1153]](#endnote-1153) Especially to be rejected and regretted, he warned, was uncritical participation in the traditional missionary enterprise, with its condescending and uninformed efforts at "Christianizing and civilizing" Africa according to Western and European standards of modernity. With explicit reference to the findings of modern science and academic disciplines that were reassessing Africa and its role in human history, Locke insisted that “the question of the redemption of Africa has become with us the question of the regeneration of Africa. We now see that the missionary condescension of the past generations in their attitude toward Africa was a pious and sad mistake. In taking it, we have fallen into the snare of enemies and given grievous offense to our [African] brothers.”[[1154]](#endnote-1154) The era’s new academic, intellectual, and scientific developments were again alluded to as Lock argued that fellow African Americans, born and raised in the crucible of modernity, “need to be the first of all Westerners to rid ourselves of the insulting prejudice, the insufferable bias of the attitude of ‘civilizing Africa,’--for she is not only our mother but in the light of most recent science is beginning to appear as the mother of civilization in general.”[[1155]](#endnote-1155)

Lock additionally noted that if the era’s Pan-African movements were to be successful, it was imperative that African-Americans, in particular, "dismiss . . . [their] missionary condescension, . . . religious parochialism, and… pride of place" and acknowledge that Africa had much to offer both her westernized offspring and the world.[[1156]](#endnote-1156) Reflective of the increased secularism being embraced within some wings of Pan-Africanism, he also advised that “Above all, it must be recognized that for the present the best channels of co-operative effort lie along economic and educational lines and that religion and politics, with their inevitable contentiousness and suspicions, are for [far] less promising ways of approach and common effort.”[[1157]](#endnote-1157)

Although Lock was not in attendance, a similar valorization and celebration of Africa and disaffection with Christianity’s traditional missionary and civilizing paradigm had been expressed at the famed Pan-African Conference held at the start of the new century. Blyden was also not in attendance, but the growing divide between Pan-Africanism and traditional evangelical theology and missiology which he personified was evident. The delegate’s "Address to the Nations of the World," drafted primarily by W. E. B. Du Bois echoed Blyden’s long-standing critique of the traditional Christian mission enterprise and its complicity in black subjugation: "Let not the cloak of Christian missionary enterprise be allowed in the future, as so often in the past, to hide the ruthless economic exploitation and political downfall of less developed nations whose chief fault had been reliance on the plighted faith of the Christian Church."[[1158]](#endnote-1158)[[1159]](#endnote-1159) It was a warning that reverberated with increasing intensity throughout much of twentieth-century Pan-Africanism as subsequent Pan-African conferences attended by growing numbers of less traditionally conservative clergy, and more secular oriented African and diaspora African participates extended their critique of both Christianity and the mission enterprise's complicity in the exploitation of Africa’s resources and inhabitants. Reforms demanded were consistent with Blyden’s interrogation, adjudication, and mediation of religious, pedagogical, intellectual, and scientific advances associated with modernity and his insistence that his black colleagues could ill afford to ignore these currents. Thus the 1921 Pan African Congress calling for "Education in self-knowledge, [and] in scientific truth," echoed Blyden’s caution that too often "Science, Religion, and Philanthropy" had "been made the slaves of world-commerce and industry."[[1160]](#endnote-1160) [[1161]](#endnote-1161) The 1927 Congress continued this trend as its delegates advocated for a progressive and service-oriented missionary effort aligned with a more worldly, modern, and socially activist “gospel” focused on “missionary effort for health, morals, and education and not for military aggression and sectarian superstition.”[[1162]](#endnote-1162)

Blyden’s influence and legacy were also part of the “DNA” of some of the era’s lesser-known movements of Pan-African impetus. One of these was popularly known, as “Chief Alfred Sam’s Back to Africa Movement.” Its antecedents were found in the religious and racial rhetoric and vision of the nineteenth-century colonization effort that Blyden had been instrumental in defining and defending on both sides of the Atlantic.[[1163]](#endnote-1163) Blyden’s posthumous linkage to the movement was confirmed by the participation and leadership of arguably his most important American based devotee, the Yale Divinity School educated Sierra Leonean-- Orishatukeh Faduma.[[1164]](#endnote-1164) Upon Blyden’s death in 1912, Faduma succeeded him as one of the trans-Atlantic black community’s most important interrogators, adjudicators, and mediators of modernity’s religious and racial corollaries. Blyden’s posthumous influence was reflected in many of Faduma’s publications, along with his Pan-Africanist pedagogy, and his central role in two of the most tangible manifestations of Blyden’s dream of Pan-African and West African unity—the Back-To Africa Movement and the National Congress of British West Africa.[[1165]](#endnote-1165)

Faduma’s involvement with the Back to Africa Movement was rooted in a twentieth-century adaptation of Blyden’s dream of African colonization and his increased frustration and disgust with the racial climate of the United States. After graduation from Yale, Faduma had commenced his work as an American Missionary Association minister, educator, and missionary to his “kith and kin’ in North Carolina with a combination of optimism, idealism, and naiveté that led him to affirm, despite the era's increasing racism and imperialism, that the New Theology of Protestant liberalism was: “destined to uproot American prejudice against the Negro, elevate and purify the State, the Church, conquer Anglo-Saxon haughtiness, and make all nations confess that 'God is no respecter of persons.” [[1166]](#endnote-1166) However, after having labored for almost two decades in Troy amid painful disappointment with the failure of “the New Theology” to redress or even stem the region’s resurgent racism Faduma joined other disillusioned southern blacks in migration to Oklahoma. In a twentieth-century reiteration of Blyden’s role as a “colonization theologian,” he became, in effect, the theologian of Chief Alfred Sam’s Back to Africa Movement.

Having long shared and nourished Blyden’s dream of a selective African American return to Africa, Faduma was an enthusiastic recruit of this Pan-African-oriented commercial, missionary, and emigration venture. In numerous articles published in West African papers, he carefully explained the movements, biblical, theological, missiological, pedagogical, ideological, and historical justification.[[1167]](#endnote-1167) Despite active political, religious, and racial opposition from a variety of quarters, the movement succeeded in purchasing a ship and Faduma was among the selected delegates who sailed to West Africa upon the newly christened “Liberia.”[[1168]](#endnote-1168)

Although it overcame intense opposition on the American side of the Atlantic, by the time of the “Liberia’s” delayed arrival at the Gold Coast, the movement was collapsing under the weight of active British repression and poor planning. Desperately attempting to revive the fortunes and morale of the movement, Faduma linked its origins to both biblical and contemporary prophets. Pan-African visionaries such as his mentor, "Blyden of Liberia” were likened to Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, whom he described as “dreamers” who could not be dissuaded by the apparent folly and difficulties of their appointed mission.[[1169]](#endnote-1169) Notably, in his final public assessments of the collapsed movement, Faduma, accurately prophesied that the continued oppression of African-Americans in the United States would inevitably give rise to other Back-to-Africa Movements because "When a house is on firemen take unusual risks to save their lives.” [[1170]](#endnote-1170)

Upon the collapse of the Back to Africa Movement, Faduma resettled in Sierra Leone and as a teacher and minister and actively donned Blyden’s mantle as interrogator and mediator of modernity’s religious, pedagogical, and racial corollaries. Consequently, topics such as the “Demands of Modern Education,” “What the Study of Science Means,” “The Study of Science in Elementary and Secondary Schools,” “The New Education,” and “Negro Development: It's Meaning and Aims,” were regularly addressed by him in the West African press.[[1171]](#endnote-1171) Also reflective of his Blydenesque engagement with race, religion, and modernity, Faduma called for the establishment in Sierra Leone of a “Co-operative Missionary Training Institution," which would train Africans in modern religious and mission sciences.[[1172]](#endnote-1172) Notably, he suggested that at the core of the institution’s curriculum should be the comprehensive and "scientific" study of religion as incorporated in disciplines such as “the Philosophy of Religion, Anthropology, and Race Psychology, and Religious Psychology." [[1173]](#endnote-1173) Insisting that the study of comparative religion was the most important of the proposed disciplines, he informed readers of the Sierra Leone News that "It should be evident to all that the study of Comparative Religion is vital in the study of religion. It is to study religion subjectively. It is to know what religion is to one-self and what it is to the other man." However, echoing the continued allegiance and loyalty to Christianity, similarly expressed by many of comparative religion’s adherents and advocates, Faduma added that the discipline would show "that in the highest religion, the Christian, there are ideas which are found in germinal forms in the lowest religions."[[1174]](#endnote-1174)

Faduma’s continued intellectual and ideological indebtedness to Blyden also inspired his leadership and cooperation in the formation of the National Congress of West Africa.[[1175]](#endnote-1175) This short-lived organizational effort at the realization of Blyden’s dream of a united West African community “transcending tribal, religious, and …territorial divisions created by the colonizing powers” was another important but often unacknowledged legacy of Blyden’s engagement with and response to modernity [[1176]](#endnote-1176) Its’ primary catalyst was Casely Hayford, Blyden’s foremost West African based devotee.[[1177]](#endnote-1177)

Notwithstanding the efforts of Hayford, Faduma, and other Blyden acolytes, the Congress Movement had limited success and Faduma returned to America and re-association with the American Missionary Association. From his new post in Highpoint, North Carolina, Faduma would witness the realization of his prophecy uttered at the collapse of the Back To Africa Movement with the emergence of the "Back-to-Africa" efforts of Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association.[[1178]](#endnote-1178) As an educator and minister, Faduma actively nurtured other manifestations of this prophecy as he shared his Blyden influenced synthesis of race, religion, pedagogy, and ideology in response to twentieth-century currents of modernity with a new generation of black students in a variety of venues and publications.

Of special import was Faduma’s role as mentor to the increased number of African students who traveled to the United States to complete their education. Exemplary was an address titled “Africa’s Claims and Needs” delivered to a joint meeting of the African Student Union and the Student Bible Institute at Hampton Institute. The address was vintage Blyden as Faduma insisted to a younger generation of African students that “If Africa is to be regenerated it must come largely through her sons and daughters who are being trained and fitted for service and responsibility.” Issuing a Blydenesque caution to the student who might be "led to imitate and adopt foreign ideas and customs, and manners without adapting them to fit his environment," he advised that such a course would "invariably leave him a non-descript--neither African nor European nor an American," but rather "worse than he was before--a jackdaw in peacock's feathers." Selective adaptation from the West, not mimicry, he insisted, was to be the key to Africa's redemption and modernization. "Too often," he noted, "the life of the Westerner is held up in all matters as a standard and a sine qua non of civilization." Additionally echoing sentiments expressed by Blyden in African Life and Customs, Faduma reminded his listeners that Africans had also developed "a civilization" which though "hoary with age" had admirably served the needs of African people and in "respect to obedience to authority, . . . sex morality, honesty, truthfulness, and other virtues, the African . . . [had] little to learn from the more civilized Westerner." [[1179]](#endnote-1179)

Among the African students directly influenced by Faduma was the Ugandan Ernest Kalibala who, after exposure to the thought of Marcus Garvey, struggled to gain access to the United States to continue his education.[[1180]](#endnote-1180) Eventually successful in his efforts at emigration to the United States, Kalibala initially enrolled at Tuskegee Institute. However, he would soon abandon pedagogically and ideologically “safe” and prestigious Tuskegee, to be instructed and mentored by Faduma at tiny Lincoln Academy in North Carolina, en route to studying anthropology and earning a Bachelor of Science degree from New York University in 1933. Kalibala also subsequently received a Master’s degree in education from Teacher’s College with a thesis that echoed Blyden and Faduma in its argument for a pedagogy specifically tailored to the needs of Ugandans.[[1181]](#endnote-1181) Upon returning to Uganda, Kalibala established the Aggrey Industrial School with a curriculum informed by his anthropological and pedagogical studies. Returning to the United States in the 1940s, he was actively involved in the leadership of the more radical successor of the African Students Union, the African Students Association. Notably, the latter organization’s membership included fellow African students such as Kwame Nkrumah. Kalibala also found common cause with Nkrumah and other emergent Pan-African and nationalist leaders in appropriating the new ethnographic focused anthropological studies to provide more accurate and less demeaning depictions of their indigenous cultures. Thus in 1946, Kalibala was awarded a doctorate from Harvard University for an ethnographically focused dissertation titled “The Social Structure of the Baganda Tribe.”[[1182]](#endnote-1182) Blyden’s legacy via Faduma was also reflected in Kalibala’s broader pedagogical, anthropological, religious, and ideological orientation as attested in a series of articles about Africa published in the African American religious press.[[1183]](#endnote-1183)

Students, however, were not the only group exposed to Blyden’s thought and legacy via Faduma’s theological, pedagogical, and ideological teachings. Addresses before various religious and educational conventions and the publication of articles, sermons, and lectures in major newspapers and journals projected his views to a much larger audience on both sides of the Atlantic and as such continued and extended Blyden’s legacy as a pioneering interrogator, adjudicator and mediator of modernity’s religious, racial and pedagogical corollaries.[[1184]](#endnote-1184) Ironically, Faduma’s death occurred in North Carolina in January 1946, amid the elongating shadow of the Fifth Pan-African Conference held in Manchester, England. Arguably, the most important of the twentieth century Pan-African Conference, it was presided over by a new generation of Blyden’s intellectual, ideological, and spiritual offspring which Faduma had helped to inspire and nurture.[[1185]](#endnote-1185)

Reverberations of Blyden’s influence and legacy throughout the wider diaspora was additionally reflected in the Pan-African efforts of the Jamaican Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) and his formation of the United Negro Improvement Association. In 1913, the 26-year-old Garvey, newly immigrated to England, summited an application to use the reading room of the British Museum in which he confessed that among “the special purposes for which I would like to use the said room are ‘Reading the works of the late Dr. Edward Blyden LL.D.’*”*[[1186]](#endnote-1186) Blyden’s premier publication Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, with its emphasis on the “African Personality” and “the desirability of return to Africa “ had an especially significant “impact” on Garvey whose “first publication after launching the UNIA in 1914,” reportedly contained a four-page extended quotation from Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race.”[[1187]](#endnote-1187)

A maturing Garvey shared Blyden’s awareness of the importance of “religion” as a key aspect of the black encounter with and response to modernity and as critical to the uplift and redemption of Africans worldwide. Hence the prominence accorded religion and the “religious question” by Garvey and the UNIA.[[1188]](#endnote-1188) Garvey’s religious orientation paralleled that of Blyden at key points and the UNIA’s motto “One God, One Aim, One Destiny” reflected a Pan-African synthesis of religion, racial consciousness, and racial uplift that echoed Blyden’s prescription to the bludgeon of modernity. Garvey’s hermeneutical and theological inclinations also paralleled those of Blyden as evidenced by his frequent appeal to and creative interpretation of Blyden’s favorite biblical texts such as the “Ethiopian Manifesto” (Psalm 68:3. Moreover, with his rejection of claims of biblical literacy and related insistence on the right and responsibility to engage in the interpretation of scripture, Garvey, like Blyden, forthrightly addressed the prominence and debilitating impact of continued hermeneutical and theological racism. More broadly, Garvey embraced and echoed Blyden’s admonition that Africans and diaspora Africans view God "through our own spectacles." The result was Garvey’s and the UNIA’s affirmation of not only a critical black hermeneutic but also a liberative theology with an accompanying black god—all of which had been promoted by Blyden.[[1189]](#endnote-1189)It is also significant that Garvey’s Blydenesque synthesis of theology, hermeneutics, and racial ideology amidst twentieth-century currents of modernity was shared and embraced to varying degrees by a trans-Atlantic cadre of progressive and liberal black clergy supporters that included William H. Ferris, James Robert Lincoln Diggs, William Henry Moses, William Yancy Bell, George Alexander McGuire, and William B. Euba.[[1190]](#endnote-1190)

More theologically conservative critics on both sides of the Atlantic were not as enthused by Garvey’s other-than orthodox religious orientation. Reflective of this sentiment was an article penned from Sierra Leone which concluded that both he and Blyden were "godless."[[1191]](#endnote-1191) The article also echoed Grimke’s warning to the American black community about the danger of following non-orthodox leaders such as Du Bois. More broadly, the author’s perspective and sentiments illuminated increased trans-Atlantic tensions between Christian traditionalists and less conservative Africans and diaspora Africans whose religious orientations had been significantly recontoured under the press of modernity’s academic, intellectual, racial, and religious corollaries. The increasing religious disjunct and divide even among those committed to “race uplift” was evident as the article’s author used the Sierra Leone Weekly News to explicitly attack in sectarian and dogmatic tones not only the religious views of Garvey and the long-deceased Blyden but also the more critical views of Christianity embraced by an emergent educated black intelligentsia: “It is vain for men, whether they combine on their backs the hoods of all three Universities at once, to go talking lightly of Christianity. It is not only vain; it is an act of folly. Such men may shine as Orators but cannot be altogether depended on as leaders of such a great cause as that of race uplift. A leader who is not a Christian in the sense of being an absolute devotee to Jesus, who is called Christ, can only go half-way.” “[H]enceforth”, he admonished, that “the man whether he be a Jamaican as Garvey is, or a West Indian as Dr. Blyden was, who, brandishing a sword, presents himself as Leader of his Race . . . must be searched out, and there must be convincing proof [that]he is also a loyal servant of Jesus the Nazarene.[[1192]](#endnote-1192)

The critique was a telling indictment of the extent to which the problematic of religious and theological diversity continued to contour and divide the African and diaspora African religious response to modernity deep into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the ecumenical and inter-religious sensibilities that emerged as a key component of Blyden’s interrogation, critique, and mediation of modernity may have anticipated and influenced the awareness of twentieth-century Pan-African and nationalist leaders that any successful mass-based movement of people of African descent had to address and accommodate the challenges posed not only by adherents of diverse religious traditions but also those posed by growing numbers of blacks who, under the influence of secular ideologies of twentieth-century modernity, affirmed no religious orientation. Hence the 1921 Pan-African conference, attended by an ecumenical array of prominent African American and West African clergy, attempted to address the “Religious Question” and echoed Blyden in its call for “freedom in . . . religion and customs with the right to be non-conformist and different.”[[1193]](#endnote-1193) Similarly, in 1924 the fourth international convention of the UNIA also attempted to engage the fact and problematic of religious diversity among the movement’s adherents.[[1194]](#endnote-1194)

Blyden’s emphasis on the production and dissemination of accurate knowledge about Africa and her descendants was among the most important aspects of his role and legacy as an interrogator, adjudicator, and mediator of modernity. To this end, he bequeathed to later generations an impressive corpus of published works that disseminated his thought throughout Africa and the Atlantic world. A related but often overlooked part of this legacy was his pioneering contribution to the emergence on both sides of the Atlantic of an informed and independent black press. Blyden early perceived this development as a crucial and essential part of his adjudication and mediation of modernity and in doing so anticipated several contemporary scholars who have argued that the establishment of newspapers was essential to the critical engagement of blacks with modernity and its corollaries.[[1195]](#endnote-1195) Amid religious and pedagogical controversy in Sierra Leone in the early 1870s, he had endorsed and supported the short-lived Negro as a vital tool of both his critique of the religious, pedagogical, and racial agenda of agents of European modernity and the dissemination of accurate information about Africans and their needs. [[1196]](#endnote-1196) It is also notable that in the wake of the Negro’s demise, Blyden joined Joseph Claudius May in the founding of The Sierra Leone Weekly News. Established in 1884, the Weekly News served as an important conduit of black thought and writings throughout West Africa. Issues related to the intersection of race, religion, and modernity were of frequent concern and reportedly “with Blyden as a regular contributor, [it] tended to approve anything distinctively African, and deplored slavish imitation of European ways.”[[1197]](#endnote-1197) Blyden also inspired and was supportive of the emergence and success of other West African and diaspora based journals. Among the latter was the AME Church Review, which was one of the earliest and most influential African American religious journals. Blyden’s support induced its founding editor Rev. Benjamin Tanner to cite from across the Atlantic both Blyden and Faduma as among those “scholars of the race” who “so nobly helped us make the Reviewwhat it is.”[[1198]](#endnote-1198) Of related importance was the support and inspiration which Blyden provided to black journalists. Among these was John Edward Bruce (1856-1924) who was one of the most important African American journalists of the late Victorian Era. With Blyden as “mentor” and “father figure” Bruce actively labored on behalf of the formation and nurture of a black press and journalism that through the dissemination of accurate information sought to uplift and vindicate blacks throughout the world.[[1199]](#endnote-1199) Blyden’s influence on a later generation of Pan-African focused black journals and journalists such as Marcus Garvey and his Black World; Duse Mohamed Ali’s (1866-1945) influential African Times and Orient Review and the numerous journalistic efforts of Nnamdi Azikiwe are also to be noted.[[1200]](#endnote-1200)

It is of related significance that Blyden’s appreciation of the production of factual knowledge and published scholarship as critical tools of the black engagement with modernity helped to forge an important additional link with W. E. B. Du Bois. Notably, “religion” in its multiple forms and formats was also of special interest and concern to the Fisk, Harvard, and the University of Berlin educated scholar who would become the most prominent of the growing cadre of American born black scholars, engaged with the problematic of race, religion, and modernity.[[1201]](#endnote-1201) It is also noteworthy that Du Bois’ personal and professional writings narrate an intellectual and religious metamorphosis that paralleled that of Blyden as they chronicled an engagement with modernity’s intellectual, religious, and racial corollaries which increasingly distanced him from both religious and academic orthodoxy.[[1202]](#endnote-1202) Thus in numerous addresses and venues as well as scholarly and literary works such as The Negro Church and The Souls of Black Folk, Du Bois evidenced his expansive appreciation of and concern with “religion” as a critical arena and factor in the black encounter with the myriad challenges posed by modernity. [[1203]](#endnote-1203)

Both Du Bois and Blyden also shared an interest in and selective appropriation of disciplines and methodologies emergent under the press of late Victorian modernity. And as was the case with Blyden, of particular concern to Du Bois was the emergent discipline of comparative religion and its potential impact on both scholarly and popular perceptions of African and diaspora African peoples, religions, and culture.[[1204]](#endnote-1204) David Chidester, astutely points out that Du Bois’ critical engagement with comparative religion and corollary disciplines such as sociology led him, like Blyden, to “raise critical issues for the study of religion.” Moreover, Blyden anticipated what Chidester has described as Du Bois’ “critical engagement with the problem of indigenous African religion that stands in counterpoint to the constructions of primitive religion by classic theorists of imperial comparative religion.”[[1205]](#endnote-1205)

Du Bois also shared with Blyden an appreciation of the importance of the black media as a critical tool of the black response to modernity and the related advance of Pan-Africanism. It was a concern reflected in a series of journalistic efforts that included most prominently Du Bois's role in the founding and editorial direction of The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races as the official magazine of the NAACP in 1910. Especially under the editorial direction of Du Bois, The Crisis presented the black community with an informative and progressive perspective on a variety of issues and subjects including the varied intersections of race, religion, gender, and modernity.[[1206]](#endnote-1206)

It is ironic that despite their shared intellectual, academic, theological, and ideological, interests and concerns, Blyden and Du Bois, arguably, the era’s most influential black scholars and “public intellectuals,” never met face to face and knew each other only by way of “reputation” and publications.[[1207]](#endnote-1207) Nevertheless, an awareness that they shared a mutual commitment to production and dissemination of accurate information and knowledge about the black race induced Du Bois to pen a letter to Blyden four years before the latter’s death that requested his assistance in the production of an “Encyclopedia Africana."[[1208]](#endnote-1208) Du Bois’s letter opened with the confession “I know you by reputation” and proceeded to announce: “I am venturing to address you on the subject of a Negro Encyclopaedia. In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Emancipation of the American Negro, I am proposing to bring out an Encyclopaedia Africana covering the chief points in the history and condition of the Negro race.” While acknowledging his intent to enlist the assistance of prominent white scholars such as William James and Franz Boaz, Du Bois assured Blyden that “the real work I want done by Negroes” facilitated by the creation of a board of “One Hundred Negro Americans, African and West Indian Scholars.” [[1209]](#endnote-1209)

Dubois’ invitation to Blyden to participate in this venture is especially significant since the encyclopedia genre, initially popularized by European scholars, has been hailed as among the most significant literary and scholarly by-products of late Victorian modernity. Gates and Appiah, point out that these popular compilations "consolidated the scholarly knowledge accumulated by academics and intellectuals in the Age of Reason” and “served both as a tangible sign of the enlightened skepticism that characterized that era of scholarship, and as a basis upon which further scholarship could be constructed." Moreover, it was argued that they "became monuments to ‘scientific' inquiry, bulwarks against superstition, myth, and what their authors viewed as the false solace of religious faith.”[[1210]](#endnote-1210)

As envisioned by Du Bois, the Encyclopedia Africana would be a similar reflection of the African and diaspora African encounter with modernity and its corollaries "and would achieve these [same] things for persons of African descent." However, Gates and Appiah note that "a black encyclopedia would have an additional function.” Its success would “at least symbolically, unite the fragmented world of the African diaspora, a diaspora created by the European slave trade and the turn of the century ‘scramble for Africa.' Moreover, for Du Bois, marshaling the tools of ‘scientific knowledge' . . . could also serve as a weapon in the war against racism." [[1211]](#endnote-1211)

The ailing Blyden’s response to Du Bois's overture is unknown, but key aspects of his thought and legacy were at least symbolically represented by the inclusion of West African disciples such as William Sarbah and especially Casely Hayford on the project’s editorial board. Blyden’s more extended contribution was also subsequently reflected in the decisive support eventually provided Du Bois and the “long overdue” project in the early 1960s with its revitalization in an independent Ghana under the sponsorship of the nation’s founding president Kwame Nkrumah. Notably, Nkrumah was among the new generation of twentieth-century African and diaspora African scholar-activists decisively influenced by Blyden’s thought and legacy.[[1212]](#endnote-1212)

**Chapter 27: Nurturing a New Generation of Scholar-activists**

The influence of Blyden’s pioneering interrogation and mediation of modernity’s intersecting religious, racial, and ideological corollaries was discernible among the generation of Pan-African scholars and activists who pursued higher education in the United States during the interwar years. Several of them engaged the religious, academic, intellectual, and ideological aspects of the black twentieth-century encounter with modernity in ways that both paralleled and built upon Blyden’s earlier thought and writings. Illustrative was Kwame Nkrumah, with whom much of postwar Pan-Africanism and the struggle against European colonialism and neo-colonialism would be associated.[[1213]](#endnote-1213)

Born in 1909 on the Gold Coast and raised as Catholic, Nkrumah was one of the many Africans that traveled to the United States to study during the interwar era. And upon his arrival in the mid-1930s, Nkrumah, like many of his African contemporaries, initially matriculated at a historically black institution of higher education. His enrollment at Lincoln University continued the school’s long tradition of educating West Africans even as it immersed him in the twentieth century dialectic of race, religion, and modernity being renegotiated in American institutions of higher learning. [[1214]](#endnote-1214) Lincoln University’s engagement with this dialectic was shaped by its historic ties to Princeton Seminary as well as the subsequent controversy between traditionalists and modernists that continued to roil American and African Presbyterian communities. This dialectic was personified by the school’s historic links to Francis Grimke, one of its most prominent graduates, and Edward Blyden whom the school granted several honorary degrees including the “Doctor of Divinity.”[[1215]](#endnote-1215) Unavoidably, Lincoln’s theologically and academically conservative curriculum and faculty would grudgingly engage some of the twentieth century’s more controversial academic, intellectual, and theological currents. Thus its students were inevitably, even if reluctantly, exposed to the insights and methodologies of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, economics, and comparative religion that were maturing under the surge of twentieth-century currents of modernity and its intellectual, academic, religious, and racial corollaries. Nkrumah, pursuing and earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology and economics, was among the students who benefited from Lincoln’s hesitantly expanded curriculum.[[1216]](#endnote-1216)

Like Grimke and Blyden, Nkrumah exhibited an interest in religion and the ministry which inspired him to additionally pursue the Bachelor of Theology degree from Lincoln’s School of Theology. En route to his theological degree which was awarded with “honors,” Nkrumah reportedly preached sermons often focused on Africa before African American congregations. [[1217]](#endnote-1217) However, Nkrumah was simultaneously undergoing an intellectual and theological metamorphosis paralleling that experienced by Blyden, Faduma, Cooper, and Du Bois which increasingly distanced him from the tenets and presuppositions of both his youthful Catholicism and Lincoln’s traditional Reformed orthodoxy.[[1218]](#endnote-1218) Nkrumah’s metamorphosis reflected an encounter with the dialectic of religion, race, and modernity that was attested during a valedictorian address in which he expounded the twentieth-century meaning and relevance of Acts 23rd –the so-called “Ethiopian prophesy” which had often been evoked and interpreted by Blyden in support of black unity and engagement with modernity.[[1219]](#endnote-1219) Illuminated by Nkrumah’s evocation and interpretation was the maturing intellectual, hermeneutical, and theological orientation that similarly empowered his critique and rejection of literal and traditional interpretations of scripture and Christianity.[[1220]](#endnote-1220)

It is a testament to the trans-Atlantic influence and legacy of Blyden that Nkrumah appears to have been substantively introduced to Blyden’s thoughts and writings, not in Africa but while attending lectures in Harlem sponsored by the “Blyden Society for the Study of African History” founded by Blyden devotee John Edward Bruce. [[1221]](#endnote-1221) However, acknowledgment of the impact of Blyden’s thought on Nkrumah has been generally been understated. This understatement, the result, in part, of Nkrumah’s emphasis on the influence of fellow Gold Coast educator and missionary statesman, Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey who traveled to the United States for study in1898, graduated from Livingstone College, and earned a doctorate in education from Columbia University in 1923.[[1222]](#endnote-1222) Notwithstanding, Aggrey’s early influence, it is apparent that Nkrumah’s mature engagement with and response to the intersection of race, religion, and twentieth-century currents of modernity more closely paralleled that of Blyden than that of the more theologically and ideological conservative Aggrey.

As he became increasingly familiar with the disciplines and methodologies of comparative religion, sociology, pedagogy, biblical studies, theology, and philosophy that were maturing in the crucible of twentieth-century modernity, Nkrumah’s orientation toward Christianity became less confessional and more intellectually and ideologically critical. He also became increasingly committed to critically interrogating and appropriating the insights of these disciplines and methodologies particularly as their perspectives and findings pertained to African and diaspora African peoples and culture. Thus, for Nkrumah, as for Blyden, the methodologies and insights provided by these disciplines became valued tools for the mental and physical liberation of both Africans and diaspora Africans.[[1223]](#endnote-1223)

Nkrumah’s critical interrogation and appropriation of the perspectives and methodologies of a number of these disciplines were reflected in several student papers that he authored. His sociological interests and studies inspired a survey of Philadelphia blacks and its findings were incorporated in an unpublished paper titled “African Background on the Mind and Thought of the New World Negro.” Illuminated in it were academic and intellectual themes that would prove foundational for Nkrumah’s mature Pan-African thought as he contrasted the methodological orientations and implications of the competing thesis advanced by Howard sociologist E. Franklin Frazier and North Western University anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits regarding the influence of African cultural “survivals” in the Diaspora. Frazier’s thesis of minimal historical and contemporary African influence was rejected as Nkrumah embraced Herskovits’ more controversial rejoinder in support of the continued influence of African cultural traditions. Nkrumah also embraced the accompanying ideological implications of sustained African and diaspora African linkage and unity.[[1224]](#endnote-1224)

Of related importance for Nkrumah’s academic, intellectual as well as ideological maturation was his increased familiarity, critical interrogation, and application of the insights and methodologies of the evolving discipline of comparative religion. Illustrative was a Nkrumah authored paper titled “The History of Religion in a Critique of West African Fetishism.” Its’ title clearly reflected Nkrumah’s awareness of the prevailing religious discourse regarding African religion as well as the academy’s more frequent use of “history of religion” in reference to the maturing discipline of “comparative religion.” Additionally previewed within the paper was Nkrumah’s evolving perspective on religion in general and African indigenous religions in particular.[[1225]](#endnote-1225) His critical interrogation and selective appropriation of the methodology and perspective of the “history of religion” subsequently provided intellectual and academic legitimation for his Blydenesque rejection of the presumptive superiority of Christianity and Western Christian civilization and his accompanying appreciation and valorization of African traditional religion and culture.

Notably, Nkrumah’s maturing synthesis of religion, race, and culture, fostered controversy at Lincoln University which illuminated the increasing gulf between the school’s academic, theological, and ideological conservatives and a new generation of more liberal and progressive faculty and students. In contrast to the former, many of the latter were more inclined to selectively appropriate the promising but problematic academic, intellectual, and cultural trove of twentieth-century modernity in defense of Africa and its traditional culture.

Particularly revealing was a controversy between Nkrumah and Dr. George Johnson, who was Dean of Lincoln’s Seminary as well as Nkrumah’s professor of theology and philosophy. It was occasioned by a memorial service held on November 26, 1942, at the grave of Dr. Aggrey. Nkrumah, who considered himself to be a protégé of his deceased Gold Coast compatriot, presided over the ceremony in his capacity as president of the African Students Association.[[1226]](#endnote-1226) In the aftermath of the ceremony, reports of the inclusion of ritual libations and prayerful appeals to Aggrey's African ancestors induced criticism from Dr. Johnson who denounced it as “an Animistic service without Christian significance and indeed contradictory to Christian teaching....and directly forbidden in the Holy Scripture.” [[1227]](#endnote-1227) The barbed response which followed from Nkrumah provides important insight into how his comparative study of religion was recasting his views of both Christianity and his ancestral religion and culture. Valorization of his Akan religious and cultural heritage, as well as critical assessment and appreciation of Western Christianity, was affirmed as he proclaimed simultaneous commitment to “the best in Christianity and [the best] in the laws and customs, and beliefs of my people.”[[1228]](#endnote-1228)

Nkrumah’s student papers, the memorial service, and its attendant controversy support the thesis that the maturation of his academic, intellectual, religious, and ideological orientation in response to twentieth-century currents of modernity, paralleled and was likely influenced by the legacy of Blyden’s earlier interrogation, mediation, and adjudication of the academic, intellectual, religious, racial, and cultural corollaries of late Victorian modernity.[[1229]](#endnote-1229) Of related significance is Nkrumah’s revealing self-description of his religious, intellectual, and ideological metamorphosis under the press of twentieth-century modernity’s more expansive theological, intellectual, academic, and secular currents. Recounting his religious odyssey, he confessed: "I took my religion seriously and was very often to be found serving at Mass. [But] As I grew older. . . the strict discipline of Roman Catholicism stifled me. It was not that I became any less religious but rather that I sought freedom in the worship and communion with my God . . . .Today I am a non-denominational Christian and a Marxist socialist and I have not found any contradiction between the two." [[1230]](#endnote-1230) Arguably, Nkrumah’s description of his religious metamorphosis essentially paralleled Blyden’s earlier response to the myriad currents of Victorian-era modernity which fostered his embrace of a socially engaged “latitudinarian” version of Christianity, demittance of his ordination, and subsequently his valorization and defense of Africa’s indigenous religious traditions and even an indigenous “socialism.”[[1231]](#endnote-1231)

A Blydenesque parallel and influence was also reflected in the pedagogical theory that Nkrumah formulated as he pursued undergraduate and graduate studies in education at Lincoln and subsequently the University of Pennsylvania. He not only rejected traditional colonial and missionary education as inadequate but his insistence that an African educational model and agenda should incorporate the social and scientific ideals and techniques of progressive pedagogy adapted to the peculiar traits and needs of the African population suggested his embrace of Blyden’s concept of an “African Personality.”[[1232]](#endnote-1232) Moreover, Nkrumah reiterated Blyden’s argument that “any system of education worth its salt should be made consistent with the changing needs of the community in which the individual personality finds expression” and that “any educational program which fails to furnish criteria for the judgment of social, political, economic and technical progress of the people it purports to serve has completely failed in its purpose, and has become an educational fraud.”[[1233]](#endnote-1233) In effect, a liberative pedagogy was envisioned, as he concurred that “in the educational process of the African the best in the western culture should be combined with the best in African culture” and that the end product would be “a new class of educated African” who would “demand the powers of self-determination and independence to determine the progress and advancement of their own country.”[[1234]](#endnote-1234)

Additional evidence of Nkrumah’s interrogation and application of comparative, anthropological, and philosophical theories and methodologies to the West African context was their incorporation into the prospectus and initial draft of his proposed doctoral thesis titled “Mind and Thought in Primitive Society: A Study of Ethno-Philosophy with Special Reference to the Akan Peoples of the Gold Coast, West Africa.” In it, Nkrumah critically engaged a list of past and contemporary scholars of religion, anthropology, and philosophy which included E. B. Tylor, William James, and Franz Boas as he employed ethnographic and comparative methodology to provide a defense of “the beliefs, customs, and norms” of his indigenous Akan culture. [[1235]](#endnote-1235) Central to his thesis was an aggressive refutation of popular academic theories about “Primitive Man” advanced by prominent Western and European scholars such as Levy Bruhl which represented the latest reiteration of academic and intellectual racism which implied that the African and his descendants have “an inherently lower mentality” and had produced a culture that was inferior to that of Europeans.[[1236]](#endnote-1236) Perhaps not surprisingly, given its racial and anti-colonial implications, Nkrumah’s thesis was rejected by the University of Pennsylvania reportedly for being “too political.”[[1237]](#endnote-1237) However, critical synthesis of the intersection of religion, indigenous culture, and modernity would continue to be productively employed by Nkrumah as he matured as a Pan-Africanist theoretician and activist.

The intersection and synthesis of religion and modernity would be of seminal importance in Nkrumah’s struggle for African liberation and his subsequent emergence as Ghana’s “first post-colonial political leader.” Paradoxically, however, this intersection and synthesis have generally been given minimal attention in assessments of Nkrumah’s later life and career. In an important corrective, Ebenezer Addo explores how Nkrumah as an emerging national leader drew upon an understanding of the role and function of religion forged in his earlier religious, sociological, and especially comparative and ethnographic studies in an effort “to wield ethnically diverse groups with primordial attachments together.” Addo concludes that “as a leader of the Ghanaian people, Nkrumah was confronted with two main tasks, national integration, and modernization. [And] In both cases, Nkrumah utilized the available Ghanaian religious heritage, an eclectic mix of Ghanaian traditional religions, Euro-Christianity, and Islam.” More broadly, Addo argues that “Because of religion’s capacity to shape discourse about any major issue in the contemporary world, including politics, it served him considerably well.” [[1238]](#endnote-1238) Thus, consistent with Blyden’s insistence on the importance and primacy of the religious encounter with modernity, religion also became for Nkrumah an important tool linking the demands of African indigenous religious and cultural traditions in support of his presidency and policies amid the currents of post-colonial modernity.[[1239]](#endnote-1239)

Blyden’s anticipation of and contribution to Nkrumah’s mature synthesis of religion and religiosity in support of his agenda is also noted by Tibebu who observes that

In his philosophical manifesto of the African revolution, Consciencism, Nkrumah states his theory of Africa’s “triple heritage”: traditional African communalism, Islamic civilization, and European–derived Christianity. His triple heritage is in accord with what Blyden expresses unequivocally in his piece, The Significance of Liberia. Nkrumah notes, “African society has one segment which comprises our traditional way of life; it has a second segment which is filled by the presence of the Islamic tradition in Africa; it has a final segment which represents the infiltration of the Christian tradition and culture of Western Europe into Africa . . . . [and] Like Blyden, he opt[ed] for a syncretic synthesis of these three segments, not a rejection of one or the other.[[1240]](#endnote-1240)

Addo concurs with the related assessment that Nkrumah “us[ed} religion as an effective instrument in shaping the beliefs, attitude, and behavior of Ghanaians so as to build a new state, Ghana.” “Nkrumah,” he notes, “was sensitive to the pluralistic nature of the religious scene in West Africa. Specifically, he saw certain positive things in Ghana’s triple heritage of traditional religion, Christianity, and Islam. All these religions received new meaning and zest in his political rhetoric, symbols of office, and leadership style. Religious pluralism in a secular state was thus made to be an important aspect of national integration.” [[1241]](#endnote-1241) Thus notwithstanding his parallel adaptation and advocacy of “scientific socialism” and even ambiguous views about its future functions, Nkrumah perceived as did Blyden, that “religion” would play an essential role in the complex process of Africa’s multiple (physical, psychological, spiritual and even material) stages of liberation and “Decolonization.”[[1242]](#endnote-1242)

Other emergent black scholar-activists of Nkrumah’s generation were also influenced by their discovery of Blyden’s writings in the Atlantic Diaspora. Many would even bond intellectually, and ideologically around them. An example of this dynamic is provided by Duodu who argues that Nkrumah’s ties to Blyden’s thought and influence were nurtured by his relationship with George Padmore (aka Malcolm Nurse 1901-1959). In a poignant tribute to the personal impact that Blyden’s words and thought could evoke years after his death, Padmore upon discovery of the writings of Blyden in a collection of his father’s books while at home in Trinidad was so impressed that he encouraged his wife to name their newborn infant after the pioneering West African scholar.[[1243]](#endnote-1243) After emigrating to the United States to continue his education, Padmore joined Nkrumah and a growing cadre of African and diaspora African students who were radicalized by American racism and their engagement directly or indirectly with the continued relevance of Blyden’s academic, intellectual, and ideological amid the bludgeon of the twentieth-century modernity.[[1244]](#endnote-1244)

An intellectual, academic, religious, and ideological odyssey in response to twentieth-century currents of modernity that paralleled that of Nkrumah and Padmore was additionally reflected in the studies, writings, and activities of Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904-1996). After emigrating from Nigeria in 1925 Azikiwe would spend almost a decade in the United States.[[1245]](#endnote-1245) During his sojourn in the United States, Azikiwe also attended historic black institutions including Storer College as well as Lincoln and Howard universities before matriculating at Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania where he excelled in studies of history, philosophy, journalism, political science, and anthropology.[[1246]](#endnote-1246) Of particular importance was Azikiwe’s discernment of the relevance and importance of the new anthropological theories and methodologies that were emerging under the press of twentieth-century modernity. [[1247]](#endnote-1247) His critical appropriation and application of them to the African context attracted the attention of Bronislaw Malinowski, the acclaimed “founder of modern fieldwork methods in anthropology” which emphasized ethnography. [[1248]](#endnote-1248) However, it is notable that as early as 1908 Blyden also emphasized the importance of ethnographic research for the accurate presentation of a holistic view of African culture that identified and emphasized the integral, organic, and functional relationship of African social systems and their linkage of religious rituals, economics, kinship relations, gender roles, and social customs.[[1249]](#endnote-1249)

Although Malinowski appeared to be oblivious to the methodological contributions of Blyden, Azikiwe was not. Consequently, the latter’s applications of the insights and perspectives of anthropology and ethnography to the West African context directly paralleled the focus of several of Blyden’s writings and addresses. A Blydenesque orientation was also reflected in Azikiwe’s 1932 study of the impact of modernity within Liberia which was researched in conjunction with his work towards a doctoral dissertation at Columbia University.[[1250]](#endnote-1250) Blydenesque concerns and themes regarding the broader African encounter with and response to modernity were also evident in later publications such as Renascent Africa.[[1251]](#endnote-1251) Azikiwe’s critical appropriation and application of the era’s “new” ethnographic and anthropological studies and methodologies to the African encounter with modernity within the colonial and post-colonial context would make him a valued advisor to Nkrumah in Ghana. They would also prove vital to his subsequent emergence as the first president of an independent Nigeria in 1963.[[1252]](#endnote-1252)

Unlike Nkrumah, Azikiwe was forthright in his acknowledgment of the impact and influence of Blyden, whom he not only lauded as a pioneer advocate of “the cause of African unity and dignity” but also as the intellectual architect of “the foundation upon which West African history was built.”[[1253]](#endnote-1253) Thus it was a fitting tribute to the influence and legacy of Blyden that Azikiwe, as president of an independent Nigeria, penned the foreword to Edith Holden’s biography of Blyden and proclaimed him “one of the greatest Africanists of all time.” Situating Blyden’s contributions and legacy both historically and contemporaneously, Azikiwe added:

“In his days, his was a lone voice in the wilderness when he disseminated ideas for the honest portrayal and appraisal of [the] African personality, for very few of his contemporaries appreciated the gospel of this visionary or were able to comprehend the message of this dreamer. In spite of this understandable handicap, his influence on the course of West African affairs of his day . . . was so potent that students of African history and culture will not fail to recognize the genius of this illustrious son of

Africa.[[1254]](#endnote-1254)

Jomo Kenyatta who departed his East African homeland for study in the Soviet Union and Britain in the 1920s was also a product and representative of a twentieth-century African encounter with the academic, intellectual, religious, racial, and cultural currents of modernity previewed in the thought and work of Blyden. As was the case with Nkrumah and Azikiwe, Kenyatta discovered that interrogation, critical appropriation, and selective application particularly of the new theoretical and methodological insights associated with anthropology and comparative religion provided academic and intellectual tools that were essential to his leadership of post-war Pan-African and nationalist efforts.[[1255]](#endnote-1255) They would influence and inform his politics and policies as he joined Nkrumah, Azikiwe, and other indigenous comparativists and “scholar-politicians” as the first president of a newly independent Kenya in 1964.

Kenyatta’s ethnographically focused thesis titled Facing Mount Kenya not only reflected significant changes that were taking place within the disciplines of anthropology and comparative religion during the inter-war era but was also an emphatic response to Blyden’s biting critique at the turn of the century of the often ill-informed and racist scholarship of Western “armchair scholars” and his call for ethnographic research on Africa that was rooted in proximity to its subject matter. It is also relevant that Kenyatta’s thesis was supervised by professor Bryan Malinowski of the University of London who had also expressed interest in Azikiwe’s interrogation, critical appropriation, and application of the era’s new anthropological and ethnographic studies to the African context.

Malinowski’s introduction to the published version of Kenyatta’s thesis echoed methodological concerns prophetically expressed by Blyden in African Life and Customs as he hailed Kenyatta as among the most important of the era’s new generation of African indigenous comparativists, who “through his upbringing....combines to an unusual extent the knowledge of Western ways and Western modes of thought with training and outlook essentially African.” Malinowski also opined that Kenyatta’s text was “one of the first really competent and instructive contributions to African ethnography by a scholar of pure African parentage” and concluded that “As a first-hand account of a representative African culture, [it was] an invaluable document in the principles underlying culture-contact and change” and “as a personal statement of the new outlook of a progressive African, this book will rank as a pioneering achievement of outstanding merit.”[[1256]](#endnote-1256)

Kenyatta, like Blyden, perceived “religion” as a critical arena of the continued African encounter with modernity and an arena that would benefit from more accurate knowledge generated by the era’s new methodological focus. Thus “religion” was the explicit focus of two chapters of his text and titled “Religion and Ancestor Worship” and “The New Religion in East Africa.”[[1257]](#endnote-1257) In his concluding chapter, Kenyatta also explicitly appropriated the new ethnographic methodology to present an analysis of the intersection of missionary Christianity and indigenous Gikuya religion that paralleled the analysis and insights regarding Christianity, Islam, and African indigenous religions and modernity presented by Blyden decades earlier. Kenyatta wrote:

When we come to religion, we see again that Gikuyu religion is integrated with the whole of Gikuyu life . . . . It is not reasonable to expect the Gikuyu to assimilate Christianity whole as the European missionary expounds it. Its language and its traditions have no relation to his daily life, its ceremony is meaningless to him, and its moral code, with its insistence on monogamy for which Gikuyu economy is not planned, and its objection to the central rituals of his own society, strikes him as subversive of all intelligible social values. But the new religious movement does show that Africans, under the influence of new forces, are not incapable of a spontaneous adaptation. It is an effort from within, to assimilate what seems to them valuable in the Christian code and the culture of which it is a part, while at the same time adapting it to the needs of Gikuyu life.[[1258]](#endnote-1258)

Leopold Senghor (1906-2001) was another African scholar-activist who exemplified a related but often overlooked aspect of Blyden’s legacy that was crucial to the ongoing black engagement with modernity during the twentieth century.[[1259]](#endnote-1259) Born in Senegal, Senghor emigrated to France where he pursued literary studies and was early enthralled by the new ethnographic studies that were presenting more positive perspectives of African culture.[[1260]](#endnote-1260) In the early 1930s, his studies and cultural interests merged as he joined Aime Cesaire (1913-2008) and Léon Damas (1912–1978) as formulators of the Negritude Movement as it emerged in the extended wake of the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro Movement.[[1261]](#endnote-1261) Blyden’s contribution is noted by contemporary scholars such as Hollis Lynch and Robert July who point out that the Negritude Movement was forged on the anvil of Blyden’s pioneering interrogation and mediation of the intersection of race, religion, and modernity and particularly his concept of an “African Personality” and its positive affirmation of “an innate Negro character or ‘Personality’---characterized by emotion, intuitiveness and empathy with nature; and a rejection, at least partial, of European culture and values.”[[1262]](#endnote-1262) The Negritude Movement’s Blydenesque antecedents were also acknowledged and affirmed by Senghor who insisted that “Negritude” was “nothing more or less than what some Africans have called the African Personality” and “the simple acknowledgment and acceptance of the fact of being black, of our destiny as Black people, of our History, and of our Culture.”[[1263]](#endnote-1263) It is also of related importance that its founder’s “provocative” coinage of the term “Negritude” was anticipated by the 1870’s efforts of Blyden and his colleagues in their declaration and rehabilitative explanation of “ The Negro” as the name of their short-lived Sierra Leone based journal.[[1264]](#endnote-1264) Senghor’s linkage to Blyden and his legacy were also substantively and symbolically acknowledged by his authorship of the introduction to Hollis Lynch’s collection and analysis of the correspondence of Edward Blyden.[[1265]](#endnote-1265)

The religious and spiritual dimensions of the Negritude Movement was of special concern for Senghor whose interest in the religious encounter with European modernity likely preceded his early intuitive revulsion of claims made by his Catholic grade school teachers thatthrough mission education they were replacing “African paganism” and “barbarism” with the superior gifts of Christianity and civilization.[[1266]](#endnote-1266) The mature Senghor and the Negritude Movement, in general, expressed disdain for missionary Christianity and tended to address the heightened problematic of the black religious encounter with modernity in the colonial and post-colonial context by the embrace of a more “spiritual” or “philosophical” notion of African and diaspora Africa religion and religiosity.[[1267]](#endnote-1267) Senghor’s engagement with the challenge and problematic of race, religion, and modernity, like that of Nkrumah, Azikiwe, and Kenyatta, was also informed by his critical appropriation of the findings and insights fostered by the era’s new wave of comparative and ethnographic studies focused on African life and culture.[[1268]](#endnote-1268) In the mid-1940’s he was reportedly “enthusiastic” upon discovery of Placide Temple's ethnographic study of the Bantu People and “the principles underlying their belief system, their customary law [and] their cultural habits.” Subsequently, he would reference aspects of this pioneering but controversial work in support of his own ethnographic and philosophical assessments of African religion.[[1269]](#endnote-1269) Senghor’s critical synthesis and selective application of the findings and insights of comparative religion, ethnography, and philosophy to African culture and religion decisively informed his concept of Negritude. Diagne concludes that Senghor “affirmed that Négritude was also the expression of a philosophy to be read in the cultural products of Africa; and above all in African religions. Different as they are from one region to another, from one culture to another, there is still ethnographical evidence that many of them share to be founded on an ontology of life forces.”[[1270]](#endnote-1270)

Thus, Senghor, as writer and poet, scholar of religion, and “the preeminent African voice of negritude,” joined Nkrumah, Azikiwe, and Kenyatta among the cadre of scholar-activists, indigenous comparativists, nationalists, and pan-Africanists who were creatively engaged with and shaped by their inexorable encounter with twentieth-century modernity and its intersecting religious, racial, and cultural corollaries. Senghor would also emulate and complement their political success and agenda with his emergence as the founding president of an independent Senegal in 1960.

Senghor, Nkrumah, Azikiwe, and Kenyatta were only the most prominent of the new generation of “indigenous comparativists” and scholar-activists who emerged during the interwar era in West and East Africa. In Blydenesque fashion, they interrogated, critiqued, and forged the academic, intellectual, scientific, and ideological by-products of the dialectic of race, religion, and modernity into instruments and tools that aided their efforts at both vindication and liberation of Africa and her dispersed offspring. Consequently, Blyden’s pioneering engagement with the promise and problematic of nineteenth-century modernity and its corollaries provided both antecedent and blueprint for the critical engagement of a new generation of Africans and diaspora Africans with twentieth-century currents of modernity.

Senghor, Nkrumah, Azikiwe, and Kenyatta and no few of their contemporaries would emulate and parallel Blyden’s efforts as they similarly strove to interrogate, critique, appropriate and mediate the new academic, intellectual, scientific, and religious currents associated with twentieth-century modes of modernity in defense of the validity and importance of their indigenous religions and cultures, and in marshaling this potent synthesis in the cause of Pan-African unity, colonial liberation, and post-colonial development.

**Chapter 28: Religious Studies Epilogue**

Edward Blyden’s life, work, and legacy were decisively shaped by his belief that “religion” was “the most important of all subjects” [[1271]](#endnote-1271) This belief inspired his youthful desire to prepare for the Presbyterian ministry and his subsequent studies of Christianity, Islam, and West African indigenous religions.[[1272]](#endnote-1272) The importance of religion and its study remained a constant for Blyden even as notions of its origins, roles, functions, and worth were being debated and recontoured amid late Victorian modernity’s new scientific, intellectual, academic developments. Blyden was increasingly aware of these developments and the challenges and controversies which they were beginning to induce in pulpit, pew, and academy throughout the Atlantic World. His gradual, but inexorable, engagement with these developments contributed to the profound intellectual and religious metamorphosis that led to his decision to demit his Presbyterian ordination in 1886 and thereafter pursue his iconoclastic ministry and scholarship as a self-described “minster of truth.”[[1273]](#endnote-1273)

Blyden’s intellectual and religious metamorphosis and his subsequent role as “minister of truth” was additionally informed by his belief that “religion” was a critical arena of the African and Diaspora African encounter with and response to the myriad challenges posed by a concept and process of modernity that claimed to be both “scientific” and “progressive” even as it remained rooted in presuppositions and policies that affirmed the normative, authoritative, hegemonic and often oppressive religious, racial and cultural paradigms of Europe and the West.[[1274]](#endnote-1274) Blyden discerned that modernity and its new intellectual, academic, and scientific theories and methodologies which were giving rise to a “scientific approach to religion” and an emergent “science of religion,” also had profound religious as well as racial implications and consequences for Africa and her descendants.[[1275]](#endnote-1275) Consequently, a growing cognizance of both the positive as well as negative implications that modernity and it's scientific, intellectual, and academic developments, and especially their religious and racial corollaries, held for people of African descent inspired him to undertake the controversial role of interrogator, critic, and mediator of modernity and it’s’ intersecting religious and racial corollaries in “defense” and “vindication” of Africa and her descendants. It also induced his accompanying prophetic warning to blacks on both sides of the Atlantic that they could not afford to ignore modernity’s academic, intellectual, scientific, and religious developments.

Instead of emulating the majority of his ministerial colleagues in summarily dismissing and damning modernity’s new scientific, intellectual, and academic developments, which most notably included evolutionary theory, biblical and historical criticism, and comparative religion, as inherently threatening and harmful to both Christianity and the race, Blyden was convinced that many of their findings could be enlisted in a corrective synthesis that would be of value and benefit. This belief and resultant effort were reflected in his pioneering research and analysis of African and diaspora African history, culture, and religion aimed at the production and dissemination of knowledge of Africa, its people, and culture that not only challenged prevailing intellectual, academic, religious, racial, and cultural stereotypes but also the practices and policies of racial repression and exploitation which they often fostered and legitimated.

Blyden’s subsequent efforts support the contention that he was one of the African race’s most important interrogators, adjudicators, and mediators of modernity and particularly, it’s religious and racial corollaries during the late-Victorian epoch. During an era in which the academic and intellectual gifts of people of African descent were often questioned and rebuffed, Blyden boldly and routinely asserted his right and responsibility as a scholar, albeit of African descent, to participate in and contribute to its most important intellectual, academic, religious, and racial discourses. His ability and willingness to do so was documented and chronicled in the vast corpus of correspondence, public addresses, and publications which he presented in numerous and varied venues throughout the Atlantic world for more than half a century.[[1276]](#endnote-1276) These included his critique from West Africa of Essays and Reviews; speculation regarding the “religious creed” and “secularizing theories” of John Stuart Mills; ridicule of the hermeneutical, theological, and missiological “vagaries” of Bishop William Colenso; defense of William Gladstone from theological conservatives; critical appraisals and advocacy of various theories and methodologies of evolution, ethnography, and historical and “biblical criticism”; ridicule of the proponents of the resurgent thesis of polygenesis; assertions of the key role played by Africans in the historical development of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism; discourse regarding the efficacy of European ecclesiastical and pedagogical hegemony in Africa; participation in theological, hermeneutical, and missiological discourse contrasting the impact, role, and future of Christianity, Islam and indigenous religions in Africa; defense of indigenous African religion and culture; commentary on “The Jewish Question”; critical assessments of and responses to the views and publications of prominent religious scholars such as Ernest Renan, Max Muller, Charles Briggs, Charles Foote, Herbert Spencer, William Robertson Smith, and John Henry Burrows; assessments of the implications and impact of the emergent “science of religion”; and even critical commentary on arguably the most important religious gathering of the nineteenth century--the World’s Parliament of Religions.[[1277]](#endnote-1277)

In the opening years of the twentieth century, an ailing Blyden also rejoined the heightened discourse about the role and future of Islam and the Koran in colonial Africa with the presentation of an analysis that reflected the fruition of his historical, hermeneutical, ecumenical, and comparative insights and arguably anticipated the emergence of the contemporary discipline of Comparative Scriptures.[[1278]](#endnote-1278) In African Life and Customs, authored just four years before his death, Blyden even more emphatically reasserted his right and responsibility as a scholar of religion to participate in and contribute to the most important religious inquiries and discourses of the era. His intent was explicitly reflected in his designation of “Religion” as the title and focus of three of the volume’s chapters.[[1279]](#endnote-1279) Illuminated within them and the broader text were the results of Blyden’s protracted study and engagement with indigenous African culture and religions and his critical and selective application to the African context and experience, theories, methodologies, and insights of disciplines which were developing under the press of late Victorian modernity and forging the theoretical and methodological foundation of the nascent discipline of religious studies.[[1280]](#endnote-1280) Accordingly, Blyden readily joined in the contentious debate about the “origin of religion” and boldly insisted on Africa’s contributions to religion’s “evolution.”[[1281]](#endnote-1281) Appropriating insights gleaned from his travels, research, and his critical appropriation of “the evolutionary theory of religion,” Blyden unabashedly proclaimed, “It is certain that Religion originated in Africa. It went from Ethiopia, that is to say, from Negro-land eastward and northward to Egypt and down the Nile, extending to the heart of Asia.”[[1282]](#endnote-1282) He also joined the related debate among the era’s foremost religious scholars concerning the role and defining characteristics of religion with his assertion that “Religion,” was “that which makes a man feel that he is not his own guide, judge, or ultimate authority; that he is bound to a higher and irresistible Power [or Being] that created him and by whose fiat he will cease to live. . . .” “All races,” he added, “without the Bible and even with the Bible have their own method of approaching this Being.” This, he pointedly insisted, included the African who “believes that the great Being can be approached through every object which he has created, whether animate or inanimate.”[[1283]](#endnote-1283) It was a formulation by Blyden of both an expansive definition of religion and an inclusive addendum that was notable in its rejection of the tendency, still common among most of the era’s religious scholars, to summarily dismiss African religious beliefs and rituals as inferior.[[1284]](#endnote-1284)

African Life and Customs also included an extended excerpt from Max Muller’s 1878 Hibbert Lecture which expressed Blyden’s appreciation of Muller’s influence on the new school of scholars engaged in the “scientific” study of African religions. Perceived as especially significant was the groundbreaking role that Muller’s work played in the validation of the African religious consciousness and African religions by his rejection of prevailing mid-nineteenth century theories that summarily disparaged them.[[1285]](#endnote-1285) Blyden also saw fit to quote Muller’s more direct refutation of the era’s prevailing racial, religious and academic chauvinism: “I claim no more for the Religion of the Negro than for our own, when I say that it should be judged not by what it is but by what it can be and by what it has been in its most gifted votaries.”[[1286]](#endnote-1286)

The broader theoretical and methodological import of African Life and Customs was illuminated as Blyden emphatically denounced the prevailing tradition of racially biased studies often authored by armchair experts who “exhausted the resources of their intellect in the endeavor to prove the Negro only quasi-human…. [and] born to serve a superior race.” [[1287]](#endnote-1287) In contrast, he endorsed and encouraged the corrective application of ethnographic theory and methodology and linked himself and his text to an emerging “new school of thinkers on African and racial questions” who as “conscientious investigators on the spot, have broken through the sinister traditions of hundreds of years, and are teaching their countrymen to judge the Man of Africa by the impartial light of truth, and not from the standpoint of prejudice and preconceived ideas.”[[1288]](#endnote-1288) As he undertook the task of becoming one of Africa’s most important “indigenous comparativists,” Blyden envisioned that their collective task was to foster a new school of scientific, rational, and ethnographic scholarship that would displace “the theories of the noisy and blustering anthropologists [of] forty or fifty years ago-the Notts and Gliddeons, Burtons, Winwood Reade, Hunt, et id homme genus—who invented all sorts of arguments based upon estimates of physical phenomena as conceived by phrenology or physiognomy,……to prove the mental and moral inferiority of the Negro.”[[1289]](#endnote-1289)

African Life and Customs was not Blyden’s last foray into the increasingly heated discourses and controversies that were erupting at the end of the Victorian era in response to modernity’s religious, racial, and cultural implications In 1910, he asserted himself into one of the era’s most contentious trans-Atlantic scholarly debates with his reflections on and suggested resolution of the hermeneutical, theological, and missiological controversy regarding the “transliteration” into Arabic of “the various Hebrew names applied to the Divine Being."[[1290]](#endnote-1290) Blyden’s response, The Arabic Bible in the Soudan: A Plea for Transliteration, drew upon his earlier studies of Arabic in West Africa and Lebanon. Also illuminated was his familiarity with the thought and writings of “learned” Western religious scholars such as Professor [William] Robertson Smith, the accomplished but controversial Scottish biblical scholar, comparative religionist, and orientalist, and Dr. George F. Moore, professor of History of Religion at Harvard.

Of primary concern for Blyden as he joined the heated discourse were biblical passages that he deemed to be not only “inconsistent with the idea of the Great Invisible Jehovah” but also especially disturbing to adherents of Islam.[[1291]](#endnote-1291) Parts of the Exodus narrative were of particular hermeneutical and missiological concern as reflected in Blyden’s quotation of William Robertson Smith’s exasperated exclamation that “The perplexities of Exodus xix-xxxiv *have made* these chapters the *locus desperatus of criticism.*”[[1292]](#endnote-1292) However, with the characteristic confidence that reflected and emphasized his intellectual independence, Blyden, in turn, confessed to being “perplexed at the perplexities of the learned critics” and, offered what he perceived as the obvious “solution of the difficulties” posed by the text: “All the misunderstanding, it seems to me, has arisen partly from the mistake of *translating* instead of *transliterating* proper names, and probably partially from the repellent idea of appearing to recognize polytheism in the Bible."[[1293]](#endnote-1293) Moreover, he asserted that “The Bible is constantly pointing out that the dispensations of Jehovah are not restricted to the Hebrew course of History—Jehovah makes no distinction. . . .[and] we are also taught that in all parts of the earth, Jehovah is worshiped though under different names."[[1294]](#endnote-1294) Blyden also saw fit to interject a more novel hermeneutical dynamic into the discourse which reaffirmed the soteriological primacy and independence of Africa, apart from the religious designations and affiliations of either East or West. His liberal theological orientation and its accompanying exegetical and hermeneutical presuppositions and skills were evoked as he contended that an accurate reading and interpretation of scripture (John: 4: 4-42), made clear that neither, “Islam or Christianity” is Africa’s “only alternative.” Noting that “Christ told the woman of Samaria that the worship of Jehovah should be confined neither to Mount Gerizim nor to Jerusalem,” he insisted that the obvious biblical message was that the “ultimate fate of Africa does not depend exclusively upon Jerusalem, Rome or Mecca.”[[1295]](#endnote-1295)

Blyden’s final publications also reflected his awareness of and aggressive engagement with the explosive resurgence of issues related to the intersection of religion and modernity that were giving rise to one of the twentieth century’s most intense religious conflicts. In fact, the twentieth-century resurgence of theological, hermeneutical, and missiological conflict that would be central to what would be known in the American context as the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy was anticipated by Blyden. On the cusp of the new century and controversy, he reiterated his appreciation and critical appropriation of the applied findings of evolution as well as the methodology of comparative religion, and in 1905 reaffirmed the importance of "Higher Criticism"—all of which would be major issues of contention in the pending conflict.[[1296]](#endnote-1296) Moreover, in 1910, Blyden explicitly linked his mature theological, hermeneutical, and missiological insights to the era’s heightening theological, hermeneutical, and missiological discord.[[1297]](#endnote-1297)

Blyden’s participation in and contributions to numerous intellectual and religious discourses throughout the late Victorian era earned him popular and scholarly acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic. Black and white intellectuals, activists, and scholars similarly engaged with the impact that modernity and its corollaries were fostering within pew, academy, and the mission field readily acknowledged his contributions as a scholar of religion and public intellectual. A partial listing of prominent European scholars who acknowledged the contributions of Blyden includes William Gladstone, Dean Arthur Stanley of Westminster, Frederick Temple, Henry Venn, Frederick Harrison (the British positivist), and Herbert Spencer. [[1298]](#endnote-1298) They were joined on the other side of the Atlantic by an array of American scholars, intellectuals, religious activists, ministers, and journalists who also directly or indirectly acknowledged Blyden’s importance and his pioneering contributions as a scholar of religion. Included among them were Professor James McCosh of Princeton Seminary; Rev. David Swing, liberal dissident and editor of the North American Review);" Professor Phillip Schaff of Union Theological Seminary; John Henry Barrows, organizer of the World’s Parliament of Religions; and Professor Frank F. Ellinwood, lecturer in comparative religion at New York University and founder of the American Society of Comparative Religion.[[1299]](#endnote-1299) Blyden’s contributions as a scholar of religion were also readily noted and acknowledged on both sides of the Atlantic by a list of black contemporaries that included Orishatukeh Faduma, Rev. Mark Hayford, Casely Hayford, Samuel Lewis, Bishop James Johnson, Rev. Majola Agbebi, J. R. Frederick, Alexander Crummell, Frederick Douglass, John Edward Bruce, Dr. Benjamin Tanner, Henry M. Turner, Rufus Perry, William H. Ferris, Anna J. Cooper, W. E. B. Du Bois, and of course Francis Grimke.[[1300]](#endnote-1300)

Blyden’s importance as a religious scholar of note was additionally attested by the publication of his writings in numerous monograms, in leading religious journals of the era, and by invitations to membership in prominent social, intellectual, and learned organizations such as London’s Anthenaeum Club, the Society of Science and Letters of Bengal, the American Philological Association, the American Society of Comparative Religions, the Royal African Society, and the American Negro Academy.[[1301]](#endnote-1301) In acknowledgment of his scholarship, Blyden was also awarded several honorary degrees, including a doctorate, and he was invited to share his scholarship in numerous academic and religious venues on both sides of the Atlantic.[[1302]](#endnote-1302) Among the latter were invitations from the Bethel Historical Society and the organizers of both the 1893 and 1895 Congress on Africa. Also notable was a request in 1893 to deliver a paper on “Comparative Religion” at the Columbian Exposition which hosted the most prominent religious gathering of the century—the World’s Parliament of Religions.[[1303]](#endnote-1303)

Acknowledgment and appreciation by Blyden’s contemporaries of his pioneering religious scholarship were not limited to Western scholars as attested by the conferring of Islamic names upon him by West African Muslim scholars, and the award of the Decoration of the Imperial Order of the Medjidieh by a representative of the Sultan of Turkey "for the labor expended in pointing out to the better consideration of the world the virtue or true import of their religion [Islam]."[[1304]](#endnote-1304) Also notable was the acknowledgment of his scholarly and pedagogical efforts on behalf of Islam by the appreciative parents of his students at the Muslim School in Sierra Leone who gifted him with a pen engraved with words that had special resonance for Blyden: “the Pen is mightier than the sword.”[[1305]](#endnote-1305)

Given Blyden’s acknowledged role as a pioneering and creative scholar of religion by his contemporaries, it is ironic and unfortunate that his contributions and legacy are so little known to current scholars and students within the discipline of religious studies. A preliminary and cursory analysis suggests that explanations of the disjunct between the late Victorian era’s appreciation and acknowledgments of Blyden’s contributions as a religious studies scholar and his relative “invisibility” within the canon and curriculum of the contemporary discipline are complex. Obviously, his religious insights were a product of his era and more personally his related existential, theological, and ideological orientations and commitments. Consequently, like that of his scholarly contemporaries, a number of his foundational theoretical and methodological assumptions have not weathered continued developments within the discipline of religious studies and have thus proved to be outdated and problematic. Especially notable in this regard were his romanticized and idealized views relative to Islam’s role and impact in West Africa as well as his views about the biological nature of race. Nevertheless, a number of his concerns and insights were predictive of ongoing issues and discourse within the contemporary discipline of religious studies and thus remain relevant. For example, several of Blyden’s insights related to the intellectual and academic complexities inherent to the intersectionality of race, religion, gender, and culture anticipated much of the ongoing discourse within the contemporary discipline of religious studies. [[1306]](#endnote-1306) Arguably, the study of Blyden’s contributions provides historical insight critical to a more comprehensive understanding of the field of religious studies and a number of its constituent disciplines as they developed under the press of modernity and its corollaries during the late Victorian era and its aftermath.

That Blyden’s contributions have been and continue to be little known and acknowledged by scholars and students within religious studies begs the question: Why? Obviously, a key factor is the persistent legacy of Western tropes of modernity which fostered and preserved a dialectic of racial, religious, cultural, and intellectual chauvinism within the academy that has historically contributed to the marginalization of the contributions, concerns, and agenda of scholars of non-European descent.[[1307]](#endnote-1307) Recent developments and publications within the academy and the discipline of religious studies have helped to correct this silencing and crippling dialectic. Consequently, the contributions, concerns, insights, and agenda of non-European scholars have been increasingly acknowledged.[[1308]](#endnote-1308) Unfortunately, this largess has generally not been afforded Blyden and his pioneering contributions to both the development of the discipline of religious studies and his anticipation of much of the modern discipline’s belated attention to the historical, theoretical, methodological importance of formative and foundational issues such as race, religion, gender, class, modernity, as well as orientalism, transnationalism, and globalism.[[1309]](#endnote-1309)

This irony is graphically reflected in the fact that Blyden and his contributions have had so little mention in the research and publications of generations of prominent white and black scholars engaged in the study of religion in the decades following the First World War. Although W. E. B. Du Bois who spanned these generations readily acknowledged the scholarship of Blyden, few of his contemporaries or descendants, even those directly engaging the ongoing problematic of religion, race, and modernity did so. Consequently, many of Blyden prophetic and suggestive insights regarding Africa’s religious and cultural linage and heritage and their contributions to the formation of diasporic black religion and culture are missing from the research, analysis, and publications of even black scholars such as E. Franklin Frazier, Carter G. Woodson, Benjamin Mays and the host of other “social -scientists” similarly preoccupied with the black response to the ongoing intersection of race, religion, and modernity in the opening decades of the twentieth century.[[1310]](#endnote-1310)

This exclusion of Blyden’s research and insights continued through the inter-war era and was largely repeated even among the later generation of scholars who, in the last third of the twentieth century, were giving shape and substance to what has been described as a “renaissance” in the study of black religion. Ironically, Gayraud S. Wilmore (1921-2020), who helped to foster this renaissance, sounded its agenda and broader implications in Blydenesque tones as he noted in 1972:

Today in the United States, Black Poets and preachers, academicians, and charismatic leaders of the masses, of the rural south and the great metropolitan areas, are all excavating the meaning of African American history and culture and finding that the deepest roots of the African American experience in the New World, as well as in Africa, lie in the religious and philosophic accruements of Black people. The broad consensus is that it is through these doors that modern-day black people may have to walk, if they are to find their true identity and destiny.[[1311]](#endnote-1311)

Wilmore whose religious studies vita included ethicist, historian, and theologian, presented a relatively expansive acknowledgment and interpretation of the ideological, hermeneutical, and even theological contributions of Blyden, than most of his contemporaries.[[1312]](#endnote-1312) More common was the example presented in the early studies and publications of colleagues such as Charles Long (1926-2020). Although the 1962 dissertation of Long, the Mircea Eliade mentored, and the University of Chicago educated, historian of religions was focused on “Myth, Culture, and History in West Africa,” it was neither informed by nor made mention of the relevant contributions of Blyden.[[1313]](#endnote-1313) Blyden also lacked even an index reference in Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Study of Religion, Long’s subsequent anthology which was published in 1968.[[1314]](#endnote-1314) Notable, however, was the inclusion of an essay that Long originally published in History of Religion in 1971. In it, Blyden and Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race are only cited in a footnote which references his role as “one of the early leaders of pan-Africanism.”[[1315]](#endnote-1315) Nevertheless, Long’s accompanying commentary was percipient as he mused that “It is interesting to note that he [Blyden] set the problem [of pan-Africanism and the “image of Africa”] within a religious context.”[[1316]](#endnote-1316) It appears that the specific implications of Blyden’s “religious” contributions, to the problem of either Pan-Africanism or the “image of Africa,” were never explored by Long. However, Blyden anticipated key intellectual and existential issues related to the study of religion and the intersection of race, religion, modernity that were explored throughout Long’s career in his role as one of the discipline’s pioneering black historians of religions.[[1317]](#endnote-1317) Notable in this regard is Long’s explanation of his choice of a career in religious studies in words that reiterates Blyden’s earlier emphasis on the importance of religion and its study:

My concern for the meaning of the religious reality of black Americans is obviously part and parcel of my scholarly discipline, the History of Religions. This academic choice itself was probably rooted in a deeper unconscious desire to make sense of my life as a black person in the United States. I was attracted to this scholarly orientation for it was the only discipline that responded to the religious experience and expressions of my origins in the black community of this country. Religion thus became the basis for radical critical thought.[[1318]](#endnote-1318)

Several other black scholars of religion who gave shape and substance to the “renaissance” in the study of black religion reflect a similar Blydenesque conviction about its’ continued importance. Ironically, most often they also evidenced a lack of engagement with Blyden and his contributions, even when focused on topics and issues that were clearly foregrounded by him. This dynamic is illuminated in the research and early publications of C. Eric Lincoln (1924-2000) and James H. Cone (1939-2018). Lincoln who studied at Fisk University and the University of Chicago received his doctorate from Boston University in 1960 and taught at Union Theological Seminary, Fisk University, and Duke where he served as Professor of Religion and Culture until retiring in 1993. Of special relevance is his 1961 study of The Black Muslims in America which failed to note Blyden’s historic role in challenging Victorian notions of orientalism as he valorized the Koran and Islam in publications and addresses before nineteenth-century African American audiences and even suggested that Islam might be an acceptable and even desirable religious alternative to Christianity.[[1319]](#endnote-1319)

The early career and publications of James Hal Cone (1939-2018) illuminate a similar dynamic. Having studied at Philander Smith College and Garrett Theological Seminary before earning a doctorate from Northwestern University in 1965, Cone became the [Charles Augustus Briggs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Augustus_Briggs) Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary where he taught for almost fifty years. Although hailed as the architect of black liberation theology, Cone’s research and publication failed to note the prophetic contributions made by Blyden who generations earlier, called for, and provided hermeneutical and theological legitimation for the formation in Africa and the Atlantic diaspora of distinctively black theologies of liberation.[[1320]](#endnote-1320)

The early career and writings of Lamin Sanneh (1942-2019) suggest that the ignoring of Blyden’s pioneering role as a scholar of religion was also more the rule than the exception among African scholars of religion who were educated and began careers during the late colonial and early post-colonial era. Born in Gambia in 1942, Sanneh was a convert to Christianity from Islam and completed undergraduate studies in the United States. Subsequent study took place at the University of Birmingham and the American University in Beirut before he earned a doctorate in African Islamic History from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London in 1974.[[1321]](#endnote-1321) Although Sanneh’s dissertation, titled “The History of the Jakhanke People of Senegambia: A Study of a Clerical Tradition in West African Islam,” included a reference to Christianity Islam and the Negro Race, there is little indication that Blyden’s pioneering studies and publications about the history of Islam in West Africa were meaningfully engaged.[[1322]](#endnote-1322)

Obviously, myriad factors related to the historical impact and influence of modernity’s intersecting religious and racial corollaries within and outside of the Academy contributed to the widespread failure on both sides of the Atlantic to engage and acknowledge Blyden’s contributions as a pathbreaking religious studies scholar. For example, it is significant that the iconoclastic religious pronouncements and prescriptions contributed by Blyden, especially in his last major publications, were made amid heightening tensions at the end of the Victorian era between religious liberals and increasingly militant defenders of evangelical orthodoxy. The resultant controversy between “Fundamentalists” and “Modernists” decisively shaped the religious, missiological, as well as academic climate particularly within the United States. Its extended aftermath had a detrimental impact on assessments of Blyden’s liberalism and modernism influenced religious contributions by subsequent generations of black and white conservative evangelicals who also dictated and controlled the curriculum and even library holdings of affiliated colleges, seminaries, and divinity schools.

An earlier portent of heightened conservative evangelical suspicions and critiques that would influence mid-twentieth-century appraisals of Blyden’s religious scholarship and contributions was reflected in the less tolerant assessment of his religious orientation, views, and insights that began to emerge within traditional religious and missiological circles in the wake of the demittance of his ordination and publication of Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race. Blyden’s valorization of Islam’s influence in West Africa purportedly to the “disparagement of Christianity” induced prolonged and widespread critiques and refutations from European and American missionaries and ministers. Among the latter was Anson Phelps Atterbury prominent pastor of New York’s Park Street Presbyterian Church. In a text titled Islam in Africa: Its Effects- Religious, Ethical and Social-Upon the People of the Country, published more than a decade after Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, Atterbury attempted to refute what he contended were Blyden “exaggeration[s]” that might “easily give rise to false inferences” about the comparative role and influence of Islam relative to Christianity.[[1323]](#endnote-1323) Related concerns were also sounded in African American religious and intellectual circles. Thus the warning voiced in 1889 by a cadre of African American ministers who contended in no uncertain terms that Blyden’s sharing of his unconventional and non-orthodox religious views valorizing the Koran and Islam in both addresses and publications “threatened” the “interests of [both] Christianity... [ and] the race.[[1324]](#endnote-1324)

Subsequently, amid heightening theological, missiological, and racial tensions in the first decade of the twentieth century, Blyden’s increasingly iconoclastic religious views even strained his personal and professional friendship with the Princeton Seminary educated Francis Grimke who was increasingly alarmed by the advance within the church and academy of tenets fostered by early twentieth century currents of liberalism and an emergent modernism.[[1325]](#endnote-1325) Even more ominous was the increased disjunct between Blyden’s religious and cultural views and those of a more conservative black religious and intellectual elite that was exhibited in 1908 when Grimke and other members of the American Negro Academy, the era’s most prestigious black intellectual and scholarly forum, voted not to publish an address by Faduma that incorporated key tenets of Blyden’s defense of polygamy and other African religious and cultural traditions.[[1326]](#endnote-1326) This decision by black religious conservatives and traditionalists signaled a broader refusal to sanction and popularize Blyden’s most iconoclastic racial, cultural, and religious views and thus in effect to suppress a number of his most important contributions to the nascent discipline of religious studies.[[1327]](#endnote-1327)

This trend of an increasingly suspicious and even hostile response to Blyden’s religious, missiological, and pedagogical theories and views by black evangelical conservatives was also evident among certain circles in West Africa at the turn of the century as illuminated by the reaction to his modest efforts at incorporating the insights and findings of comparative religions into the curriculum of the College of Liberia. Also probably not atypical was an expanding narrative of derogatory posthumous commentary about Blyden’s religious orientation and the value of his work and legacy such as that pronounced in 1923 by a resident of Sierra Leone who opined that Blyden had “failed” due to his rootage in other than "Absolute Loyalty to Christ."[[1328]](#endnote-1328)

Having related impact on posthumous appraisals of Blyden’s religious studies contributions and legacy was the increased credence given long persistent rumors of his clandestine conversation to Islam as illuminated by the charge made in the pages of the official organ of the AME Church that publication of Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race and the demittance of his ordination indicated that Blyden had “left Christianity and joined himself to the Mohammedans.”[[1329]](#endnote-1329) Erroneous assessments of Blyden’s religious orientation and its impact on his religious scholarship would become negative determinatives of the merit of his comparative studies of Islam and Christianity and his broader religious scholarship within academic, religious, and missiological circles.[[1330]](#endnote-1330) Odamtten has observed that by the Post World War II era, such assessments and a combination of related factors contributed to a situation whereby “fewer academics and [even] Pan-African enthusiasts . . . [were] aware of Blyden’s specific contributions to the systematic study of Islam in West Africa.” Consequently, he noted, “some of the early historical studies of Islam in Africa, its localization and contact with traditional African religions, by the likes of E. G[eoffrey] Parrinder and later Lamin Sanneh rarely mention Blyden’s pioneering contributions.” [[1331]](#endnote-1331)

Lack of knowledge and appreciation of Blyden’s religious contributions and legacy by subsequent generations of traditionally Western-educated scholars was also influenced by heightened religious, political, racial, and pedagogical tensions within the African colonial and missionary context during the interwar and late colonial era. This dynamic furthered “the colonization” of an academic establishment that had little interest in the contributions and legacy of Blyden.[[1332]](#endnote-1332) Blyden’s writings legitimating and calling for increased African cultural, ecclesiastical, theological, and pedagogical independence had long irritated members of the European colonial and ecclesiastical establishment dating from at least his involvement in the controversy involving church and school in Sierra Leone in the early 1870s.[[1333]](#endnote-1333) In the years leading up to and after the First World War, related writings by Blyden which inspired African efforts at pedagogical, political, and ecclesiastical independence as well as movements of West African and Pan-African unity were perceived with increased alarm by colonial and ecclesiastical authorities. Insight into the cumulative impact of such perceptions of Blyden and his ideological, pedagogical, missionary, and broader religious contributions are suggested by mission historian Eugene Stock who perpetuated the biased assessment shared by generations of religious and mission scholars that Blyden’s views, scholarship, and related activities had a calamitous impact on Christianity and the mission enterprise in West Africa.[[1334]](#endnote-1334)

Related assessments of Blyden’s broader religious and missiological legacy were also impacted by his intellectual, theological, and hermeneutical legitimation and advocacy of African independent churches. Their theological, missiological, ecclesiastical, and ideological warrant and justification were articulated by Blyden in works such as “The Return of the Exiles and the West African Church” (1892).[[1335]](#endnote-1335) His views and writings inspired and instructed West African clergy such as Majola Agbebi who established the first wave of independent African churches seeking freedom from European ecclesiastical, theological, and missiological strictures. Moreover, the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of more “radical” independent churches under the leadership of a new generation of African “prophets” such as William Wade Harris and Simon Kimbangu which were perceived as providing a more direct threat to the colonial edifice.[[1336]](#endnote-1336) Thus, it is not surprising that Blyden’s role as a founder and inspiration of the African Independent Church Movement would be among factors that hampered appreciation of his contributions by a twentieth-century academic and religious edifice founded upon and still rooted in the racial and “colonizing” agenda of Europe and the West.[[1337]](#endnote-1337)

Of related impact and influence was the emergence of neo-orthodox theology and its accompanying missiology during the inter-war period.[[1338]](#endnote-1338) With its popular condemnation of the “folly” and “naivete” of liberalism and modernism and its rejection of the academic, theological and missiological legitimacy which their advocates and adherents had provided the growing phenomenon of “Independent” and “Younger Churches,” neo-orthodoxy had profound influence within pulpit, pew, academy, and the mission arena.[[1339]](#endnote-1339) Its critique of “the whole liberal attitude toward other religions,” and its re-emphasis on the normative and authoritative status of Western Christianity and Christian culture refuted key tenets of Blyden’s advocacy and legitimation of African theological, hermeneutical, and ecclesiastical independence.[[1340]](#endnote-1340) More broadly, the accompanying demise of liberalism and modernism during the intra-war era, the resurgence of conservative evangelicalism, and the heightened spiritual dynamic and emphasis subsequently associated with the influential Pentecostal and “charismatic church movement” contributed to an academic, theological, and missiological milieu in both Africa and the West that was not conducive to awareness, acknowledgment, nor appreciation of Blyden’s religious scholarship and legacy.[[1341]](#endnote-1341)

The continued development and maturation of the “science of religion” and the emergent discipline of religious studies throughout the twentieth century also contributed directly and indirectly to the minimization of Blyden’s religious contributions and legacy. Among these were theoretical, methodological, and theological shifts implied in the various names associated with the evolving discipline. By the mid-twentieth century “History of Religions” was the more commonly used designation in the mainstream academy and it provided the foundational perspective, theoretical orientation, and methodology of the contemporary discipline of “Religious Studies.”[[1342]](#endnote-1342) Of related importance was the developing discipline’s adoption of presuppositions and theories which contributed to the failure of religious studies scholars and students on both sides of the Atlantic to adequately appreciate the resilience, importance, and broader influence of Africa’s indigenous religious and spiritual traditions. Notably, these obscured awareness of the accuracy and relevance of Blyden’s prediction that the West might eventually have to look to Africa for religious and spiritual renewal.[[1343]](#endnote-1343)

The widespread appropriation of secularization theories and presuppositions by religious studies scholars and students additionally encouraged a failure to note and appreciate the seminal and complex role which religious sentiments, sensibilities, beliefs, texts, institutions, and clergy played in the nurture and maturation of Pan-Africanism and West African nationalism.[[1344]](#endnote-1344) Most often emphasized instead were the secular dimensions and “secularization” of these movements of liberation under the leadership of ostensibly “secular” leaders such as Nkrumah.[[1345]](#endnote-1345) Also generally obscured were the religious aspects of the subsequent African struggle with the vestiges of colonialism and post-colonialism.

However, even as Blyden’s contributions were being ignored, misconstrued, and minimized within the metanarrative of the West’s academic and religious mainstream, a competing narrative was evolving that reflected awareness and acknowledgment of the continued potency of his religious scholarship and legacy. Illuminated within the latter narrative was the posthumous discovery of Blyden’s seminal contributions and insights by a new generation of African and diaspora African scholars and activists who similarly interrogated the liabilities and benefits of multiple and diverse modes of modernity during the inter-war era and afterward. Some, like Nkrumah, Azikiwe, and Kalibala, were Africans studying in the United States, where their academic, intellectual, religious, and political activities were increasingly characterized by efforts to critically and selectively engage modernity’s prized-albeit compromised-trove of scientific, intellectual, religious, and academic offerings in the cause of African unity and liberation.

Their discovery and subsequent appropriation of Blyden’s thoughts and insights were taking place amid heightened efforts to suppress his contributions and legacy by educational, missionary, and colonial agencies alarmed by and fearful of black radicalization in Africa and the diaspora.[[1346]](#endnote-1346) Amid coordinated efforts to actively suppress influences perceived as contributing to black radicalization, overt acknowledgment and appreciation of Blyden’s thought and writings by African and diaspora African students and even established scholars such as Faduma became a religious, financial, and academic liability.[[1347]](#endnote-1347) The penalty for adoption and application of theoretical, methodological, pedagogical, ideological, religious, and racial insights that paralleled or were influenced by those of Blyden was suggested in Nkrumah’s conflict with Lincoln’ University’s Dean of Religion over the evocation of African rituals at the gravesite of Aggrey. [[1348]](#endnote-1348) The reactionary response to this convergence amid fears of black radicalization was also likely a factor in the subsequent rejection of Nkrumah’s dissertation proposal by the University of Pennsylvania as “too politicized.” [[1349]](#endnote-1349)

Notwithstanding the marginalization of Blyden as persona non grata and the suppression of his thought and influence within mainstream academic and religious circles, his scholarship and publications provided a new generation of scholar-activists with a twentieth-century paradigm for their critical study, interrogation, and selective appropriation of the methodologies and findings of the evolving disciplines of history of religions, hermeneutics, theology, missiology, sociology, anthropology, pedagogy, history, and even journalism. As with Blyden, these became potent instruments in the production and dissemination of more accurate “knowledge” about Africa and her descendants which challenged racist and exploitive stereotypes and policies. Moreover, as black scholar-activists on both sides of the Atlantic critically engaged these tools and agenda, they similarly discovered that “religion” in its various roles and manifestations remained a crucial element and arena in the ongoing encounter of people of African descent throughout Africa and the Diaspora with varied and multiple modes of modernity. And, as had Blyden, they discovered “religion” in its various manifestations to be a complex, controversial, and often divisive component in their resistance to both continued dehumanization and their agenda of national and regional development

Developments in the post-colonial era have provided a more conducive climate for re-discovery and critical analysis of the life and work of Blyden through multiple theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary lenses.[[1350]](#endnote-1350) Notable in this regard has been the emergence of scholars, particularly of African descent, who share Blyden’s awareness of the importance and expansive impact of Africa’s religions and its religious heritage.[[1351]](#endnote-1351) Their studies and scholarship directly benefited from the fruition of Blyden’s plea for the founding of African universities and the establishment within them of chairs, departments, and related organizations focused on the study of Africa’s religious and cultural heritage. [[1352]](#endnote-1352) This development also nurtured the realization of Blyden’s call for the employment of African scholars in Western universities, seminaries, and divinity schools who would similarly be engaged in the study of Africa’s religious, linguistic, and cultural heritage and their trans-African impact and implications.[[1353]](#endnote-1353) Consequently, the contemporary era has witnessed African scholars of religion occupying prominent positions in Western religious studies departments and seminaries such as Edinburgh, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and Chicago. From these positions, they have often critically engaged key implications of Blyden’s insights regarding “religion” in general and African “religion” in particular.[[1354]](#endnote-1354)

Arguably, the career of Lamin Sanneh exemplifies this later dynamic and trend. After receiving his doctorate in Islamic history from the University of London, Sanneh taught at the University of Ghana, the University of Aberdeen, before returning to the United States to teach at Harvard, and most recently as Professor of History, Missions, and World Christianity at Yale University. Despite his lack of attention to Blyden’s contributions during his undergraduate and graduate education, Sanneh’s later scholarship and publications have explored a variety of themes, issues, and contexts engaged by Blyden a century earlier. Moreover, particularly, in his capacity as co-convener of the Yale-Edinburgh Conferences on the History of the Missionary Movement and World Christianity, Sanneh acknowledged the importance of Blyden’s myriad contributions to the study of religion and encouraged scholarship focused on his religious and missiological writings.[[1355]](#endnote-1355) Blyden’s shadow and extended legacy could also be discerned in 2019 at the founding of the Sanneh Institute at the University of Ghana at Accra to honor and encourage the continuation of Sanneh’s scholarship on religion and culture in Africa.[[1356]](#endnote-1356)

Notwithstanding these more recent developments, it remains evident that scholars and students engaged in the contemporary discipline of religious studies would benefit significantly from a more comprehensive awareness, acknowledgment, and critical analysis of Blyden’s contributions and continued relevance to the development of their discipline. Scholars and students engaged with the varied intersections of race, religion, and Western modernity and especially the relationship of African religious thought and Western science will find Blyden’s direct and implied critiques of both Western and Eurocentric notions of religion and modernity of particular importance.[[1357]](#endnote-1357) Those interested in pastoral studies will discover Blyden’s perceptions, advocacy, and modeling of an activist and intellectually informed ministry during the late Victorian era to be of special significance.[[1358]](#endnote-1358) Similarly, ethicists stand to benefit from an analysis of his determined application of the tenets of Christianity to the struggle for freedom and justice for women and men of African descent. Meanwhile, scholars and students focused on the interrelated dynamics of race, religion, gender, and modernity will profit from an examination of Blyden’s influence upon and alliance with pioneering female theorists, theologians, and activists such as Anna J. Cooper, Mary Kingsley, Adelaide Casely Hayford, and Anna Erskine as well as his contributions to the work of contemporary African feminist theologians such as Mercy Oduyoye and political activists like Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.[[1359]](#endnote-1359)

Studies of both the origins and development of the contemporary African Independent Church Movement also await comprehensive examination and analysis of Blyden’s theological, hermeneutical and ecclesiastical contributions related to their inspiration, nurture, and legitimation. Moreover, despite frequent disclaimers that he was not a theologian, Blyden’s critique of traditional Western theology and his prophetic call for the development of an African theology with “the smell of Africa on it” clearly nurtured the emergence of distinctive African theologies.[[1360]](#endnote-1360) It has also been noted that his theological and hermeneutical efforts also anticipated the emergence of “liberation theologies” in Africa and the diaspora.[[1361]](#endnote-1361) Consequently, a comprehensive examination of Blyden’s role as a pioneer of African and diaspora theologies will prove invaluable to contemporary students of theology. Similarly, contemporary biblical scholars will find Blyden’s early rejection of hermeneutical racism and his adamant call for black awareness of and active engagement with key developments within the field of biblical studies to be of continued inspiration and relevance.[[1362]](#endnote-1362)

Also worthy of exploration is the role played by Blyden as an early “indigenous comparativist” who advocated and employed comparative theory and methodology in his pioneering examination and contrast of the role and impact of Islam and Christianity in West Africa as well as in his subsequent articulation of a defense of African indigenous culture and religions that radically challenged the often derogatory presuppositions of fellow intellectual, academic, and religious pundits.[[1363]](#endnote-1363) Relatedly, Blyden’s provocative speculations about Africa and her descendants as foundational to studies of the origins and evolution of “religion,” as well as his implied critique of the term’s application to the intersection of Africa’s expansive spiritual and cultural traditions remain especially pertinent to contemporary scholars of religion engaged in discourse about the viability of applying western concepts of religion to non-Western cultures and traditions.[[1364]](#endnote-1364)

Blyden’s iconoclastic reflections on the historical development and expansion of Christianity in Africa and the West remain especially pertinent for contemporary scholars of religious and ecclesiastical history. Scholars and students engaged with the persistent question of African religious and cultural “survivals” in the Atlantic diaspora and the historical development of diaspora expressions of “black religion” will also find Blyden’s reflections and insights of surprising relevance.[[1365]](#endnote-1365) Scholars and students of the missionary enterprise will also find his extensive corpus of missiological writings and especially his prophetic call for an indigenously rooted and culturally informed missionary effort to be of continued importance.[[1366]](#endnote-1366) Relatedly, contemporary studies of inter-religious dialogue also stand to profit significantly from the examination of Blyden’s path-breaking ecumenical and inter-faith contributions.

Scholars of Islam in Africa and the Diaspora have actively explored Blyden’s role as a pioneering "scholar in the emergent field of Islamic studies" and their scholarship promises to continue to benefit from the critical study of his insights regarding Islam’s intersection with race, gender, and culture on both sides of the Atlantic.[[1367]](#endnote-1367) Of related importance for students and scholars of religious studies are Blyden’s contributions to both the historical and contemporary discourse regarding “orientalism.”

His insights proved perceptive of the problematic of a persistent “orientalism” within the discipline of religious studies and suggest new avenues of research and inquiry.[[1368]](#endnote-1368) Similarly, Blyden’s reflections on the intersection of the black and Jewish experience are of heightened contemporary relevance.[[1369]](#endnote-1369)

Additionally, scholars and students currently engaged in newly emergent fields within religious studies such as “World Christianity” and “Comparative Scriptures” will find Blyden’s extensive corpus and thought of particular importance. His writings regarding the historical development and global expansion of Christianity and the related problematic posed by Christianity’s racial, cultural, and gender captivity provide invaluable insight regarding the historical, theoretical, and methodological challenges facing the neoteric discipline of World Christianity.[[1370]](#endnote-1370) It is also notable that Blyden’s early philological and comparative attention to not only the Christian text but also the written and oral canons of other religious traditions, including Islam, Judaism, and African traditional religions, anticipated and provide crucial historical context for the newly emergent field of Comparative Scriptures.[[1371]](#endnote-1371)

In summary, contemporary scholars and students within the expansive interdisciplinary field of religious studies will find that Blyden anticipated and participated in key theoretical and methodological discourses that shaped and continue to contour the developing discipline.[[1372]](#endnote-1372) While the gate-keepers of religious studies have yet to fully acknowledge the importance of Blyden’s often prophetic contributions, belated attention to this gifted son of Africa and the African Diaspora who was actively engaged for more than fifty years in a transatlantic tradition of critical discourse regarding the extended impact of modernity and its religious and racial corollaries continues to be of relevance and importance as the discipline of religious studies explores its problematic past, its challenging present, and its promising future.[[1373]](#endnote-1373)

1. On specific references to Blyden as the “Father of Pan Africanism,” and “the most important historical progenitor of Pan-Africanism,” see Hollis Lynch, Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot, 1832-1912 (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 250 and P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, Pan Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1963 (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982). See also Nnamdi Azikiwe, foreword to Edith Holden, Blyden of Liberia: An Account of the Life and Labors of Edward Wilmot Blyden, As Recorded in Letter and in Print (New York: Vantage Press, 1966), 9-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Darwin’s On the Origin of Species was published in 1859 and Essays and Reviews appeared four months later. Janet E. Browne, Charles Darwin: The Power of Place (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 112; Charles Darwin, On The Origin of Species (London: John Murry, 1859); John W. Parker, ed., Essays and Reviews (London: John W. Parker and Sons, 1860). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Edward Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia: a lecture delivered at Lower Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, Liberia, January 26 (London: C. M. Philipps, 1908), 20. See also Marjorie Wheeler-Barclay, The Science of Religion in Britain, 1860-1915, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 1-15, 243-56 and David Chidester, Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 66. See Blyden to Gladstone, 25 April 1861, Holden,

   Blyden of Liberia, 119-21. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. See Edward Blyden, “The Negro in Ancient History,” Methodist Quarterly Review, LI January 1869: 71-93; Edward Blyden, “A Vindication of the African Race: Being a Brief Examination of the Arguments in Favor of African Inferiority,” (Liberia,1857) and Edward Blyden, From West Africa to Palestine ( Freetown: Manchester and London, 1873). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Edward Blyden, “ Mohammedanism in West Africa,” Methodist Quarterly Review, LIII January 1871: 62-78; Edward Blyden, “Mohammedanism and the Negro Race,” Fraser’s Magazine, New Series , XII November 1875: 598-615; and Edward Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” Fraser’s Magazine, New Series, XIII May,1876:554-568. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. On Blyden’s refutation of his Presbyterian ordination and proclamation as a “minister of truth” see Blyden to the Presbytery of West Africa 8 Dec.,1886, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 573. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Edward Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 2nd ed. 1887; reprint

   Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1987. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Blyden, “A Vindication of the African Race: Being a Brief Examination of the Arguments in Favor of African Inferiority,” originally published in Liberia in August 1857. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Lynch, Patriot, 18, 81-82. Blyden’s venues included several seminaries and divinity schools established in conjunction with the growing number of black universities and colleges. He also lectured to white students and faculty at McCormick Theological Seminary. Edward Blyden, “The Koran in Africa,” The African Repository 66, no. 4 (October 1890):101-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Blyden was unable to attend either of these gatherings. While noting the importance of the Parliament of Religions for its contribution to the advancement of religious knowledge and toleration, Blyden criticized its lack of representation of indigenous African religious traditions including Islam. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 646. His appreciation of the progressive agenda of the Congress on Africa was communicated in a “Letter of Greeting and Commendation,” sent from West Africa. Edward Blyden “Letter of Greeting and Commendation,” in Bowen, Africa,16. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. See especially Teshale Tibebu, Edward Wilmot Blyden and the Racial Nationalist Imagination (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012) and Harry N. K. Odamtten, Edward W. Blyden’s Intellectual Transformation: Afropublicanism, Pan-Africanism, Islam, and the Indigenous West African Church (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2019). [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Edward Wilmot Blyden, “Africa’s Service to the World”: A Discourse delivered at Madison, Wisconsin during the session of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, May 1880. Published in The African Repository and Colonial Journal, Vol LVII, Oct. 1881, No. 8:110. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Edward Blyden to Booker T. Washington, 28th November 1894 (published in New York Age, January 24, 1895). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Edward Blyden to the Presbytery of West Africa, 8 Dec., 1886, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 573; Edward Blyden to Coppinger, 16 Mar., 25 Jan.,13 Apr., and 6 June 1887, Holden Blyden of Liberia, 575-578. Edward Blyden to Francis Grimke, 11 Sept. 1889, in Carter G. Woodson, ed., The Works of Francis Grimke (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1942), 4:11-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Ernest Renan, History of the People of Israel 5 vols. (London: Chapman & Hall, 1888-1895). Renan’s controversial studies of the origins of Christianity, which included The Life of Jesus (1863) and Studies of Religious History and Criticism (1864), reflected his response to the currents of modernity and related conviction that Christianity, the life of Jesus, and the Bible should be subject to the tools and perspectives of historical, literary, and biblical criticism. See especially the preface to vol. 2, ix-xi. Accessed at https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31210008453027;view=1up;seq=15. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Blyden shared Renan’s early background in philology and as early as 1874 described him as the “distinguished French Oriental scholar and Rationalist.” Edward Blyden, “The Prospects of the African,” African Repository 50 (1874): 298. Blyden’s advice and assessment also anticipated his more appreciative appropriation by the turn of the century of some of Renan’s key religious and philosophical insights. See Blyden to Mary Kingsley, in Edith Holden, Blyden of Liberia: An Account of the Life and Labours of Edward Wilmot Blyden, As Recorded in Letter and in Print (New York: Vantage Press, 1966), 730. Notably, while sharing Renan’s embrace of the new “Science of Religion,” Blyden would take issue with his theory of racial hierarchies as well as his “scientificism” and summary rejection of religion in favor of an impending rationalism as illuminated in Renan’s 1891 publication titled “The Future of Science.” Ernest Renan, The Future of Science (London: Chapman and Hall, 1891). See especially v-xxiv, 1-11, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015010744665;view=1up;seq=481. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Edward Blyden to Francis Grimke, 11 September 1889, Woodson, Works, 4:11-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Efforts to define the theological orientations of both Blyden and Grimke have proved challenging. Despite occasional overlap, especially on issues pertaining to race, cursory analysis of their theological sympathies places them on opposite ends of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theological spectrum. On Blyden’s more “liberal” religious and theological orientation, see Gayraud Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 117. On the more conservative and “almost entirely orthodox” theological orientation of Grimke, see Mark Sidwell, “Francis James Grimke and the Fundamentalists,” Biblical Viewpoints 32, no. 1 (1998): 80, 81, 87. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Sydney Ahlstrom noted that “never before or since has the science of religion received such wide attention in the United States. . . .Indeed, for the study of world religions, the Parliament of 1893 serves as a kind of landmark or watershed.” Sydney Ahlstrom, The American Protestant Encounter (Beloit, WI: Beloit College, 1962). See also John Henry Barrows, ed., The World’s Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's Parliament of Religions, Held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893, 2 vols. (Chicago: Parliament Publishing, 1893); John P. Burris, Exhibiting Religions: Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions 1851-1893 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001); and Richard Hughes Seager, The World’s Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1895). [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Blyden to Booker T. Washington, 28 November1894, published in New York Age, January 24, 1895 and Hollis Lynch, Black Spokesman: Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1971), 205-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. On Blyden’s broader impact on black Americans see Thomas H. Henriksen, “African Intellectual Influences on Black Americans: The Role of Edward W. Blyden,” Phylon, Vol. 36, No. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1975: 279-290. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. David W. Wills, “The Double Crisis of Black Christianity,” in History of Christianity in America, ed. Mark A, Noll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 351-52. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. See Thomas Pakenham, The Scramble for Africa: White Man’s Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912 (London: Random House, 1991) and Rayford Logan, The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901 (New York: Dial Press, 1954). [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. As defined by Anthony Giddens “modernity refers to modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence. "Anthony Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990)). See also Jurgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Twelve Lectures, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987). [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. More recently this research has advanced the concept of “multiple modernities” that reflect multiple or plural historical, chronological, cultural, geographical, and political diversities and genealogies. Among these are various conceptualizations of “African modernity” and “Black modernity” that emerged in conjunction and competition with the dictates of more Eurocentric concepts of modernity. See Vincent Houben and Mona Schrempf, eds., Figurations of Modernity: Global and Local Representations in Comparative Perspective (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Samuel N. Eisenstadt, ed., Multiple Modernities (New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 2001), 2-3; Timothy Mitchel, ed., Questions of Modernity (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xii-xiv. Also, of significance are the critical reflections on “rethinking modernity” offered by Gurminder K. Bhambra. See Gurminder K. Bhambra, Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination (London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. See Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Finn Sivert Nielson, A History of Anthropology: Anthropology, Culture and Society (London: Pluto Press 2013); A. H. Halsey, A History of Sociology in Britain: science, literature and society (New York, London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3-28 and Harry E. Barnes, An Introduction to the History of Sociology (Chicago, Illinois: University of ‘Chicago Press, 1948); Marjorie Wheeler-Barclay, The Science of Religion in Britain, 1860-1915, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 1-15, 243-56. See also David Chidester, Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Some of this research has also advanced the concept of “multiple modernities” that reflect multiple or plural historical, chronological, cultural, geographical, and political diversities and genealogies. Among these are various conceptualizations of “African modernity” and “Black modernity” that emerged in conjunction and competition with the dictates of more Eurocentric concepts of modernity. See Vincent Houben and Mona Schrempf, eds., Figurations of Modernity: Global and Local Representations in Comparative Perspective (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Samuel N. Eisenstadt, ed., Multiple Modernities (New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 2001), 2-3; Timothy Mitchel, ed., Questions of Modernity (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xii-xiv. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Enrique Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity”, in The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America, eds. John Beverley-José Oviedo (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 65-76. See also Enrique Dussel, “Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism,” Nepantla: Views from South 1, no. 3 (2000): 465-78. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. 31See especially Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). See also Kwaku Larbi Korang, Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa: Nation and African Modernity (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003) and Ntongela Masilela, “New Negro Modernity and New African Modernity,” a paper presented to The Black Atlantic: Literatures, Histories, Cultures forum in Zurich in January 2003. This mutual encounter of Africans and diaspora Africans with Western modernity is also noted as having helped to give birth to the Pan-African consciousness. See

    Teshale Tibebu, Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentricism in World History (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011); See also Toyin Falola, The African Diaspora : Slavery, Modernity, and Globalization ( Rochester, New York: University of Rochester, Press, 2013) 102-3; David Attwell, Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006); Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual Power in Post-Colonial Africa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. 32 Patrick Manning, The African Diaspora (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. 33 Teshale Tibebu, Edward Wilmot Blyden and the Racial Nationalist Imagination (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Joseph Auguste Anténor Firmin, the Haitian born pioneer anthropologist, Egyptologist, lawyer, and diplomat became a member the Societé d'Anthropologie de Paris and authored The Equality of the Human Race. See also Frederick Douglass who in 1854 delivered “The Claims of the Negro, Ethnologically Considered.” Like Blyden, both were inspired by the pseudo-scientific and pseudo-religious racism that was emerging under the mantle of modernity. Firmin’s text was a direct rebuttal of Arthur de Gobineau's "Inequality of the Human Races" and Douglass’s was a response to the theory of polygenesis and the related racist claims made by the authors of Types of Mankind. Antenoir Firmin, The Equality of the Human Races, (originally published in French in1895 and translated by Asselin Charles, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002). See also Celucien L. Joseph, “Anténor Firmin, the ‘Egyptian Question,’ and Afrocentric Imagination,” The Journal of Pan African Studies, vol.7, no.2, August 2014. Frederick Douglass, “The Claims of the Negro, Ethnologically Considered, An Address delivered at Western Reserve College, At Commencement, July 12, 1854 (Rochester: Lee, Mass & Co, 1854). Josiah Clark Nott and George, R. Gliddon, Types of Mankind: or Ethnological researches based upon the ancient monuments, paintings, sculptures, and crania of races, and upon their natural geographical, philological and Biblical history: illustrated by selections from the inedited papers of Samuel George Morton and by additional contributions from L. Agassiz, W. Usher, and H. S. Patterson, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co. 1854). Scholars such as Ntongela Masilela have additionally highlighted modernity’s engagement by Blyden contemporaries such as Soga and Alexander Crummell. Tiyo Soga who has been described as “the first major modern African intellectual,” completed his theological studies in Scotland at Glasgow University and the United Presbyterian Theological Hall in 1856 and returned to South Africa to serve as a minister and missionary. Like Crummell and Blyden, Soga was also initially an Anglophile who welcomed the offerings of modernity and Christian Civilizationism and depreciated indigenous South African culture and religion as “backward and heathen.” However, Soga’s experiences as an African of the unpleasantries of European modernity while studying in Scotland laid the foundation for his transition into what has been described as “the founder of black nationalism and black consciousness in South Africa.” Notably, his “black nationalism” and “racial consciousness” has been described as more akin to that of Alexander Crummell than its less conservative expression by Blyden and his disciples. See Donavan Williams, Umfundisi: a biography of Tiyo Soga, 1829-1871 (Lovedale, South Africa: Lovedale Press, 1978);  *“*Tiyo Soga,”[The Journal and Selected Writings of the Reverend Tiyo Soga](http://books.google.com/books?id=x4AmAQAAIAAJ) ([Grahamstown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grahamstown): [Rhodes University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhodes_University), 1983),8*;* John A. Chalmers, Tiyo Soga: A Page of South African Mission Work (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1877) and J. A. Millard, “Tiyo Soga,” in Dictionary of African Christian Biography, http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/soga1\_tiyo.html. See also Masilela, “New Negro Modernity,” 5-6 and David Attwell, “Transculturation of Enlightenment: The Journal of Tiyo Soga,” in David Attwell, Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006)27-50. On Crummell see Moses, Alexander Crummell. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. 9 This thesis is also largely supported by Tibebu who describes Blyden as “a modernist.” Tibebu, Blyden, 76. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. See for example Masilela, “New Negro Modernity,” 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. See especially Laura Elizabeth West, “‘The Negro Experiment’: Black Modernity and Liberia, 1883-1910” (master’s thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2012), accessed June 1, 2016, https://theses.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-05082012-115854/unrestricted/West\_LE\_T\_2012. See also David Borman, “Literature of Return: Back to Africa, Belonging and Modernity” (PhD diss., University of Miami, 2014), accessed online June 7, 2016, http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2237&context=oa\_dissertation. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Contemporary scholars have increasingly noted the relationship between Pan-Africanism, West African nationalism, and modernity. See Toyin Falola, Nationalism and African Intellectuals (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001); Ronald W. Walters, Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1993); Marika Sherwood, Origins of Pan-Africanism: Henry Sylvester Williams, Africa and the African Diaspora (New York: Routledge, 2011). On the specific relationship between Liberia, Sierra Leone, Pan-Africanism, and modernity, see Ibrahim Sundiata, Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 3. See also Richard Brent Turner, “Edward Wilmot Blyden and Pan-Africanism: The Ideological Roots of Islam and Black Nationalism,” The Muslim World 87, no. 2 (April 1997). [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Tibeau, Blyden, 53, 31. As a West African statesman (Liberia’s Secretary of State, Ambassador to the Court of St. James, Liberian presidential candidate, Agent of Native Affairs, Minister of Interior ) and a founding member and vice president of the Mary Kingsley–inspired Royal African Society, Blyden was continuously engaged with the often more controversial and less malleable realities of West African political and economic development amid the extending shadow of the “Scramble for Africa” and accompanying European colonial and imperial machinations. Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot,33, 44, 140, 173, 203, 207-208. On the significance of Blyden’s diplomatic and economic efforts on behalf of Liberia, see West, “‘The Negro Experiment’: Black Modernity and Liberia.” On Blyden’s relationship with the Royal African Society, which advocated a “modern” and “enlightened imperialism,” see Edward Blyden, West Africa before Europe and other addresses, delivered in England in 1901 and 1903 (London: C. M. Phillips, 1905). See also several addresses published in his capacity as a member and vice-president of the Royal African Society. Included among the latter was Edward Wilmot Blyden, “Islam in the Western Soudan,” Journal of the African Society (October 1902): 11-37; and Edward Wilmot Blyden, “The Koran in Africa,” Journal of the African Society 14, (January 1905): 157-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Notably, the committee that elected Blyden to membership in the Athenaeum Club reportedly included John Lubbock, Herbert Spencer, and Dean Church—all prominent European scholars actively engaged with varied currents of modernity. William J. Simmons, “Hon. Edward W. Blyden, LL.D.” in Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising (Cleveland: Geo. M. Rewell & Co., 1887), 918. See also The Athenaeum, Journal of Literature, Science, The Fine Arts, Music and Drama, no. 4026 (December 1904): 876-77. On the significance of the founding of the American Negro Academy and its membership, which included Blyden’s ministerial colleagues such as Grimke, Alexander Crummell, and Orishatukeh Faduma, see Alfred A. Moss, The American Negro Academy: Voices of the Talented Tenth (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1981). [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Blyden to Miller, 29 November 1888 in Hollis Lynch, Selected Letters of Edward Blyden, (Millwood: KTO Press, 1978), 395-98. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, 6 December 1888, Lynch, Letters, 399-401. Note that versions of several earlier articles included in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race were apparently revised to reflect Blyden’s evolving intellectual and religious orientation. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. 42 Protestant or evangelical liberalism emerged as an international movement that sought to interpret Christian faith in a manner consistent with modern scientific and intellectual thought. It has been described as “the movement in modern Protestantism which during the nineteenth century tried to bring Christian thought into organic unity with the evolutionary world view, the movements for social reconstruction, and the expectation of a ‘better world’ which dominated the general mind.” Daniel Day Williams, God’s Grace and Man’s Hope (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 22; Lloyd J. Averill, American Theology in the Liberal Tradition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 69-94. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. 43. Tibebu, Blyden, 6. On Blyden’s emphasis upon the importance of “religion” see Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia, 20. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. 44. See, for example, E. A. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A Social and Political Analysis (London: Longmans, 1966); J. A. Langley, Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa, 1856-1970 (London: Rex Collings, 1979); and Robert July, The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West Africa During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (London: Faber & Faber, 1968). See also Martin N. Kilson, Political Change in a West African State: A Study of the Modernization Process in Sierra Leone (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966). [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. 45 For example, Blyden was aware of the works of key British scholars such as Fredrick Max Muller, Edward Bennet Tylor, and Herbert Spencer, who were engaged in formulating the new “science of religion.” He was also aware of the related work of figures such as Bishop Colenso, Dean Milman, Ernest Renan, etc. See Eric Sharpe, Comparative Religion: A History (La Salle: Open Court, 1980) and Julius H. Bailey, Down in the Valley: An Introduction to African American Religious History (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 1-8*.* For a broader treatment of this development and its implications, see Chidester, Empire of Religion and David Chidester, Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996). David Wills has documented the intensive discourse related to the impact of modernity and its corollaries in the African American context. David W. Wills, “Aspects of Social Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1884-1910” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1975) and Wills, “The Double Crisis of Black Christianity.” [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. 46. See Cornell West’s Foreword in Richard Newman, Go Down, Moses, A Celebration of the African-American Spiritual (New York: Clarkson Potter/Publishers, 1998), 9-17. For a broader argument of this thesis, see Wilson J. Moses, Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998), 1-17. However, this irony is extended and deepened by the rejection of the spirituals as musically and theologically “primitive” and “backwards” by many members of the black intellectual and religious elite. Exemplifying this tradition was Daniel Alexander Payne (1811-1893) who studied at Lutheran Theological Seminary before becoming a senior bishop of the AME Church and principle founder of Wilberforce University and the Bethel Historical Society.Daniel Alexander Payne, Recollections of Seventy Years (Nashville: A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1888, reprint Arno Press and The New York Times,1968), 253-57 See also Lawrence Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: African American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1977), 165-166. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. 47. On the thesis and theory of polygenesis and the black response, see Colin Kidd, The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 247-50. See also Paul Harvey, “A Servant of Servant Shall He Be,” in Craig R. Prentiss, Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity: An Introduction (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003), 22. For Blyden’s rejection and ridicule of the theory of polygenesis as espoused by “modern” scholars such as Alexander Winchell in his Adamites and Preadamites: Or, a Popular Discussion Concerning the Remote Representatives of the Human Species and Their Relation to the Biblical Adam (Syracuse, NY: J.T. Roberts, 1878), see Edward W. Blyden, “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans” in Edward W. Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race (1887 reprint, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1967) 90, 93 and Edward W. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. See, for example, the response of AME minister and Bishop Benjamin T. Tanner. Benjamin Tanner, “The Origin of Man,” AME Church Review 4 (October 1887): 203-13 and Benjamin T. Tanner, The Descent of the Negro (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Publishing House, 1898). Notably, Frederick Douglass also rejected the theory of polygenesis as undermining Scripture in language that approximated that of Tanner as he noted that “the credit of the Bible was at stake.” Cited in Wilson J. Moses, Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998), 110-11. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. 49. Tiyo Soga who has been described as “the first major modern African intellectual, completed his theological studies in Scotland at Glasgow University and the United Presbyterian Theological Hall in 1856. *“*Tiyo Soga,”[The Journal and Selected Writings of the Reverend Tiyo Soga](http://books.google.com/books?id=x4AmAQAAIAAJ) ([Grahamstown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grahamstown): [Rhodes University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhodes_University), 1983*)*, 8*;* John A. Chalmers, Tiyo Soga: A Page of South African Mission Work (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1877) and J. A. Millard, “Tiyo Soga,” in Dictionary of African Christian Biography, http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/soga1\_tiyo.html. See also Masilela, “New Negro Modernity,” 5-6 and David Attwell, “Transculturation of Enlightenment: The Journal of Tiyo Soga,” in David Attwell, Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006)27-50. On Crummell see William J. Moses, Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 289; and Blyden, African Life and Customs. Stephen C. Knapp, “Mission and Modernization: A Preliminary Critical Analysis of Contemporary Understandings of Mission from a Radical Evangelical Perspective,” in R. Pierce Beaver, ed., American Missions in Bicentennial Perspective (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977), 146-209. For a broader treatment of this dynamic, see Andrew Porter, Religion versus Empire, British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914 (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. # See for example the life and ministries of Revs. Orishatukeh Faduma, Majola Agbebi, Sutton E. Griggs, William H. Ferris, Theophilus Gould Steward, Reverdy Ransome, William B. Euba; John Mensah Sarbah, William B. Euba and Mark C. Hayford. See William H. Ferris, The African Abroad: Or, His Evolution in Western Civilization, Tracing His Development Under Caucasian Milieu, Volume 2 (Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Press, 1913); William H. Ferris “ The New Negro’s Attitude towards Theology,” Negro Journal of Religion, 1 (July, 1935); Theophilus Gould Steward, From 1864 to 1914: Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry (Philadelphia : A. M. E. Book concern, 1921), Theophilus Gould Steward, Genesis Re-Read, of the Latest Conclusions of Physical Science, Viewed in their Relation to the Mosaic Record (Philadelphia: A. M. E. Book Room, 1885); Albert G. Miller, Elevating the Race: Theophilus G. Steward, Black Theology and the making of an African American Civil Society 1864-1924 (University of Tennessee Press, 2003); Sutton E. Griggs, The Story of my Struggles, (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1914), Sutton Griggs, Guide to Racial Greatness, of the Science of Collective Efficiency (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1924); Reverdy C. Ransom, The Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom’s Son (Nashville: The A. M. E, Sunday School Union, 1948); John Mensah Sarbah, Fanti Customary Laws (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1897) , John Mensah Sarbah, Fanti National Constitution, (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1906); Alfred Tildsley, Dr. Mark C. Hayford: In promotion of the spiritual and material welfare of the natives of West Africa and proposed developments (unknown binding, 1926). See also Randall K. Burkett, Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978).

    [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Orishatukeh Faduma and Majola Agbebi who were devotees of Blyden were among late Victorian clergy who exemplified this position. See Orishatukeh Faduma, “Success and Drawbacks of Missionary Work in Africa by an Eye-Witness,” in J. W. E. Bowen, ed. Africa and the American Negro: Addresses and Proceedings of the Congress on Africa (Atlanta: Gammon Theological Seminary, 1896):125-136: Orishatukeh Faduma, “Negro Development: Its Meaning and Aims,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, 17 Sept. 1921; Orishatukeh Faduma, “Africa’s Claims and Needs,” Southern Workman (May 1925): 221-225. See also Moses N. Moore, Jr., Orishatukeh Faduma: Liberal Theology and Evangelical Pan-Africanism, 1857-1946 (Lanham, Md., and London: The American Theological Library Association and The Scarecrow Press, Inc, 1996). On Majola Agbebi, see E. A. Ayandele, A Visionary of the African Church: Mojola Agbebi, 1860 - 1917 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House,1971); Akinsola Akiwowo, “The Place of Mojola Agbebi in the African Nationalists Movements, 1890-1917,” Pylon 26 (1965): 122-139 and Rina Okonkwo, “Mojola Agbebi : Apostle of The African Personality” Présence Africain: 114-144. 10.3917/presa.114.0144. January 1980 accessed online at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276401248_Mojola_Agbebi_Apostle_of_The_African_Personality> See also Olufemi Taiwo’s broader reflections on 19th century African modernists.’ Olufemi Taiwo, How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa, (Indiana University Press, 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. 52. Note, for example, pervasive rumors that Blyden’s often romanticized assessments of Islam, defense of polygamy, and attempts to incorporate the study of Arabic and Islam into the curriculum of Liberia College reflected the efforts and agenda of his status as a clandestine convert to Islam. Holden, Blyden, 662-65. See also Richard B. Turner, R. B., “Edward Wilmot Blyden and Pan Africanism: The Ideological Roots of Islam and Black Nationalism in the United States,” The Muslim World 87 (1997): 169-82 and A. R. I. Doi, “Influence of Islam and the Spread of Islam Learning in West Africa: Contributions of E. W. Blyden to Islamic Studies,” The Islamic Review 54, no. 11 (November 1966): 32-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. 53. Both Hollis Lynch and Valentin Y. Mudimbe allude to “an unbelievable inconsistency in Blyden’s thought.” Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, viii; and “Edward Blyden’s Legacy and Questions,” in Valentin Y. Mudimbe, The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1988), 98-134, especially 115. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. It is notable that a significant number of Blyden’s black and white contemporaries such as William Gladstone, Bishop Colenso, David Swing, Alexander Crummell, and even W. E. B. Du Bois were similarly accused of inconsistency in the wake of their often tenuous and hesitant efforts to make sense of and accommodate the myriad scientific, intellectual, and religious challenges posed by late Victorian modernity. For insight into the resultant “ordeal” of faith and intellect that many in pew, pulpit and academy were undergoing during the late Victorian era see Francis P. Weisenburger, Ordeal of Faith: The Crisis of Church Going America, 1865-1900 (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959) and Ferenc Morton Szasz, The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930 (University: University of Alabama Press, 1982). On similar developments taking place in Britain, see Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, 2 vols (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1972). [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. John Knox, A Historical Account of St. Thomas, W. I. With Its Rise and Progress in Commerce; Missions and Churches; Climate and Its Adaptation to Invalids, Geological Structure; Natural History and Botany. . . . (New York: Charles Scribner, 1852) and Livingston, Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Both parents were reportedly born on neighboring St. Eustatius, a smaller island southeast of St. Thomas which under Dutch influence had become by the eighteenth century an important part of the region’s slave-based economy. Edward Blyden, “Biographical Sketch” in Edward W. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering (New York: John Grey, 1862), i. Although the descendants of slaves taken from Nigeria to fuel this economy, both Romero and Judith were born free (Romero in 1796 and Judith in 1803). By the late 1820s, the two had married and started a family that eventually included Edward and five siblings. See sketch of “Blyden Family Tree” from personal files of Mr. Myron Jackson, a Blyden descendant and Executive Director of the Virgin Island Cultural Heritage Institute. Blyden would eventually draw divisive racial, religious, and political implications from his consciousness of being a “pure Negro” rather than a “mulatto.” On the racial and social distinctions on St. Thomas and their possible implications for Blyden’s later racial views, see Thomas W. Livingston, Education and Race: A Biography of Edward Wilmot Blyden (San Francisco: The Glendessary Press, 1975), 15-16, 18-19. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Livingston, Education and Race, #2, 225 [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Knox, Historical Account, 42. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. The family’s two-year sojourn at Porto Cabello [Porto Bello], Venezuela served to further expose a youthful Blyden to the inequities and tenuous quality of life for people of African descent throughout the Caribbean Diaspora. The family’s sojourn also elicited early evidence of the precocious youth’s linguistic skills as he quickly became fluent in Spanish. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, i-ii. Livingston, Education and Race, 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Livingston, Education and Race, 15, 16 and Knox, Historical Account, 19-20. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. At the end of the seventeenth century, the island’s governor attempted with little success to suppress the slave’s practice of “drum dances” and other “heathenish customs brought with them from Africa.” Knox, Historical Account, 55-56. On the possibility that Islam may have been among these traditions see Michael Gomez, Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of Muslims in the Americas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 47-90. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Livingston, Education and Race, 17. In an article published in 1876, Blyden attested to continued African religious and cultural influences in the West Indies. His reminisces and comments anticipated contemporary discourse regarding African “survivals” and cultural transmission in the Diaspora. Edward Blyden “Christianity and the Negro Race,” originally published in Fraser’s Magazine, May 1876. Reprinted in Blyden, Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, 39-40. On the continued influence of African religion and culture on St. Thomas into the early twentieth century, see Maud Cuney Hare, “History and Song in the Virgin Islands,” The Crisis 40, no. 4 (April 1933): 83-84 and The Crisis 40, no. 5 (May 1933): 108, 118. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Although the precise nature, source, and function of these “African traditions” are unknown, they undoubtedly had religious implications. Hollis Lynch, ed., Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1978), 4. The Church Registry records the confirmation of Romero on May 28, 1830 and Judith on June 27, 1830 and that of Edward and his brother William on March 31, 1850. The Registry of the Members of the Dutch Reformed Church in St. Thomas. Von Shelton Papers Collection, Enid M Baa Public Library, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. See also Dutch Reformed Church of DWI Registry of Members 1744-1923 (Microfilm). [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Rooted in the theological and hermeneutical dynamics of the Reformation, the Reformed Tradition was decisively shaped by the theological ministrations of the French reformer and theologian John Calvin whose name become indelibly associated with its demanding biblical, theological, social, and ethical rigor. In subsequent varied denominational manifestations it emphasized the majesty and sovereignty of God; the sinfulness and depravity of humanity; the divine authority and literal interpretation of the Bible; the complex mysteries of predestination, election, and damnation—and what would prove to be of special and lifelong significance for Blyden—God’s providential and decisive role in human and world affairs. John T. McNeill, The History and Character of Calvinism (New York, 1954) and Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong, Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, ii. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. George M. Marsden, The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) and Randall Balmer and John R. Fitzmier, The Presbyterians (Westport, London: Greenwood Press, 1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. Livingston, Education and Race, 20. Lynch, Selected Letters, 14-15. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, ii. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 21. Blyden’s confirmation was recorded on March 31, 1850. The Registry of the Members of the Dutch Reformed Church in St. Thomas. Von Shelton Papers Collection, Enid M Baa Public Library, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, ii. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 21-22. Lynch, Patriot, 4. See also Blyden to Coppinger 13 September1884, ACS Papers, vol. 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Lowrie served as one of the first Presbyterian missionaries to Liberia and was a member of the executive committee of the American Colonization Society. Pinney, a graduate of Princeton, also served as missionary to Liberia in 1833 and briefly as governor of the fledgling colony. Frederick J. Heuser, Jr., A Guide to Foreign Missionary Manuscripts in the Presbyterian Historical Society (New York, Westport, CT, London: Greenwood Press, 1988), 84-85. See Andrew E. Murray, Presbyterians and The Negro: A History (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966), 78. See also H. N. Sherwood, “The Formation of the American Colonization Society,” Journal of Negro History 2, no. 3 July , 1917: 209-28, and P. J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement 1816-1865 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961). [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. In 1774, Presbyterian stalwart Ezra Stiles and Congregational divine Samuel Hopkins submitted a letter to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia requesting assistance in educating and sending “two natives of Africa on a mission to propagate Christianity in their native country.” The project, however, was deferred and superseded by events relating to the Revolutionary War and its aftermath. Jesse Belmont Barber, Climbing Jacob’s Ladder: Story of the Work of the Presbyterian Church U. S. A. Among the Negroes (New York: Board of National Missions, Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1952), 13-14. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Robert Finley, founder of the colonization society was a graduate of the seminary, and most of its professors and students were present at its initial public meeting. Old School and Princeton Seminary ties to the colonization movement were further cemented and illuminated by the activities and legacy of Archibald Alexander. Not only did the venerable Old School leader and Princeton professor serve as a missionary to Liberia and West Africa, he was also an active leader of the American Colonization Society and author of an influential early history of colonization. See David E. Swift, “Black Presbyterian Attacks on Racism: Samuel Cornish, Theodore Wright and Their Contemporaries,” Journal of Presbyterian History 51 (1973): 444-45. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Murray, Presbyterians and the Negro, 78. Arthur J. Brown, One Hundred Years, a History of the Foreign Missionary Work of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. A. (New York: Revell, 1936), 204. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. The Presbyterian General Assembly which had earlier given “its hearty endorsement to the organization of the American Colonization Society” routinely passed resolutions encouraging its support by Presbyterian congregations. Heuser, Guide, xxi-xxiii. Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1832, 365-66. Brown, One Hundred Years, 196-97, 204. For an in-depth history of this relationship, see Eva Naomi Hodgson, “The Presbyterian Mission to Liberia” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1980). [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. Benjamin Quarles, Black Abolitionists (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 4-5, 8. On opposition to the “colonization scheme” by black Presbyterian clergy, see Samuel Cornish and Theodore Wright, The Colonization Scheme Considered, in its Rejection by the Colored People--in its Tendency to Uphold Caste--in its Unfitness for Christianizing and Civilizing the Aborigines of Africa, and for Putting a stop to the African Slave Trade: in a Letter to the Hon. Benjamin F. Butler (Newark, NJ: Aaron Quest, 1840). [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. Holden, Blyden, 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. These contradictory factors included lingering suspicions and resentments regarding the pro-slavery sentiments of some members of the American Colonization Society as well as questions about and the role and status of its indigenous population fostered by the racial, religious and cultural chauvinism of Americo-Liberians. All hampered Liberia’s ability to elicit support and immigrants from black communities in the Atlantic Diaspora. Livingston, Education and Race, 22-27. On the early history of Liberia see Edward Blyden, “A Chapter in the History of Liberia,” A. M. E. Church Review, July 1892 in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 99-117. See also Tom W. Shick, Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settler Society in Nineteenth Century Liberia (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 8-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. See especially West, “The Negro Experiment.” See also David Borman, “Literature of Return: Back to Africa, Belonging and Modernity” (PhD diss., University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, 2014), accessed June 7, 2016, http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2237&context=oa\_dissertations. See additionally Patrick Manning, The African Diaspora (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. On Wilson, see B. F. M. MacPherson, “The Agnew-Wilson Family,” Gettysburg Times, May 3, 1958, 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. Archibald Alexander, A History of Colonization on the West Coast of Africa (Philadelphia: Wm S. Martien, 1846). See also 39th and 40th (1876, 1877) Annual Reports of the Presbyterian Board of Mission. See Blyden to John Lowrie, 3 June 1875, Lynch, Letters, 190-91. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. Earnest Sandeen contends that “The Princeton Theology” was “founded by Archibald Alexander, [and] given its most complete formulation by Charles Hodge in his Systematic Theology.” See Earnest R. Sandeen, “The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism” Church History 31, no. 3 (September 1962): 307-21, 308; Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1874); Mark Noll, The Princeton Theology 1812-1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1983, 2001). [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. David Wilson to Walter Lowrie, October 1, 1851; David Wilson to Walter Lowrie, 28 July 1851, Holden, Blyden, 29-33. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. Livingston, Education and Race, 32. The pedagogical preeminence given the Bible reflected Wilson’s studies at Princeton Seminary which emphasized that it was the literal and authoritative “Word of God.” Similarly, his appropriation of it as a historically and geographically accurate text was thoroughly consistent with the view and use of Scripture common in traditional evangelical circles at mid-nineteenth century. On the traditional use and interpretation of the Bible in nineteenth-century America, see Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds., The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). See also Allene Stuart Phy, ed., The Bible and Popular Culture in America (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985). [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Livingston, Education and Race, 32. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. For more critical insight on Blyden’s views relative to Islam and “Orientalism,” see Jacob Dorman, “‘Lifted Out of the Commonplace Grandeur of Modern Times:’ Reappraising Edward Wilmot Blyden’s Views of Islam and Afrocentrism in Light of His Scholarly Black Christian Orientalism,” Souls, A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society 12, no. 4 (October 2010): 398-418. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. Livingston, Education and Race, 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. Ironically, while much of Blyden’s theological and intellectual orientation would undergo transformation in subsequent decades, the perception of “history as the gradual unfolding of the will of God” was one of the factors that remained constant. Livingston, Education and Race, 32. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. Wilson’s pleas for support were successful and Blyden’s education at the high school was partially subsidized by funds from the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission. Wilson to Walter Lowrie, 1 October 1851 and 28 July 1851, Holden, Blyden, 29-33. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. David Wilson to Walter Lowrie, 1 October 1851 and 28 July 1851, Holden, Blyden, 29-33. Livingston, Education and Race, 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. Blyden’s decision would have immediate economic and political implications since it apparently entailed rejection of an entreaty by Liberia’s President S. A. Benson to become his Secretary of State. Livingston, Education and Race, 39. Holden, Blyden, 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. Livingston, Education and Race, 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. Lynch, Blyden, 45-46. Blyden to the Rev. John L. Wilson, Corresponding Secretary of the Presbyterian Board, 5 March 1858. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 50-52. Although Blyden seems to have been unclear about his preference of schools, presumably Princeton Seminary—the flagship of American Presbyterian theological education and one of the few schools that admitted blacks for advanced theological study—would have been among the schools that he envisioned attending. [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. On Presbyterian ministerial education, see Robert T. Handy, A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 3-4. Inexplicably, the Board did act favorably upon the similar request by Armistead Miller, another graduate of Alexander High School. It seems to have been understood that Miller would pursue his theological education at recently opened Ashmun Institute which was envisioned as both theologically and racially “safe.” Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. Such sentiments appear to have been manifest in the extensive correspondence between Blyden and the Board during the tenure of corresponding secretary John Leighton Wilson. Wilson, a white Southerner and pioneer Presbyterian missionary in West Africa, often criticized Blyden for what he described as a “pompous display of learning” and “the pretension to literature which pervades and characterizes your letters.” Wilson was especially incised by Blyden’s tendency to employ Greek and Latin in his letters to the Board which he viewed as an expression of gratuitous self-aggrandizement. Consequently, Wilson’s perception of Blyden’s abuse of his educational attainments may have been decisive in the Board’s decision not to subsidize his quest for seminary education in the United States. See Wilson to Blyden, June 1859, P.B.F, M. Outgoing Letters to Africa, vol. 2, no. 351; Livingston, Education and Race, 43 and Murray, Presbyterians and the Negro, 74. On Wilson, see Hampden C. DuBois, Memoirs of Rev. John Leighton Wilson, D. D., Missionary To Africa And Secretary of Foreign Missions, (Richmond, Va.: Presbytery Committee of Publications, 1895). Michele Valerie Ronnick argues that Blyden’s habitual use of Latin over a period of fifty years in his correspondence was “in no way the meaningless and frivolous embellishments of a conniving poseur” but rather used to express “some of Blyden’s most serious and important ideas.” Michele Valerie Ronnick, “The Latin Quotations in the Correspondence of Edward Wilmot Blyden,” The Negro Educational Review 46, no. 3-4 (July-October 1994): 105 (101-106). [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. This date was also consistent with Blyden’s recollection that “ever looking forward to the ministry, I was *finally* [emphasis his], after the usual examination, licensed and ordained by the Presbytery of West-Africa, in the year 1858.”Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, iii. [↑](#endnote-ref-97)
98. Holden, Blyden, 52 from New York Colonization Journal, March 1860 and New York Colonization Journal, March 1859. [↑](#endnote-ref-98)
99. Although most accounts report that Blyden was examined and ordained in 1858, After additional inquiries, this text accepts 1858 as the date of his ordination. [↑](#endnote-ref-99)
100. Ashmun was permeated by a conservative evangelical orientation that reflected mid-nineteenth century Presbyterianism’s peculiar synthesis of racialized ideology and theology. Its 1865-66 catalogue noted that it was founded for preparation of Blacks primarily to facilitate “mission and colonization work in Africa.” Lincoln University Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Lincoln University, 1865-66, cited in Ferry, “Portrait,”11-12. See also Andrew E. Murray, “The Founding of Lincoln University,” Journal of Presbyterian History 51 (1973): 392-410. [↑](#endnote-ref-100)
101. African Repository 36 (1860): 123, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 52. Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission (PCUSA/UPCUSA), Secretaries’ Files of the West Africa Mission, 1835-1965. These files contain outgoing and incoming correspondence, minutes and reports between Liberian missionaries and the secretaries of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. See also Frederick J. Heuser, Jr., A Guide to Foreign Missionary Manuscripts in the Presbyterian Historical Society (New York, Westport, CT, London: Greenwood Press, 1988), 3-12. [↑](#endnote-ref-101)
102. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 138-39. [↑](#endnote-ref-102)
103. African Repository 42 (1866): 246. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 139-40. [↑](#endnote-ref-103)
104. Edward Blyden, The Pastor’s Work, (London, 1866). [↑](#endnote-ref-104)
105. Edward W. Blyden The Pastor’s Work: A Sermon Preached on the Occasion of the Installation of Rev. Thomas H. Amos as Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Monrovia, May 6, 1866 (London: Dalton & Lucy, n. d., 9, 15-16. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 45-47. [↑](#endnote-ref-105)
106. See Edward Blyden, “A Eulogy Pronounced on Rev. John Day,” African Repository 37 (1861): 154-58. [↑](#endnote-ref-106)
107. African Repository 41 (1865): 123-24. David Wilson to Walter Lowrie, 1 October 1851. Holden, Blyden, 50, 53, 129-30, 138-39; Livingston, Education and Race, 41. [↑](#endnote-ref-107)
108. African Repository 41 (1865): 123-24. Wilson to Walter Lowrie, 1 October 1851. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 129-30. Wilson departed Liberia in 1859 to recuperate from a lingering malaise. Livingston, Education and Race, 41; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 50, 53. [↑](#endnote-ref-108)
109. Livingston notes that Blyden’s pedagogical concern extended beyond the offspring of Liberia’s settler population and increasingly reflected his belief that the future of the Republic was dependent upon successful outreach to its neglected indigenous population. Thus he aimed to instill his students with an “evangelical zeal--tempered judiciously with intelligence--so that they could move into the Liberian interior, to instruct “the natives [in] the arts of civilized life and their great duties to God and each other.” Blyden to Gladstone, 3 May 1861 in Livingston, Education and Race, 52-53. [↑](#endnote-ref-109)
110. Livingston, Education and Race, 32, 52-53. See also Blyden to Gladstone, 3 May 1861. [↑](#endnote-ref-110)
111. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 61 from African Repository 36 (1860): 280-81. Notably, Blyden’s pedagogical efforts also included instructing and preparing Presbyterian and ministerial candidates from other denominations in Greek, the classics and theology. Livingston, Education and Race, 41. [↑](#endnote-ref-111)
112. Frederick Max Muller whose groundbreaking work in comparative philology and comparative religion (“the science of religion”) would have significant impact upon Blyden’s views on and studies of the intersection of religion and modernity. On the significance of Muller, as the “Father of Comparative Religion” see Eric J. Sharpe, Comparative Religion (London: Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1975, 1986), 27-72. See also Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion in Britain, 37-70. [↑](#endnote-ref-112)
113. Edward Blyden, “Ladies, Liberia Literary Institute,” African Repository, vol. 28,

     August,1852, 243-245.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-113)
114. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, i. Soon after his arrival in Liberia, Blyden became an active supporter and proponent of the Ladies Liberia Literary Institute and in 1853 commemorated its anniversary with an address focused on the “Vanity of Worldly Pursuits” which challenged the nation’s women to assume their responsibilities “as part of Liberia’s civilizing mission.” Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 61; Livingston, Education and Race, 38-39. See also Liberia Herald, 4 April 1852 reprinted in African Repository 28 (August 1852): 243-44; Liberia Herald, 2 March 1853 and African Repository 29 (September 1853): 266-67. Ironically, Blyden’s efforts as both advocate and facilitator of expanded educational and social opportunities for women would contribute to his reputation as a “ladies’ man” and provide no shortage of fuel for rumors of inappropriate relationships. Livingston, Education and Race, 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-114)
115. Livingston, Education and Race, 31. The linguistically gifted Blyden had been introduced to Hebrew by Jewish playmates on St. Thomas and prior to his ordination began a lifelong study of Hebrew. He would write to Dr. [Isador] Kalish “the distinguished Hebrew scholar and divine” who was active in the Reformed movement in the U. S. for assistance. Kalish responded with the gift of “his [own] Hebrew Grammar” as well as “Commentaries on Exodus and Genesis” which Blyden acknowledged as having “been to me a wonderful storehouse of philological, historical, and even theological information.” Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, iii. Edward Blyden, The Jewish Question (Liverpool, 1898), 6-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-115)
116. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, iii, 29-64. Edward Blyden, “A Vindication of the African Race: Being a Brief Examination of the Arguments in Favor of African Inferiority,” originally published in Liberia in August 1857. The pamphlet included an introduction by Alexander Crummell, the Cambridge educated Episcopal clergyman who was a colleague of Blyden. [↑](#endnote-ref-116)
117. Blyden, “A Vindication of the Negro Race,” in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 131-33. [↑](#endnote-ref-117)
118. Based on Gen. 9:18-27, the so-called curse of Ham was used to demean people of African descent. It would be readily adopted as scriptural justification and legitimation of the subordination, brutalization, and exploration of blacks within the agenda of modernity. Cain Hope Felder, ed., Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 130-32. See also Gene Rice, “The Curse That Never Was (Genesis 9:18-27),” Journal of Religious Thought 29 (1972): 11-26. For a broader study of this text and its use in justification of slavery, see Stephen R. Haynes, Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). [↑](#endnote-ref-118)
119. Livingston, Education and Race, 37. See Cain Hope Felder, “Race, Racism, and The Biblical Narratives” and Charles B. Copher, “The Black Presence in the Old Testament,” in Felder, Stony the Road We Trod, 127-84. See also related articles in Vincent M. Wimbush, ed., African Americans and The Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures (New York, London: Continuum, 2000) and Sylvester, A. Johnson, The Myth of Ham In Nineteenth-Century American Christianity: Race, Heathens, and the People of God (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). See additionally Ronald E. Clements, One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) and Modape Oduyoye, The Sons of the Gods and the Daughters of Men: An Afro-Asiatic Interpretation of Genesis 1-11 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1987). [↑](#endnote-ref-119)
120. Wilson to Walter Lowrie, 1 October 1851, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 29-30. [↑](#endnote-ref-120)
121. Blyden to Wilson, 8 June 1861. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 79. [↑](#endnote-ref-121)
122. Blyden to Rev. J. B. Pinney, 26 November 1850, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 23-24. [↑](#endnote-ref-122)
123. New York Colonization Journal, August 1851 quoted in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-123)
124. See Edward Blyden, “A Eulogy Pronounced on Rev. John Day on March 2, 1859,” Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 49. See African Repository 37 (1861): 154-58. Lynch, Black Spokesman, 61. Edward W. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering (New York: John A. Gray, 1862). [↑](#endnote-ref-124)
125. West, “The Negro Experiment.” [↑](#endnote-ref-125)
126. The pamphlet, privately published in 1856 by friends and supporters of Liberian colonization, was directed at an African American audience and occasioned by passage of the pro-slavery Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 by the United States Congress which heightened despair in an African American community still reeling from passage of the Fugitive Slave Law only four years earlier. In its aftermath, some members of a despondent black community began to reconsider the option and merits of emigration. Unfortunately, for supporters of Liberian colonization, this reconsideration did not significantly alleviate prevailing skepticism and criticism regarding Liberia and the American Colonization Society. Consequently, the geographical focus of their emigration plans became South and Central America and Haiti, rather than Liberia. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 16-17. Howard H. Bell, “The Negro Emigration Movement: A Phase of Negro Nationalism,” Phylon 20 (November 1959). See also Martin R. Delany, The Condition, Elevation and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered, (Philadelphia: 1852). [↑](#endnote-ref-126)
127. Cecil A. Blake, “A Critical Introduction to Edward Wilmot Blyden’s American discourse on exodus, 1861-1890” Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976), 10-11. [↑](#endnote-ref-127)
128. Livingston, Education and Race, 37. [↑](#endnote-ref-128)
129. Lynch, Black Spokesman, 9-10. See Edward E. Curtis’ contention that “Blyden became a fervent black messianist, supporting the view of Africa and Africans as potential messiahs in the redemption of the world . . . .” Edward E. Curtis IV, Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African-American Islamic Thought (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 22-23. On Blyden’s contribution to the tradition of “racial messianism” rooted in the “concept of the redemptive mission of the black race,” see also Wilson J. Moses, Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Racial and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-129)
130. Blyden, A Voice from Bleeding Africa, in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 8-9. See also Livingston, Education and Race, 46; and Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 18. [↑](#endnote-ref-130)
131. Obviously aware of developments roiling the American Presbyterian community, Blyden, prior to his departure, had expressed concern about the prudence of his attendance given “the present agitated state of affairs in the U. S.” His apprehension proved to be warranted as the Old School Assembly, meeting in Philadelphia amid heightened anti-slavery and sectional tension, divided along sectional lines--its southern wing subsequently forming the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America (the Southern Presbyterian Church).

     Blyden to Wilson, 15 March 1861, Holden, Blyden, 64, 73. See also Ernest Trice Thompson, Presbyterians in the South: Volume I, 1607-1861 (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963), 297. [↑](#endnote-ref-131)
132. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, iii-iv. [↑](#endnote-ref-132)
133. See Edward W. Blyden, “Hope for Africa, A Discourse Delivered in the Presbyterian Church, 7th Avenue, N. Y. July 21, 1861,” Washington, 1861. Original version published in the African Repository 47 (1861): 258-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-133)
134. Over the course of his 8 visits to the United States between 1850 and 1895 (1850,1861,1862,1874,1880,1882, 89, and 1895) Blyden became acquainted with a veritable “Who’s Who” of black and white religious leaders and was often honored and hosted in homes, and an ecumenical array of churches and denominational enclaves. [↑](#endnote-ref-134)
135. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, iv. J. D. Johnson was a black physician and entrepreneur who had recently immigrated to Liberia from the United States. Wilson J. Moses, Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 128, 141-42. See also Miller, Search for a Black Nationality, 198-200. [↑](#endnote-ref-135)
136. Howard Holman Bell, ed., Search for a Place: Black Separatism and Africa, 1860 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971), 47. For a broader discussion of the surge of colonization sentiment on the eve of the Civil War, see Floyd J. Miller, The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975); Wilson J. Moses and James M. McPherson, The Negro’s Civil War (New York: Vintage, 1965) and David W. Blight, Frederick Douglass’ Civil War : Keeping Faith in Jubilee (Baton Rough and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 122-147. See also Wilson J. Moses, The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925 (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1978) and Wilson J. Moses and James M. McPherson, The Negro’s Civil War (New York: Vintage, 1965). [↑](#endnote-ref-136)
137. Mentored by Theodore Sedgewick Wright, the first black graduate of Princeton's Theological Seminary, Garnet was a leader among the generation of activist and less theologically conservative black New School Presbyterian ministers that emerged in the aftermath of the schism of 1837. Encyclopedia of World Biography, s.v. “Garnet, Henry Highland,” accessed January 5, 2017, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/garnet-henry-highland>. Traveling to England in 1850, Garnet spent two years as a popular and engaging lecturer within a British religious and intellectual climate that was already being roiled by issues related to the impact of modernity and its religious and racial corollaries. See also Joel Schor, Henry Highland Garnet: A Voice of Black Radicalism in the Nineteenth Century (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977) and Earl Offari, Let Your Motto Be Resistance: The Life and Thought of Henry Highland Garnet (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972). [↑](#endnote-ref-137)
138. In the 1850’s Garnet helped to establish the African Civilization Society as an explicitly antislavery-oriented alternative to the Colonization Society. Miller, Search, 192-93, 228-31. Unlike the Colonization Society, the Civilization Society was not only unambiguous in its opposition to slavery but also committed to fostering economic and commercial development as part of its antislavery agenda. However, as reflected by its name, the Civilization Society did share with the Colonization Society the broader agenda, theology, and ideology of “Christian Civilizationism.” Its constitution was explicit in its call for “the civilization and Christianization of Africa and the descendants of African ancestors in any portion of the earth, wherever dispersed.” Wilson J. Moses notes that the notion of “civilizationism” as applied to Africa, “embodied a sense of obligation to aid in the uplifting not only of the continent itself, but of black people everywhere, and argued that if the internal life of the continent could be improved, black folk in England and America would experience a corresponding elevation of status.” Wilson J. Moses, The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925 (New York: Oxford, 1988), 11. Moses, Crummell, 124-28. [↑](#endnote-ref-138)
139. Blake, “Blyden’s American Discourse on Exodus,” 46-48. [↑](#endnote-ref-139)
140. New York Observer, June 5, 1862. Inspired by one of his favorite texts, Deuteronomy 1:21, Blyden’s discourse evoked the concept of “Providence” in passionate explanation and proclamation of “the duty of the descendants of Africa to their fatherland.” Edward Blyden, “The Call of Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America,” Lynch, Black Spokesman, 25-33. [↑](#endnote-ref-140)
141. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 99-100, 935. Over the course of his tour Blyden discovered and was not reticent in incorporating more poignant secular justifications for his advocacy of colonization as he again witnessed the painful and humiliating legal and extralegal realities of American racism. While visiting Washington, he observed the dreaded Fugitive Slave Law “in active operation” as “colored persons were handcuffed and carried back into Slavery” even as “boastful speeches and declamation about the freedom of American institutions were being made at the Capital.” Incited by the accompanying hypocrisy and complicity of the white Christian community, he indicted its version of Christianity with the query: “How can colored people have any faith in Christianity . . . when examples so contradictory to its teachings are daily set by those who claim to be its enlightened professors?” See Blyden to the editor of the Liberia Herald, August 1862, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 102. [↑](#endnote-ref-141)
142. Blyden charged that in the United States, “All the bitter and unrelenting opposition [to colonization] comes from a few half-white men, who, glorying in their honorable pedigrees, have set themselves up as representatives and leaders of the coloured people of this country. . . .” Edward Blyden, “An Address Before the Maine State Colonization Society, Portland Maine, June 26th, 1862” in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 15-16. Although rooted in pseudo-scientific racial theories common to the nineteenth century, Blyden’s general distrust and dislike of mulattos was buttressed by personal observations and experiences on St. Thomas, Liberia, and the United States. His animus, privately and publicly presented with increased frequency, would develop into an irrational and almost paranoid distrust, fear and even hatred that would become a major source of tension, conflict and often enmity between Blyden and blacks of mixed racial heritage within Liberia, wider West Africa, and the United States. See Blyden to Professor Henry of the Smithsonian Institution, “On Mixed Races in Liberia,” 6 October 1869, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 212-15; Blyden to William Coppinger, 19 October 1874, Lynch, Selected Letters, 173-78; Lynch, Black Spokesman, xiv, xxix. [↑](#endnote-ref-142)
143. On the development and emergence of theological liberalism in the United States, see Gary Dorrien, The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining American Progressive Religion, 1805-1900 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) and Gary Dorrien, The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining American Progressive Religion, 1900-1950 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-143)
144. Douglass’ Monthly, September 1862. Cited by Moses, Crummell, 141-42. On Douglass’ religious development, his early engagement with the religious and racial implications of mid-nineteenth century modernity and its corollaries, and subsequent transition from evangelical orthodoxy to religious “heterodoxy” see Martin, Mind, 173-82; William Van Deburg, “Frederick Douglass: Maryland Slave to Religious Liberal,” Maryland Historical Magazine 69 (Spring 1974): 27-43; and especially David W. Blight, Frederick Douglass’ Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 8-12, 122-23, 125-26, 130-34. For a more recent analysis of Douglass’ antebellum engagement with and appropriation of Scripture as “an interpretive lens,” see Margaret P. Aymer, First Pure, Then Peaceable: Frederick Douglass Reads James (Library of New Testament Studies 379, New York: T&T Clark, 2008). Unfortunately, Aymer does not extend her analysis of Douglass into the Post-Bellum era during which he more consistently illuminates his critical awareness of and responses to theological and hermeneutical currents and sensibilities associated with the academic, intellectual, and racial impact of modernity. See for example Douglass’ 1870 controversy with conservative AME Bishop and theologian Jabez Pitts Campbell over his “liberal” religious views and “opinions.” Herbert Aptheker, “An Unpublished Frederick Douglass Letter,” The Journal of Negro History 44, no. 3 (July 1959): 277-81, (June 14, 1870). See also Martin, Mind of Douglass, 178-79 and Blight, Douglass, 122-47.  [↑](#endnote-ref-144)
145. Indicative of their commitment to colonization, the two clergymen and “commissioners” also collaborated in an earlier less well-known edited work in support of Liberia and colonization. See Edward Wilmot Blyden and Alexander Crummell, eds., Liberia: The Land of Promise to Free Colored Men (Washington, D.C.: American Colonization Society, 1861). An editorial review published in the African Repository heralding “Liberia’s Contribution to Letters and Theology,” lauded their texts as “refutation of the alleged inferiority of the African race” and “honorable indications of the talent and literary progress in Liberia.” It added, “We commend these volumes to the thoughtful consideration of all free men of color and to all who would promote their welfare. . . .” The African Repository 38 (1863): 362. See also Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 112. [↑](#endnote-ref-145)
146. Wilson J. Moses, Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989),52-88. Among prominent African and diaspora African clergy who visited Britain and wider Europe where they lectured, pursued educational opportunities, and lobbied for anti-slavery funds and support were Tiyo Sogo (the University of Glasgow educated South African), James W. C. Pennington (recipient of an honorary doctorate from Heidelberg University) ; Henry Highland Garnet (abolitionist activist),James Theodore Holly (Bishop of Haiti), James Cardoza who was a student at the University of Glasgow and subsequently studied theology for four years in seminaries in London and Edinburgh); Samuel Ringgold Ward, and West Africans, Orishatukeh Faduma, William Euba, John Mensa Sarbah, Bishop James Johnson, etc. Of related significance was the British sojourn from 1845 to 1847 of Frederick Douglass who briefly served as a preacher upon being licensed in 1839. [↑](#endnote-ref-146)
147. See John Wolffe, ed. Religion in Victorian Britain Volume V: Religion and Empire (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988) [↑](#endnote-ref-147)
148. Moses, Crummell, 76. [↑](#endnote-ref-148)
149. Whewell was also a member of learned organizations such as the British Association for the Advancement of Science founded in 1833. Crummell was also sponsored and partially supported during his studies by William Wilberforce and (Dean) Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, both of whom would be key participants in controversy engaging religion, academy and modernity. Both would also become close acquaintances and supporters of Blyden during and after his intellectual and religious metamorphosis. See Stephen Thompson, “Alexander Crummell,” in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy(Spring 2014 edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/alexander-crummell/. See also F. Kirkland, “Modernity and Intellectual Life in Black,” The Philosophical Forum 24.1-3:136-165; Moses, Crummell, 75-77. Reportedly, Crummell was also sponsored and partially supported during his studies by William Wilberforce and (Dean) Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, both of whom would be key participants in Britain’s adjudication of controversy regarding religion and modernity. Both would also be close acquaintances and supporters of Blyden as he underwent intellectual and religious metamorphosis. [↑](#endnote-ref-149)
150. # Ntongela Masilela, “New Negro Modernity and New African Modernity,” (Paper presented at The Black Atlantic: literatures, histories cultures forum in Zurich in January 2003), accessed December 11, 2015. <http://pzacad.pitzer.edu/NAM/general/modernity.pd>. See also Ntongela Masilela, [The Historical Figures of the New African Movement](http://africaworldpressbooks.com/historical-figures-of-the-new-african-movement-ntongela-masilela/)(Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2014) and Ntongela Masilela, “The ‘Black Atlantic’ and African Modernity in South Africa, Research in African Literatures Vol. 27, No. 4 (Winter, 1996): 88-96. See also F. Kirkland, “Modernity and Intellectual Life in Black,” The Philosophical Forum, 24.1-3:136-65.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-150)
151. “Alexander Crummell, Cambridge’s first black graduate,” The Guardian, October 19, 2011, accessed online January 12, 2016. <http://pzacad.pitzer.edu/NAM/general/modernity.pd>

     Moses, Crummell, 84-88; Lynch. Patriot, 26-28, 40-41,47 [↑](#endnote-ref-151)
152. Alexander Crummell, “The English Language in Liberia” (1860), in The Future of the Race (New York: Charles Scribner,1862). Alexander Crummell, “The Regeneration of Africa” (1865), in Africa and America, (Springfield: Wiley and Company,1891. See also J. R. Oldfield, (ed) Civilization and Black Progress: Selected Writings of Alexander Crummell (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995). Identified as being of special importance was Crummell’s 1860 address titled “The English Language in Liberia” delivered in Monrovia in 1860. Masilela contends that Crummell’s celebration of ‘. . . the prerogatives and the elevation the Almighty has bestowed upon us, in our having as our own, the speech of Chaucer and Shakespeare, of Milton and Wordsworth, of Bacon and Burke, of Franklin and Webster," subsequently “provided” South African intellectuals “with the code words for their understanding and articulation of modernity.” Masilela “New Negro Modernity,” 15, 20-21.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-152)
153. Alexander Crummell, The Future of Africa: Being Addresses, Sermon, Etc., Etc., Delivered in the Republic of Liberia (New York: Charles Scribner, 1862). See critical review of The Future of Africa by Douglass in Douglass’ Monthly, July 1862, 674. See also Crummell’s response cited in Moses, Crummell, 118 139-41, 326, 284. [↑](#endnote-ref-153)
154. Edward Blyden, Liberia’s Offerings (New York: John A. Gray, 1862). Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 112. On the maturation of Blyden’s views regarding indigenous African religion and culture, see Edward W. Blyden, African Life and Customs, (London: Phillips, 1908). On the more ambivalent and less critical interrogation and assessment of Western modernity and especially its religious and cultural corollaries by Crummell and Tiyo Soga see Masilela, “New Negro Modernity.” See also Vuyani Vellem, “Tiyo Soga: Violence, disruption and dislocation in the white polis”, HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies 72(1), 2016. a3563. http://dx.doi. org/10.4102/hts. v72i1.3563: 1-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-154)
155. The collection reflected the various currents and themes that characterized Blyden’s writings, addresses, and research through the early 1860s as he began his mature interrogations of modernity. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 112. [↑](#endnote-ref-155)
156. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, iv and Blyden to Tracy, 17 July 1862, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 108. Local papers such as The St. Thomas Tende proudly recorded “the appreciation felt by his countrymen of his efforts in the sacred cause of Africa’s evangelization and regeneration.” It also expressed hope that his visit might “act as a stimulus upon his former associates and acquaintances, urging them to attempt great things for the outraged land with whose interest he had identified himself. . . .” It concluded on a note of local pride: “It is gratifying to us to know that out little Island has furnished one to take a part in the great work of opening Africa to civilization, to which savants and philanthropists are hastening from Europe and America to devote themselves.” St. Thomas Tidende, August 23, 1862. See also Blyden, Liberia’s offering, v. [↑](#endnote-ref-156)
157. African Repository 39 (1863): 137, from Liberia Herald, February 18, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 109. [↑](#endnote-ref-157)
158. Edward Blyden to the editor of the St. Thomas Tidende, August 28, 30, 1862. [↑](#endnote-ref-158)
159. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-159)
160. African Repository 39 (1863): 139-140, from Liberia Herald, February 15, 1863. See also Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 108-109. [↑](#endnote-ref-160)
161. New York Colonization Journal, October 1862. See also Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, iv-v and Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 110. [↑](#endnote-ref-161)
162. Alexander Crummell, Africa and America (Springfield, 1891), 429 and Lynch, Patriot, 33-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-162)
163. Lynch, Patriot, 33-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-163)
164. For insight into his changing perceptions of Liberia and colonization as both model and means of African modernization, see Edward W. Blyden, “The Origin and Purposes of African Colonization” (Washington, D.C.: American Colonization Society, 1882). See also and especially, Edward Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia” A Lecture Delivered at Lower Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, Liberia, January 26, 1908 (London: Phillips, 1908) and Edward Blyden, The Problems before Liberia: A Lecture Delivered in the State Chamber at Monrovia, January 18, 1909 (London: Phillips, 1909) and West, “The Negro Experiment.” [↑](#endnote-ref-164)
165. On the complicated and convoluted history of Liberia College, see especially Thomas W. Livingston, “The Exportation of American Higher Education to West Africa: Liberia College, 1850-1900,” The Journal of Negro Education 45, no. 3 (Summer 1976): 246-62. [↑](#endnote-ref-165)
166. Upon reporting Blyden’s appointment as Professor of Greek and Latin Languages and Literature, Dr. Joseph Tracy, Congregational minister and Secretary of the Boston based Trustees of Donations for Education in Liberia, attested to both his ministerial credentials and growing reputation as a scholar. Writing to a ministerial colleague in support of his academic bona fides and credentials, Tracy noted that “Professor Blyden . . . . is an ordained minister and missionary of the Old School Presbyterian Church, with whose claims to scrupulousness in respect to scholarship you are acquainted.” Specifically cited in support was one of Blyden’s early colonization treatises, “Hope for Africa.” Tracy to Rev. Dr. Larabee,10 August 1861, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 87, 220; Livingston, Education and Race, 56-73. [↑](#endnote-ref-166)
167. Livingston, “The Exportation of American Higher Education,” 250, 252. [↑](#endnote-ref-167)
168. Tracy to Mr. H. M. Schieffelin, of the New York Colonization Society, 22 June 1863; Tracy to Pinney, 22 July 1863; 1 August 1863; 10 August 1863; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 127-28. The Fulton Professorship was endowed by “a bequest from the will of James Fulton” and administered by the New York Colonization Society. Provisions of the will required that the appointee “subscribe” to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. Tracy noted that although “it may be presumed that he [Blyden] subscribed to it when he was ordained; . . . there should have been formal subscription, duly . . . recorded, in connection with his appointment and induction, so that the fact could be proven in court.” Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-168)
169. Balmer and Fitzmier, The Presbyterians, 25-30; 48, 53, 57, 86. With the outbreak of the Civil War in America and the further division of both the Old School and New School church into regional sections, subscription to the traditional doctrines of the Church again became a major issue. It would become an even more volatile issue amid reunion plans proposed at the end of the war. George Marsden, The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003; originally published New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 213-15. [↑](#endnote-ref-169)
170. Related suspicion and even resentment were engendered among members of the Presbytery of West Africa and Presbyterian mission circles when the high school was forced to suspend its operation in the aftermath of Blyden’s resignation to accept appointment to the college. Although expressing regret at termination of his “ten year connection” with the high school, “first as its pupil and then as its head,” Blyden insisted that his acceptance of the position at the college had come only as a result of being given the impression that the school would soon close for want of funds. It was an explanation that did little to assuage supporters of the school, who viewed his resignation as little less than an act of desertion and ingratitude. Adding to tensions were allegations that Blyden had continued to accept his salary from the school even after acceptance of the college appointment. As a result, not only denominational loyalty but also professional ethics became interrelated sources of long-running suspicions and conflict. Whatever may have been the extent of his loyalties to Alexander High School, Blyden’s appointment to Liberia College where he would be a colleague of Crummell provided an opportunity that the ambitious young scholar could scarcely turn down. In addition to affording a high-profile platform to actualize his evolving pedagogical, ideological, and missiological agenda, his appointment also provided the continuously financially strapped minister with a significantly higher salary. Blyden to Walter Lowrie, New York Colonization Journal, April 1962 from Liberia Herald, Dec. 20, 1861 in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 89-90; New York Colonization Journal, June 1862; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 94. [↑](#endnote-ref-170)
171. Inaugural exercises, reflective of the mid-19th century evangelical orientation of the college and its supporters, began with the singing of the 100th Psalm, the reading of Scripture by the Rev. J. S. Payne, and prayer offered by Rev. B. R. Wilson. Ironically, a disregard for "sectarian principles" was hailed as operative at the college and was purportedly reflected in the makeup of the faculty as Mr. Ralston, the Liberian Consul General, enthused: "Mr. Roberts is a Wesleyan Methodist, Mr. Crummell is an Episcopalian, and Mr. Blyden a Presbyterian; and there is a prospect of their acting harmoniously together in the advancement of true religion." Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 91-93. His comments also revealed the extent to which perceptions of “true religion” and ecumenism reflected the religious and cultural bias of the nation’s ruling Anglo-Liberians. Conspicuously absent during the inaugural ceremonies was recognition or even acknowledgment of the varied religious orientations of Liberia’s indigenous populations. The status of even suspect versions of Christianity was also illuminated in President Roberts’ inaugural address which attempted "to stave off any possible criticism of heresy or heterodoxy" by "assuring the citizenry that there would be no principles instilled in the minds of youth contrary to the teachings of the word of God." Christianity, of Protestant pedigree and orthodox evangelical orientation, he affirmed, would be the singular and uncompromised religious standard of the institution. Livingston, Education and Race, 57-58. [↑](#endnote-ref-171)
172. Edward Blyden, “Inaugural Address at the Inauguration of Liberia College, at Monrovia, January 23rd, 1862” as published in Blyden, Liberia’s Offering. See also Lynch, Black Spokesman, 219-22. [↑](#endnote-ref-172)
173. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-173)
174. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-174)
175. Included among Blyden’s cited works were John Henry Newman, Office and Work of Universities; Thomas Babington Macaulay, The History of England (1848) and Essays on the Athenian Orators Knight’s Quarterly Magazine (August 1848); Henry Brougham, Lives of Men of Letters and Science (London: Charles Knight, 1845); Frederick Temple, “The Education of the World,” ; Dr. M. M. Kalisch, Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament: Genesis (Longmans Green, London, 1858); William G. T. Shedd, “Address on the Relation of Language to Thought,” Bibliotheca Sacra (November 1848): 650-653; and Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America vol. 1 (1835). Blyden, “Inaugural Address,” 118-19. See also Lynch, Black Spokesman, 217-18. [↑](#endnote-ref-175)
176. Alexander Crummell, “The English Language in Liberia” (1860). [↑](#endnote-ref-176)
177. Blyden, “Inaugural Address” 118-119. [↑](#endnote-ref-177)
178. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-178)
179. In an 1861 letter, Blyden hailed the British statesman’s public expressions of piety and enthused that “when such sentiments so Scripturally and so philosophically true, prevail in the high places of any country, that country must be great and honorable; for despite the secularizing theories of mere Utilitarians, it is an abiding truth that ‘Righteousness exalteth a nation.’ England then, so long as her leading men hold to such doctrines will maintain the front rank which she occupies among the nations of the earth.” Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 14. See Blyden to William Gladstone, 20 April 1869, and Blyden to William Gladstone, 25 March 1861, British Museum, Add. Ms. 44395, 223-26, quoted in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 117-18. [↑](#endnote-ref-179)
180. See Edward Blyden, “A Eulogy Pronounced on Rev. John Day,” African Repository 37 (1861): 154-58. Blyden’s emulation of Gladstone would result in him being known as the “little Gladstone.” [↑](#endnote-ref-180)
181. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 66. See Blyden to Gladstone, 25 April 1861, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 119-21. See also C. Collyer, “Edward Blyden-A Correspondent of William Evert Gladstone,” Journal of Negro History 35 no 1 (January 1950): 75-78 and Wilber Devereux Jones, “Blyden, Gladstone and the War,” The Journal of Negro History 49, no. 1 (January 1964): 56-61. [↑](#endnote-ref-181)
182. Lynch, Letters of Blyden, 30. Blyden to William Gladstone, 25 March 1861, British Museum. See also Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 119-21 [↑](#endnote-ref-182)
183. Lynch, Letters of Blyden, 30. Blyden to William Gladstone, 25 March 1861, British Museum. [↑](#endnote-ref-183)
184. Blyden to William Gladstone, 7 September 1860, British Museum, Add. Ms. 44394. F, 102-103, cited in Holden, Blyden, 115. [↑](#endnote-ref-184)
185. Blyden to Gladstone, 3 May 1861, British Museum, Add. Ms. 44396, f 3. To this end, Livingston reports that Blyden informed an astounded Gladstone of his efforts at Alexander High School to imbue his students with “the disciplined insights of Xenophon, Thucydides, and Herodotus.” Livingston notes that his vision and pedagogical strategy emphasizing the civilizing synthesis of classical studies and Christianity, “the spread of civilization borne on the pagan wings of antiquity, animated by the spirit of the Gospel,” was one that he felt certain that Gladstone would appreciate. Gladstone was additionally flattered when Blyden reported that when the enthusiasm of his students waned, he was often successful in rekindling their enthusiasm by reminding them of the importance of classical training in the shaping of “Gladstone” and other renowned British leaders. Livingston, Education and Race, 50-53. [↑](#endnote-ref-185)
186. William Ewart Gladstone, Homeric Studies: On Homer and the Homeric Age (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1858) On intellectual and religious transitions at England’s most prominent academic institutions in response to the currents of modernity see Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 176, 216. [↑](#endnote-ref-186)
187. Kingsley was a minister, Cambridge professor, historian, broad churchman, progressive, and leading advocate of Christian Socialism. Hare was a classical scholar and theologian who pioneered in the application of “the techniques of historical criticism,” and was “active in bringing German critical scholarship to England.” Hare was also the brother-in-law of another figure of importance in this development, Frederick Denison Maurice. Notably, the hermeneutical and theological implications of the works of the three induced early concern among British defenders of orthodoxy. On Kingsley, see Piers Hale, “Darwin’s Other Bulldog: Charles Kingsley and the Popularization of Evolution in Victorian England,” Science and Education 21, no. 7 (2012), accessed January 6, 2017, http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/H/Piers.J.Hale-1/DARWIN’S%20OTHER%20BULLDOG%202011.pdf. On Hare, see N. Merril Distad, Guessing at Truth. The Life of Julius Charles Hare (1795-1855) (Shepherdstown, West Virginia: Patmos Press, 1979). Lynch, Selected Letters, 30. Blyden to William Gladstone, 25 March 1861, British Museum, Add. Ms. 44395. f 223-26, quoted in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 117-18 and Blyden to Gladstone, 25 April 1861, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 119-21. [↑](#endnote-ref-187)
188. Blyden to William Gladstone, 25 March 1861, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 116-17, 154. See also Lynch, Letters, 43; Livingston, Education and Race, 52 and Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-188)
189. James R. Moore describes “a series of intellectual tremors which jarred large sections of the British churches into militant defense of the faith once delivered to the saints. Beginning in 1857, each year for the greater part of a decade seemed to bring a new and deliberate assault on established religious truth. . . .” James R. Moore, The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-189)
190. Publication of Origin of Species ignited long smoldering conflict within the British ecclesiastical and academic establishments. By the early 1860s, both were publically embroiled in bitter and rancorous controversy over the compatibility of the findings of Darwinism, geology, anthropology, comparative religion, and biblical criticism with the “truths” of orthodox Christianity. A series of heresy trials exacerbated the controversy as ecclesiastical defenders of orthodoxy sought to purge liberals and progressives from church, university, and public life. Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, vols. 1 and 2, 2nd ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1972); Clement C. J. Webb, A Study of Religious Thought in England from 1850 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933); L. E. Elliot-Binns, English Thought, 1860-1900: The Theological Aspect (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956); Otto Pfleiderer, The Development of Theology in Germany Since Kant and Its Progress in Great Britain since 1825, trans. J. F. Smith (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1890). See also John Wolffe, ed., Religion in Victorian Britain, Vol. V Culture and Empire (New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), 177-219; and Wheeler-Barclay, The Science of Religion in Britain. [↑](#endnote-ref-190)
191. See Blyden to William Gladstone, 20 April 1869. Blyden to William Gladstone, 25 March 1861, British Museum, Add. Ms. 44395, 223-26, quoted in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 117-18. [↑](#endnote-ref-191)
192. Blyden to Gladstone, 25 March 1861 in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 117. [↑](#endnote-ref-192)
193. David Chidester, Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014) 64-65 and Ieuan Ellis, Seven Against Christ: A Study of “Essays and Reviews” (Leiden: Brill, 1980), ix. See also Josef L. Altholz, Anatomy of a Controversy: The Debate over Essays and Reviews, 1860-1864 (Aldershot, England: Scholar Press, 1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-193)
194. Blyden letter to William Gladstone, 16 April 1862, British Museum, Ms.; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 124. [↑](#endnote-ref-194)
195. Blyden was responding to criticism of a valedictory address delivered by Gladstone at the University of Edinburgh titled the “Place of Ancient Greece in the Providential Order of the World.” Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 148. Moore notes that Gladstone’s successful nomination of Temple in 1869 was “the foremost defeat for the politics of religious conservatism” in Britain. Moore, Post-Darwinian Controversies, 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-195)
196. In correspondence with Gladstone, Blyden noted that The Record (an influential conservative publication) “seems particularly interested in the effect upon the causes of truth and righteousness of the light you are now reflecting. It says with great seriousness and concern: ‘Every prophetic foreshadowing of Mr. Gladstone’s future must be watched with the utmost anxiety.’” For dramatic effect and literary affirmation, Blyden closed with a cryptic excerpt from Dante’s Inferno XVII. Blyden to William Gladstone, 3 February 1866. Holden, Blyden, 148-50. See C. Collyer, “Edward Wilmot Blyden-A Correspondent of William Evart Gladstone,” Journal of Negro History 35 (1950): 75-78. [↑](#endnote-ref-196)
197. “J[ohn]. Stuart Mill” was a prominent philosopher and a "radical" critic of the ethics, morality, and "supernaturalism" associated with Christian orthodoxy. He was also one of the foremost advocates of a "Religion of Humanity," which he argued was "destined . . . to be the religion of the Future." Blyden’s comments were probably induced by Mills’ promotion of “Utilitarianism” in an article published in Fraser’s Magazine in 1861 and later proclaimed in a book in 1865. Blyden may have also been familiar with several Mills’ earlier works such as his controversial System of Logic which was originally published in 1843 and The Principles of Political Economy published in 1848. See John Stuart Mills, “Utilitarianism,” Fraser’s Magazine, 1861. Blyden to William Gladstone, 25 March 1861, British Museum, Add. Ms. 44395.f 223-26. Quoted in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 117-18. Blyden, no doubt, was more appreciative of Mill’s response to the racism of Thomas Carlyle in “The Negro Question” published in 1850. See John Stuart Mill, “The Negro Question,” Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country, 1850 and “John Stuart Mill,” The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 10. See John Stuart Mill, Three Essays on Religion: Nature, the Utility of Religion, and Theism (1874), 105. Although published posthumously, the essays were written between 1830 and 1870 and reflect the maturation of Mill’s religious thought. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v “John Stuart Mill,” http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/m/milljs.htm, 13-15. In an analysis of Mill’s “Religion of Humanity,” Linda C. Raeder argues that “contrary to the conventional view of Mill as the prototypical secular liberal, religious preoccupations dominated his thought and structured his endeavors throughout his life. For a proper appreciation of Mill’s thought and legacy, the depth of his animus toward traditional transcendent religion must be recognized, along with the seriousness of his intent to found a non-theological religion to serve as its replacement.” Linda C. Raeder, “John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity,” http://www.system.missouri.edu/upress/spring2002/raeder.htm, 1. See also Linda C. Raeder, John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002). [↑](#endnote-ref-197)
198. 62 Blyden’s references to the “vagaries” of Colenso may have had related allusion to Colenso’s advocacy and defense of what he purported to be a racially benign version of polygenesis. On the impact that modernity’s new scientific, intellectual academic and religious corollaries were having upon biblically rooted theories of race and resurgent racism, see Colin Kidd, The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 153-56. [↑](#endnote-ref-198)
199. Frederick Denison Maurice, a liberal British theologian was also a leading formulator of Christian Socialism as prescriptive of the economic and social dislocations occasioned by modernity. See Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v “Frederick Denison Maurice,” http://www.britannica.com/biography/Frederick-Denison-Maurice. On the influence of Abraham Kuenen, the Dutch theologian and “one of the leaders of the modern school of Old Testament critics,” see Jewish Encyclopedia, s.v “Kuenen, Abraham,” accessed July 11, 2015, http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9538-kuenen-abraham#anchor1. [↑](#endnote-ref-199)
200. In The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined Colenso “challenged the historicity of the biblical narrative and applied historical critical methods to the text of the Pentateuch. John William Colenso, The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined, 7 vols. (London: Longman, Robert, and Green, 1862-79). See also Moore, Post-Darwinian Controversies, 306; Gerald Parsons, “Current Research: The Theology of Bishop J. W. Colenso,” http//www.open.ac.uk/Arts/relstud/colenso.htm, 1 and George P. Landow, “Bishop Colenso and the Literal Truth of the Bible,” The Victorian Web: Literature, History, & Culture in the Age of Victoria. http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/colenso.html [↑](#endnote-ref-200)
201. William Henry Green, The Pentateuch Vindicated from the Aspersions of Bishop Colenso (New York: John Wiley, 1863), iii-vii, 15, 52, 69-73. See also James Moorhead, Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 234-50. Notably Francis Grimke, the African American minister with whom Blyden would establish a close personal and professional relationship was among Princeton Seminary students that imbibed Green’s caustic criticism of Colenso and embraced his conservative hermeneutical tenets in response to the new biblical perspectives and claims emergent in conjunction with modernity and its corollaries. Grimke’s embrace of the defensive orthodoxy of Charles Hodge and other members of the Princeton faculty in similar reaction to the claims and perspectives of Darwinism, critical ecclesiastical historiography, and comparative religion would illuminate a more conservative response of prominent black clergy to the challenges posed to their faith and ideology by the pervasive acids of modernity. [↑](#endnote-ref-201)
202. John William Colenso, St Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Newly Translated and Explained from A Missionary Point of View (1861). Colenso’s synthesis of biblical, comparative, and missiological insights and interests was signaled as early as 1854 in his “Church Missions Among the Heathen in the Diocese of Natal.” See Ruth Edgecombe, ed., Bringing Forth Light: Five Tracts on Bishop Colenso’s Zulu Mission, (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1982), 1-28. In noting the importance of Colenso’s pioneering synthesis of biblical criticism and the emergent discipline of comparative religion within the missionary context, David Chidester has observed that Colenso “depicted his entire enterprise of biblical criticism as a response to a crisis in his mission” induced by Zulu questions regarding “the historical accuracy of the Bible.” For a discussion focused on Colenso’s synthesis of biblical criticism and the emergent discipline of comparative religion as applied in the African context, see David Chidester, Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 129-40 and G. Parsons, “Rethinking the Missionary Position: Bishop Colenso of Natal,” in Religion In Victorian Britain, Vol. V Culture And Empire, ed. John Wolffe (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), 134-75. See also Frieder Ludwig and Afe Adogame, eds., European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2004) which reviews European per­cep­­tions of re­ligion in Africa from the sixteenth century and especially Ulrich Berner, “Africa and the Origin of the Science of Religion. Max Müller (1823-1900) and James George Frazer (1854-1941) on African Religions,” 141-50. [↑](#endnote-ref-202)
203. Parsons, “Rethinking the Missionary Position,” 134. [↑](#endnote-ref-203)
204. Moore, Post-Darwinian Controversies, 58, 90-97. See also Francis P. Weisenburger, Ordeal of Faith: The Crisis of Church-Going America, 1865-1900 (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 218. Chidester, Savage Systems, 129-40 and Edgecombe, In Bringing Forth Light, 1-28. [↑](#endnote-ref-204)
205. Temple (1821-1902) originally contributed but later withdrew submission of his article for Essays and Reviews. Moore, Post-Darwinian Controversies, 52. The boundaries of Gladstone’s theological and intellectual transition were marked by the bitter and long-running controversy which found him defending central tenets of Christianity against the onslaught of Thomas Huxley. See Moore, Post-Darwinian Controversies, 65-66, 348. [↑](#endnote-ref-205)
206. For insight regarding Blyden’s belated awareness and appreciation of Gladstone’s religious evolution and “laditudarianism,” see Blyden’s 1876 essay titled “Christianity and the Negro Race” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 30-31. [↑](#endnote-ref-206)
207. Blyden also rejected Colenso’s speculations regarding polygenesis. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” Fraser’s Magazine, New Series 13 (May 1876): 554-68; “Christian Mission in West Africa,” Fraser’s Magazine, 14 (October 1876): 504-22; “Mohammedanism in West Africa,” Methodist Quarterly Review, 53 (January 1871): 62-78; “Mohammedanism and the Negro Race,” Fraser’s Magazine, New Series, 12 (November 1875): 598-615. [↑](#endnote-ref-207)
208. Crummell, “The Relations and Duty of Free Colored Men in America to Africa” in The Future of Africa, 222. The depiction and treatment of African cultures and religions as evil and illusory found support in purportedly scholarly works of evangelical theorists such as William Sprague whose text titled Lectures Illustrating the Contact Between True Christianity and Various Other Systems reaffirmed the prevailing theological and missiological truism that “the relations between Christianity and paganism were the relations between light and darkness and that with the spread of missions the kingdom of darkness was being routed and its ruler was in panic.” Such assumptions were amplified when focused on Africa and its inhabitants. Consequently, Africa was viewed as a benighted continent, ruled by Satan and ravished by idolatry, ignorance, and the slave trade. William B. Sprague, Lectures Illustrating the Contact between True Christianity and Various Other Systems (New York: Daniel Appleton, 1837), cited in Forman, “History of Foreign Mission Theory,” 73. See also Sylvia Jacobs, “The Historical Role of Afro-Americans in American Missionary Efforts in Africa,” in Sylvia Jacobs, ed., Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982), 16. [↑](#endnote-ref-208)
209. Curtis, Islam, 26. See Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 15, 42, and Blyden, “The Negro in Ancient History,” Lynch, Black Spokesman, 142-43. [↑](#endnote-ref-209)
210. Lynch, Black Spokesman, 170, 244. See Lynch, Patriot, 15, 42. See also Blyden, “Call of Providence,” 123 and Blyden, “The Negro in Ancient History.” [↑](#endnote-ref-210)
211. On the spread of Islam in West Africa, see J. Spencer Trimingham, A History of Islam in West Africa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); Peter B. Clarke, West Africa and Islam: A Study of Religious Development From the 8th to the 20th Century (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1982) and Ira M. Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). [↑](#endnote-ref-211)
212. Blyden, “The Origin and Purpose of African Colonization” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, quoted in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 41. See also Blyden, “Liberia--Its Status and its Field,” in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 94-97. [↑](#endnote-ref-212)
213. Blyden, “Liberia--Its Status and its Field,” in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 96-97. Blyden’s research eventually took him deep into the interior of both Liberia and Sierra Leone where he met with indigenous Islamic scholars. In acknowledgment of his efforts and expressions of respect and sensitivity for their faith that transcended that of traditional missionaries they reportedly referred to him as the “Christian Muslim” and honored him with Islamic names such as “Abd-al-Kerim” and “Mukhtar” (“the chosen one”). Importantly, Blyden would also eventually surmise that Islam’s African adherents were free of many of the material, spiritual, and even psychological ills that seemingly afflicted most black converts to Christianity. Such contacts would further challenge Blyden’s traditional orientalist views of Islamic religion and culture and induce a profound reappraisal of his pedagogy, theology, missiology and racial ideology. Edward Blyden to Henry Venn (Secretary of the Church Missionary Society), 6 September 1871, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 188-92. See also Livingston, Education and Race, 54; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 665; Lynch, Blyden, 174 and Curtis, Islam in Black America, 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-213)
214. Edward E. Curtis IV, Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African-American Islamic Thought (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 26 and Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 15, 42. See also Blyden, “Call of Providence,” 123. Letter of Jessup, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 143. Blyden, “Liberia--its Status and its Field,” African Repository (September 1872): 267-68 and (October 1872): 289-96. See also Lynch, Black Spokesman, 96-97. Despite the unconventional nature of his developing missiological strategy, Blyden’s primary agenda—the conversion of Muslims and other indigenous Africans to Christianity in order "to rescue" them “from the grasp of remorseless superstition, and introduce the blessings of the Gospel"—revealed his continued commitment to traditional evangelical Christianity and presumptions regarding its religious and cultural superiority. [↑](#endnote-ref-214)
215. Consistent with his philological inclinations, Blyden lauded and encouraged the study of languages—particularly Greek and Latin—as essential to academic, religious, and national development during his 1862 inaugural address as professor at Liberia College. Blyden, “Inaugural Address, Liberia’s Offering, 102-115. Livingston, “Exportation of American Higher Education,” 257. [↑](#endnote-ref-215)
216. The newly opened institute attracted scholars and especially missionaries who desired to become proficient in Arabic in order to extend Christianity and meet the Islamic advance. See Livingston, Education and Race, 75-77 and Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 141, 941, #25. [↑](#endnote-ref-216)
217. Edward W. Blyden, From West Africa To Palestine (Freetown: T. J. Sawyerr, 1873). [↑](#endnote-ref-217)
218. The trip also provided inspiration and resources for Blyden’s reassessment of the African past and ode to its future presented in “The Negro in Ancient History.” Enthused by the evidence of ancient African influence in Egypt, Blyden was moved to immortalize his visit with an inscription carved at the entrance of the Great Pyramid: “Liberia, 1866, E. W. Blyden” and Lynch, Blyden, 47. A review of From West Africa to Palestine published in the African Repository noted that “Professor Blyden writes like a scholar” and that the book was “well worthy of perusal.” African Repository 49 (1873): 251. For a more critical assessment of this text and Blyden’s continued adherence to many of the prevailing sentiments and bias of mid-nineteenth-century Orientalism, see especially Curtis, Islam and Black America, 26-33. See also Dorman, “Black Christian Orientalism,” 398-418 and Blyden, From West Africa to Palestine, 91-92. [↑](#endnote-ref-218)
219. Bliss had provided Liberia College with “several Arabic books printed in Syria for distribution among Arabic reading people accessible to Liberia.” His concern and effort, attuned to Blyden’s own pedagogical, political and missiological agenda, likely inspired and facilitated the latter’s successful application for study at the college in Syria as an addendum that would advance their shared agenda. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 142-43. Blyden to Mr. H. M. Schieffelin, 7 December 1870. Turner, “Blyden,” 173. Livingston, Education and Race, 78-79. See also Howard Bliss, The Modern Missionary (Beirut: Trustees of the Syrian Protestant College 1920 (Reprint from The Atlantic Monthly, May 1920): 664–675). [↑](#endnote-ref-219)
220. African Repository 42 (1866): 304-305, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 142-43. See also Alan Austin, African Muslims In Antebellum America: A Sourcebook (New York & London: Routledge, 1984), 433-34, 486-87. [↑](#endnote-ref-220)
221. Letter from Rev. H. H. Jessup to the New York Evangelist, quoted in African Repository 42 (1866): 304-305 in Holden, Blyden to Liberia, 143. On Jessup and the College see Henry Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria. 2 vols. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1910). [↑](#endnote-ref-221)
222. See Ussama Makdisi, “Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity,” The American Historical Review CII (3): 680-713. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/102.3.680> See also Deanna Ferree Womack “The Contested Origins of the 1865 Arabic Bible: Contributions to the Nineteenth Century Nahḍa, Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, Vol 30, 2019: 265-267, DOI: [10.1080/09596410.2019.1573590](https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2019.1573590) and Howard S. Bliss, The Modern Missionary (Beirut: Trustees of the Syrian Protestant College (Reprint from The Atlantic Monthly, May 1920: 664–675). [↑](#endnote-ref-222)
223. Relatedly, one of Blyden’s final publications would be focused on his scholarly intervention in heighted theological and hermeneutical controversy related to the efficacy of certain translations of Christian scripture which had been incorporated into the Arabic Bible for outreach to Muslims in the Soudan. Edward Blyden, The Arabic Bible in the Soudan: A Plea for Transliteration (London, `1910) [↑](#endnote-ref-223)
224. Letter from Rev. H. H. Jessup to the New York Evangelist, Blyden to Liberia, 143. [↑](#endnote-ref-224)
225. While visiting nearby Jerusalem, Blyden also delivered a lecture that reiterated his early views on the “Religious and Political Condition and Prospects of West Africa.” Blyden to Coppinger, 12 September 1866, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 145-46. [↑](#endnote-ref-225)
226. Edward W. Blyden, “Liberia: Past, Present and Future: An Address delivered July 26, 1866 on Mount Lebanon, Syria, at the celebration of the Nineteenth Anniversary of the Independence of Liberia, held by American Missionaries and other citizens of the United States residing in Syria,” Washington City, 1869. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 144. [↑](#endnote-ref-226)
227. Edward W. Blyden, Liberia, Past, Present and Future (Washington, D.C.: McGill & Witherow, 1869); Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 144-45. Curtis IV, Islam in Black America, 26-27. [↑](#endnote-ref-227)
228. As his research took him deeper into the interior of both Liberia and Sierra Leone, Blyden met with indigenous Islamic scholars who deeply impressed him with their learning and bearing. Such contacts would further challenge Blyden’s traditional orientalist views of Islamic religion and culture and induce a profound reappraisal of his pedagogy, theology, missiology and racial ideology. Edward Blyden to Henry Venn (Secretary of the Church Missionary Society), 6 September 1871, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 188-92. See also Livingston, Education and Race, 54; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 665; Lynch, Blyden, 174 and Curtis, Islam in Black America, 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-228)
229. # Livingston, Education and Race, 78.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-229)
230. Blyden to Henry Schliffen of the Board of the New York State Colonization Society, 10 April 1868, African Repository 44 (1868): 125; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 162. [↑](#endnote-ref-230)
231. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-231)
232. Arabic’s inclusion as part of the college’s annual examination would attract not only the attention of the school’s American supporters but also Muslim scholars who visited Blyden at the college and even participated in examination exercises. African Repository 46 (1870): 124; African Repository 47 (1872): 113-15, from Liberian Register, December 24, 1870; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 166-67. [↑](#endnote-ref-232)
233. Blyden to Coppinger, 7 October 1871. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 206-207. [↑](#endnote-ref-233)
234. Livingston, “The Exportation of American Higher Education,” 257-62. See also Richard Brent Turner, “Edward Wilmot Blyden and Pan-Africanism: The Ideological Roots of Islam and Black Nationalism in The United States,” The Muslim World 87, no. 2 (April 1997): 173. [↑](#endnote-ref-234)
235. Livingston, Education and Race, 74, 102. [↑](#endnote-ref-235)
236. Livingston reports that one of his colleagues, discounting Blyden’s claims of the influence of Arabic among West African Muslims, “informed the Board that there was but one place in West Africa where Arabic was known, and there but imperfectly: the brain of Edward Blyden and there it would likely remain.” Livingston, Education and Race, 74-76. [↑](#endnote-ref-236)
237. # Cornelius Van Dyke was a Dutch Reformed missionary, educator, physician, and translator stationed in Lebanon and associated with the college. He is credited with overseeing the translation and publication in 1865 of The Arabic Bible (which was also commonly referred as “the Van Dyke Bible”). See David D. Grafton, The Contested Origins of the 1865 Arabic Bible Nahda(Leiden: Brill, 2015). See also African Repository 45 (1869): 126; African Repository 44 (1868): 219; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 162-163.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-237)
238. African Repository 45 (1869): 127. Blyden to Lowrie, 27 August 1881, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 487, 173; Livingston, Education and Race, 75; Blyden to Lowrie, 23 January 1877, Lynch, Letters, 234-35. [↑](#endnote-ref-238)
239. The Board’s support was in part reflective of Blyden’s penchant for self-promotion which induced complaints from critics within the presbytery regarding the disproportionate influence which he was not reluctant to wield to his advantage. From early in his career, he exhibited a gift and penchant for self-promotion, flattery, and developing friendships with influential men in England and within the inner circles of the American Boards. Especially critical among the latter, was the almost fifty-year friendship that he cultivated and nurtured with William Coppinger, the long-serving Corresponding Secretary of the American Colonization Society and founding editor of the African Repository. It was a twenty-two-year-old Coppinger, then Secretary of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, who escorted a frightened Blyden to the wharfs of Washington for his departure to Liberia, and the two had quickly become trusted confidants. Coppinger would also use the pages of the African Repository to alternately promote and defend the emergent star and advocate of the colonization enterprise. On the relationship between Blyden and Coppinger until the latter’s death in 1892, see Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 5, 119, 120 and especially Papers of the American Colonization Society, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., which contains correspondence between Blyden and Coppinger from 1864 to 1891. [↑](#endnote-ref-239)
240. See for example, Mohammed Bassiru Sillah, “Edward Blyden and Islam in Sierra Leone: A Study of African Intellectual Response to British Colonialism,” Hamdard Islamicus 14 (1991): 23-42 and A.R.I. Doi, “Influence of Islam and the Spread of Islam Learning in West Africa: Contributions of E. W. Blyden to Islamic Studies,” The Islamic Review 54, no. 11 (November 1966): 31-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-240)
241. Edward Blyden, A Vindication of the Negro Race; Being a Brief Examination of the Arguments in Favor of African Inferiority (Monrovia: G. Killian, 1857). [↑](#endnote-ref-241)
242. Edward Blyden, “The Negro in Ancient History,” Methodist Quarterly Review 51 (January 1869): 71-93. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 55. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 161, 942. [↑](#endnote-ref-242)
243. Blyden explicitly noted and refuted the prevailing popular sentiment articulated by American author A. H. Foote who proclaimed that: “if all the Negroes of all generations have ever done were to be obliterated from recollection forever, the whole world would lose no great truth, no profitable arts, no exemplary form of life. The loss of all that is African would offer no memorable deduction from anything but the black catalogue of crime.” Quoted from A. H. Foote, Africa and the American Flag (New York, 1854), 207 in Blyden, “The Negro in Ancient History.” See Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-243)
244. See Blyden to William Gladstone, 13 April 1867, British Museum Add. Ms. 44412/207. Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-244)
245. Edward Wilmot Blyden, From West Africa To Palestine (Freetown: T. J. Sawyer, 1873), 112; Livingston, Education and Race, 228 and Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 55, 58. [↑](#endnote-ref-245)
246. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-246)
247. See Frank Snowden, Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983) and Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). See also Martn Bernal, Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University, 1987); Cheikh Anta Diop, “Origin of the Ancient Egyptians,” Ancient Cultures of Africa, vol. 2 of General History of Africa (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1981); and Maghan Keita, Race and the Writing of History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also essays under the title “Race and Ancient Black Africa in the Bible” in Felder, Stony the Road, 127-84. [↑](#endnote-ref-247)
248. Lynch, Patriot, 14, 26, 63. [↑](#endnote-ref-248)
249. Blyden to W. E. Gladstone, 7 September 1860, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 115-16. [↑](#endnote-ref-249)
250. Charles Darwin, On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life (London: John Murray, Albemarle, 1859). [↑](#endnote-ref-250)
251. Blyden, “Sierra Leone and Liberia” in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 258, cited in Tibebu, Blyden, 72-73. [↑](#endnote-ref-251)
252. McCosh suggested that Darwin’s theory might contain a “large body of important truth.” See James McCosh, Christianity and Positivism (New York, 1871) and James McCosh, The Religious Aspect of Evolution (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890), vii-x. [↑](#endnote-ref-252)
253. Lynch, Patriot, 3. Importantly Blyden also noted a similar reaction among “native scholars” in other parts of the colonized world to the problematic implications of various versions of evolution. See Blyden, “Christianity and Race,” 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-253)
254. See for example Blyden’s reference to Huxley’s Inaugural address at the opening of Mason Science College, Birmingham, September 1880. Blyden, “Aims and Methods,” in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 98. In 1895 Blyden informed Rev. Byron Sutherland, pastor of Washington’s First Presbyterian Church, that he was “very much interested in” the religious, racial and pedagogical implications of the evolutionary theories of British sociologist and Free-thinker Benjamin Kidd. See Blyden to Rev. Byron Sutherland, 11 March 1895, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 649. See also Benjamin Kidd, Social Evolution (New York: Macmillan, 1894). [↑](#endnote-ref-254)
255. The historical-critical method helped to foster the idea that Scripture and Christianity had been decisively shaped over time by historical, cultural, social and even racial accruements. It supported the thesis that the essence and kernel of Christianity had been encased in a husk of superficial accumulations, most recently of Euro-Western origin, and that it was possible to move beyond the accumulated husk of European doctrines and interpretations and recover the “timeless essence” of Christianity and the Christian message. The theory, popularized by German liberal historical theologian Adolf von Harnack, would prove critical to Blyden. It would repeatedly be appropriated in various contexts to provide key academic and intellectual legitimation of his seminal critique of the assumed normative status and hegemony of the theology, ecclesiology, and missiology of Western Christianity and support his subsequent advocacy of the creation of an African Church. [↑](#endnote-ref-255)
256. On Blyden’s emphasis on the role of blacks in the Bible and the historical development of Christianity, see especially Edward Blyden, “Phillip and the Eunuch,” and Blyden, “Stretching out her hands unto God; or Africa’s Service to the World” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 174-98, 130-32. See also Edward Blyden, The Jewish Question (Liverpool, 1898) and “Christianity and the Negro Race” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 30-52. See Edward Blyden, “Christian Missions in West Africa,” “Africa and the Africans additionally,” and “The Mohammedans of Nigritia” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 54-81; 298-324; 350-82. [↑](#endnote-ref-256)
257. See Edward Blyden, “Christian Missions in West Africa,” “Africa and the Africans,” and “The Mohammedans of Nigritia” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 54-81; 298-324; 350-82. [↑](#endnote-ref-257)
258. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 21-22. Lynch, Patriot, 4. See also Blyden to Coppinger 13 September1884, ACS Papers, vol. 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-258)
259. Livingston, Education and Race, 31. The linguistically gifted Blyden had been introduced to Hebrew by Jewish playmates on St. Thomas and prior to his ordination began a lifelong study of Hebrew. He would write to Dr. [Isador] Kalish “the distinguished Hebrew scholar and divine” who was active in the Reformed movement in the U. S. for assistance. Kalish responded with the gift of “his [own] Hebrew Grammar” as well as “Commentaries on Exodus and Genesis” which Blyden acknowledged as having “been to me a wonderful storehouse of philological, historical, and even theological information.” Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, iii. Edward Blyden, The Jewish Question (Liverpool, 1898), 6-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-259)
260. Blyden to William Gladstone, 3 February 1866. Holden, Blyden, 148-50.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-260)
261. Blyden, “Phillip and the Eunuch,” Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 196. [↑](#endnote-ref-261)
262. Blyden to Professor Camphor (of the College of West Africa), 22 September 1899. See The New Africa, November 9, 1899. See also Edward Blyden to Booker T. Washington, 28th November 1894 published in New York Age, January 24th, 1895. [↑](#endnote-ref-262)
263. Edward Blyden, “The Koran in Africa,” Journal of the African Society 14 (January 1905): 157-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-263)
264. Blyden, African Life and Customs, 7-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-264)
265. Friedrich Max Muller, My Autobiography-A Fragment (London: Longman Green, 1901), 277, quoted in Beckerlegge, “Muller and the Missionary Cause,” 192. [↑](#endnote-ref-265)
266. See D. Wiebe, "Religion and the scientific impulse in the nineteenth century: Friedrich Max Muller and the birth of the science of religion:” International Journal of Comparative Religion and Philosophy, vol. 1: 76-97. [↑](#endnote-ref-266)
267. Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 67. See also “‘Friedrich Max Muller And the Role of Philology in Victorian Thought’ (Invitation to) An **International Conference at the German Historical Institute, London, 16-18 April 2015,” accessed January 1, 2017,** http://events.history.ac.uk/event/show/12741. [↑](#endnote-ref-267)
268. Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 42. See also D. Wiebe, "Religion and the scientific impulse in the nineteenth century: Friedrich Max Muller and the birth of the science of religion:” International Journal of Comparative Religion and Philosophy, vol. 1: 76-97. [↑](#endnote-ref-268)
269. While Muller readily embraced the evolutionary theory of religious development, he communication to Gladstone his apparent reluctant to accept its complete application to the method and means of human development. See Muller to Gladstone in correspondence of 1873. Cited in Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-269)
270. British and Foreign Evangelical Review, 29 (January 1880): 36, quoted in Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 68. [↑](#endnote-ref-270)
271. G. A. Muller, ed., The Life and Letters of the Right Honorable Friedrich Max Muller Edited by his Wife, vol. 2 (New York, London: Longman Green, 1902), 481, quoted by G. Beckerlegge, “Professor Friedrich Max Muller and the Missionary Cause” in Wolff, Religion In Victorian Britain, 193-204. [↑](#endnote-ref-271)
272. Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 67. [↑](#endnote-ref-272)
273. On the significance of the Hibbert Lectures for establishment and popularization of the emergent disciple see Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 18,44,56,64-65. [↑](#endnote-ref-273)
274. Michele Valerie Ronnick, The First Three African American Members of the American Philological Association (Philadelphia: American Philological Association, 2001) pamphlet. Referenced at Michele Valerie Ronnick “Bibliography: The Classical Tradition and People of African Descent,” <http://www.langlab.wayne.edu/mvr/black_classicists/biblio.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-274)
275. On Muller’s contributions to the formation of “the science of religion,” see Wheeler-Barclay, The Science of Religion, 37-70. See also D. Wiebe, "Religion and the scientific impulse in the nineteenth century: Friedrich Max Muller and the birth of the science of religion,” International Journal of Comparative Religion and Philosophy, vol.1: 76-97. See also Sharpe, Comparative Religion, 35; and Max Muller, Introduction to the Science of Religion (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1873). [↑](#endnote-ref-275)
276. Edward Blyden, “Islam and Race Distinctions,” Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 277-297. Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-276)
277. Blyden, “Islam and Race Distinctions,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and Negro Race, 296. See also Max Muller, Chips from a German Workshop, vol. 1 (California: Scholars Press, 1985, first published 1869). See also F. Max Muller, Lecture on the Origin and Growth of Religion (New York: AMS, 1976, first published 1882) and New World Encyclopedia, s.v “Max Müller,” accessed December 20, 2016, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?titlei=Max\_M%C3%BCller&oldid=984599  [↑](#endnote-ref-277)
278. Edward W. Blyden, “Mohammedanism in Western Africa,” Methodist Quarterly Review 53 (January 1871): 133-48 and Edward Blyden, “Mohammedanism and the Negro Race,” Fraser’s Magazine, November 1875. See also additional essays in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race. [↑](#endnote-ref-278)
279. Edward Blyden, African Life and Customs, (London: 1908) [↑](#endnote-ref-279)
280. Muller, The Hibbert Lecture, 195, cited by Blyden in African Life and Customs, 62. Blyden also made direct reference to the pioneering scholarship of James George Frazer and that of Scottish writer and erstwhile anthropologist Andrew Lang. [↑](#endnote-ref-280)
281. Ibid. See also F. Max Muller, Chips from a German Workshop, vol. 1 (California: Scholars Press, 1985, first published 1869) and F. Max Muller, Lecture on the Origin and Growth of Religion (New York: AMS, 1976, first published 1882). Blyden was not the only West African scholar of religion to be influenced by the writings of Muller or the emergent discipline of comparative religion. Blyden protégé Orishatukeh Faduma, opened his address before the African Congress in 1895 with reference to the contributions made by religious scholars such as “Max Muller, [George] Rawlinson, and [Archibald H. Sayce” to an understanding of the “evolution” of the major world religions. Like Blyden, Faduma also insisted that “The study of religion in all its forms ought to be important to the student of comparative religion” and that such studies, if correctly applied could shed valuable light on the religions of Africa and their relationship to Christianity.” Faduma, “Religious Beliefs” 31-36. [↑](#endnote-ref-281)
282. Beckerlegge, “Professor Friedrich Max Muller and the Missionary Cause,” 201; Muller, My Autobiography, 294. Quoted in Beckerlegge, “Muller and the Missionary Cause,” 192. [↑](#endnote-ref-282)
283. Beckerlegge, “Muller and the Missionary Cause,” 190. [↑](#endnote-ref-283)
284. Edward Blyden “ Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans” (1881) in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race 82-107; Edward Blyden, West Africa Before Europe, and Other Addresses Delivered in England in 1901 (London: C. M. Phillips, 1902); Blyden, African Life and Customs. [↑](#endnote-ref-284)
285. Chidester, Savage Systems, xiii. A similar assessment is provided by the historian of religions, Charles Long. See Charles Long, Significations, Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion, (Aurora, Co.: The Davis Group Publishers, 1999). See also Benjamin Rolsky, “Charles H. Long and the Re-Orientation of American Religious History,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion 80, no. 3 (September 2012): 750-74. [↑](#endnote-ref-285)
286. Cauthen, Impact, 9; Chadwick, The Victorian Church, vol. 2, 35-39. [↑](#endnote-ref-286)
287. Even the orthodox and conservative E. B. Pusey reportedly viewed Muller’s translations of the Vedas as “the greatest gifts which have been bestowed on those who would win to Christianity the subtle and thoughtful minds of the cultivated Indians” and informed Muller that his studies would “form a new era in the efforts for the conversion of India.” Monier Williams, also designated among the discipline’s founders, made its missiological implications a major factor in his successful campaign to win the Boden chair of Sanskrit at Oxford University. Pusey to Max Muller, 2 June 1860, quoted in Chadwick, The Victorian Church, vol. 2, 36-37. See also G. Beckerlegge, “Professor Friedrich Max Muller and the Missionary Cause,” in Wolff, Religion in Victorian Britain, 177-219 and Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 37-70. [↑](#endnote-ref-287)
288. Georgina A. Muller, ed., The Life and Letters of the Right Honorable Friedrich Max Muller Edited by his Wife, vol. 2 (New York, London: Longman Green, 1902), 262-263. [↑](#endnote-ref-288)
289. Ibid. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 723, 989-90. [↑](#endnote-ref-289)
290. Ironically, Chidester who is primarily focused on developments in Southern Africa rather than West Africa does not include Blyden among his list of pioneering indigenous African comparativists. However, Chidester David Chidester, Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), xiii and David Chidester, Religion of Empire. [↑](#endnote-ref-290)
291. The American Society of Comparative Religion was founded in 1893 under the leadership of Presbyterian minister and missiologist Frank Ellinwood. On Blyden’s membership in the American Society of Comparative Religion as well as the American Philological Association, see Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Session, Middletown, 1883, in Transactions of the American Philological Association (1869-1896), vol. 14 (1883) (The Johns Hopkins University Press), 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-291)
292. Both Blyden and Muller would subsequently author appraisals of the Parliament. Blyden’s appraisal included an incisive critique of its inadequate representation of Islam and African-derived religious traditions. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 646 and Edward Blyden, West Africa before Europe and other Addresses (London: C. M. Phillips, 1905). Max Muller, “The Real Significance of the Parliament of Religion,” Arena 61 (December 1894): 1-14. [↑](#endnote-ref-292)
293. Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race and the Negro Race. [↑](#endnote-ref-293)
294. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 170-71; Livingston, Education and Race, 82-83. See Edward Blyden, “Mohammedanism in Western Africa,” Methodist Quarterly Review 53 (January 1871). [↑](#endnote-ref-294)
295. ## On the history of Fourah Bay College, see Daniel J. Paracka, Jr., “The Athens of West Africa: International Education at Fourah Bay College, 1814-2002,” SERSAS 2001, accessed January 6, 2017, file:///C:/Users/redshay/Documents/Blyden%20Grimke%20Man%203/forah%20Bay%20College.html.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-295)
296. Livingston, Education and Race, 82 [↑](#endnote-ref-296)
297. See Edward W. Blyden to Professor Henry of the Smithsonian Institution “On Mixed Races in Liberia,” 6 October 1869, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 212-15. Blyden to William Coppinger, 19 October 1874, Lynch, Letters, 173-78. [↑](#endnote-ref-297)
298. Livingston, Education and Race, 9, 157. See also Blyden to Lowry, 9 September 1874, PBFM Liberia, vol. 10, no. 45; and 15 January 1875, ibid, vol. 10, no. 73. [↑](#endnote-ref-298)
299. The immediate backdrop of this almost Shakespearian tragedy was seething anger by the mulatto community incited by circulation of an article based on Blyden’s letter to Professor Henry of the Smithsonian Institution that made public some of his most vicious vilifications of Liberia’s mulatto population. Edward W. Blyden to Professor Henry of the Smithsonian Institution “On Mixed Races in Liberia,” 6 October 1869, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 212-15. Blyden to William Coppinger, 19 October 1874, Lynch, Letters, 173-78. See also Livingston, Education and Race, 81. [↑](#endnote-ref-299)
300. In correspondence from Sierra Leone, Blyden implicated mulattos in the sordid episode and the subsequent death of President Roye. Blyden to Coppinger, 7 January 1873, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 212, 215. Pinney to Coppinger, 25 January 1872, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 211. Mr. D. B. Warner to Coppinger, 1 January 1873, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 211. [↑](#endnote-ref-300)
301. Moore, The Post-Darwinian Controversies, 52. See also Wolffe, Religion in Victorian Britain. [↑](#endnote-ref-301)
302. See African Repository 42 (1871): 168-71; from the New York Evangelist in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 172. [↑](#endnote-ref-302)
303. Blyden anticipated that Fulah, like Arabic, could be useful in his outreach to interior residents of West Africa. He would be aided and encouraged in its study by the Rev. C. A. K. Reichardt, “a learned German from the University of Tubingen,” who had spent twenty years in Sierra Leone becoming an “authority on the Fulah language.” On Reichardt, see Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 183-84, 944. See also Eugene Stock, History of the Church Missionary Society, (London: 1899), 377. [↑](#endnote-ref-303)
304. Blyden reported that Dr. Wright was apparently impressed enough to consider the possibility of sending one of the manuscripts to “Professor Fleischer of Leipzig—one of the first Arabic scholars in Europe.” Blyden to Coppinger, 20 July 1871. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 183-84. See also Ursula Wokoeck, German Orientalism: The Study of the Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945 (New York: Routledge, 2009). [↑](#endnote-ref-304)
305. See Livingston, Education and Race, 54, 229. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 174. See also Blyden to Coppinger, 20 July 1871, A. C. S. Papers, and vol. 204. Blyden to Coppinger, 20 July 1871, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 183-84. Dean (Arthur Penrhyn) Stanley was one of Britain’s leading liberal theologians and author of an impressive corpus of critical ecclesiastical studies which included his Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church with an Introduction on the Study of Ecclesiastical History.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-305)
306. Blyden, “Mohammedanism in West Africa,” Methodist Quarterly Review 53 (January 1871): 62-78. [↑](#endnote-ref-306)
307. Livingston, Education and Race, 54; Holden, Blyden, 665; and Lynch, Patriot, 174. Also foreshadowed was his role as a pioneering “Black Christian Orientalist.” The article’s title was a reflection of Blyden’s embrace of currents of a prevailing Orientalism which he was beginning to critique and reject. His own growth and development were illuminated by his subsequent explanation of the incorrect use of “Mohammedanism” in reference to Islam and its adherents and by his subsequent refusal later in his career to use it as such. For discussion of Blyden’s significance relative to the contemporary debate regarding the meaning and import of “orientalism,” see especially Said, Orientalism and Jacob Dorman, “‘Lifted Out of the Commonplace Grandeur of Modern Times:’ Reappraising Edward Wilmot Blyden’s Views of Islam and Afrocentrism in Light of His Scholarly Black Christian Orientalism,” Souls, A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society 12, no. 4 (October 2010): 398-418. See also Edward E. Curtis IV, “African American Islam Reconsidered: Black History Narratives and Muslim Identity,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion 7, no. 3 (September 2005): 659-84. A more positive perception of the intersection of the new biblical studies and "orientalism" was being advanced by Edward L. Curtis, professor of Hebrew at Yale Divinity School, who insisted that "the Bible is an Oriental book" and that to understand it one must be prepared to "wear the garb of the Orient, and dwell beneath Syrian skies." Roland Bainton, Yale and the Ministry: A History of Education for the Christian Ministry at Yale from the founding in 1701 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 178-79. [↑](#endnote-ref-307)
308. On the iconoclastic theological views of Whedon, see Daniel D. Whedon, Essays, Review, And Discourses (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1887). [↑](#endnote-ref-308)
309. Blyden, “The Negro in Ancient History,” Methodist Quarterly Review 51; Blyden, “Mohammedanism in West Africa,” Methodist Quarterly Review 53 (January 1871); Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot, 55, 68; Methodist Quarterly Review (January 1872): 168-69; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 173-74. Other supporters shared Whedon's sentiment and plans for a broader presentation of Blyden’s views and studies were made. Arrangements were made for their inclusion in an edited publication titled The People of Africa: A Series of Papers on their character, condition and Future Prospects. Seven of its ten chapters (“The Negro In Ancient History”; “Conditions of Education in Liberia”; “Extracts from Professor Blyden’s Journal of a Visit to Sierra Leone in February 1871”; “The Syrian [Arabic] College”; “Arabic Manuscript in Western Africa”; “Mohammedanism in Western Africa”; “A Letter from the King of Musadu to the President of Liberia, written in Arabic translated by Rev. Dr. Blyden”) were contributions by Blyden. Blyden, Edward Wilmot, et al., The People of Africa: A Series of Papers on Their Character, Condition, and Future Prospects: A Series of Papers on their character, condition and Future Prospects (New York: A. D. F. Randolph & Co., 1871). Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 173-74. [↑](#endnote-ref-309)
310. The essay presented his unconventional conclusion that “the influence of Islam in Central and West Africa has been upon the whole, of most salutary character” since it was displacing the “debasing Heathenism” and “barbarous” paganism of the West African indigenous traditions. Quoting from Crummell’s Future of Africa, he contended that “the yearning of the native African . . . for a higher religion is illustrated by the singular fact that Mohammedanism is rapidly and peaceably spreading all through the tribes of Western Africa, even to the Christian settlements of Liberia.” The essay also reiterated Blyden’s argument that the Arabic language was of key advantage to Islam in its encounter with Africa’s indigenous culture and that it was preparatory to the *successful* propagation of Christianity within West Africa. Quoting Professor Post of the Syrian Protestant College, he noted that the “general diffusion of the Arabic language . . . through Mohammedan influence, must be regarded as a preparatory circumstance of vast importance for the introduction of the Gospel.” Blyden concluded with the observation: "We are persuaded that, with the book knowledge that they already possess, and their love of letters, many of them would become ready converts of a religion which brings with it the recommendation of higher culture and a nobler civilization. Moreover, once brought within the pale of Christianity, these Mohammedans would be a most effective agency for the propagation of the Gospel in remote regions, hitherto impervious to European zeal and enterprise, and the work of African regeneration would proceed with uninterrupted course and unexampled rapidity. Crummell, Future of Africa, 305, quoted in Blyden, “Mohammedanism in West Africa,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, 200.Blyden, “Mohammedanism” in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 216. Blyden, “Mohammedanism in West Africa”; Lynch, Blyden, 68-69. [↑](#endnote-ref-310)
311. The article also previewed Blyden’s equally problematic embrace and advance of romanticized views of Islam and its adherents that tended to advance his own ideological agenda as reflected particularly in his treatment of the complicity of Islam and its adherents in the African slave trade. Blyden, “Mohammedanism,” in Christianity, Islam, and Negro Race, 214. [↑](#endnote-ref-311)
312. Blyden noted that the writings of these scholars “have taught the world that ‘Mohammedanism is a thing of vitality, fraught with a thousand fruitful germs;’ and have amply illustrated the principle enunciated by St. Augustine, showing that there are elements both of truth and goodness in a system which has had so widespread an influence upon mankind. . . .” Blyden, “Mohammedanism in West Africa,” in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 199. [↑](#endnote-ref-312)
313. Blyden to Coppinger, 20 July 1871. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 183-84. [↑](#endnote-ref-313)
314. Livingston also notes that it was through Stanley that Blyden met R. Bosworth Smith, "an influential literary figure and a master at Harrows" whose own studies of Islam would fuel another close and influential friendship with Blyden. Livingston, Education and Race, 54-55. On Dr. Thomas Frazier, who was popular with non-conformists, see Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 171 and “Ecclesiastical Notes,” The Christian Reformer, A Monthly Magazine of Christian Life and Thought 1 (London, Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, January to June 1886): 126. Note that Stanley also provided support for Crummell during his studies. [↑](#endnote-ref-314)
315. Begun as a quarterly in March 1825, The African Repository and Colonial Journal actively promoted and publicized colonization in Liberia and “all movements for the civilization and emigration of Africa.” See African Repository and Colonial Journal 1, no. 4 (June 1825): 129 and vol. 54, no. 3 (July 1878). [↑](#endnote-ref-315)
316. For insight into the relationship shared by Blyden and Coppinger see The African Repository; Papers of the American Colonization Society; Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot; and Edwin S. Redkey, “Bishop Turner’s Africa Dream,” The Journal of American History 54, no. 2 (September 1976); [↑](#endnote-ref-316)
317. African Repository 10 (October 1871) and 47 (1871): 208-10 from New York Evangelist. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 204-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-317)
318. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-318)
319. In later writings and addresses Blyden noted that such sojourns experienced by growing numbers of West Africans visiting and studying in Britain were similarly revelatory of the limitations of Eurocentric currents and models of modernity, particularly as applied in Africa. Blyden, “The Three Needs of Liberia, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-319)
320. “Banquet to Dr. Blyden – West Africans Honor a Teacher,” Liberia, Bulletin no. 25, (November 1904): 43. [↑](#endnote-ref-320)
321. Blyden to Coppinger, 20 July 1871, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 183. [↑](#endnote-ref-321)
322. Livingston, Education and Race, 82. His pained loyalty to Liberia also remained evident as he admonished Coppinger and the Republic’s “friends” not to “relax” their efforts on her behalf. Despite recent developments and his own personal and professional abuse at the hands of its most prominent citizens, Blyden was still able to confess: “I believe that Liberia was planted by the Almighty himself. Its establishment and growth on this coast, when narrowly looked into, may be regarded as almost miraculous; and it will still advance. . . .Throughout the ages the providential plan for the moral development of Africa has been at work, and Liberia has been established as a necessary link in the great chain, deposited on this coast as an element of vitality and growth.” Blyden to Coppinger, 20 July 1871; Blyden to Coppinger, 2 August 1871, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 183-85. See also African Repository 47 (1871): 283-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-322)
323. Lynch, Patriot, 84. [↑](#endnote-ref-323)
324. Lynch, Patriot, 87-88. See T. E. Yates, Venn and Victorian Bishops Abroad: The Missionary Policies of Henry Venn and Their Repercussions Upon the Anglican Episcopate of the Colonial Period, 1841-1872 (Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1978); J. F. A. Ajayi, “Henry Venn and the Policy of Development,” in The History of Christianity in West Africa, ed. O. U. Kalu (London and New York: Longman, 1980), 63-75; and Warren, To Apply the Gospel. See also “Henry Venn of the Church Missionary Society,” in Peter Beyerhaus and Henry Lefever, The Responsible Church and the Foreign Mission (London: World Dominion Press, 1964), 25-30; and Wilbert Schenk, Henry Venn—Missionary Statesman (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983). For a more contemporary assessment of the missiological policies of Venn, see Andrew Porter, Religion versus Empire, British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914 (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 167-280, 239-40. [↑](#endnote-ref-324)
325. Ajayi, “Henry Venn,” 65 and Hollis R. Lynch, “The Native Pastorate Controversy and Cultural Ethnocentrism in Sierra Leone, 1871-1874,” in Kalu, History of Christianity in Africa, 270-92. See also William Knight, Memoir of Henry Venn, 282-87. Both Geiss and Langley contend that Venn’s “sympathy for Africans dated back to his childhood at Clapham Common, when he used to play with the children of the African Academy from Sierra Leone.” Geiss, Pan-African Movement, 51; E. A. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914, 180-82. [↑](#endnote-ref-325)
326. Ajayi, “Henry Venn and the Policy of Development,” 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-326)
327. Venn’s missiological theories, never shared wholeheartedly or enthusiastically by Lambeth Palace or his missionary colleagues in the field, were never fully implemented. Nevertheless, they had significant impact within British West Africa, and particularly Sierra Leone, where as early as 1861 they helped to encourage a pioneering effort at establishment of an indigenous native pastorate. Ajayi, “Henry Venn and the Policy of Development,” 63-75; Livingston, Education and Race, 83, 233. [↑](#endnote-ref-327)
328. See Blyden’s citation of Venn’s “Instructions Given to Missionaries at Their Demission from Salisbury Square,” 30 June 1868; William Knight, Memoir of H. Venn (London: Longmans, Greed and Co., 1880). Cited in Blyden, “Africa’s Service to the World: (Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God; or, Africa’s Service to the World,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 123. [↑](#endnote-ref-328)
329. Blyden to Coppinger, 20 July 1871, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 184-85. Lynch Patriot, 88. [↑](#endnote-ref-329)
330. John Peterson, Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone, 1787-1870 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 18-23; Christopher Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 13. See also Lamin Sanneh, West African Christianity, The Religious Impact (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1983), 53-89. See also Ellen Gibson White, The Royal Blacks (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1976); Joseph A. Conforti, Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregational Ministry, and Reform in New England between the Great Awakenings (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1981); Phillip J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); Floyd J. Miller, The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Colonization and Emigration, 1787-1863 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975); Philip D. Curtin, The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850 (London: Macmillan, 1965), 39; Peterson, Province of Freedom, 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-330)
331. Peterson, Province of Freedom, 36, 45. [↑](#endnote-ref-331)
332. Geiss, Pan-African Movement, 50. For a broader interpretation of the modernization process in Sierra Leone, see Martin N. Kilson, Political Change in a West African State: A Study of the Modernization Process in Sierra Leone (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966). For a more contemporary discussion of this relationship, see Stephen C. Knapp, “Mission and Modernization: A Preliminary Critical Analysis of Contemporary Understandings of Mission from a Radical Evangelical Perspective,” in Beaver, American Missions, 146-209. [↑](#endnote-ref-332)
333. Key among them were political, economic, religious, and racial developments attendant a new phase in the collusion of modernity and the “Scramble for Africa.” All were fostering more malevolent images of Africa and her inhabitants. On the “Scramble of Africa,” see Thomas Pankenhan, The Scramble for Africa: The White Man’s Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912 (New York: Random House, 1991). [↑](#endnote-ref-333)
334. Curtin, Image of Africa, 238-40, 414-15, 425-26. Spitzer, Creoles, 45, 46. See also Andrew Porter, Religion versus Empire, British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914 (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-334)
335. Spitzer, Creoles, 110-11. As in Liberia, mission agency, church, and school werecomplementary instruments and cooperative tools in their efforts to recreate Victorian Christianity and culture. Peterson, Province of Freedom, 63-80. See also Eric Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African: A Study in the Ecology of Higher Education (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), 162-78. Most Sierra Leone’s founding emigrants from England, Nova Scotia, and Jamaica had settled in outposts along its coast. Thoroughly westernized, most were converts to evangelical Protestantism and brought with them well-organized ecclesiastical structures and firm evangelical convictions and notions of modernity. Peterson, Province of Freedom, 37-44; Fyfe, History of Sierra Leone, 55-56; Robert July, The Origins of Modern African Thought (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-335)
336. On the broader contribution of Fourah Bay to the dynamics of modernity in Sierra Leone and beyond, see Daniel Paracka, “The Athens of West Africa: International Education at Fourah Bay College, 1814-2002” (paper presented at the Southeast Regional Seminar in African Studies (SERSAS), Georgia State University, March 22-23, 2002). See also John Peterson, Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone 1787-1870 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 63-80; Winwoode Reade, Savage Africa: Being the Narrative of a Tour in Equatorial, Southwestern, and Northwestern Africa (New York: Harper, 1864), 25, 27. [↑](#endnote-ref-336)
337. Blyden to Venn, 24 August 1871, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 187-88. [↑](#endnote-ref-337)
338. Blyden to Venn, 10 October 1871, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 194-95. [↑](#endnote-ref-338)
339. Translated as “one who subordinates his life as worshiper to God or Allah.” [↑](#endnote-ref-339)
340. Blyden to Venn, 6 September 1871, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 188-92. [↑](#endnote-ref-340)
341. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-341)
342. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-342)
343. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-343)
344. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-344)
345. Blyden to Coppinger, 5 September 1871, African Repository 47 (1871): 349-50; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 203-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-345)
346. Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 88. [↑](#endnote-ref-346)
347. Blyden to Coppinger, 5 September 1871.Blyden to Venn, 28 October 1871, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 197-99. [↑](#endnote-ref-347)
348. Blyden to Venn, 16 October 1871, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 195-97, 200. See also Livingston, Education and Race, 83*.* Despite Blyden’s termination and the attendant swirl of unflattering rumors, Venn continued to offer his personal support. It was probably at his intervention and insistence that the CMS awarded the all but destitute Blyden a generous severance allowance. Blyden, in turn, remained deeply appreciative of both Venn’s personal assistance and his wider contributions to African development. In 1872, he wrote to the ailing CMS secretary describing him as “the Chariot of our Israel and the horseman thereof.” Blyden added: “I trust that God may spare your life and strength, especially for his African work. Dark will be the day for Africa when the active influence of Henry Venn is removed from the African culture.” He would sincerely grieve Venn’s death later in the year. Blyden to Venn, 27 December 1871, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 202. See also Ayandele, Missionary Impact, 83 and Lynch, Letters, 82. [↑](#endnote-ref-348)
349. Blyden to Venn, 27 December 1871, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 202. [↑](#endnote-ref-349)
350. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 230; Blyden to Coppinger, 1 October 1872, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 236-37. [↑](#endnote-ref-350)
351. Livingston, Education and Race, 97-98 from Blyden, The West African University, 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-351)
352. Proceedings at the Banquet in Honor of EdwardWilmot Blyden, LLD., On his Retirement from his Official Labours In the Colony of Sierra Leone, January 24th, 1907 (London: C. M. Phillips, 1907), 52-55. [↑](#endnote-ref-352)
353. Proceedings, 52-53. [↑](#endnote-ref-353)
354. Ibid, 54. [↑](#endnote-ref-354)
355. Masilelap, “New Negro Modernity,” 4. On Blyden contributions to the founding of the Sierra Leone Weekly News see Christopher Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 464. Willie Givens, Selected Works Of Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden: Statesman, Politician, Linguist, Educator and Great Pan-Africanist (1832-1912) (unpublished collection, Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount Country Liberia: The Tubman Center of African Culture, 1976), 187; Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 89. [↑](#endnote-ref-355)
356. William Knight, Memoir of H. Venn (London, 1880), 305-321 and 282-92; J. F. A. Ajay, “Henry Venn and the Policy of Development,” Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria no. 4 (1959): 331-42; Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 85. [↑](#endnote-ref-356)
357. From /CMS CA1/09, Tenth Annual Report of the Sierra Leone Native Pastorate. Quoted in Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 86. [↑](#endnote-ref-357)
358. Although loyal and dedicated to Anglicanism, Johnson shared Blyden’s belief that Christianity as taught by Europeans required modifications to suit the needs of Africans and that Africans were capable of ecclesiastical leadership. Lynch, Patriot, 85, 98; Fyfe, History of Sierra Leone, 352. See also E. A. Ayandele, Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism, 1836-1917 (London: F. Cass, 1970). [↑](#endnote-ref-358)
359. Correspondence from Blyden to Governor Hennessy, 6 December 1872 and 11 December 1872, quoted in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 226-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-359)
360. Lynch, Patriot, 94, quoted from “The West African University,” 7; Livingston, Education and Race, 96. [↑](#endnote-ref-360)
361. On Blyden’s broader role as a proponent of African theological and ecclesiastical independence, see Lynch, Blyden, 220-27 and Edward Blyden, Return of the Exiles and the West African Church (London: W. B. Whittingham & Co., 1891). [↑](#endnote-ref-361)
362. Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 94-95. [↑](#endnote-ref-362)
363. Blyden argued that “the presence of such an institution with able African teachers brought, if necessary, from different parts of the world—even a Negro Arabic Professor from Egypt, Timbuctoo or Fatah—would have great influence in exposing and correcting the fallacies upon which our foreign teachers have proceeded in their utter misapprehension and, perhaps, contempt of African character.” Correspondence from Blyden to Governor Hennessy, 6 December 1872 and 11 December 1872, in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 226-29.Livingston, Education and Race, 91, 94; Blyden, “West African University,” 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-363)
364. On Blyden’s concept of the “African Personality” see Blyden, “Race and Study”

     Lynch, Patriot, 61 [↑](#endnote-ref-364)
365. Livingston, Education and Race, 95, 101; Blyden, “Christian Mission in West Africa” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and Negro Race, 54, 55. See also Eric Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African: A Study in the Ecology of Higher Education (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 162-80. [↑](#endnote-ref-365)
366. As pointed out by Livingston, Blyden seems to have been oblivious to the irony that he was a product of the very system of missionary education that he was indicting. See Livingston, Education and Race, 90-91, 96. [↑](#endnote-ref-366)
367. Livingston, Education and Race, 98-97 and Blyden, The West African University, 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-367)
368. The correspondence between Blyden and Pope-Hennessy would be published as a special supplement to The Negro under the title “The West African University,” which proved explosive and immersed the colony in conflict as battle lines were extended and hardened in support and opposition. Edward Blyden, The West African University (Freetown: Negro Printing Office, 1872). [↑](#endnote-ref-368)
369. Lynch, Patriot, 95-96; West African University Correspondence, 6; Livingston, Education and Race, 97-99 and Blyden, The West African University, 13. [↑](#endnote-ref-369)
370. Correspondence from Blyden to Governor Hennessy, 6 December 1872 and 11 December 1872, in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 226-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-370)
371. Tregaskis ridiculed the campaign for a West African university with his own broadsheet dismissively titled A West African University! What Next?, while Cheetham argued that Blyden’s advocacy of a West African university was selfishly motivated and simply an attempt to “feather his own nest.” Governor Pope-Hennessey, he charged, had fallen prey to a “disgusting flattery” and that the combined “influence of Mr. Hennessy’s administration and the presence of Mr. Blyden . . . have produced unfortunate results on the minds of the native pastors and some of the upper natives.” Moreover, he argued that Blyden was the “source” of an even more potent “evil” since he had “so dwelt upon this race feeling that . . . a most strong and virulent anti-white feeling has arisen.”Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 99-100 Ca>M>S. CA/025e Cheetham to Henry Wright, 5 February 1873, and Cheetham to Governor Berkely, 17 April 1874, Public Record Office CO/806/46, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 258-60. [↑](#endnote-ref-371)
372. Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 210. [↑](#endnote-ref-372)
373. Blyden to Coppinger, 2 October 1873, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 267. [↑](#endnote-ref-373)
374. Blyden to Kimberly, 22 October 1873, Monrovia, Liberia, W. A. Public Record Office, CO/267/324, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 253. [↑](#endnote-ref-374)
375. Referenced by Blyden was Dean Stanley’s sermon “On the Prospects of Christian Missions” and “On Missionary Duties’&c.” by the progressive and unorthodox churchman Connop Thirlwall, “Bishop of St. David’s.” Also cited in reference to the missionary encounter with a revived Islam were “Dr. Hunter on ‘Our Indian Mussulmans’” and “Mr. Palgrave’s Essay on ‘The Mohometan Revival.’” Blyden to Kimberly, 22 October 1873, Monrovia, Liberia, W. A. Public Record Office, CO/267/324, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 253. [↑](#endnote-ref-375)
376. Blyden to Governor Berkely, 12 February 1874, Public Record Office, CO /806 /46, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 255-58. [↑](#endnote-ref-376)
377. Cheetham to Governor, 17 April 1874, Public Record Office, CO/806/46, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 258-60. [↑](#endnote-ref-377)
378. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-378)
379. On extension of this dynamic within the South African colonial context, see David Chidester, Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1996) and David Chidester, Empire of Religion: Imperialism & Comparative Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-379)
380. Howard Cline Barnard, A History of English Education From 1760, rev. ed. (London: University of London Press LTD, 1961), 83-87, 135-43. [↑](#endnote-ref-380)
381. Faduma of Yoruba parentage was born in British Guyana in 1857 and returned as a child to Sierra Leone where he become a protégé of Blyden. With his subsequent enrollment in Yale Divinity School in the early 1890’s Faduma was immersed in the new academic and intellectual currents and disciplines including biblical criticism, historical criticism, and comparative religion that were reshaping theological education at the end of the century. Upon graduation with “honors” in 1894, he would spend the remainder of his life in efforts at interrogation and mediation of modernity’s religious and racial corollaries to black communities on both sides of the Atlantic. For Faduma’s description of the University of London see Orishatukeh Faduma, “African Negro Education,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, August 10, 1918. For a broader analysis of Faduma’s life and work see Moses N. Moore, Orishatukeh Faduma: Liberal Theology and Evangelical Pan-Africanism 1857-1946 (Lanham, Md., and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1996). [↑](#endnote-ref-381)
382. Barnard, A History of English Education From 1766, 135-43; Faduma, “African Negro Education.” [↑](#endnote-ref-382)
383. Peterson, Province of Freedom, 285; Lynch, Black Spokesman, xxiii. [↑](#endnote-ref-383)
384. See for example, Kenneth James King, Pan-Africanism and Education: A Study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). [↑](#endnote-ref-384)
385. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 104. [↑](#endnote-ref-385)
386. Blyden to John C. Lowrie, 20 December 1873 and 28 May 1874, Lynch, Letters, 157, 169. [↑](#endnote-ref-386)
387. Lynch, Letters, 149-51. John C. Lowrie was the son of Walter Lowrie. In 1838, after serving as a missionary to India, he joined his father as a corresponding secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions. Heuser, Guide, 85. [↑](#endnote-ref-387)
388. Blyden added, “We shall not have, of course, the lofty gifts of a Jonathan Dickinson or the almost inspired intellect of a Jonathan Edwards or the seraphic eloquence of a Samuel Davies or the Executive power of [John] Witherspoon but if you would accept of my services to inaugurate such a work, I promise you the labors of one who would endeavor to devote his whole head and life to the glorious enterprise. It cannot be expected that the present generation will witness the organization of the great Presbyterian College—which must exist in this country if the Republic is to succeed in its political and missionary work—but I trust I may aspire, without presumption, to assist in the preliminary task of breaking the ground and clearing the foundations of the Future.” All the figures mentioned were clergymen elected to the presidency of Princeton University (or the College of New Jersey as it was earlier known). Blyden to Lowrie, 20 December 1873, Lynch, Letters, 149-53. [↑](#endnote-ref-388)
389. Lynch, Letters, 152. [↑](#endnote-ref-389)
390. On the Board’s gradual adoption of a “policy of superintending missions in [Liberia] . . . on the Home Board method, in connection with the action of the Presbytery.” See 54th Annual Report of the Mission Board (1891), 23 and 39th Annual Report of the Mission Board (1876), 26. Robert A. M. Deputie to Lowrie, 28 August 1876, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 348-49. [↑](#endnote-ref-390)
391. See Blyden to Rev. John C. Lowrie, 20 December1873, Lynch, Letters, 153-54 and Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 343, 955. [↑](#endnote-ref-391)
392. See Blyden to Rev. John C. Lowrie, December 20, 1873, Lynch, Letters, 153-160. [↑](#endnote-ref-392)
393. Blyden was apparently hopeful that such a change would strengthen his increasingly contested influence within the presbytery. This was also reflected in his suggestion that the Board “send out an experienced and discreet white man . . . to visit the work here and report fully on its present condition and prospects.” Ibid. An additional factor inducing Blyden’s call for the resumption of direct Board oversight of the Liberian mission may have been his concern over diminishing financial support for Alexander High School. A measure of his desperation to maintain support from the American Presbyterian community is reflected in his request that the Board formally prefix the name Archibald to the school: “As the school was named during his life-time and he [Archibald Alexander] did not object to the compliment, we can hardly suppose that if he were consulted he would interpose any objection to making the compliment more precise and definite.” Brown, One Hundred Years, 87. See also 39th and 40th (1876, 1877) Annual Reports of the Presbyterian Board of Mission; Blyden to John Lowrie, 3 June 1875, Lynch, Letters, 190-91. [↑](#endnote-ref-393)
394. This linkage was also attested by the reported ten students from Liberia that were currently studying in Lincoln’s various departments. John M. Deputie to Lowrie, 21 August 1876. Holden, Blyden, 348. African Repository 50 (1874): 218; Lynch, Patriot, 105. See “Commencement at Lincoln University,” The Presbyterian, June 27, 1874. [↑](#endnote-ref-394)
395. Anna J. Cooper, ed., Life and Writings of the Grimke Family 2 vols. in 1, (n.p, 1951), 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-395)
396. Cooper, Life and Writings, 211. [↑](#endnote-ref-396)
397. Ibid., 212. [↑](#endnote-ref-397)
398. For Francis’s assessment of the religious orientation of Archibald, see Cooper, Life and Writings, 32. Their lifelong commitment to applied Christianity was also reinforced by the discovery while students at Lincoln that they were nephews of famed anti-slavery and feminist activists Sarah and Angelina Grimke. Cooper, Life and Writings, 212-15. [↑](#endnote-ref-398)
399. In honor of his “unselfish devotion to the race,” Archibald was awarded the Spingarn Medal in 1919. Following an illustrious career that included service as a US ambassador, he died in 1930. See Cooper, Life and Writings, 36 and especially Dickson D. Bruce, Archibald Grimke: Portrait of a Black Independent (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-399)
400. Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 81. [↑](#endnote-ref-400)
401. Ferry, “Portrait,” 71, 75; Woodson, Works, 1: ix. [↑](#endnote-ref-401)
402. On Reeve, who received an honorary doctorate from Lincoln in 1870, see Robert F. Handy, A History of Union Theological Seminary (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 41 and William J. Simmons, Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising (Cleveland, OH: Geo. M. Revells and Co., 1887), 199-201. [↑](#endnote-ref-402)
403. Ferry, “Portrait,” 58, 73, 75. [↑](#endnote-ref-403)
404. John B. Reeve, “What Should Be the Policy of The Colored American Toward Africa?” AME Church Review 2, no. 1 (July 1885) and Edward Blyden, “African Colonization,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 404; Blyden to Coppinger, 19 October 1874, Lynch, Letters, 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-404)
405. See “Religious Instructions” and “Departments of Instruction,” The Seventeenth Annual Catalogue of Lincoln University (1874), 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-405)
406. On religious instruction at Lincoln, see Ferry, “Portrait,” 52, 58, 65 and L. U. Catalogue 1866, 12; Francis Grimke, “Remarks at the Semi-Centennial of the Ordination to the Ministry of the Rev. John B. Reeve delivered June 4 1911,” Woodson, Works, 1:141-46; see Grimke on the death of Reeve in 1916 “Rev. John B. Reeve,” Woodson, Works, 1:146-47, 150 and Francis Grimke, “A Short Address Delivered At Howard University; Nov. 11 1930,” in connection with the presentation of a Portrait of the Rev. John B. Reeve, D.D., Woodson, Works 1:153. [↑](#endnote-ref-406)
407. Moses N. Moore, “Black Presbyterians and the Schism of 1837,” Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. 54 (spring 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-407)
408. Bella Gross, “The Life and Times of Theodore S. Wright, 1797-1847,” The Negro History Bulletin 3 (1939-40), 133-4. See also Freedom’s Journal, September 14 and September 21, 1827. and James H. Moorhead, Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture (William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 83-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-408)
409. Ferry, “Portrait,” 92. See also Mark Noll, ed., The Princeton Theology 1821-1912: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Warfield (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001). [↑](#endnote-ref-409)
410. As suggested by the experiences of Theodore Wright, Princeton Seminary was no racial utopia. Both Grimke and Anderson would cite racial tensions at the seminary during and after their enrollment with the latter calling upon it as “the fountain head of the Presbyterian Church [to] turnabout and make herself perfectly right in regard to the Negro.” Disappointment at the seminary’s failure to do so would continue to be noted by Anderson and Grimke long after their graduation. Additionally, study at the seminary and the denominational and doctrinal loyalty which it helped to engender would make even more painful to its black alumni the subsequent capitulation of both it and their beloved Church to the intersection of racism and ecclesiastical politics displayed in the campaign for church reunion. Matthew Anderson, Presbyterianism: Its Relation to the Negro (Philadelphia: John White and Co., 1897), 169-70, 189; Francis Grimke, “Evangelicalism and Institutes of Evangelism,” Woodson, Works, 1:526. See also C. James Trotman, “Race, Reform, and Religion in the Life of Matthew Anderson,” The Princeton Seminary Bulletin 9, no. 2 (1988) New Series: 143-55 and C. James Trotman, “Matthew Anderson: Black Pastor, Churchman and Social Reformer,” American Presbyterians: Journal of Presbyterian History 66, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 11-22. On Hodge’s and Princeton’s complicated ambivalent posture on slavery and race, see Moorhead, Princeton, 185-91, 194. [↑](#endnote-ref-410)
411. Hodge, who died in 1879, reportedly “trained over two thousand seminary students” during his thirty-eight-year career at Princeton Seminary and was revered by both Presbyterian conservatives and many moderates. Balmer and Fitzmier, The Presbyterians, 172-73. [↑](#endnote-ref-411)
412. At the core of a seminary curriculum anchored by the works of Charles Hodge were courses in Greek, Hebrew, biblical studies, and theology intended to prepare students to defend the inerrancy of Scripture and the doctrines of Reformed orthodoxy as immutable and error free. See Noll, The Princeton Theology and Ernest R. Sandeen, “The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism,” Church History 31, no. 3 (September 1962): 307-21. [↑](#endnote-ref-412)
413. Charles Hodge, What is Darwinism? (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Company, 1874), 168-177. See also Jonathan Wells, Charles Hodges Critique of Darwinism (Lewiston, New York, The Edwin/Mellen Press, 1988). [↑](#endnote-ref-413)
414. See Dwayne Cox, “William Henry Green: Princeton Theologian” Hebrew Studies, Vol 19 (1978): 16-25 Published by: National Association of Professors of Hebrew (NAPH) Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/27908614 Accessed: 27-07-2018 14:51 UTC [↑](#endnote-ref-414)
415. Ironically, Green’s critique of the works of Bishop Colenso may have inspired Blyden’s ridicule of Colenso. See William Henry Green, The Pentateuch Vindicated from the Aspersions of Bishop Colenso (New York: John Wiley, 1863); William H. Green, Moses and the Prophets (1882) and William H. Green, The Higher Critics of the Pentateuch (1895). [↑](#endnote-ref-415)
416. James C Moffatt, Church History in Brief (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1885), 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-416)
417. James C. Moffat, Comparative History of Religions (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1871-72). [↑](#endnote-ref-417)
418. James C. Moffat, Comparative History of Religions (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1871-72). Sydney Ahlstrom, American Encounter, n.p [↑](#endnote-ref-418)
419. In contrast to Hodge, McCosh suggested that Darwin’s theory might contain a “large body of important truth.” James McCosh, The Religious Aspect of Evolution (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890), vii-x; see also James McCosh, Christianity and Positivism (New York, 1871). For more comprehensive studies of the Reformed and Presbyterian response to Darwinism, see Dennis R. Davis, “Presbyterian Attitudes toward Science and the Coming of Darwinism in America, 1859 to 1929” (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1980) and Gary S. Smith, “Calvinists and Evolution, 1870-1920,” Journal of Presbyterian History 61 (Fall 1983): 335-52. On the broader controversy and its impact, see Lefferts A. Loetscher, The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church Since 1869 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954)*.* [↑](#endnote-ref-419)
420. Ferry notes that “a large part of Charles Hodge’s thought became the permanent furniture of Grimke’s mind.” Ferry, “Portrait,” 86, 96. [↑](#endnote-ref-420)
421. Anderson, Presbyterianism, 169-70, 175-76, 189. McCosh also provided endorsement of the educational offerings, students, and faculty of Lincoln University. He noted that most of its faculty were “graduated from Princeton” and that the overall success of the institution provided “clear evidence of the capacity of the African race to receive and be benefited by instruction in the higher branches.” “The [black] race,” he concluded, “is to be elevated by giving a high education to the better minds among them, that they may, as Ministers of the Gospel, and in the various professions, call forth the energies of their people.” Catalogue of Lincoln University . . . for the Academical Year, 1889-90, 40. See also Tad Bennicoff, “African Americans and Princeton University: A Brief History,” (March 11, 2005),<http://www.princeton.edu/mudd/news/faq/topics/African_Americans.shtml> [↑](#endnote-ref-421)
422. McCosh’s assessment was reiterated by A. A. Hodge, who confirmed that Grimke “convinced all the professors under whom he studied” that he was “a young man of a very high order of talent and of excellent character.” Letters of Recommendation from James McCosh, President of Princeton College, and Archibald Alexander Hodge, 18 October 1879, Woodson, Works, 1: x. Grimke also impressed fellow seminary students, including Benjamin B. Warfield, who was reported to have had “high regard” for him. See letter to Grimke from Ethelbert D. Warfield, Woodson, Works, 4:357-58. [↑](#endnote-ref-422)
423. Cooper, Recollections, 38; Ferry, “Portrait,” 108. [↑](#endnote-ref-423)
424. See Blyden to Coppinger, 21 November 1882, Holden, Blyden, 507 and Edward Blyden, “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans” (Cambridge, MA: J. Wilson & Sons, 1882). [↑](#endnote-ref-424)
425. Francis Grimke, “Biographical Sketch,” January 24, 1887, 2, Francis J. Grimke Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Collection, Personal Papers, Box 40, folder 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-425)
426. Francis Grimke, “A Discourse Delivered in the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, July 1, 1928, (to mark the fiftieth year of his ordination to the Christian ministry and his installation as pastor of said Church),” Cooper, Life and Writings, 119-31. Although Balmer and Fitzmier contend that Grimke was “[b]roadly evangelical in his theological sympathies” and was not “a promoter of the Princeton Theology,” it is obvious that his life and ministry were impacted by key aspects of the Princeton Theology as adapted to the exigencies of black life. Balmer and Fitzmier, The Presbyterians, 170. [↑](#endnote-ref-426)
427. Clifton E. Olmstead, “Francis James Grimké (1850-1937): Christian Moralist and Civil Rights,” in Sons of the Prophets: Leaders in Protestantism from Princeton Seminary, ed. Hugh T. Kerr (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), 161-75. [↑](#endnote-ref-427)
428. Although Grimke would be tolerant of Blyden’s advocacy of colonization, he concurred with Douglass’s assessment that it was rooted in the cynical and racist premise “that blacks could never live and compete effectively with whites as social and political equals in the United States.” Ferry, “Portrait,” 81; Mark Perry, Lift Thy Voice: The Grimke Family’s Journey from Slaveholders to Civil Rights Leaders (New York, NY: Viking, 2001), 263. [↑](#endnote-ref-428)
429. On Forten, “granddaughter of influential businessman, activist, and abolitionist James Forten Sr.,” see Thabiti M. Anyabwile, The Faithful Preacher: Recapturing the Vision of Three Pioneering African-American Pastors (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1907), 115. [↑](#endnote-ref-429)
430. Grimke’s memorial sermon was based upon 2 Sam. 3:38, “Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day.” It was the same text cited by Blyden in his 1882 funeral oration of Henry H. Garnet. In alluding to the religious sensibilities of Douglass, Grimke recalled his favorite hymns and implied that despite his estrangement from Christian orthodoxy, Douglass epitomized the best characteristics of Christianity and Christ. Perry, Lift Thy Voice, 263-64; Woodson, Works,1: xxii-xiii; Blight, Douglass, 122-47. See also Francis Grimke, “Sermon by the Rev. Francis J. Grimke of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, Washington D. C. March 10, 1895.” [↑](#endnote-ref-430)
431. Lynch, Patriot, 173. [↑](#endnote-ref-431)
432. Edward W. Blyden, “Mohammedanism in West Africa,” Methodist Quarterly Review 53 (January 1871), cited in Lynch, Blyden, 68-69. See also Edward Blyden, “Mohammedanism and the Negro Race,” Fraser’s Magazine, New Series, 12 (November 1875): 598-615 and Edward Blyden, “Christian Missions in West Africa,” Fraser’s Magazine, New Series, 12 (October 1876). [↑](#endnote-ref-432)
433. David M. Dean, Defender of the Race: James Theodore Holly, Black Nationalist Bishop (Boston: Lambert Press, 1979) 7,23, 25, 70. [↑](#endnote-ref-433)
434. Randall David Davidson, The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888: with the official reports and resolutions together with the sermons preached at the conferences (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: E & J. Young & Co, 1889) [↑](#endnote-ref-434)
435. Dean, Holly, 70. Lynch, Patriot, 180-81. [↑](#endnote-ref-435)
436. James Theodore Holly, “Biblical Criticism,” A. M. E. Church Review 4 (April 1888): 367. [↑](#endnote-ref-436)
437. Blyden to Coppinger, 7 September 1878, American Colonization Papers 18, cited in Lynch, Patriot, 181. [↑](#endnote-ref-437)
438. Edward Blyden, “Africa and the Africans” Frasers Magazine, August 1878: 178-96. Reprinted in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race: 298- 324. [↑](#endnote-ref-438)
439. Blyden to Coppinger, 7 September 1878, American Colonization Papers [↑](#endnote-ref-439)
440. Blyden, “Africa and the Africans” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 304. [↑](#endnote-ref-440)
441. Curtis, “Islam.” See also Blyden, Africa and the Africans, in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 304. [↑](#endnote-ref-441)
442. See Blyden, African Life and Customs. On the epistemological dynamic and faulty production of knowledge of Africa and Africans that was contributing to an “Imperial Comparative Religion,” see Chidester, Empire of Religion, ix-89. [↑](#endnote-ref-442)
443. Spencer, Principles of Sociology, 485, cited in “Blyden, “Africa and the Africans,” Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 318-20. [↑](#endnote-ref-443)
444. On Blyden’s extended appropriation of the evolutional insights of Huxley and Spencer, see Blyden, “Liberal Education for Africans,” Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 88, 94, 98. In “The Three Needs of Liberia” published just four years before his death in 1912, Blyden evoked the theory of evolution to explain and lament subversion of the developmental process in Liberia: “We are cut off from the evolutionary process by which men and nations normally grow. And as evolution is the law of life, we have neither permanent real life nor vigorous or continuous growth.” Blyden, “The Three Needs of Liberia,” 2-3, cited in Tibebu, Blyden, 103. [↑](#endnote-ref-444)
445. Blyden, Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, iv. [↑](#endnote-ref-445)
446. Ibid. See also Blyden to Coppinger, 19 November 1887, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 603-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-446)
447. By 1908 he would argue that “evolution is the law of life … [and] vigorous or continuous growth.” Blyden, “The Three Needs of Liberia,” 2-3. [↑](#endnote-ref-447)
448. For an analysis of this dilemma as experienced in the American context see Francis P. Weisenburger, Ordeal of Faith: The Crisis of Church-Going America, 1865-1900 (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc. 1959). [↑](#endnote-ref-448)
449. Moore, Post-Darwinian Controversies, 54, 103. On additional British religious leaders who underwent related religious and intellectual crises during this era, see Moore, Post-Darwinian Controversies, 102-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-449)
450. While numerous studies have noted that Darwinism along with historical, and biblical criticism were being vigorously contested among American Presbyterians, less attention has been paid to the similar impact of the discipline of comparative religion and its association with the emergence of theological and missiological liberalism. Of its impact within American Presbyterianism, Longfield has noted: “The advent of the study of comparative religions . . . provided another area of contention. Rather than demonstrating the superiority of Christianity to other faiths, the study of comparative religion seemed to place Christianity on a par with all religions. . . . In opening the question of the relativity of Christian truth, the study of comparative religions further agitated the already-troubled waters of Protestant America.” Longfield, Presbyterian Controversy, 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-450)
451. In 1874, Patton accused Swing of heresy. Tried by the Chicago Presbytery, Swing was acquitted, but continued persecution by Patton and other “defenders of Presbyterian orthodoxy” resulted in his resignation from the Presbyterian ministry. Balmer and Fitzmier, The Presbyterians, 226-27. See also William R. Hutchison, “Disapproval of Chicago: The Symbolic Trial of David Swing,” Journal of American History 59 (1972), 30-47. [↑](#endnote-ref-451)
452. Lefferts A. Loetscher, The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church Since 1869 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954). [↑](#endnote-ref-452)
453. Robert Deputie to Lowrie, 28 August 1876, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 348-49. [↑](#endnote-ref-453)
454. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-454)
455. John M. Deputie to Lowrie, 21 August 1876, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 348. [↑](#endnote-ref-455)
456. R. A. M. Deputie to Presbyterian Board, 28 August 1876, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 349. [↑](#endnote-ref-456)
457. Edward Wilmot Blyden, “Christian Missions in West Africa,” Fraser’s Magazine, October 1876 and Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-457)
458. Africa’s other representative was Dr. Robert Hamill Nassau, a white missionary assigned to the Church’s West African mission at Corisco. The Presbyterian, 5 June 1880; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 454. Although Nassau had served in the Presbyterian Church’s West Africa mission from 1861, presumably he and Blyden had never met. Four years earlier, in “Christian Missions in West Africa,” Blyden publicly chastised him for descriptions of African character and culture that were “gross exaggerations . . . pernicious in their influences.” Nassau’s unflattering reference was made in an address delivered before the ACS on January 21, 1873. See Edward W. Blyden, “Christian Missions in West Africa,” Fraser’s Magazine, October 1876, in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 65-66. Nassau served in the Presbyterian Church’s West Africa mission from 1861 to 1906 and was the author of several mission-oriented texts. See Robert Hamill Nassau, Crowned in Palm Land: A Study of African Mission Life (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1874) and Robert Hamill Nassau, Fetishism in West Africa: Forty Year’s Observation of Native Customs and Superstitions (London: Duckworth & Co., 1904). See also Brown, One Hundred Years, 246; The Presbyterian, 5 June 1880; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 454. Mary Kingsley would also pen a refutation of Nassau’s views. [↑](#endnote-ref-458)
459. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 453; Edward W. Blyden, “‘Africa’s Service to the World’ A Discourse delivered at Madison, Wisconsin, during the session of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, May, 1880, and also in the cities of Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York.” The discourse was later published under the title “Ethiopia Stretching Out Her Hands Unto God; Or, Africa’s Service to the World,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro World, 130-49. See also Cecil A. Blake, “A Critical Introduction to Edward Wilmot Blyden’s American discourse on exodus, 1861-1890” Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976). [↑](#endnote-ref-459)
460. Blyden, “Africa’s Service to the World,” 132. [↑](#endnote-ref-460)
461. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-461)
462. The Presbyterian, June 5, 1880; Blyden to Coppinger, 29 May 1880, Holden, Blyden, 454. Authored in 1647, the Westminster Shorter Catechism along with the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Larger Catechism was considered a key doctrinal statement by Presbyterians. However, during the nineteenth century, its doctrinal and dogmatic validity and relevance, like that of the Confession of Faith, was being increasingly challenged by theological liberals. Balmer and Fitzmier, The Presbyterians, 86. [↑](#endnote-ref-462)
463. Amid reassuring denominational assessments of his theological and doctrinal legitimacy, a triumphant Blyden provided his own account of his activities at the Assembly. Writing to Coppinger, he noted, “The present General Assembly is said to be the largest since the Reunion, and the church is exceedingly well represented. . . . I addressed them on Wednesday night last, and they seemed much interested.” Included in his report to Coppinger was a poignant account of a reunion with John P. Knox, his early pastor and theological mentor, on the floor of the Assembly. Blyden to Coppinger, 29 May 1880, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 453-54. [↑](#endnote-ref-463)
464. Balmer and Fitzmier, Presbyterians, 86. [↑](#endnote-ref-464)
465. Notably, the Presbyterian Board of Missions, which had long been racked by a succession of interrelated doctrinal, theological, missiological and ecclesiastical controversies, was headed from 1868 to 1870 by Charles Hodge. Blyden, Letter to the Board of Missions referencing Tulloch. [↑](#endnote-ref-465)
466. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-466)
467. Blyden to Coppinger, 29 May 1880, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 453-54. [↑](#endnote-ref-467)
468. Given the necessity of enlisting and maintaining Presbyterian support for his personal and professional agenda, a reference to the evangelical and pedagogical relevance of the Shorter Catechism would have been almost obligatory. This thesis is additionally suggested by the absence of reference to the Shorter Catechism in the version of the sermon which was published seven years later in the wake of Blyden’s demittance of his ordination. On Blyden’s tendency to adjust his comments to his audience, see Christopher Fyfe, introduction to Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, by Edward Wilmot Blyden (Edinburgh: University Press, 1967), xi. [↑](#endnote-ref-468)
469. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Lincoln University, Chester County, Pa., June 1, 1880, Holden, Blyden, 454, 459. [↑](#endnote-ref-469)
470. “Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Society,” Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 463. [↑](#endnote-ref-470)
471. Livingston, Education and Race, 190 and Blyden to Coppinger, 5 June 1880, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 454. [↑](#endnote-ref-471)
472. Blyden to Coppinger, 11 May 1880, Holden, Blyden, 461. [↑](#endnote-ref-472)
473. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 157. [↑](#endnote-ref-473)
474. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 488. See The Observer, January 12, 1882; African Repository 58 (1882) 56, 87-88; Lynch, Patriot, 110, 157. [↑](#endnote-ref-474)
475. Lynch, Patriot, 111. Blyden to Coppinger, 15 June 1880, Holden, Blyden, 454. Whether Blyden and Garnet, two forceful personalities in their own right, would have been able to sustain a friendship and working relationship in close proximity that would have benefited the Liberian Republic and the college and perhaps the Presbyterian enterprise in Liberia is open to speculation. Blyden’s history with clerical peers such as Crummell with whom he had a bitter parting of the ways and even his relationship with Grimke suggest that distance rather than proximity was of crucial assistance in sustaining a friendship and even working relationship with the prickly West African-based religious leader and scholar. [↑](#endnote-ref-475)
476. Lynch, Black Spokesman, 15-16; Moses, Crummell, 141-42. See Douglass’s Monthly, September 1862. [↑](#endnote-ref-476)
477. Frederick Douglass at Market Hall, New York City, October 22, 1847. Blight, Douglass, 122-47. [↑](#endnote-ref-477)
478. Margaret Ayer, First Pure, Then Peaceable, 98. [↑](#endnote-ref-478)
479. # On claims of Douglass’s “lifelong journey toward and through religious liberalism,” see William L. Van Deburg, “Frederick Douglass: Maryland Slave to Religious Liberal,” Maryland Historical Magazine 69, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 27-43. Van Deburg concludes that “Douglass became more liberal in his view of the Godhead because he was discouraged over the contradiction between Christian theory and practice.” Van Deburg, “Douglass,” 41. See also Douglass’s argument in 1852 that the proslavery hypocrisy of Christianity had done more to advance irreligion and infidelity than the “infidel writings of Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and Bolingbroke.” See Frederick Douglass, “Oration Delivered in Corinthian Hall, (Rochester, 1852), 29. See also Waldo E Martin, The Mind of Frederick Douglass (University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 177-82.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-479)
480. The work of Nott and Gliddon was associated with the emergent “American school of Ethnography” characterized by its racist assumptions and applications. Josiah Clark Nott and George R. Gliddon, Types of Mankind: or Ethnological Researches, based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races and upon their Natural, Geographical, Philological and Biblical history: illustrated by selection from the unedited papers of Samuel George Morton and by additional contributions from Prof. L. Agassiz, LL.D, W. Usher, M.D., and Prof. H. S. Patterson, M.D. (Philadelphia, London: Lippincott Gramoo & Co., Trubner & Co., 1855). [↑](#endnote-ref-480)
481. Frederick Douglass, “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered: An Address Before The Literary Societies Western Reserve College At Commencement, July 12, 1854,” (Rochester: Lee, Mann & Co., 1854). [↑](#endnote-ref-481)
482. See especially Gary Dorrien, The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1800-1905 (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) and Gary Dorrien, The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity 1900-1950 (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-482)
483. Douglass’ Monthly, September 1862. Cited by Moses, Crummell, 141-42.  [↑](#endnote-ref-483)
484. Dorrien, The Making of American Liberal Theology. [↑](#endnote-ref-484)
485. On Douglass’ response to his critics in a letter to the Philadelphia Press which denounced their intolerance and sham religiosity. See Van Deburg, “Douglass,” 27, 38-39; Herbert Aptheker, “An Unpublished Frederick Douglass Letter,” Journal of Negro History 44 (July 1959): 278-81 and Philadelphia Press, May 30, 1870; Foner, Frederick Douglass, 272. [↑](#endnote-ref-485)
486. Although Douglass remained opposed to colonization, Blyden was pleased with his belated confession that he “hoped to see Liberia before he dies.” Blyden to Coppinger, 15 June 1880, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 454. [↑](#endnote-ref-486)
487. See Blyden’s account of a weeklong stay as Douglass’s guest in his Washington residence. Edward Blyden, “The Negro in the United States,” AME Church Review 16 (1900): 310, 319-20. [↑](#endnote-ref-487)
488. David Friedrick Strauss (1808-18740 was a German theologian. His controversial Life of Jesus Critically Examined has been hailed as having contributed to “a new dawn in Biblical criticism by [his] applying the “myth theory” to the life of Jesus”, treat [ing] ther Gospel narrative like any historical work, and den[ying] all supernatural elements in the Gospels.” David Friedrick Strauss, The life of Jesus Critically Examined (Augsburg Fortress, 1972). Ludweig Feuerbach (1804-1872) was an equally controversial German philosopher. His text the The Essence of Christianity which was authored in (1841) challenged traditional dogmatic interpretations of Christian theology. Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity (Lanham, MD, Prometheus Books, 1989). See also Adelle M. Banks, “5 religious facts you might not know about Frederick Douglass.” Religious News Service, Washington Post, June 19, 2013. Accessed online at

     <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/5-religious-facts-you-might-not-know-about-frederick-douglass/2013/06/19/25cca02e-d922-11e2-b418-9dfa095e125d_story.html?fbclid=IwAR3IW2tG4UfaGehsceOgcWS2zx-tuyz-9fNA3aiDkkGjM1ZatQfyxN1NyOU&utm_term=.3447be815416> [↑](#endnote-ref-488)
489. Blyden, “The Mohammedans of Nigritia,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 373. Blyden’s statement seems to lead credence to the theory that another factor in the religious rapprochement between the two may have been Blyden’s awareness of Douglass’ alleged Islamic ancestry. On the theory that Douglass may have had Islamic ancestry see Michael Gomez, Black Crescent, 178. [↑](#endnote-ref-489)
490. Edward Blyden, “An Address Before the Maine State Colonization Society, Portland Maine, June 26th, 1862” in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 15-16. See Blyden to Professor Henry of the Smithsonian Institution, “On Mixed Races in Liberia,” 6 October 1869, Holden, Blyden, 212-15; Blyden to William Coppinger, 19 October 1874, Lynch, Selected Letters, 173-78; Lynch, Black Spokesman, xiv, xxix. [↑](#endnote-ref-490)
491. “The Diary of a Liberian in American,” Monrovia Observer, November 11, 1880. Lynch, Patriot, 111. [↑](#endnote-ref-491)
492. A similar assessment was made by Blyden of AME Bishop Henry M. Turner. Lynch, Patriot, 112; African Repository 52 (July 1876): 84-86. Lynch contends that Blyden’s assessment of the exceptionalism of mulattos like Douglass, Turner and eventually Francis Grimke did not “invalidate his theory of race.” Livingston concurs, noting that Blyden never really “reappraised” his general view of mulattos. Rather than “reevaluate his beliefs, he chose to see outstanding mulattos as exceptions; If they agreed with him, he enjoyed their company while rationalizing that their ‘Negro’ instincts were predominant.” Livingston, Education and Race, 190-91; Lynch, Patriot, 111. See also “The Diary of a Liberian in America,” Monrovia Observer, October 26, 1880; November 11, 1880; December 9, 1880. [↑](#endnote-ref-492)
493. Livingston points out that by the 1880s Blyden had learned much about African history and culture and his studies had convinced him that both had much to contribute to the formulation of a uniquely African pedagogy. Moreover, he recognized its psychological importance in eradicating “the injurious notion which largely prevails among civilized Negroes, chiefly in foreign lands, gathered from books they read, that the Negro had had no past, and all his ideas of civilization and all his tendencies to growth have been obtained from European institutions and example.” Livingston, Education and Race, 95, 116-18; Blyden, “Christian Mission in West Africa,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and Negro Race, 54, 55. [↑](#endnote-ref-493)
494. Lynch, Patriot, 149; Livingston, Education and Race, 95, 116-18; Blyden, “Christian Missions in West Africa,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and Negro Race, 54, 55. [↑](#endnote-ref-494)
495. Edward W. Blyden, “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans,” inaugural address as President of Liberia College, delivered at Monrovia, January 5, 1881, in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 71-93. See also Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 149. Livingston, Education and Race, 95, 116-18; Blyden, “Christian Missions in West Africa,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and Negro Race, 54, 55 [↑](#endnote-ref-495)
496. Blyden, “Aims and Means,” 90. [↑](#endnote-ref-496)
497. Ibid., 84. [↑](#endnote-ref-497)
498. Ibid., 90. [↑](#endnote-ref-498)
499. Ibid., 71-93, 95-98. [↑](#endnote-ref-499)
500. Ibid., 97, 101. [↑](#endnote-ref-500)
501. Blyden would quote from Huxley’s inaugural address delivered at the opening of the Mason Science College in Birmingham in September 1880. On Rev. Dr. Andrew P. Peabody DD, LL.D., who was a Harvard professor, see Andrew Peabody, Christianity and Science (New York, 1875) and “Obituary Rev. Andrew P. Peabody,” The New York Times, March 11, 1893, 3; Blyden, “Aims and Methods,” 88-89, 104. [↑](#endnote-ref-501)
502. Blyden, “Aims and Methods,” 90-91, 93. [↑](#endnote-ref-502)
503. Alexander Winchell, Adamites and Preadamites Or a Popular Discussion Concerning the Remote Representatives of the Human Species and their Relation to the Biblical Adam (Syracuse, NY: John T. Robert, 1878), 15-26. See also Horace Winchell and Alexander Newton Winchell, The Winchell Genealogy: The Ancestry and Children of those born to the Winchell name in America since 1635, with a discussion of the origin and history of the name and the family in England, and notes on the Winchell family (Higginson Book Co., 1917, original from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, digitized March 18, 2008), 366-69. See also Cain Felder, Stony the Road, 147-50. [↑](#endnote-ref-503)
504. Various versions of the theory of polygenesis were also embraced by more liberal biblical scholars such as Bishop Colenso with purportedly fewer racist implications. On Colenso’s interpretations of polygenesis, see Kidd, The Forging of Races, 153-56. [↑](#endnote-ref-504)
505. Blyden, “Aims and Means,” Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 97, 101. [↑](#endnote-ref-505)
506. Blyden, who had unsuccessfully advocated and attempted the inclusion of Arabic during his earlier tenure as a professor at the college, was especially adamant about its inclusion. However, once again its advocacy opened him to sectarian-driven rumors that Arabic was intended to displace the teaching of the Bible with the teaching of the Koran. Blyden to Coppinger, 31 August 1881; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 478. [↑](#endnote-ref-506)
507. Blyden, “Aims and Means,” Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 103. [↑](#endnote-ref-507)
508. Blyden, “Aims and Means,” Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 82, 196. [↑](#endnote-ref-508)
509. The circular published in the African Repository as the "Aims and Needs of Liberia College" announced that the school's "liberal" curriculum, entailed the study of "Religion" as well as "English Language and Literature, Latin, Greek, Arabic and Native Languages, Mathematics, Natural Science, Moral and Intellectual Philosophy, Political Science, History, and Jurisprudence." African Repository Vol LVII, 1881 June, 54-56); Holden, Blyden, 464, 470-472, 474; Lynch, Patriot, 115. [↑](#endnote-ref-509)
510. African Repository Vol. LVIII, 1882, 133-115. [↑](#endnote-ref-510)
511. Blyden, “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans” and Blyden to Coppinger, November 21, 1882, Holden, Blyden, 507. [↑](#endnote-ref-511)
512. Albert S. Broussard, African-American Odyssey: The Stewarts-1853-1963 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas 1998), 29. [↑](#endnote-ref-512)
513. In further evidence of the relationship that McCosh nurtured with the seminary’s black students, he attended Stewart’s farewell sermon preached at Bethel in January 1883 and spoke highly of the “capability” of both his former pupil and “the colored race.” Broussard, African-American Odyssey 20-24, 28-30. 39. See also New York Globe, August 4, 1883 and Simmons, Men of Mark, 1052-1054. [↑](#endnote-ref-513)
514. Blyden to James C. Braman, October 27, 1882, Lynch, Letters, 308-309; Holden, Blyden, 506. [↑](#endnote-ref-514)
515. It is not clear if the initial recommendation for the establishment of this chair came from Blyden or the College's Trustees of Donations. Indicative of their sensitivity to wider religious, social, political and regional dynamics was the additional establishment of the “Charles Sumner Professorship of Belles Lettres, History and Law” in honor of the recently deceased (1874) abolitionist and Reconstruction hero. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 506. See, also Blyden’s referral to Hodge's "sententious and epigrammatic utterance[s]" in response to racial prejudice and slavery. Blyden, "Mohammedaism and the Negro Race” and “Christianity and the Negro Race” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 24,42. [↑](#endnote-ref-515)
516. The African Repository 60 (1884) and Broussard, African American Odyssey, 41-42, 45. [↑](#endnote-ref-516)
517. Characteristically, Blyden viewed his difficulties at the college as symptomatic of what he increasingly perceived as the intrinsic weakness of the overall Presbyterian mission in Liberia. The lamentable condition of church, mission, and college in Liberia, he argued, was the direct result of the Board’s misguided policy of appointing to Liberia “persons largely of mixed blood.” Blyden to Lowrie, 27 August 1881; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 484-87; Grimke, Woodson, Works, 1:189-200. [↑](#endnote-ref-517)
518. Holden, Blyden, 512-16 and African Repository 59 (1883): 62. [↑](#endnote-ref-518)
519. Blyden to Mr. Braman, Secretary of the Trustees in Boston, 27 March 1884, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 517-18. See Trustees of Donations for Education in Liberia, 28, 29. [↑](#endnote-ref-519)
520. Lynch, Patriot, 159-160; Blyden to Coppinger, 13 March 1884, ACS Papers, vol. 21; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 527-28; Blyden to Coppinger, 25 October 1883, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 513-14. [↑](#endnote-ref-520)
521. Broussard, African-American Odyssey, 44-46. [↑](#endnote-ref-521)
522. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 154-55 [↑](#endnote-ref-522)
523. Despite his fulsome earlier praise for the appointment of Browne and Stewart, Blyden would later claim that he had reservations regarding their hire. He described the two as being arrogant, selfish and having readily joined in alliance with his mulatto enemies. In turn, Browne and Stewart were sorely disappointed with Blyden’s leadership and material conditions at the college. Broussard, African American Odyssey, 41-42; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 512 and African Repository 59 (1883): 62. [↑](#endnote-ref-523)
524. Blyden professed to being particularly disappointed with the apparent lack of religious inclinations exhibited by Browne, who he had assumed as a fellow Presbyterian minister would have been committed to expansion of the struggling Presbyterian enterprise in Liberia and no doubt be initially perceived as an important ally in shoring up his ideological and theological influence within the Presbytery of West Africa. Blyden to Coppinger, 25 October 1883, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 513-14. [↑](#endnote-ref-524)
525. See, for example, Francis P. Weisenburger, Ordeal of Faith: The Crisis of Church-Going America, 1865-1900 (New York: Westminster Press, 1982) and Ferenc Morton Szasz, The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930 (University of Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1982). For some sense of the related crisis of intellect and faith evoked among black clergy and those preparing for the ministry, see the autobiographical accounts of Theophilus Gould Steward, From 1864 to 1914: Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry (Philadelphia: AME Book Concern, 1921) and Reverdy Ransom, The Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom’s Son (Nashville: The AME Sunday School Union, 1948). [↑](#endnote-ref-525)
526. Stewart took a post-graduate work course in philosophy under McCosh who was also present for his farewell sermon preached at Bethel A.M.E. Church. Bossard, African-American Odyssey, 30, 39. See African Repository 59 (January 1883): 27; William Milligan Sloane, ed., The Life of James McCosh, A Record Chiefly Autobiographical (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1896); on his sermon, see New York Globe, January 6, 1883, and January 13, 1883. See also Alumni Files, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Princeton Theological Seminary Catalogue, 1878-79, 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-526)
527. Broussard, African American Odyssey, 29, 38. [↑](#endnote-ref-527)
528. Notwithstanding reservations that he later claimed to have had regarding Browne’s racial background and ideological commitment, the expectation of a fruitful alliance and even friendship with Browne was probably also reinforced by his occupancy of Garnet’s former pulpit and the mutual friendship that both shared with Francis Grimke. [↑](#endnote-ref-528)
529. Grimke, Woodson, Works, 1:189-200. [↑](#endnote-ref-529)
530. Brossard, African American Odyssey, 42-43. [↑](#endnote-ref-530)
531. It is conceivable that Stewart’s departure from Princeton was also related to his difficulties in accepting the generally defensive reaction to modernity which the school and most of its faculty attempted to inculcate in students. [↑](#endnote-ref-531)
532. Ibid., 49. [↑](#endnote-ref-532)
533. Ibid., 69-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-533)
534. Echoing the thesis advanced by Blyden in The Negro in Ancient History, Stewart insisted that blacks had a glorious past and that they were “descendants of a great people whose ancient civilization was the wonder and glory of the world.” Brossard, African American Odyssey, 71-71. See also T. McCants Stewart, “The Condition-The Measure of Power, 1884,” Princeton Theological Seminary Archives and Special Collections. [↑](#endnote-ref-534)
535. Rufus Perry, The Cushite or the Ancient Children of Ham as Seen by Ancient Historian and Poets (1893) (originally published as Rufus Perry, The Cushite or the Ancient Children of Ham as Seen by Ancient Historian and Poets "A PAPER READ BY REV. RUFUS L. PERRY (Editor of The National Monitor.) before THE BROOKLYN LITERARY UNION, WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY T. McCANTS STEWART, Esq., PUBLISHED BY THE LITERARY UNION. 1887. [↑](#endnote-ref-535)
536. Brossard notes that Stewart’s four-page introduction to Perry’s book revealed his keen interest and readings in biblical and African history as well as his familiarity with African ethnology and with Blyden texts such as The Negro in Ancient History. And like Blyden, his concern was to combat the prevalent belief that Africa was a backward continent by emphasizing that Africa’s “modern” descendants could boast a glorious past and should therefore be proud of their racial heritage. Brossard, The Stewarts, 42, 72, 92-101; Perry, The Cushite, iv-v, x, 11-18. [↑](#endnote-ref-536)
537. On Stewart’s legal career and his contributions to the legal and judicial developments in Liberia, see Brossard, African American Odyssey, 49-54, 79-92, 92-101. [↑](#endnote-ref-537)
538. Lynch, Patriot, 160-61; Lynch, Black Spokesman, xvi; Livingston, Education and Race, 113-38. The messy end of his troubled presidency keenly disappointed supporters and students even as it confirmed the cynical predictions of critics and detractors. See Deputie to Lowrie, 31 March 1882. See also African Repository 58 (1882): 90-92. Of broader significance, the controversy at the college bolstered Blyden’s increasingly cynical assessment of the miseducation of African Americans and his pessimism regarding their readiness for participation in the colonization enterprise and the development of Africa. In what was intended as private correspondence with confidants such as Coppinger, Blyden offered an increasingly caustic critique of the curriculum and agenda of black higher education in the United States that extended even to established institutions such as Howard, Lincoln, and Fiske universities. Lynch, Patriot, 122-23; Blyden to Coppinger, 22 June 1886, ACS papers, vol. 23, cited in Lynch, Patriot, 122. [↑](#endnote-ref-538)
539. Edward Wilmot Blyden, “Africa’s Service to the World”: A Discourse delivered at Madison, Wisconsin during the session of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, May 1880. Published in The African Repository and Colonial Journal, Vol LVII, Oct. 1881, No. 8:110. See also the more iconoclastic version of “Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God; or, Africa’s Service to the World” which also cited Ernest Renan’s “Hibbert Lectures.” Blyden, “Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God; or, Africa’s Service to the World” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 131,139. [↑](#endnote-ref-539)
540. Blyden, “The Origin and Purposes of African Colonization,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 108-29. For contrast with the theological and hermeneutical emphasis of Blyden’s early colonization treatises, see for example, Edward Blyden, “‘The Call of Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America,’ A Discourse Delivered to Coloured Congregations in the Cities of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Harrisburg, during the Summer of 1862,” in Blyden, Liberia’s Offering. See also Edward Blyden, “African Colonization” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 383-423. See also Cecil A. Blake, “A Critical Introduction to Edward Wilmot Blyden’s American Discourse on Exodus, 1861-1890,” 43-48. [↑](#endnote-ref-540)
541. Blyden, “The Origin and Purposes of African Colonization,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 108.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-541)
542. Among the schools visited were Atlanta University, Clark University, Richmond Institute, Biddle University, and Hampton Institute. Blyden to Coppinger, 8 December 1882, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 507-9, 510. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 159. See also Blyden to Coppinger, 30 November 1882, African Repository 58 (1882): 115-33, from the New York World. [↑](#endnote-ref-542)
543. An extended version of the address, later published in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, presented an even more iconoclastic version of Blyden’s thesis and his scholarship that explicitly refuted much of what most blacks and whites had been taught to believe in church, school, and wider society regarding Africa and Africans. See Edward Blyden, “Philip and the Eunuch—or The Instruments and Methods of African Evangelization,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 174-98; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 506 [↑](#endnote-ref-543)
544. Blyden, “Philip and the Eunuch.” See for example Charles B. Copher, Black Biblical Studies: an anthology of Charles B. Copher: biblical and theological issues on the Black presence in the Bible (Chicago: Black Light Fellowship, 1993), Cain Hope Felder, Troubling Biblical Water: Race, Class, and Family (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), Cain Hope Felder, Stony the Road We Trod: African American biblical interpretation ( Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), Cain Hope Felder, Race, racism and the biblical narrative (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), Vincent L. Wimbush, Bible and African Americans, ( Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), Vincent L. Wimbush, ed. African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Tests and Social Textures (New York, London: Continuum, 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-544)
545. Ibid., 177-78. [↑](#endnote-ref-545)
546. Ibid. 176. [↑](#endnote-ref-546)
547. Blyden’s response was provoked by Ebers’ novel An Egyptian Princess. Ibid. 176. [↑](#endnote-ref-547)
548. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-548)
549. Ibid.; Blyden, “Aims and Means,” 91. [↑](#endnote-ref-549)
550. Blyden, “Philip and the Eunuch,” 189. [↑](#endnote-ref-550)
551. Milman’s pioneering application of the historical critical approach was also reflected in such ecclesiastical studies as the History of Latin Christianity (1855). Notably, Milman had been among the more prominent churchmen who publicly defended the scholarship of Bishop Colenso. See the Outlook 64, no. 12 (March 24, 1900): 684. See also “Dean Milman, His Career at St. Paul’s and the Works He Wrote,” New York Times, March 31, 1900. It is also notable that Blyden also cited the critical historical and ecclesiastical insights of his friend Dean (Arthur Penrhyn) Stanley who was one of Britain’s leading liberal theologians and author of an impressive corpus of critical ecclesiastical studies which included his Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church with an Introduction on the Study of Ecclesiastical History. [↑](#endnote-ref-551)
552. Blyden, “Philip and the Eunuch,” 189, 193. [↑](#endnote-ref-552)
553. Ibid., 189. [↑](#endnote-ref-553)
554. Of more contemporary significance, Blyden also likened “the nascent Church of the Niger” under the direction of the venerable Bishop Crowther as a “second Abyssinian Church in aboriginal vigor and permanence.” Blyden, “Philip and the Eunuch,” 188. [↑](#endnote-ref-554)
555. Blyden additionally noted that the Abyssinian Church had proved integral and important to the history of Islam, even “affording shelter to the persecuted Muslims, who in the early days of Islam, had to fly from Arabia for their lives.” Blyden, “Philip and the Eunuch,” 190-192, 195. [↑](#endnote-ref-555)
556. Ibid., 184-85, 195. [↑](#endnote-ref-556)
557. Ibid., 198. [↑](#endnote-ref-557)
558. Rootage of even his most iconoclastic and controversial discourses within familiar passages of scriptures seems to have been a characteristic and generally effective strategy employed by Blyden as a modus operandi that no doubt helped to account for the usually positive reception that he continued to receive from both black and white traditionally oriented evangelical audiences and acquaintances. Blyden reports that requests for copies of the discourse came from such divergent venues as a meeting of the Synod of Wilmington, the congregation of Park Street Church in New York, and from the coast of Africa where it was requested by Christians as well as Muslims who “wanted it on account of the references made to Mohammedan history.” Blyden to Bauman, 3 March 1883, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 511-12. [↑](#endnote-ref-558)
559. African Repository 58 (1882): 115-33, from the New York World. [↑](#endnote-ref-559)
560. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-560)
561. Prior to the founding of the American Negro Academy, the Bethel Literary and Historical Society was the most prestigious intellectual and literary forum in the African American community. It invited and hosted a range of black scholars and leaders who frequently engaged in spirited presentations and discussions with an audience that often numbered in the hundreds. A cursory review of presenters and topics reveal that no few of its presenters were addressing issues directly or indirectly related to the African and Diaspora African encounter with modernity in its varied modes. See Kim Roberts, “The Bethel Literary and Historical Society,” Beltway Poetry Quarterly 11, no. 2 (Spring 2010), http://washingtonart.com/beltway/bethel.html. [↑](#endnote-ref-561)
562. See, for example, Frederick Douglass, “The race problem: great speech of Frederick Douglass, delivered before the Bethel Literary and Historical Association, in the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Washington, D.C., October 21, 1890.” Ironically, it would be Richard T. Greener (who in 1870 was the first black graduate of Harvard) rather than Blyden who would present a paper on “Mohammedanism vs. Christianity,” before the Historical Society. [↑](#endnote-ref-562)
563. “‘Christianity and the Negro Races’ by E. W. Blyden, LL. D. President of Liberia College Delivered Before the Union Bethel Literary and Historical Association of Washington, D. C. January 2, 1882,” (Union Bethel Literary and Historic Association of Washington, 1893). See also Edward Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Races,” Fraser’s Magazine, 1876, 504-22. In a revised version of this address published five years later in Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, Blyden would make more evident his selective embrace and critical appropriation of many of the intellectual, academic, hermeneutical, theological, and missiological insights associated with modernity and its corollaries. [↑](#endnote-ref-563)
564. [↑](#endnote-ref-564)
565. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” (1883), 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-565)
566. Ibid., 10-11. [↑](#endnote-ref-566)
567. Ibid., 11-12. [↑](#endnote-ref-567)
568. Ibid., 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-568)
569. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-569)
570. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-570)
571. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-571)
572. Alexander Winchell, “Pre-Adamites; or a Demonstration of the Existence of man before Adam &c. (Chicago: S. C. Greggs & Co.). See also Adamites and Preadamites: Or, a Popular Discussion Concerning the Remote Representatives of the Human Species and Their Relation to the Biblical Adam (Syracuse, NY: J. T. Roberts, 1878); Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-572)
573. “Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 9, 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-573)
574. Ibid., 3-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-574)
575. Ibid., 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-575)
576. Ibid., 3-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-576)
577. Ibid., 9, 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-577)
578. See “History of the Bethel Literary and Ahistorical Association Being a Paper Read Before The Association by Dr. John W. Cromwell on Founder’s Day February 24, 1896,” (Washington D. C.: Press of R. L. Pendleton, 1896), 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-578)
579. In the version of “Christianity and the Negro Race” published in 1886 in conjunction with the demitting of his Presbyterian ordination, Blyden was even more explicit about his critical and selective appropriation of the findings of comparative religion, the historical-critical method, evolutionary theory, and biblical criticism as well as what he described as his “latitudinarian” theological “inclinations.” Edward Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 30. Roberts, “The Bethel Literary and Historical Society.” [↑](#endnote-ref-579)
580. David Wills has noted that even as the post-Reconstruction African-American religious community struggled in the face of a resurgent racism to marshal its limited spiritual and material resources, it was not immune or impervious to the pervasive currents associated with modernity that were forcing reassessment and realignment of the theological, pedagogical, and missiological praxis of mainstream evangelical Protestantism. David W. Wills, “The Double Crisis of Black Christianity,” 351-52. David W. Wills, “Aspects,” 88-158. See also Carter G. Woodson, The History of the Negro Church (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, 1921), 224-89. See also S. P. Fullinwider, The Mind and Mood of Black America: Twentieth-Century Thought (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1969), 26-27. Black religious journals such as the A.M.E. Church Review, the A.M.E. Christian Recorder, and the National Baptist Magazine also attest that the scientific, intellectual, and theological currents associated with modernity and theological liberalism were filtering into the African-American and West African religious communities from a variety of sources and provoking a variety of responses. The A.M.E. Review, for example, under the editorial direction of Benjamin T. Tanner (1884-1888) and his immediate successors, Levi J. Coppin (1888-1896), H. T. Kealing (1896-1912), and Reverdy Ransom (1912-1924), exposed its readers to the major tenets of liberalism and the controversies they provoked within their own and the wider religious community. Neither the editors nor contributors of articles to the Review were disinterested spectators as they commented on Darwinism, the historical-critical method, polygenesis and most of the other disputed theological and missiological issues of the era. The numerous articles and editorials related to these issues illustrate the growing tensions between the defenders of orthodoxy and the proponents of liberalism in the A.M.E. Church and the wider African-American religious community. David Wills, “Aspects,” 88-158 and James Melville Washington, Frustrated Fellowship: The Black Baptist Quest for Social Power (Macon, GA: Mercer Press, 1986), 184, 192-93, 212-13; Fullinwider, Mind and Mood, 33-46. [↑](#endnote-ref-580)
581. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 3, 5, 9, 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-581)
582. A disproportionate number of the black proponents of theological liberalism and its corollaries appear to have been members of predominantly white denominations that were on the cutting edge of the growing liberal influence within American Protestantism. Many also attended liberal-oriented colleges, universities, and seminaries associated with these denominations. Of special importance were liberal-oriented institutions such as Yale, Harvard, Chicago, Boston, Andover, and Union Theological Seminary. Theological education at these institutions was of major influence in shaping the theologies and ministries of black liberals and subsequently “modernists.” See, for example, the ministry of Yale Divinity School educated Congregationalist ministers such as Orishatukeh Faduma and Henry H. Proctor. See Moses Moore, Orishatukeh Faduma, Liberal Theology and Evangelical Pan-Africanism, 1857-1946, (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1996) and Henry H. Proctor, Between Black and White: Autobiographical Sketches (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1925). [↑](#endnote-ref-582)
583. Cauthen, Impact, 5. See, for example, Albert G. Miller, Elevating the Race: Theophilus G. Steward, Black Theology and the Making of An African American Civil Society, 1865-1924 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-583)
584. See James A. Handy’s presentation in 1885 of a refutation of Darwinism and polygenesis in an article entitled “The Mystery of Man.” Drawing upon the supportive conclusions of an earlier generation of orthodox scientists, he affirmed that “geology, ethnology and the natural history of man bear ample testimony of the truth of the Mosaic statement as recorded in the book of Genesis.” James A. Handy, “The Mystery of Man,” A.M.E. Church Review 2 (July 1885): 20. See also Levi J. Coppin’s comments on the case of the Presbyterian biblical scholar Charles Briggs of Union Theological Seminary. Levi J. Coppin, “Editorial,” A.M.E. Church Review 10 (October 1893): 203; A.M.E. Church Review 8 (July 1891): 110-11; A.M.E. Church Review 9 (April 1893): 425. Wills, “Aspects,” 88-136. Benjamin Tanner also denounced the “Higher Criticism” and “portrayed the German higher critics as descendants of the defeated skeptics of earlier ages.” Benjamin T. Tanner, “The Higher Criticism,” A.M.E. Church Review 10 (July 1893): 115, quoted in Wills, “Aspects,” 89. Tanner also articulated the broader theological agenda for both defenders of orthodoxy and liberals as he noted in 1888 that “the time has come for the Negro and even all the colored races of the earth, to conduct a theology for themselves.” Wills concludes that primarily because of Tanner’s intellectual leadership between 1884 and 1893, the A.M.E. Church fostered “a greater range of theological discussion than at any previous period in its history.” Benjamin T. Tanner, “Editorial,” A.M.E. Church Review 4 (April 1888): 457, quoted in Wills, “Aspects,” 128, 90. [↑](#endnote-ref-584)
585. Campbell was elected bishop in 1864 and served as editor of the A.M.E. Church’s official publication The Christian Recorder. See Simmons, Men of Mark, 1031-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-585)
586. A perturbed Douglass responded with “an open letter in the Philadelphia Press reaffirming his position, denouncing bigotry and religious intolerance and declaring that he would not yield to ministerial pressure.” “I have no doubt,” Douglass wrote, “that the avowal of my liberal opinions will drive many from me who were once my friends and even exclude me from many platforms upon which I was a welcome speaker, but such is the penalty which every man must suffer who admits a new truth into his mind. . .. I bow to no priests either of faith or of unfaith. I claim as against all sorts of people, simply perfect freedom of thought.” Reportedly Douglass also issued an apparently unaccepted invitation to Bishop Campbell to engage in a public debate of the controverted issues. Herbert Aptheker, “An Unpublished Frederick Douglass Letter,” The Journal of Negro History 44, no. 3 (July 1959): 277-81, (June 14, 1870). See also Martin, Mind of Douglass, 178-79. [↑](#endnote-ref-586)
587. Simmons, Men of Mark, 1031-34. Jabez P. Campbell, “A Scriptural View, or The Statement Concerning Paradise that Was Lost Regained,” A.M.E. Church Review 1 (July 1884): 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-587)
588. “Dinner to Dr. Blyden,” The Christian Recorder, March 29, 1883. Stephen Ward Angell, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-588)
589. See Blyden, “Africa’s Service to the World” for reference to Turner as one of the few African American clerics that correctly perceived the advantages of colonization. It was also significant that Blyden included Turner among his cadre of exceptional mulattos, noting that notwithstanding “his light complexion,” Turner’s “hair [is] unmistakenly African-his instinct strong of the race; and he has all the peculiarities of an uncontaminated Eboe.” Lynch, Patriot, 112; African Repository 52 (July 1876): 84-86. Blyden later reports receiving an invitation by Bishop Turner to a celebration of his 30th wedding anniversary on which was inscribed, “If not the greatest, certainly one of the greatest Negroes that tread the globe, in the opinion of the sender.” Blyden to Coppinger, 20 September 1886, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 569. [↑](#endnote-ref-589)
590. James A. Handy, “The Mystery of Man,” A.M.E. Church Review 2 (July 1885): 20. See also James A. Handy, Scrapes of AME History, (Philadelphia: AME Book Concern, 1902) [↑](#endnote-ref-590)
591. Cardoza was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1837 to a free black mother and a father who was a Sephardic Jew. In the year of Blyden’s ordination (1858) he began his studies at the University of Glasgow and subsequently studied theology for four years in seminaries in London and Edinburgh. Returning to the United States in 1864, he pastored Temple Street Congregational Church in New Haven, Connecticut; helped to establish Avery Institute; and served as principle of famed “M” Street (Paul Lawrence Dunbar) High School in Washington from 1891-1896. See Dictionary of American Negro Biography, 89-90; Simmons, Men of Mark, 421-28; and “Francis Lewis Cardoza,” University of Glasgow, accessed January 15, 2017, http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH24164&type=P. [↑](#endnote-ref-591)
592. “Dinner to Dr. Blyden,” The Christian Recorder, March 29, 1883. [↑](#endnote-ref-592)
593. Notwithstanding his comment about joining Blyden in his African work, Grimke was not a colonization enthusiast--his personal stance and reservations relative to the Liberian enterprise were more akin to those of Douglass and Reeve. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 512. On Grimke’s concern to guard his church and pulpit against what he described as both racial and religious heresy, see Woodson, Works 1: xviii, 191-92. [↑](#endnote-ref-593)
594. Livingston, Education and Race, no. 16, 247. Lynch, Patriot, 112. [↑](#endnote-ref-594)
595. A going going-away party hosted at Grimke’s church for Browne and reportedly attended by Blyden provided what appeared to be an auspicious start for the ambitious endeavor that was intended to explicitly link the African American community, Princeton Seminary, and the wider American Presbyterian community to Liberia College. Holden, Blyden, 512 and African Repository 59 (1883): 62. [↑](#endnote-ref-595)
596. The Presbyterian, June 5, 1880; Holden, Blyden, 454. [↑](#endnote-ref-596)
597. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race.” However, closer attention to the title and broader content of Blyden’s inaugural lecture titled “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans,” as well as the college’s prospectus might have elicited concern and suspicions among both supporters and detractors. Edward W. Blyden, “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans,” inaugural address as President of Liberia College, delivered at Monrovia, January 5, 1881, in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 82-107. On the curriculum and prospectus which earned the endorsement of McCosh, see Blyden to Coppinger, 21 November 1882, Holden, Blyden, 507. [↑](#endnote-ref-597)
598. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 549-53. [↑](#endnote-ref-598)
599. September 10, 1875, M. H. S. / Liberia College Papers; Livingston, Education and Race, 111-12. [↑](#endnote-ref-599)
600. On Blyden and Rev. Hopkins W. Erskine, see Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 912; Livingston, Education and Race, 15. Consistent with his concern to advance female education in Liberia, Blyden had been tutoring Anna, and with his support she had been offered a position as a teacher by the Board of Missions. On Anna Erskine, see Nemata Blyden, “The Search for Anna Erskine,” in Catherine Higgs, Barbara A. Moss, and Earline Rae Ferguson, Stepping Forward: Black Women in Africa and the Americas (Ohio University Press: 2002), 31-43. [↑](#endnote-ref-600)
601. Blyden, “Anna Erskine,” 42. Blyden to Lowrie, 7 January 1877, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 912-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-601)
602. Blyden, “Anna Erskine,” 41. [↑](#endnote-ref-602)
603. Blyden to Lowrie, 7 January 1877, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 912-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-603)
604. Blyden, “Anna Erskine,” 41-43. [↑](#endnote-ref-604)
605. Blyden acknowledged Anna’s linguistic skills and the respect afforded her by Muslims in suggesting that “such a person in an interior mission would have an easy and influential access to the wives and daughters of Mohammedans.” Blyden to Lowrie, 7 January 1877, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 912-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-605)
606. Blyden to Lowrie, 7 January 1877, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 912-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-606)
607. The children were named Rakiatu Theodora Aliena, Nemata Carolina, Isa Cleopatra Ayesatu, and Amina Judith Anna; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 1159; Blyden to Lowrie, 7 January 1877, PBFM, Liberia, vol. 11, no. 270. [↑](#endnote-ref-607)
608. Livingston, Education and Race, 76-77, 155-57. [↑](#endnote-ref-608)
609. Blyden even attributed much of his prodigious capacity for work to his dysfunctional marriage: “if I were blessed with domestic comfort, I could not do the amounts of work which I am able to accomplish. Thrown altogether upon myself at home, I have a great deal of time for work, and [am] always ready to undertake work away from home.” Blyden to J. C. Lowrie, 15 January 1875, P. B. F. M., Liberia, vol. 10, no. 73. Livingston, Education and Race, 155-56. [↑](#endnote-ref-609)
610. Sarah would depart West Africa in 1893 and settle in the United States. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 1015; see Sierra Leone Weekly News, February 24, 1912; Livingston, Education and Race, 158-59. [↑](#endnote-ref-610)
611. Anna was honored with a Government pension upon her retirement in 1926. Blyden, “Anna Erskin,” 43. See also Livingston, Education and Race, 159. [↑](#endnote-ref-611)
612. Blyden, “Anna Erskin,”43 and Livingston, Education and Race, 41. [↑](#endnote-ref-612)
613. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 1015 and Sierra Leone Weekly News, February 24, 1912. [↑](#endnote-ref-613)
614. Blyden to Coppinger, 13 April 1887 and 6 June 1887, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 580-81. [↑](#endnote-ref-614)
615. In light of the thesis recently advanced by David Chidester regarding its role in the development and exhibition of an “Imperial-colonial nexus” and “Imperial Comparative Religion” and its enthusiastic endorsement by Max Muller, it is significant that Blyden explained that “the immediate occasion . . . of the publication” of Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race was the “Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, which has brought together in London men of all races and climes, and of almost every degree of civilization.” Edward Blyden, “Preface to the First Edition,” Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, viii; Chidester, Empire of Religion, 61-62, 83-87. [↑](#endnote-ref-615)
616. The fifteen articles comprising this anthology were: “Mohammedanism and the Negro Race” (1875); “Christianity and the Negro Race” (1876); “Christian Missions in West Africa” (1876); “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans” (1881); “The Origin and Purpose of African Colonization” (1883); “Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God; or, Africa’s Service to the World” (1880); “Echoes From Africa” and “Philip and the Eunuch” (1882); “Mohammedanism in Western Africa” (1871); “Sierra Leone and Liberia: Their Origin, Work, and Destiny,” “Islam and Race Distinction” and “Africa and the Africans” (1878); “The Life of Lord Lawrence and its Lessons”; “The Mohammedans of Nigritia”; and “African Colonization.” [↑](#endnote-ref-616)
617. Blyden, Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, Introduction, xii, xiv, xv. Lewis, born in Freetown in 1843, was “the leading native barrister on the coast.” He exemplified Sierra Leone’s creole elite and mirrored from a more secular context the engagement of his generation of educated Africans with the currents of modernity. He was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1896 and died in London in 1903. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 570. [↑](#endnote-ref-617)
618. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 30, 31. [↑](#endnote-ref-618)
619. On Harnack who would apply “the methods of historical criticism” in formation and support of the thesis “that Christian dogma in its [conception](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conception) and development is a work of the Hellenistic Greek spirit” and that “the overcoming of dogma” and “recovery of the essence of the Gospel” could be achieved by application “ the historical-critical approach.” His thesis would be popularized in The History of Dogma, which has been called “a monument of liberal Christian historiography.” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Adolf-von-Harnack#ref41954> ; [www.britannica.com/topic/The-History-of-Dogma](http://www.britannica.com/topic/The-History-of-Dogma)

     Adolph von Harnack, History of Dogma, (originally published 1886-1891, Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1902). On Harnack’s broader contribution to liberal theology see Adolph von Harnack and Martin Rumscheidt, Adolph von Harnack: Liberal Theology at its Height (London: Collins; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-619)
620. Liberian Bulletin, No. 11, November 1897,40 quoted in Lynch, Patriot,165. See a;sp Holden, Blyden, 678. [↑](#endnote-ref-620)
621. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,”30. [↑](#endnote-ref-621)
622. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-622)
623. Ibid., 44. [↑](#endnote-ref-623)
624. Ibid., 32-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-624)
625. Specifically cited were the hermeneutical racism of Louisiana’s John Fletcher, whose 1852 Studies on Slavery in Easy Lessons, brought “the resources of the Hebrew language to the support of his idol [slavery]. . ..” Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race, “Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race,36-37. [↑](#endnote-ref-625)
626. Josiah Clark Nott and George Robins Gliddon, Types of Mankind: or Ethnological Researches, based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and Upon their Natural, Geographical, Philological and Biblical history: illustrated by selections from the unedited papers of Samuel George Morton and by additional contributions from Prof. L. Agassiz, LL. D., W. Usher, M. D. and Prof. H. S. Patterson, M. C. (Philadelphia, London: Lippincott, 1955), accessed July 24, 2014, http://until-darwin.blogspot.com/2012/02/on-josiah-nott.html. See also See also Douglass' response to the pseudo-scientific and religious theories of Nott and Gliddon and the American School of Anthropology in his 1854 address titled "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered." [↑](#endnote-ref-626)
627. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,”37. [↑](#endnote-ref-627)
628. Blyden opined that the consequences of this history for the subsequent development of Christianity among African Americans was still evident. It fostered and continued to nurture what Blyden believed to be among the least positive attributes and characteristics of the African American Church and clergy—-its tendency toward emotionalism and lack of intellectual roots since “the teaching they received . . . left less to their intellectual apprehension of the truth then to their emotional impulses. . . .” and “produced an outward conformity to the views and will of their masters,” even as it left both the mind and “the heart untouched.” Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 38. [↑](#endnote-ref-628)
629. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 52. It was a complement that reflected Blyden’s generally positive personal and professional relationships with prominent leaders of the AME Church such as Payne, H. M. Turner, Tanner, Derrick, etc. [↑](#endnote-ref-629)
630. Similarly anticipated by Blyden were the insights of modern ethnomusicology as he noted the related import of the origins and development of African American religious song. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 51. [↑](#endnote-ref-630)
631. Blyden did not view the retention of African religious and cultural survivals in the Americas as completely positive. He accepted and repeated the thesis that “Africans who were carried to the western world were, as a general rule, of the lowest of the people in their own country . . . [and] did not fairly represent the qualities and endowments of the race. [and] Even the traditions of their country they carried away in the most distorted form.” Consequently, “elements of civilization and barbarism—of Christianity and Heathenism—not only subsisted side by side, but, so far as the Negro was concerned, were inlaid, so to say, into each other, in a sort of inharmonious mosaic all over the Western hemisphere.” Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 39-40. Presumably, with reference to his personal experiences of the religious diversity evident on St. Thomas and in the wider Caribbean, he observed that “a system of Heathenish worship-now rare among the tribes of West Africa-is found among the Negroes, especially in the West Indies. . ..” Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 40. [↑](#endnote-ref-631)
632. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 51. [↑](#endnote-ref-632)
633. Edward Blyden to Francis Grimke, 11 September 1889, Carter G. Woodson, ed., The Works of Francis Grimke (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, 1942), 4:11-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-633)
634. For insight into the impact of Blyden’s theological, missiological, and cultural influence, especially within Sierra Leone during the 1880s, see William R. Hutchison, “Cultural Strain and Protestant Liberalism,” American Historical Review 76 (April 1971): 386-411. [↑](#endnote-ref-634)
635. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-635)
636. Blyden, “The Mohammedans of Nigritia,” in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 361-73. Anticipated within it were a number of issues pertaining to the religious impact of modernity that would later be engaged in the full-blown battle between the militant defenders of orthodoxy (Fundamentalist) and proponents of liberalism and modernism that would be waged within the mission arena in the opening decades of the twentieth century. On the missionary encounter with modernity, see especially William R. Hutchinson, “Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity, 1875-1935,” in The Missionary Enterprise in China and America, ed. John K Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 110-31. [↑](#endnote-ref-636)
637. Blyden, “Mohammedans of Nigritia,” 373. Although evidencing a heightened appreciation of African indigenous religions, his continued projection of them was often linked to his efforts at valorization of the missiological advantage of Islam. Hence, as late as 1886 he was referring to “the irrational and debasing superstitions of a hoary Paganism” giving way to the influence of Islam. Blyden, “Mohammedans of Nigrita,” 358. [↑](#endnote-ref-637)
638. The Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record, November 1887, 650-66; see also Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 649-66. For a more contemporary and expansive analysis of Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race and its influence, see Viera Pawlikova-Vilhanova, “Christianity, Islam and the African World, Edward Blyden (1832-1912) And Contemporary Missionary Thought,” Asian And African Studies 11 (2002) 2:117-28, accessed December 2, 2016, https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/05141257Pawlikov%C3%A1. [↑](#endnote-ref-638)
639. The London Times, October 8, 26, 31; November 7, 17, 30, 1887, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 599, 975 (#99). [↑](#endnote-ref-639)
640. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 597-99; Lynch, Blyden, 76-77; Lynch, Letters, 397; Balmer and Fitzmier, The Presbyterians, 226-27. On Hartmann, see Ursula Wokoeck, German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945 (Routledge, 2009). Swing’s review titled “ A Solid Volume on Africa” was republished in the African Repository LXVI (1890): 23-24. [↑](#endnote-ref-640)
641. The journal was by then under the editorial direction of Benjamin Franklin Lee who would become the denomination’s twentieth bishop in 1892. The Christian Recorder, November 3, 1887. For one of Blyden’s earliest responses to this charge, see the African Repository 64 (1888): 134-35, and Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 600-603. [↑](#endnote-ref-641)
642. Rev. J. R. Frederick, “Has Dr. Blyden gone Over to Mohomet?”, The Christian Recorder, January 12, 1888. In 1912, Frederick would officiate at Blyden’s funeral service in Sierra Leone. [↑](#endnote-ref-642)
643. The Presbyterian, January 29, 1887, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-643)
644. Blyden to the Presbytery of West Africa, 8 December 1886, Holden, Blyden, 573. [↑](#endnote-ref-644)
645. Resolution passed by the Presbytery of West Africa, December 10, 1886, Africa Letters file, Presbyterian Historical Society, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-645)
646. Coppinger to Blyden, 7 February 1887, Holden, Blyden, 575; Coppinger to Blyden, 10 June 1887, Holden, Blyden, 581-82. [↑](#endnote-ref-646)
647. Additional insight into Blyden’s actions and the response of the Presbytery is reflected in correspondence of Rev. Thomas H. Roberts with Rev. E. Webb of Lincoln University. Roberts, pastor of the Presbyterian church at Brewerville, Liberia, reported to Webb, his former professor, that “We pled with the Dr. not to have his name taken from the roll of the ministry, but could not prevail. His reasons in his petition were that he could not be any longer ‘useful and happy’ in that office, and therefore he asked of us to remove him from the role of the ministry. There were other reasons and causes which he thought best not to reveal as they might discourage us rather than encourage. . ..” Rev. Thomas Roberts to Rev. E. Webb, 21 December 1886, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 574. [↑](#endnote-ref-647)
648. Blyden to Coppinger, 13 April 1887; 6 June 1887, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 580-81. See also Blyden to Coppinger, 16 March 1887, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 575-79, 600-603, and African Repository 64 (1888): 134-35. [↑](#endnote-ref-648)
649. Blyden to Coppinger, 16 March 1887, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 575-79. Edward Blyden, “Not a Mohammedan,” African Repository 64 (1888): 134-35 and Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 600-603. It was likely their long and intimate friendship rather than the cogency of his explanation and defense that helped to assuage Coppinger’s concerns regarding Blyden’s demitting of his ministry and relationship to Islam. Amid renewed rumors and suspicions elicited by the publication of Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race and fearful of the potential damage that heightened suspicions might do not only to the reputation of his friend but also to the waning support of the American Colonization Society, Coppinger began a vigorous effort of crisis management. Employing the pages of the African Repository, he orchestrated a campaign that affirmed his friend’s continued commitment to Christianity even as he conceded that the accumulative impact of Blyden’s publications on Islam now magnified by their presentation in one volume might lead to the inference “that the author has a strong leaning towards Islamism.” African Repository 63 (1887): 127. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 600. Referencing their long personal and professional relationship, Coppinger proclaimed, “We are in a position to state that the author’s belief in Christianity is as strong and vigorous to-day as ever before; his faith in the system of Christ’s religion is still unchanged and he entertains no doubt whatever in the superiority of Christianity as taught by Christ.” African Repository 63 (1887): 127. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 600. Notwithstanding his strenuous editorial attempts to validate Blyden’s Christian bona fides, an ailing Coppinger soon conceded to his friend that his efforts to deny and refute the charge “extensively published in this country” that he had “turned Mohammedan” had been largely ineffective. “Your book has produced a profound impression in the religious world, and many favorable and unfavorable criticism of it have appeared. The charge that you had “turned Mohammedan” has been extensively published in this country. I have denied this, but a lie travels faster and further than the truth, and appears to be more enduring. . ..” Coppinger to Blyden, 27 January 1888, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 599. [↑](#endnote-ref-649)
650. Blyden to Coppinger, 6 June 1887; 25 January 1887, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 581. [↑](#endnote-ref-650)
651. Miller’s corpus of controversial works included “Fetish in Theology” (1874); “Metaphysics” (1875); “Are Souls Immortal?” (1877); “Was Christ in Adam?” (1877); “Is God a Trinity?”; “Creed” (1879); “Theology” (1887) and “Commentary on Romans” (1887), http://virtualology.com/apjohnmiller/. See also John Miller Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. [↑](#endnote-ref-651)
652. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 612. [↑](#endnote-ref-652)
653. Blyden to Miller, 29 November 1888, in Lynch, Letters, 395-98. [↑](#endnote-ref-653)
654. A number of Presbyterianism’s “most distinguished scholars,” including A. C. McGiffert and Henry Preserve Smith, would also be “forced out of the Presbyterian Church” during this era by defenders of orthodoxy who found their historical and hermeneutical views incompatible with the traditional tenets of Presbyterians. Ahlstrom, American Protestant Encounter, n.p See also Loetscher, The Broadening Church, chapters 6, 7, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-654)
655. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, 29 November1888, Lynch, Letters, 395-96; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 612; Charles Briggs, American Presbyterianism: Its Origin and Early History together with an Appendix of Letters and Documents (New York, 1885). Alluded to in Blyden’s reference to Briggs was the influence of a related theological and missiological perspective common among some theological and missiological liberals which suggested that Christianity might not be the last and highest revelation of God to man but rather the foundation of an evolving “World Religion.” See John W. Buckham, “Christianity Among the Religions,” The Hibbert Journal (April 1909): 513-21. [↑](#endnote-ref-655)
656. Handy, History of Union Theological Seminary, 106-107, 140. See also Max Gray Rogers, “Charles Augustus Briggs: Heresy at Union,” in American Religious Heretics: Formal and Informal Trials, ed. George H. Shriver (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1966), 94-97 and Mark Stephen Massa, Charles Augustus Briggs and the Crisis of Historical Criticism (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). The conciliatory perspective of a black theological moderate on the Briggs controversy and related theological and hermeneutical “conflict” within the broader Christian community was offered in the AME Church Review by its editor Levi Coppin. Noting that the Briggs case was “only one . . . of many where the fires of conflict burn fiercely,” Coppin (who acknowledged that AME theological liberal Theophilus Gould Steward was the preacher that “impressed” him most during his formative years) offered a conciliatory perspective: “We are seriously of the opinion that church controversies are generally unfortunate things. The finite can never grasp the infinite, and so there will always be *mysteries* in the inspired Word. But why should we, who accept the Bible as the Word of God, become at swords points because there are certain passages of minor importance upon which we cannot see eye to eye? This has always been the case and will always be so, since ever man is an individual and all men are limited in their knowledge.” Levy J. Coppin, “Religious Conflict,” A.M.E. Church Review 8 (July 1891): 110-11. See also Levy J. Coppins, Unwritten History, (Philadelphia: AME Book Concern, 1919), 252-57. [↑](#endnote-ref-656)
657. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, 29 November 1888, Lynch, Letters, 395-96. [↑](#endnote-ref-657)
658. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, 6 December 1888, Lynch, Letters, 399-401. Patton succeeded McCosh as president of Princeton University, and from his post at Princeton University and later Princeton Seminary, he continued to aggressively lead the conservative attack on Charles Briggs and other theological and missiological liberals within the Presbyterian Church. See Balmer and Fitzmier, The Presbyterians, 202-3; Longfield, The Presbyterian Controversy, 22-23. Handy, History of Union Theological Seminary, 66-77 and Max Gray Rogers, “Charles Augustus Briggs, Heresy at Union,” in American Religious Heretics, ed. George H. Shriver (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 89-147. [↑](#endnote-ref-658)
659. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, 29 November 1888, Lynch, Letters, 395-96. [↑](#endnote-ref-659)
660. While such comments are consistent with Blyden’s chronic complaints about his financial woes and sacrifices as a minister, they also suggest that he may have expected more support at least from theological and missiological liberals and progressives for his new ministry. Although his basic and immediate needs were partially met from the generosity of a few wealthy friends, and partially from small earnings from his writings, lectures, and private tutoring, demitting his ordination and his unconventional new ministry clearly magnified Blyden’s chronic financial difficulties. Blyden to Coppinger, 21 June 1886, Holden, Blyden, 561-63. Lynch, Patriot, 215. [↑](#endnote-ref-660)
661. Annual Reports of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in The United States of America, 1887-1900. [↑](#endnote-ref-661)
662. In its 1890 annual report, the Board noted, “The growth of our missionary work in Liberia has not fulfilled the expectation of the Home Church in its earlier years. . .. Both churches and schools have not become strong and self-supporting after over fifty years since the first missionaries were sent to that country.” The report also speculated that “this slow progress was owing in part to the change of policy, in sending or supporting in this field only persons of color.” The 1891 report continued this litany as did the 1892 report which alluded to the “special and peculiar” situation presented by the Liberian mission and the Board’s change in attitude toward it. See 52nd Annual Report of the Board of Missions (1890), 11, 13; 54th Annual Report of the Board of Missions (1892), 25-28; 56th Annual Report of Board of Missions (1893), 27; Brown, One Hundred Years, 208; 57th Annual Report of Board of Missions (1894), 33; 60th Annual Report of Board of Missions (1897), 33. [↑](#endnote-ref-662)
663. One of the major formulators and implementers of the Board’s policies was Robert E. Speer, who served as its secretary from 1891 to 1937. Balmer and Fitzmier, Presbyterians, 93, 214-15; 58th Annual Report of Board of Missions (1895), 29-30;56th Annual Report of Board of Missions (1893), 27; Brown, One Hundred Years, 208; 57th Annual Report of Board of Missions (1894), 33; 60th Annual Report of Board of Missions (1897), 33. The Board’s 1895 report reiterated and defended this policy which entailed a reduction of salaries and even the discontinuance of some of its missionaries, teachers, and schools. In 1899 it reported, “The financial help given the Board to the Presbyterian churches in Liberia has been diminished from year to year until now only two workers are receiving such assistance.” It also announced that a decision to further concentrate its support of missionary work in Africa in the West African Mission (specifically Crisco and Gabon) had been “reviewed and reaffirmed with the approval of the Assembly.” 60th Annual Report of Board of Missions, (1897), 33. Although the Board recorded that its change of policy “has, on the whole, been well received and productive of good results,” reports and private correspondence indicate that this new policy did not elicit enthusiastic support from members of the presbytery, and in 1895 the presbytery felt it necessary to remind the Board that the Liberian mission remained a cooperative enterprise: “a work belonging to us and the Board as soldiers belonging to the grand army of the living God and our Christ.” 58th Annual Report of Board of Missions (1895), 29-30; 58th Annual Report of Board of Missions (1895), 29-30. However, the minutes and correspondence of the Board also reveal the often-painful personal impact of the Board’s change in policy. In response to a letter from D. W. Frazier of the Liberian mission protesting that his cut in salary from $600 to $500 was “a breach of contract,” Speer referred him to the “manual” which noted that salaries were “subject to change after sufficient notice” and announced that the Board was holding to its policy of “No Increase but decreases.” Speer also referred disgruntled members of the Presbytery “to the China Inland Mission for encouragement” and argued that it was “not an unkindness but a kindness for the Board to ask the churches to support themselves.” See letter from D. W. Frazier of the Liberia Presbytery, 6 December 1894; Speer to R. A. M. Deputie, 26 September 1895 and 5 December 1895; Speer to the Presbytery of West Africa, 17 May 1894; Africa Letters, Liberia Mission 1884-1901 51:2; 62nd Annual Report of Board of Mission (1899), 32. [↑](#endnote-ref-663)
664. 62nd Annual Report of Board of Mission (1899), 32; Minutes of the General Assembly (1925), 1:213. An interpretation of Board policy and its impact as chronicled in the often-cryptic reports of the Board is provided by Brown. He notes, “In 1894 the Board withdrew and officially ended more than a half-century of mission work in Liberia by deciding to gradually phase out its Liberian mission by diminishing from year to year the amount of its appropriations. . ..” Brown, One Hundred Years, 203, 205, 209. [↑](#endnote-ref-664)
665. A policy of black exclusion by the Board was illuminated in 1896 when eight students at Lincoln University volunteered for foreign missionary service and were rejected. Murry, Presbyterians, 195. For explicit charges of racism within the Presbyterian mission field, see the protests of Taka Truman of the Crisco and Gabon mission over discrepancies in support provided black and white missionaries by the Board. Taka Truman to the Board, 10 October and 11 October 1881, Africa Letters, 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-665)
666. These include “Liberia as a Field for a Missionary Enterprise,” originally delivered as a lecture in the late 1890s. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 679. The last and perhaps most significant of his commentaries on mission work in Liberia was the lecture “The Problems before Liberia,” delivered in 1909 in Monrovia. See Edward Wilmot Blyden, The Problems before Liberia: A Lecture delivered in the Senate Chamber at Monrovia, January 18, 1909 (C. M. Phillips, London, 1909) and Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 848-50. Occasional references to Blyden’s activities were published in The Presbyterian. See the Presbyterian, June 28, 1899 and Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 691. [↑](#endnote-ref-666)
667. Notably, Frank Ellinwood, board member and founder of the American Society of Comparative Religion in 1890, would endorse and embrace some of Blyden’s missiological views and insights. [↑](#endnote-ref-667)
668. Eugene Stock, The History of the Church Missionary Society (London: 1899), 231. See also Livingston, Education and Race, 213. [↑](#endnote-ref-668)
669. Through the end of the century, Blyden would continue correspondence and personal relationships with American Presbyterian leaders and remain active in prominent Presbyterian venues including minister’s meetings, churches, and even seminaries as he attempted to define and actualize his new ministry. [↑](#endnote-ref-669)
670. See Coppinger to Blyden, 27 January 1888, Holden, Blyden, 599. [↑](#endnote-ref-670)
671. See, for example, Blyden’s notice and lament in 1886 of concurrent moves by Southern Episcopalians and Methodists to segregate their black constituents in Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race”; Blyden, “Mohammedanism and the Negro”; and “The Mohammedans of Nigritia”; in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 1-53, 366-67, 382. [↑](#endnote-ref-671)
672. Blyden, “The Mohammedans of Nigritia” and “Christianity and the Negro Race,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 43, 366. [↑](#endnote-ref-672)
673. Ferry, “Racism and Reunion: A Black Protest by Francis James Grimké,” Journal of Presbyterian History 50 (1972): 77-88 and David M. Reimers, “The Race Problem and Presbyterian Union,” Church History 31 (1962): 203-15. [↑](#endnote-ref-673)
674. James McCosh’s gracious acceptance of an invitation to officiate at Theodora’s baptism must have reaffirmed for Grimke his linkage to Princeton. Cooper, Recollections, 38; Ferry, “Portrait,” 108. [↑](#endnote-ref-674)
675. Letter to Grimke, 28 January 1884, Grimke Correspondence Box 1, folder 17, Grimke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center; Francis J. Grimke, “The Second Marriage of Frederick Douglass,” Journal of Negro History 19 (July 1934): 325; Perry, Lift, 264. [↑](#endnote-ref-675)
676. Blyden, “The Mohammedans of Nigritia,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 373. [↑](#endnote-ref-676)
677. Grimke, “Mr. Moody and the Color Question in The South,” in Cooper, Recollections, 54-59; cited in Ferry, “Portrait,” 169. [↑](#endnote-ref-677)
678. C. James Trotman, “Race, Reform, and Religion in the Life of Matthew Anderson,” The Princeton Seminary Bulletin 9, no. 2 (1988) New Series, 143-55; Cooper, Recollections 1:50-53. See Moses N. Moore, Jr., “Black Presbyterians and the Schism of 1837,” Union Seminary Quarterly Review 54 (spring 2000): 53-84; Ferry, “Racism and Reunion”; Ernest T. Thompson, “Presbyterians North and South—Efforts Toward Reunion 1870-1984,” Journal of Presbyterian History 43 (March 1965): 1-15.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-678)
679. Francis J. Grimke, “The Defects of Our Ministry and the Remedy,” AME Church Review 3 (October 1886): 154-57 and Francis J. Grimke, “The Afro-American Pulpit in Relation to Race Elevation,” (presented at the Minister’s Union, Washington, D.C., 1892), Woodson, Works 1:223-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-679)
680. Blyden to Grimke, from Sierra Leone, 13 November 1893, Woodson, Works 4:33. [↑](#endnote-ref-680)
681. Livingston, Education and Race, 111-12, 159; Blyden to Lowrie, 7 January 1877 and William Tracy to Lowrie, 23 February 1877, cited in Holden, Blyden, 912-13, 1159. For insight into the view of divorce, marriage, and “polygamy” among traditional Reformed clergy, see colonizationist activist Joseph Tracy, “The Bible Doctrine of Divorce,” in Bibliotheca Sacra 23 (July 1866): 384-406. [↑](#endnote-ref-681)
682. On Grimke’s numerous sermons and lectures in support and advocacy of traditional marriage, see Woodson, Works 2:121-249 and Ferry, “Portrait,”120-24. Sidwell notes that connected with Grimke’s theological system was a strong emphasis on personal morality that was summarized by a 1929 entry in his journal which concluded that “rum, women, the love of money, and worldly pleasures, are now, and have been the main gateways to hell.” Woodson, Works 3:344, cited in Sidwell, “Grimke and Fundamentalists,” 81. [↑](#endnote-ref-682)
683. Moses, Alexander Crummell, 192-93. [↑](#endnote-ref-683)
684. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, ii. [↑](#endnote-ref-684)
685. Reportedly, he encouraged their members to “strive not only to adorn yourselves outwardly with gay and beautiful apparel but decorate your minds with the unfading laurels of wisdom, for ‘wisdom is the principal thing.’” See Liberia Herald, April 4, 1852, reprinted in African Repository 27 (August 1852): 243-44. See also his address on the “Vanity of Worldly Pursuits” delivered on the 1853 anniversary of the Literary Institute. See Liberia Herald, March 2, 1853, reprinted in African Repository 29 (September 1853): 266-67 and cited in Livingston, Education and Race, 38-39. [↑](#endnote-ref-685)
686. Blyden, “Aims and Methods of Liberal Education,” in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and Negro Race, 102-3; Blyden, “Search for Anna Erskine,” 38-39. [↑](#endnote-ref-686)
687. Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 159. [↑](#endnote-ref-687)
688. Blyden to Coppinger, 16 March 1887, Holden, Blyden, 575-80. On Blyden’s positive reference to the role and status of female adherents of Islam in West Africa, see Edward Blyden to Major Alexander Bravo, Acting Governor of Sierra Leone, 1873 (report of the expedition to Timbo, January to March 1873), 10 March 1873, Lynch, Letters, 137-38. [↑](#endnote-ref-688)
689. Blyden, “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans.” See also Lynch, Black Spokesman, 235-36 and Blyden to Coppinger, 6 June 1887, Holden, Blyden, 581. [↑](#endnote-ref-689)
690. Livingston, Education and Race, 157. On Anna Erskine as a pioneering feminist, see Nemata Blyden, “The Search for Anna Erskine: African American Women in Nineteenth Century Liberia,” in Stepping Forward: Black Women in Africa and the Americas, eds. Catherine Higgs, Barbara A. Moss, and Earline Rae Ferguson (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 31-43. See also Adelaide M. Cromwell, An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford, 1868-1960 (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-690)
691. Although Kingsley appears not to have fully appreciated or concurred with perceptions of her as an exemplar of late-Victorian femininity, her flouting of traditional religious and racial views as well as conventional gender roles and expectations clearly resonated with Blyden’s ideal of the progressive synthesis of religion, race, gender, and modernity. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 729-30. See also Alison Blunt, Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa (New York: Gilford Press, 1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-691)
692. Ella Barrier was the sister of Fannie Barrier Williams and served as a teacher and principal in Washington. Blyden to Francis Grimke, from Sierra Leone, 7 September 1908, Lynch, Letters, 485-86. See William B. Gatewood, Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-692)
693. Blyden to Grimke, 7 September 1908, cited in Holden, Blyden, 847-48. [↑](#endnote-ref-693)
694. See Gerda Lerner, The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Women’s Rights and Abolition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). [↑](#endnote-ref-694)
695. Cooper and other black female activists such as Fannie Barrier Williams were not reticent in acknowledging their appreciation of Grimke’s support as well as that of other prominent ministers, such as Alexander Crummell and Bishop Benjamin Arnett. See Grimke’s series of sermons critiquing the objectification of women in Francis Grimke, “Address on True Womanhood,” April 29 and May 8, 1923, and “Addresses on a Worthy Woman,” January 17, 24, 31 and February 7, 1904, Woodson, Works 2:412-60. In turn, female activists such as Cooper and Fannie Barrier Williams were not reticent in acknowledging their appreciation of his support as well as that of other prominent ministers, such as Alexander Crummell and Bishop Benjamin Arnett [↑](#endnote-ref-695)
696. On the formation of the Reading Circle, see Blyden to Grimke, 11 September 1889, Woodson, Works 4:11-14. On the wider significance of the Reading Circle phenomenon and movement, see Wilson J. Moses, “The Lost World of the Negro 1895-1919, Black Literary and Intellectual Life Before the Renaissance,” Black American Literary Forum 21 (Spring-Summer 1987): 61-84. See also Cooper for more details on the formation and operation of the group and references to the participation of “Dr. Blyden when on this side of the Atlantic” as well as the process of selecting books for the group. She also reports that while Mrs. Frederick Douglass was a participant, they “were too dilettante for the Honorable Frederick.” Cooper, Life and Writings, 9,12. [↑](#endnote-ref-696)
697. Blyden to Grimke, 5 March 1890, Lynch, Letters, 409-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-697)
698. Upon his departure for West Africa, Grimke wrote informing Blyden that he and the members of the Reading Circle “follow you in thought, in your trip across the Atlantic, and have thought of you and talked of you often. . .. I need not assure you that you are missed by us, especially by the Reading Circle. . ..” He added, “I called on Mrs. Cooper, the other evening, and we spoke of you.” Grimke to Blyden from Washington, 24 March 1890, Woodson, Works, 4:21. On Blyden membership, see Cooper, Life and Writings, 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-698)
699. Blyden to Grimke, 5 March 1890. See also Blyden to Grimke, 9 April 1890; Blyden to Grimke, 7 September 1907, Lynch, Letters, 409-13, 485-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-699)
700. Consistent with this these, the evolving religious and theological orientation of black womanist activists such as Ida B. Wells Barnett and even Margaret Murry Washington in response to modernity and its intersecting religious, racial, and gender corollaries warrants closer examination. For broader examination of this dynamic see Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1978); Ruth Bogin and Bert Loewenberg, eds., Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985); Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter (New York: William Morrow, 1984); Bell Hooks, Ain’t I A Woman?: Black Women and Feminism (Cambridge, Ma.: South End Press, 1981). See also Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). For this dialectic as manifest in the lives and works of a younger generation of black female leaders, intellectuals, arts and activists see CherlyWall, Women of the Harlem Renaissance ( Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) and Elise Johnson McDougald, “The Task of Negro Womanhood,” in The New Negro: an Interpretation, ed. Alain Locke (1925; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1968). For similar developments within the West African and broader Black Atlantic note the life and work of the West African born Adelaide Casely Hayford and the Jamaican born Amy Jacques Garvey. See Adelaide Cromwell, An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford, 1868-1960 (Routledge, 1986); Rina Okonkwo, "Adelaide Casely Hayford: Cultural Nationalist and Feminist." Phylon 1981: 41-51 and Amy Jacques Garvey, Garvey and Garveyism (Kingston, Jamaica: United Printers, 1963); and Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey (Totowa, N. J. : Frank Cass, 1967) and Ula Yvette Taylor, The Veiled Garvey: The life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey, ( Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2002). See also Catherine Higgs, Barbara A. Moss, and Earline Rae Ferguson, eds. Stepping Forward: Black Women in Africa and the Americas,(Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002). [↑](#endnote-ref-700)
701. William’s intellectual and religious orientation was also reflected in two addresses which she delivered in conjunction with the 1893 Columbian Exposition which hosted the World’s Parliament of Religions. In these she called for “more religion and less church. . .. Less theology and more of human brotherhood, less declamation and more common sense and love for truth.” Fannie Williams, “The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women of the United States since the Emancipation Proclamation” and “What Can Religion Further Do to Advance the condition of the American Negro.” See Bert James Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin, eds., Black Women in Nineteenth Century American Life (1976), 261, 272; Mary Jo Deegan, ed., The Collected Writings of Fannie Barrier Williams, 1893-1918 (2002); Wanda Hendricks, “Williams, Fannie Barrier,” in Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (1993); and June O. Patton, in Women Building Chicago, 1790-1990, eds. Rima Lunin Schultz and Adele Hast (2001). See also Fannie Williams, “A Northern Negro’s Autobiography,” The Independent 57, no. 2002 (July 14, 1904). [↑](#endnote-ref-701)
702. Upon moving to Washington D.C., Cooper joined the staff at M Street High School and became part of the district’s black intellectual social and religious elite. See Mark S. Giles, “Anna Julia Cooper, 1858-1964: Teacher, Scholar, and Timeless Womanist,” Journal of Negro Education 75, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 621-35. [↑](#endnote-ref-702)
703. Anna Cooper, “Womanhood A Vital Element in The Regeneration and Progress of a Race” (1886). See also Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan, eds. The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Including A Voice From the South and Other Important Essays, Papers , and Letters (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998) [↑](#endnote-ref-703)
704. Ibid.; Cooper, A Voice from the South, 9-12. [↑](#endnote-ref-704)
705. Cooper, “The Gain from Belief,” in Anna J. Cooper, A Voice from the South (Xenia, OH: Aldine Printing House, 1892), 286-303, especially 287. See also V. Denise James, “Reading Anna J. Cooper with William James: Black Feminist Visionary Pragmatism. Philosophy’s Culture of Justification, and Belief,” The Pluralist, Vol. 8, No.3, Fall 2013: 32-45. Scholars considerA Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South “the first work by an African American feminist” and “the wellspring of modern black feminist thought.” Encyclopedia.com, s.v “Cooper, Anna Julia 1858-1964,” accessed March 5, 2014, http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-2872200020.html; Leona Christine Gabel, From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond: The Life and Writings of Anna J. Cooper (Department of History of Smith College, 1982). [↑](#endnote-ref-705)
706. Cooper was also elected to the conference’s Executive Committee. Ironically, Blyden was not in attendance at this conference which cemented Du Bois’ role as one of the “Fathers of Pan-Africanism. See [Abayomi Azikiwe](https://www.pambazuka.org/taxonomy/term/5740), “[Feminist thought and the Pan-African struggle: From Anna J. Cooper to Addie W. Hunton](https://www.pambazuka.org/pan-africanism/feminist-thought-and-pan-african-struggle-anna-j-cooper-addie-w-hunton),” Pan-African News Wire*,* March 12, 2017. Gale Group, Encyclopedia of World Biography. See also Jacqueline Moore, Leading the Race: The Transformation of the Black Elite in the Nation’s Capital, 1880-1920 (Richmond: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 149-207. [↑](#endnote-ref-706)
707. Grimke to Blyden, 24 March 1890, Woodson, Works, 4:21. [↑](#endnote-ref-707)
708. Cooper, A Voice from the South. [↑](#endnote-ref-708)
709. Cooper was a founder of the Colored Women’s League of Washington, D.C., which would join in establishment of the National Association of Colored Women. A decade earlier in A Voice from the South, she had issued the clarion call of the emergent movement— “Lifting as We Climb.” See Deborah Gray White, “The Cost of Club Work, the Price of Black Feminism,” in Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism, eds. Nancy H. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsock (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 247-69. [↑](#endnote-ref-709)
710. Blyden to Francis Grimke, from Sierra Leone, 7 September 1908, Lynch, Letters, 485-86. See William B. Gatewood, Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-710)
711. Blyden to Grimke, 1907, Lynch, Letters, 485; Blyden to Grimke, 5 March 1890, Lynch, Letters, 410; Blyden to Grimke, 24 September 1903, Lynch, Letters, 475. See also Giles, “Anna Julia Cooper” and Blyden, “The Aims and Needs of a Liberal Education.” [↑](#endnote-ref-711)
712. The National Association of Colored Women was the most prominent organization formed during the Black Women’s Movement. See Beverly W. Jones, “Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women, 1896 to 1901,” The Journal of Negro History67, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 20-33, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2717758. [↑](#endnote-ref-712)
713. Blyden was also unsparing in his criticism of black newspapers and editors that were unsympathetic to the concerns of the women’s convention and its participants. Blyden to Grimke, 5 September 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:40-44. [↑](#endnote-ref-713)
714. See Marcia Y. Riggs, ed., Can I Get a Witness? Prophetic Religious Voices of African American Women: An Anthology (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), xiii; Harley and Terborg-Penn, The Afro-American Woman; Bogin and Loewenberg, Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life. [↑](#endnote-ref-714)
715. Cooper, “Womanhood A Vital Element in The Regeneration and Progress of a Race” (1886). [↑](#endnote-ref-715)
716. On the expanding intellectual, theological, gender, and transnational perspective and vision of Cooper, see Gale Group, Encyclopedia of World Biography (Detroit, MI: Thomson/Gale, 2006). See also Encyclopedia.com, s.v “Cooper, Anna Julia 1858-1964.” It is also significant that Cooper’s later educational development was influenced by modernist French educator Abbe Felix Klein, a professor at the Institut Catholique in Paris who visited M School. Klein authored The Church in the Industrial Age and penned a controversial preface to the French translation of Walter Eliot’s The Life of Father Hecker. See also Klein’s positive reflections on the contributions of Catholic professor and scientists Zahn. Cooper’s dissertation titled “L' attitude de la France à l'égard de l'esclavage pendant la Révolution” (The Attitude of France towards Slavery during the Revolution) from the Sorbonne in 1925 also anticipated the focus of contemporary scholars on the intersection of slavery and modernity. [↑](#endnote-ref-716)
717. Consequently, their activities, opinions, and publications were among the most frequent topics of the transatlantic correspondence shared by the two clergymen as the nineteenth century drew to its close. For example, writing from Sierra Leone, Blyden informed Grimke that he cut out for preservation Mrs. Grimke’s “Reminiscences of the South” and also Cooper’s “Do two and two make four.” Blyden to Grimke, 17 May 1895, Lynch, Letters, 437-38. As late as 1908, Blyden continued to share fond reminiscences of the female members of the Reading Circle. Blyden to Francis Grimke, from Sierra Leone, 7 September 1908, Lynch, Letters, 485-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-717)
718. On W. E. B. Du Bois’ response to the intersection of race, religion, gender, and modernity and his contributions to the resulting legacy of discourse and activism. See for example Reiland Rabaka, “W. E. B. Du Bois and “’The Damnation of Women:’ An Essay in African Critical Social Theory” in Journal of African American Studies , 7. 2. 2003: 37-60. [↑](#endnote-ref-718)
719. On Blyden’s legacy in reference to the formation of the National Congress of British West Africa in 1920, see National Congress of British West Africa: Resolutions of the Conference of Africans of British West Africa, held at Accra, Gold Coast, from 11th to 29th March, 1920, 2-7, cited in J. Ayodele Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945: A Study in Ideological and Social Classes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). See also Martin Kilso, “The National Congress of British West Africa, 1918-1935,” Journal of Politics 20 (May 1958): 368-87. On Adelaide Casely Hayford, see Rina Okonkwo, “Adelaide Casely Hayford: Cultural Nationalist and Feminist,” Phylon 42 (January 1981): 41-51 and Adelaide M. Cromwell, An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford 1868-1960 (Washington: Howard University Press, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-719)
720. The celebration held at the University of Liberia included the pouring of libations. “Liberia Remembers Edward Wilmot Blyden, the Father of Pan-Africanism,” Awareness Times, February 12, 2007, 23:46. On Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, see Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, [This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa’s First Woman President](http://www.amazon.com/This-Child-Will-Great-Remarkable/dp/0061353485/ref=la_B0028S8J8C_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1394734812&sr=1-1) (Harper/Harper Collins, 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-720)
721. See Francis Grimke, “My Farewell Quadrennial Message to the Race (Delivered in the 15th street Presbyterian Church 5 March 1933).” Cooper, Life and Writings, 166-67. [↑](#endnote-ref-721)
722. Blyden to Grimke, 5 March 1890, Lynch, Letters, 409. Woodson, Works, 4:11-24 and Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 612-15. Blyden read a version of “The Koran in Africa” in March before [↑](#endnote-ref-722)
723. “The Koran in Africa”, African Repository, XLVI, 1890: 101-107. Blyden to Grimke, 4 November 1889, Lynch, Letters, 406. [↑](#endnote-ref-723)
724. # Charles, Augustus Briggs, A Sign Of The Times.: Whither? A Theological Question For The Times (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1889).

     [↑](#endnote-ref-724)
725. Handy, History of Union Theological Seminary, 106-7, 140; Longfield, The Presbyterian Controversy, 82.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-725)
726. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, 29 November 1888, Lynch, Letters, 395-96; The Presbyterian 59 (1889): 12-13; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 616. [↑](#endnote-ref-726)
727. Edward Blyden, “The Koran in Africa,” The African Repository 66, no. 4 (October 1890): 101-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-727)
728. Frank Ellinwood, Church at Home and Abroad (March 1889), cited in Blyden, “The Koran in Africa,” 106. On Ellinwood and the founding of the American Society of Comparative Religions, see Ahlstrom, The American Protestant Encounter (n.p). On the continued development of the discipline of comparative religion and its increased distinction as “History of Religions,” see A. Eustace Haydon, “From Comparative Religion to History of Religions,” The Journal or Religion 2, no. 6 (November 1922): 577-87. [↑](#endnote-ref-728)
729. Blyden, “The Koran in Africa,” 101-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-729)
730. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-730)
731. Blyden to Grimke, 4 November 1889. Lynch, Letters, 406. [↑](#endnote-ref-731)
732. Blyden to Grimke, 29 October 1889, Woodson, Works, 4:14-15. Blyden’s presentation was consistent with his broader insistence that “The Christian Negro . . . cannot afford to look upon the Mohammedans with indifference or hostility. . . .” Lagos Times 4, February 21, 1891, cited in Lynch, Patriot, 228. [↑](#endnote-ref-732)
733. “The Church at Home and Abroad,” The Presbyterian, May 1890, 409-13. See also Wills, “The Double Crisis of Black Christianity,” 351-52. [↑](#endnote-ref-733)
734. Blyden to Grimke, 4 November 1889, Lynch, Letters, 406. [↑](#endnote-ref-734)
735. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-735)
736. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-736)
737. “‘Christianity and the Negro Races’ by E. W. Blyden, LL. D. President of Liberia College Delivered Before the Union Bethel Literary and Historical Association of Washington, D. C. January 2, 1882,” (Union Bethel Literary and Historic Association of Washington, 1893), 3-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-737)
738. Blyden to Grimke, 5 November 1889, Woodson, Works, 4:16-17. As a partial corrective, “in view of the vast importance of the subject,” Blyden called for the establishment of “a professorship of Arabic and Islam” in the nation’s theological seminaries. Blyden to Grimke, 29 October 1889, Woodson, Works, 4:14-15. [↑](#endnote-ref-738)
739. Blyden to Dr. Wilkinson, 17 November 1891, Monrovia, published under the heading “Dr. Blyden And Mohammedanism,” Lagos Weekly Record, December 3, 1892 (3, no. 15), cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 634. [↑](#endnote-ref-739)
740. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-740)
741. “The Koran in Africa” was one of three major discourses (“The African Problem”; “The Elements of Permanent Influence”; and “Problems Before the Church”) that Blyden delivered during his 1889-90 tour of the United States. These were subsequently compiled and published in Edward Blyden, The African Problem and Other Discourse, Delivered in America in 1890 (London, W. B. Whittingham & Co., 1890); Blyden to Grimke, 4 November 1889, Lynch, Letters, 406.; Charleston News and Courier, December 1, 1889; Blyden to Coppinger, 29 November 1889; Blyden to Coppinger, 4 December 1889, Holden, Blyden, 616-20. Unlike Grimke’s brief pastorate in the South which heightened his aversion and public opposition to the region’s resurgent racism, Blyden’s tour was punctuated by his reported endorsement of some of the South’s most racist legislation and advocacy of a strategy of racial accommodation that elicited praise from a number of the region’s most rabid racists and criticism from segments of the black community. Their contrasting reactions to the white South’s determination to reassert and extend its racial privilege portended an ideological dissonance that would also be illuminated by century’s end in their divergent responses to the policies of Booker T. Washington. Livingston, Education and Race, 126-27, 192-94; Lynch, Patriot, 125. [↑](#endnote-ref-741)
742. Notable among his critics was Charles H. J. Taylor, former U. S. envoy to Liberia who penned a letter to the Atlanta Constitution which denounced Blyden as “a Muslim, fetish-worshiper, and a hypocrite.” Curtis, Islam in Black America, 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-742)
743. Derrick anticipated the accolades of Blyden’s West African devotee Casely Hayford as he proceeded to liken Blyden to “John the Baptist, the forerunner of a great movement, having for its object the moral, intellectual and religious development (of the race), whose voice is crying in the wilderness, ‘Prepare ye the way’. . ..” Amid “loud applauds” he concluded with an endorsement of Blyden’s ministry and life’s work that was eschatological in scope: “I cherish the fondest hope of his realizing the fulfillment of his life’s work, the redemption of Africa. . .. While we are conscious that he may not live to witness the great achievement; yet we believe that when he shall cross the flood, and be resting at home with the fathers, the great spirit of the immortal Blyden will look down from the battlements of glory to see the march of the American Negroes in the efforts to redeem Africa.” Christian Recorder, January 2, 1890; Blyden to Coppinger, 1 October 1888, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 609, 620-21; Lynch, Patriot, 127. See Hayford’s introduction to Edward Blyden, West Africa Before Europe and Other Addresses (London: Phillips, 1905), 20-23. See also Joseph Casely Hayford, Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation (London: Frank Cass,1969, originally published 1911). [↑](#endnote-ref-743)
744. Blyden to Grimke, 5 March 1890, Woodson, Works, 4:20. The Presbyterian reported that Blyden’s paper “was able, scholarly and interesting” and that “the intellectual culture evidenced speaks highly for the brain and learning of a colored man.” The Presbyterian, March 5, 1890, 63, as reported in The African Repository 61 (April 1890). Given the criticism that the lecture earlier evoked among black clergy, it is probable that the version of “The Koran in Africa” presented before the Ministerial Association was revised by Blyden to exclude or at least better explain some of its more controversial and “threatening” racial and religious contentions. [↑](#endnote-ref-744)
745. Born in Pittsburg in 1835, Tanner received his formal theological education at Western Theological Seminary in the late 1850s and a Doctorate in Divinity in 1878 from Wilberforce. Benjamin T. Tanner, The Negro’s Origin, And Is the Negro Cursed (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Depository, 1869) and Benjamin T. Tanner, The Descent of the Negro (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Publishing House, 1898). See also Benjamin T. Tanner, “The Descent of the Negro,” AME Church Review 15 (July 1898): 513-28. On Tanner, see William Seraile, Fire in His Heart Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner and the A.M.E. Church (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1998). [↑](#endnote-ref-745)
746. Their increasingly personalized conflict, which garnered significant media attention upon Blyden’s final trip to the United States in 1895, would become a frequent topic of conversation and even amusement between Blyden and Grimke. The seminal issues impacting the relationship of Blyden and Turner appear to be centered around increasingly divergent ideological views and strategies regarding African emigration, colonization, and the plight of African Americans. For a sensationalized version of their conflict and respective positions, see “Blyden and Turner,” The Washington Post, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 652. See also Blyden, “Blyden The African Problem,” North American Review 161 (September 1895): 327-39; Blyden, “The Negro in the United States,” African Methodist Episcopal Review 16 (1900): 308-31 and Edwin S. Redkey, ed., Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner (New York: Arno Press, 1971). [↑](#endnote-ref-746)
747. Blyden to Grimke, 11 September 1889, Woodson, Works, 4:11-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-747)
748. Blyden noted "the great religions of China and India, professed by more than one-half of the human race" and the commonalities shared by "the three highest religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism." Edward Blyden, “The Elements of Permanent Influence, Discourse Delivered in the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, Washington, D. C., Sunday, February 16, 1890.” See also Blyden to Coppinger, 28 February 1890, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 624. [↑](#endnote-ref-748)
749. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-749)
750. Blyden to Grimke, 5 March 1890, Woodson, Works, 4:20; Grimke to Blyden, 24 March1890, Woodson, Works, 4:21. [↑](#endnote-ref-750)
751. Edward Blyden, Return of the Exiles and the West African Church (London: Whittingham, 1891), 16, 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-751)
752. This designation was made in The African Times, 5 July 1899. See Colin Legum, “The Roots of Pan-Africanism” The New African, February 1962: 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-752)
753. See E. A. Ayandele, A Visionary of the African Church: Mojola Agbebi, 1860 - 1917 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971). On Blyden’s broader influence on the nationalist thought of Agbebi see Akinsola Akiwowo, "The Place of Mojola Agbebi in African Nationalists Movements, 1890-1917," Phylon 26, No. 2 (1965):122 -139;). See also James Bertin Webster, The African Churches Among the Yoruba, 1888 - 1922 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); Lynch, Patriot, 84-104, 219-30; and Lynch, Black Spokesman, xxxiv. Notably, Agbebi also presented a paper at the First Universal Races Congress held in 1911 at the University of London. [↑](#endnote-ref-753)
754. Lynch, Patriot, 238. Notably, Agbebi also traveled to the United States in 1903 where he met and became a close acquaintance of Pan-African journalist and Blyden devotee, John Edward Bruce. During his visit Agbebi was hailed as “the embodiment of the African personality” and proclaimed the “new voice from Africa” who “in scholarly ability and general attitude…[was] second [only] to Blyden.” Lagos Standard Oct. 21, 1903 and New York Herald Oct. 22, 1903 and “To The Men’s Sunday Club Yonkers, U. S Expressions of Appreciation from Lagos, West Africa in Record, April 6, 1907. Cited by Rina Okonkwo in Rina Okonkwo, “Mojola Agbebi: Apostle of the African Personality,” Présence Africaine, no. 114, 1980: 144–159.  JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/24349949. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24349949.%20Accessed%204%20Jan.%202021). [↑](#endnote-ref-754)
755. See Majola Agbebi, Inaugural Sermon, (New York, 1903), 17 and Lynch, Patriot, 239. J. Ayodele Langley, Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa, 1856-1970 (London: Rex Collings, 1979). [↑](#endnote-ref-755)
756. “Pastor Mojola Agbebi, The West African Problem,” Papers on Inter-Racial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress, ed. G. Spiller (I9II): 343-8. Quoted in Henry S. Wilson, Origins of West African Nationalism, (London: Macmillan 1969), 304-308. [↑](#endnote-ref-756)
757. “The Object and Nature of the Congress,” viii, G. Spiller, ed. Inter-Racial Problems: Papers from the First Universal Races Conference Held in London in 1911, (Citadel Press, 1970, originally published London: P. S. King & Son Orchard House, 1911). [↑](#endnote-ref-757)
758. Lynch, Patriot, 239. [↑](#endnote-ref-758)
759. Agbebi’s presentation was not only informed by Blyden’s notion of the “African Personality” but was also influenced by Blyden insights gleaned from his appropriation of the methodology, findings and perspective of the “science of religion.” It also echoed Blyden’s heightened critique of the myriad failings of European and Western modernity as manifest in the British metropole as well as Africa, and his fulsome defense of African social and religious traditions, including Islam as articulated in his last major publication, African Life and Customs. Agbebi, “West African Problem.” See Okonkwo, “Mojola Agbebi”; Lynch, Patriot, 239-240 and Blyden, African Life and Customs. It is also notable that W. E. B. Du Bois attended and was a participant at the Congress. See W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Negro Race in the United States of America" in Papers on Inter-Racial Problems, Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress, held at the University of London, July 26-29, 1911 (London: P.S. King & Son, 1911) and W. E. B. Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward and Autobiography of a Race Concept (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1940). [↑](#endnote-ref-759)
760. Lynch, Patriot, 185-86. See Sierra Leone Weekly News 7, June 11, 1892; London Star, May 19, 1892; Lagos Weekly Record 3, September 10, 1892; Liverpool Courier, August 5, 1892. [↑](#endnote-ref-760)
761. Edward Blyden, “The Prospects of the African,” African Repository 50 (October 1874): 298-99. [↑](#endnote-ref-761)
762. See M. Yu Frenkel, “Edward Blyden and the Concept of African Personality,” African Affairs 73, no. 292 (July 1974): 277-89. [↑](#endnote-ref-762)
763. The Parliament drew representatives from many of the world’s religious traditions and met for seventeen days under the motto, “Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?” Ahlstrom noted that “never before or since has the science of religion received such wide attention in the United States. . .. Indeed, for the study of world religions, the Parliament of 1893 serves as a kind of landmark or watershed.” Sydney Ahlstrom, The American Protestant Encounter (Beloit, WI: Beloit College, 1962). See also John Henry Barrows, ed., The World’s Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World’s Parliament of Religions, Held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893 2 vols. (Chicago: Parliament Publishing, 1893); John P. Burris, Exhibiting Religions: Colonialism and Spectacle At International Expositions 1851-1893 (University of Virginia Press, 2001) and Richard Hughes Seager, The World’s Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1895). [↑](#endnote-ref-763)
764. Blyden to Booker T. Washington, 28 November 1894, published in New York Age, January 24, 1895, Lynch, Black Spokesman, 205-8. The newly founded University of Chicago was already one of the nation’s most important pedagogical responses to modernity and its intellectual and religious corollaries. See James Turner, Religion Enters the Academy: The Origins of the scholarly study of Religion in America (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-764)
765. David Wills suggests that these developments evoked a “double crisis” within an African-American religious community already struggling in the face of resurgent racism to marshal its limited spiritual and material resources. Wills, “The Double Crisis of Black Christianity” and Wills, "Aspects of Social Thought.” See also Paul Harvey, "A Servant of Servant Shall He Be," in Craig R. Prentiss, Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity: An Introduction (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003), 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-765)
766. See Blyden, "Aims and Methods," 90, 93 and Blyden, "Christianity and the Negro Race," 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-766)
767. See Tanner, “The Origin of Man,” 203-213 and Tanner, The Descent of the Negro. [↑](#endnote-ref-767)
768. Woodson, Works, 3.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-768)
769. Francis Grimke, “The Remedy for the Present Strained Relations between the Races in The South” (delivered June 25, 1899), Woodson, Works, 1:319-20. Notably, Douglass also rejected the theory of polygenesis as undermining Scripture in language that approximated that of Grimke as he noted that “the credit of the Bible” was “at stake.” On Douglass and a broader treatment of the earlier black response to the theory of polygenesis, see Colin Kidd, The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 247-50. See also William J. Moses, Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History (Cambridge, 1998), 110-11. [↑](#endnote-ref-769)
770. Grimke, “Stray Thoughts and Meditations,” Woodson, Works, 3:185-86, 239-40. [↑](#endnote-ref-770)
771. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-771)
772. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-772)
773. William Henry Green, The Pentateuch Vindicated from the Aspersions of Bishop Colenso (1863). See also Green’s subsequent critique of the scriptural and hermeneutical insights of Professor W. Robertson Smith. S “Prof W. Robertson Smith on the Pentateuch.” Ira V. Brown, “The Higher Criticism Comes to America, 1880-1990,” Journal of The Presbyterian Historical Society 38, no. 4 (December 1960): 198. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology 3 vols. (New York, 1873), I, 152, cited by Brown, “The Higher Criticism Comes to America, 1880-1900,” 194. [↑](#endnote-ref-773)
774. Tanner, “The Higher Criticism,” 115, quoted in Wills, “Aspects,” 89; James Theodore Holly, “Biblical Criticism,” AME Church Review 4 (April 1888): 367. On Holly, see David M. Dean, Defender of the Race: James Theodore Holly, Black Nationalist Bishop (Boston: Lambert Press, 1979). [↑](#endnote-ref-774)
775. George William Cook “Comparative Religion,” AME Church Review 3 (January 1887): 277-282. Cook would subsequently serve for more than fifty years as an instructor and administrator at Howard. [↑](#endnote-ref-775)
776. James C. Moffit would present an orthodox version of the emergent discipline in his two-volume study titled Comparative History of Religions, published in 1871-73. James C. Moffit, Comparative History of Religions, (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1871-73). The limitations of this work especially in relationship to its presentation of non-western peoples, cultures and religions are noted by Ahlstrom in his Brewer Lecture. Ahlstrom, American Protestant Encounter with World Religion. [↑](#endnote-ref-776)
777. Kelly Miller, "A Man of God in An Age of Gold," The Afro-American, June 13, 1925. [↑](#endnote-ref-777)
778. Blyden to Grimke, 5 September 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:40-41; Holden, Blyden, 655-56. [↑](#endnote-ref-778)
779. Blyden to Grimke, 5 September 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:42; Blyden to Booker T. Washington, 28 November 1894, published in New York Age, January 24, 1895; Lynch, Black Spokesman, 205-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-779)
780. Sponsored by the Stewart Missionary Foundation and hosted at Gammon Theological Seminary, the Congress on Africa was an ecumenical affair that attracted a broad cross-section of participants of both African and European descent concerned with the destiny of Africa and “the relation of the American Negro to the civilization and redemption of his fatherland.” “Opening Remarks” by President W. P. Thirkield of Gammon Theological Seminary, in J. W. E. Bowen, ed. Africa and the American Negro: Addresses and Proceedings of the Congress on Africa, (originally published 1896, reprint Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing, 1969),10,14. Blyden addressed a letter to its attendees that expressed his hope that the Congress would “be one of the providential agencies in the promotion of the magnificent work of Africa’s regeneration.” Edward Blyden, “Letter of Greeting and Commendation,” Bowen, Africa, 16, 195-98, 229. [↑](#endnote-ref-780)
781. On the support which Blyden’s appointment engendered within progressive circles from advocates such as R. Boswell Smith, see Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 662-65. [↑](#endnote-ref-781)
782. In attendance and sharing the platform with Blyden were “Revs. H.G. Miller, Mt. Taber Presbyterian Church; Granville Hunt, Antioch Baptist Church; J. M. Henderson, New Bethel A.M.E. Church; J. S. Caldwell, Zion A.M.E. Church; E. G. Clifton, Little Zion A.M.E. Church; Hr. Edmunds, Union Church; H. Creamer, Baptist Church; Fred H. Butler, M. E. Church, Delaware Conference; Rev. E. Gumbs of St. Kitts, W. I. and C. L. Brown, White Plains M. E. Church.” See “Reception to Dr. Blyden In New York,” New York Age, August 29, 1895, published in Lagos Weekly Record, October 5, 1895 (7, no. 3). [↑](#endnote-ref-782)
783. The Washington Star, October 14, 1895, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 660-61; Lynch, Patriot, 136. [↑](#endnote-ref-783)
784. Blyden, “The Future of the Negro,” as reported in The Washington Star, October 14, 1895, cited in Holden, Blyden, 660-61; Lynch, Patriot, 136. [↑](#endnote-ref-784)
785. Blyden, “The Future of the Negro.” On Blyden’s continued efforts to refute this “myth,” see “Blyden to the Liberian Government,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, November 14, 1896, cited in Holden, Blyden, 671; see also Blyden to Camphor, 22 September 1899, Holden, Blyden, 701-2. [↑](#endnote-ref-785)
786. Blyden to Grimke, 25 October 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:45. [↑](#endnote-ref-786)
787. See, for example, Blyden’s request that Grimke preach a sermon on “The Mission of Christianity” from Luke 4:18 to “point out the barbarisms in Armenia as well as those in America.” Blyden to Grimke from Sierra Leone, 17 May 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:38-40. [↑](#endnote-ref-787)
788. Blyden to Grimke, 5 September 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:40-42. See also Grimke’s forwarding to Blyden an article by Bishop Turner with the expectation that it would induce “a good hearty laugh.” Grimke to Blyden, 24 March 1890, Woodson, Works, 4:21. This assessment was also consistent with Anna J. Cooper’s description of Grimke’s exhibition of a surprising measure of humor among his close friends. Cooper, Life and Writings, 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-788)
789. Blyden to Grimke, 11 September 1889, Woodson, Works, 4:11-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-789)
790. Ibid. Blyden to Grimke, 31 October 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:47. Both often denounced the anti-intellectualism, emotionalism, and dearth of education among black clergy. See Blyden’s attribution of much of this as a product of the dearth of education and training for the ministry among African Americans during and after slavery. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro Race,” Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 38. [↑](#endnote-ref-790)
791. See for example Blyden’s reaction to suggestions that Grimke should be classified with Bishop Turner in “political rancor and bitterness.” Blyden to Grimke, 24 September 1903, Woodson, Works, 4:86-87. For insights on Grimke’s general response to divergent beliefs held by close acquaintances, see Cooper, Life and Writings, 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-791)
792. Blyden to Grimke, 13 November 1893, Woodson, Works, 4:30-33. [↑](#endnote-ref-792)
793. William Crogman to Grimke, 22 November 1899, Woodson, Works, 4:67. [↑](#endnote-ref-793)
794. Blyden's publications remained primarily focused on various aspects of the intersection of race, religion, and modernity and tended to be scholarly and expansive in scope. In contrast, those of Grimke, consistent with his pastoral orientation, were generally more parochial, moralistic, and didactic. Grimke’s corpus included more than fifty sermons published in pamphlet form that were primarily devoted to condemnations of racism and in his later years to denunciations and warnings of modernity’s racial, religious, cultural, and ethical implications. Miller, “A Man of God in An Age of Gold,” The Afro-American, June 13, 1925; Ferry, “Portrait,” iii. On Crogman, see Simmons, Men of Mark, 694-98. [↑](#endnote-ref-794)
795. William H. Ferris, The African Abroad or His Evolution in Western Civilization, tracing his Development Under Caucasian Milieu, 2 vols. (New Haven, CT: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Press, 1913), 2:888-89, cited in Ferry, “Portrait,” ii and Woodson, Works, 1: xxii, 83. It is notable that Grimke’s list of acquaintances also included black liberal clergy as Theophilus G. Steward of the AME Church. On Grimke’s ethical and moral influence on Steward see Theophilus G. Steward to Grimke (in appreciation of his essay on “The Afro-America Pulpit”), 27 April 1893, Woodson, Works, 4:29 and Rev. J. Albert Johnson to Grimke, 10 June 1903, Woodson, Works, 4:78; and John W. E. Bowen to Grimke, 18 October 1903, Woodson, Works, 4:87-88. [↑](#endnote-ref-795)
796. Alfred A. Moss, Jr., The American Negro Academy: Voice of the Talented Tenth (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 1-2, 19, 26-31, 79, 80, 127-28. [↑](#endnote-ref-796)
797. # Ntongela Masilela, “New Negro Modernity and New African Modernity,” (Paper presented at The Black Atlantic: literatures, histories cultures forum in Zurich in January 2003), accessed December 11, 2015. <http://pzacad.pitzer.edu/NAM/general/modernity.pd>. See also Ntongela Masilela, [The Historical Figures of the New African Movement](http://africaworldpressbooks.com/historical-figures-of-the-new-african-movement-ntongela-masilela/)(Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2014) and Ntongela Masilela, “The ‘Black Atlantic’ and African Modernity in South Africa, Research in African Literatures Vol. 27, No. 4 (Winter, 1996): 88-96. See also F. Kirkland, “Modernity and Intellectual Life in Black,” The Philosophical Forum, 24.1-3:136-65.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-797)
798. Alexander Crummell, “Civilization: The Primal Need of the Race and the Attitude of the American Mind Toward the Negro Intellect,” The American Negro Academy Occasional Paper No. 3, 1898. See also Alexander Crummell’s more explicit articulation of this theme in his 1895 address published in conjunction with the Atlanta Congress on Africa titled “Civilization as a Collateral and Indispensable Instrumentality in Planting the Church in Africa.” John Wesley Edward Bowen, ed., Africa and the American Negro: Addresses and Proceedings of the Congress on Africa: Held under the Auspices of the Stewart Missionary Foundation for Africa of Gammon Theological Seminary in Connection with the Cotton States and International Exposition December 13-15, 1895 (Reprint, Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing, 1969). 119-124. See also Wilson, Crummell, 252-253. On the transnational impact of Crummell’s more Eurocentric response to modernity, see Masilela, “New Negro Modernity.” On the influence of Crummell upon a younger generation of black intellectual elites such as Du Bois, see Du Bois, “Of Alexander Crummell” in William E. B. Dubois, The Souls of Black Folk (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903).  [↑](#endnote-ref-798)
799. Crummell, “Civilization.” See also Moses, Crummell, 262-263 and David Levering Lewis, W. E. B. Du Bois, A Biography (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009), 121. [↑](#endnote-ref-799)
800. W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Conservation of Races,” The American Negro Academy Occasional Papers, No. 2, 1898. See also Moses, Crummell, 264. [↑](#endnote-ref-800)
801. Moss, The American Negro Academy, 1-2, 19, 26-31, 79, 80, 127-28. See also Encyclopedia.com, s.v “American Negro Academy,” accessed November 6, 2016, http://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/american-negro-academy. [↑](#endnote-ref-801)
802. See Alexander Crummell, “Plan, Purpose, Constitution, and Membership of the

     American Academy of Religion,” March 5, 1897. [↑](#endnote-ref-802)
803. The Academy was Pan-African in orientation and membership and its West African membership included Blyden, Samuel Lewis, Orishatukeh Faduma, and Joseph E. Casely Hayford. Blyden’s membership was also symbolic of a reconciliation of sorts with Alexander Crummell. Lynch, Patriot, 82-83. Pan-African in orientation, the African component of the Academy included Blyden, Samuel Lewis, Orishatukeh Faduma and Joseph E. Casely Hayford. Moss, The American Negro Academy, 1-2, 19, 26-31, 79, 80, 127-28. [↑](#endnote-ref-803)
804. “An Important Notice,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, August 5, 1887. [↑](#endnote-ref-804)
805. Orishatukeh Faduma, “African Negro Education,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, Aug. 10, 1918. See also Howard Cline Barnard, A History of English Education From 1760 (London: University of London Press, 196) 83-87; 135-143. [↑](#endnote-ref-805)
806. See Orishatukeh Faduma, “Africa or the Dark Continent,” A.M. E. Church Review (January, 1893): 1-8; Orishatukeh Faduma, “The Pastoral Epistles,” A. M. E. Church Review 11 (October, 1894: 215-230; Orishatukeh Faduma, “Religious Beliefs of the Yoruba People of West Africa” in Africa and the American Negro: Addresses and Proceedings of the Congress on Africa, ed. J. W. E. Bowen (1896) (Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing, 1969, reprint) 31-36; Orishatukeh Faduma “Materials for the Study of World Religions” A.M. E. Church Review 12 April 1896: 461-473; Orishatukeh Faduma. “Success and Drawbacks of Missionary Work in Africa by an Eye-Witness in Africa and the American Negro: Addresses and Proceedings of the Congress on Africa, ed. J. W. E. Bowen (1896) (Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing, 1969, reprint) (1896): 125-136. See, for example, Orishatukeh Faduma, “Christianity and Islam in Africa,” Africa Mail, May 22, 1914; “Christianity and Islam in Africa: A Native African’s View of the situation,” Missionary Review of the World 48 (November 1925): 865-68 and Faduma,” Drawbacks to Missionary Work in Africa,” Missionary Echo 24 (April 1917): 54-56. In the wake of the modernist/fundamentalist dispute and the controversy attendant the Scopes Trial, Faduma traveled throughout North Carolina presenting a “Blydenesque” mediation of the perceived conflict in lectures on “The Christian Minister’s Attitude toward Religion and Science.” Orishatukeh Faduma, “The Christian Minister’s Attitude toward Religion and Science”; Orishatukeh Faduma, “Some of My Literary Contributions” (n. p., n. d.), Yale Alumni File.. [↑](#endnote-ref-806)
807. Orishatukeh Faduma, "Thoughts For The Times; Or the New Theology" AME Church Review, 7 (Oct. 1890),139-143. See also Orishatukeh Faduma, “What the Study of Science Means,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, October 21, 1922. [↑](#endnote-ref-807)
808. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-808)
809. Faduma was quoting from Sabatier’s article on "The Inmost Life of Dogmas and the Power of Evolution.” August Sabatier, "The Life of Dogmas," Homiletic Review (May 1890), quoted by Faduma, "The New Theology," 142. On Sabatier, see Reardon, Liberal Protestantism, 10, 31, 34, 44-58, 65, 163. [↑](#endnote-ref-809)
810. Faduma, "The New Theology,"142-143. Orishatukeh Faduma, “The Problem of Christian Mission among Less Developed Races,” American Missionary 61 (March 1907): 69-74; and Orishatukeh Faduma, “Drawbacks and Success of Missionary Work in Africa,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, March 9, 1918. Compare with Blyden's "Christian Missions in West Africa," in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 46-70. William Hutchison has provided perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of the changes fostered in American missiology by Protestant liberalism. See William Hutchison, Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions (Chicago, 1987); American Protestant Thought: The Liberal Era (New York, 1968); and "Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity, 1875-1935" in John K. Fairbank, ed. The Missionary Enterprise in China and America (Cambridge, 1974), 110-131. [↑](#endnote-ref-810)
811. Orishatukeh Faduma, “Religious Beliefs of the Yoruba People in West Africa,” Bowen, Africa, 31-32. George Rawlinson (1812-1902) was a scholar of ancient Easer religions who authored such works as The History of Ancient Egypt (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1882 and The Religions of the Ancient World, Including Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia, Persia, India, Phoenicia, Etruria, Greece, Rome (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1882). Archibald Henry Sayce (1854-1933) was also scholar of ancient Eastern religions and cultures and in 1887 give the Hibbert Lecture on “The Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religions of the Ancient Babylonians.” [↑](#endnote-ref-811)
812. Orishatukeh Faduma, “The Problem of Christian Mission among Less Developed Races,” American Missionary 61 (March 1907): 69-74; and Orishatukeh Faduma, “Drawbacks and Success of Missionary Work in Africa,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, March 9, 1918. Compare with Blyden's "Christian Missions in West Africa," in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 46-70. William Hutchison has provided perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of the changes fostered in American missiology by Protestant liberalism. See William Hutchison, Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions (Chicago, 1987); American Protestant Thought: The Liberal Era (New York, 1968); and "Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity, 1875-1935" in John K. Fairbank, ed. The Missionary Enterprise in China and America (Cambridge, 1974), 110-131. [↑](#endnote-ref-812)
813. See for example, Faduma’s publications in Missionary Review of the World, American Missionary; A. M. E. Church Review; Southern Workman; Sierra Leone Weekly News; and African Mail. Orishatukeh Faduma, “Christianity and Islam in Africa: A Native African’s View of the Situation,” Missionary Review of the World 48 November 1925: 865-868; Orishatukeh Faduma, “The Problem of Christian Missions among Less Developed Races,” American Missionary 61 (Mar 1907) : 69-74; Orishatukeh Faduma, “Materials for the Study of the World Religions,” AME Church Review 12 (Apr, 1896):461-473; “African’s Claims and Needs,” Southern Workman May 1925: 221-225; Orishatukeh Faduma, “African Negro Education : Some Demands of Modern Education,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, August 10, 1918 and Orishatukeh Faduma, “What the African Movement Stands For,” African Mail, Sept.25,   
      Oct.2, 1914. [↑](#endnote-ref-813)
814. Initially serialized in the Sierra Leone Weekly News, “African Life and Customs” would be published as a book in 1908. [↑](#endnote-ref-814)
815. Orishatukeh Faduma, “Social Problems in West Africa from the Standpoint of an African," 1908 addresses before the American Negro Academy. In earlier works such as his 1895 presentation before the Congress on Africa, Faduma had denounced polygamy. However, under the influence of Blyden’s recent study he now argued that it was one of the indigenous West African institutions with which the Church and Christian civilization had to co-exist. See Orishatukeh Faduma. “Success and Drawbacks of Missionary Work in Africa by an Eye-Witness” in Africa and the American Negro: Addresses and Proceedings of the Congress on Africa, ed. J. W. E. Bowen (1896) (Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing, 1969, reprint) (1896): 125-136. Moss, Academy, 160-61. See Blyden, African Life and Customs and Lynch, Patriot, 66-67, 78, 81. On the wider debate regarding polygamy and the influence of Blyden’s views among his West African ministerial colleagues, see E. A. Ayandele, Holy Johnson, Pioneer of African Nationalism, 1836-1917 (London: Cass, 1970). [↑](#endnote-ref-815)
816. Moss, Academy, 160, 161-166.  [↑](#endnote-ref-816)
817. See Grimke, “Marriage and Kindred Subjects,” Woodson, Works, 2:121-22; see also Grimke to New York Independent, April 6, 1899, Woodson, Works, 4:59-60.  [↑](#endnote-ref-817)
818. Francis J. Grimke, “The Afro-American Pulpit in Relation to Race Elevation” (delivered at the Minister’s Union in Washington, D.C., 1892), Woodson, Works, 1:223-34; Blyden to Grimke from Sierra Leone, 13 November 1893, Woodson, Works, 4:33. [↑](#endnote-ref-818)
819. Livingston, Education and Race, 194; Perry, Lift, 295; Booker T. Washington, “The Colored Ministry: Its Defects and Needs,” in The Booker T. Washington Papers, Vol. 3: 1889-95, ed. Louis R. Harlan (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 71-75, originally published in the Christian Union, August 14, 1890. See also Francis J. Grimke, “The Afro-American Pulpit in Relation to Race Elevation,” in Woodson, Works, 1:223, 228-31. Blyden to Grimke, 13 November 1893, Woodson, Works, 4:33. [↑](#endnote-ref-819)
820. Grimke to Kelly Miller, 26 September 1903, Woodson, Works, 4:86-87. Grimke’s disavowal of quietism and pacifism in the face of resurgent racial violence at the start of the new century fostered an increased militancy that extended to the advocacy of black self-defense in order “to make it as perilous as possible for the mob.” Grimke, “God and the Race Problem,” May 3, 1903, Woodson, Works, 1:364-78 and “The Atlanta Riot,” October 7, 1906, Woodson, Works, 1:406-18. It also encouraged his decision to play a leadership role in the NAACP and by 1914 Grimke was even more explicit about “the cowardly, hypocritical course” and policies of BTW, who he insisted “ought to be heartily ashamed of himself.” See Woodson, Works, 1:234-47 and Perry, Lift, 323-24; see also Grimke, “God and the Race Problem,” A Discourse Delivered in Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, Washington D. C., May 3, 1903; “Christianity and Race Prejudice,” May 29, 1910, and June 5, 1910, Woodson, Works, 4:442-73 and “The Negro and His Citizenship,” Woodson, Works, 1:391-406. [↑](#endnote-ref-820)
821. Blyden to Governor Carter, Department of Native Affairs, Lagos, 21 May 1896, in Lynch, Black Spokesman, 256-59; “Prospectus and Appeal of the Proposed Lagos Training College and Industrial Institute,” Holden, Blyden, 670-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-821)
822. Edward Blyden, “The Negro in the United States,” Church Review 16 (January 1900): 308-31 and Edward Blyden, “The African Problem,” North American Review 161 (September 1895): 327-39. See also Blyden to Grimke, 9 April 1890; Blyden to Grimke, 5 September 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:40-44. [↑](#endnote-ref-822)
823. See Francis J. Grimke, “The Negro Will Never Acquiesce as Long as He Lives,” Richmond Planet, November 1898, cited in Blackpast.org, accessed September 21, 2013, http://www.blackpast.org/1898-reverend-francis-j-grimke-negro-will-never-acquiesce-long-he-lives. See also Blyden to Grimke, 9 April 1890, Woodson, Works, 4:22-23. [↑](#endnote-ref-823)
824. See Blyden, “The Call of Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America,” Lynch, Black Spokesman, 25-33 and Blyden to Grimke, 9 April 1890, Woodson, Works, 4:22. [↑](#endnote-ref-824)
825. Lynch, Patriot, 79-80. However, Blyden was not the only liberal or adherent of the “science of religion” who retained belief in Providence. According to Wheeler-Barclay, it remained a stable and “dominant” conviction for Max Muller “even after his theology had broken through the boundaries of the most liberal forms of Victorian Protestantism.” Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 38. See also Orishatukeh Faduma, “My Nigerian African Background,” Yale Divinity School Alumni file (n.d., n.p). [↑](#endnote-ref-825)
826. Blyden to Wilson, 31 May 1897, quoted in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 677. [↑](#endnote-ref-826)
827. See M. Yu Frenkel, “Edward Blyden and the Concept of African Personality,” African Affairs 73, no. 292 (July 1974): 277-89. [↑](#endnote-ref-827)
828. See, for example, Blyden’s tepid and ambivalent responses to what he described as “melancholy rumors” of the brutalization of Africans by Belgians in the Congo. “Banquet to Dr. Blyden –West Africans Honor a Teacher,” Liberia Bulletin 25 (November 1904): 38. See also Liberia Bulletin 18 (February 1901): 15-18; West Africa, August 22, 1903, 199-201, cited in Holden, Blyden, 772-73; Hollis Lynch, “The Attitude of Edward Blyden to European Imperialism in Africa,” Journal of Nigerian Historical Society 3, no. 2 (1965): 249-59. [↑](#endnote-ref-828)
829. Amid race riots in the aftermath of World War I, Grimke publically endorsed the new militancy of blacks expressed in Claude McKay’s poem “If We Must Die” and confessed that “The Washington riot gave me a thrill that comes once in a lifetime. . .. The Negro is no longer running as he used to do. A new spirit is taking possession of him. He is now standing and will stand in his own defense in the future. And the men are not standing alone, the women are back of them.” Cooper, Life and Writings, 88-104. See also Ferry, Portrait, 330-32. [↑](#endnote-ref-829)
830. Perry, Lift, 323-24;Woodson, Works, 1:234-47 and Grimke, “The Negro and His Citizenship,” published and circulated by the America Negro Academy in 1905. See also Grimke, “God and the Race Problem,” May 3, 1903: 364-78; “Christianity and Race Prejudice,” May 29, 1910, and June 5, 1910: 442-473. Grimke’s outspoken critique of racism in church and state drew compliments and support from more liberal black clergy. See Theophilus Gould Steward to Grimke, 27 April 1893, Woodson, Works, 4:29 and John W. E. Bowen to Grimke, 18 October 1903, Woodson, Works, 4:87-88. [↑](#endnote-ref-830)
831. The Presbyterian Church’s capitulation to the prevailing mood of American racism was affirmed when the General Assembly agreed to the formation of racially segregated presbyteries and synods (judicatories) in exchange for union with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. On the protests presented by Grimke and Anderson, see Murry, Presbyterians and the Negro, 196-200 and Grimke to the Presbytery of Washington City, 4 October 1908, Woodson, Works, 4:115, 165-69; see also David M. Reimers, “The Race Problem and Presbyterian Union,” Church History, 31, no. 2 (June 1972): 203-15. The Presbyterian Board of Missions was only one of several Protestant Mission Boards which began to restrict the appointment of black missionaries during this era. For explicit charges of racism within the Presbyterian mission field, see the poignant protests filed by African missionaries which reveal the personal impact of the Board’s change in policy. Africa Letters, Liberia Mission 1884-1901, 51:2. See also Taka Truman to the Board, 10 and 11 October 1881, Africa Letters, 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-831)
832. While Blyden commented on the problems of the missionary enterprise in West Africa in a number of post-1890 addresses and works, his perception of and response to the racial policies of the Board and the fate of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia is at best ambiguous. The last and perhaps most significant of Blyden’s commentaries on mission work in Liberia was a lecture, “The Problems before Liberia,” delivered in 1909 in Monrovia. See Edward Wilmot Blyden, The Problems before Liberia: A lecture delivered in the Senate Chamber at Monrovia, January 18, 1909 (London: C. M. Phillips, 1909) and Holden, Blyden, 848-50. See also Blyden, “Liberia as a Field for a Missionary Enterprise,” Holden, Blyden, 679. [↑](#endnote-ref-832)
833. Brown, One Hundred Years, 210. [↑](#endnote-ref-833)
834. . Balmer and Fitzmier, The Presbyterians, 93. Brown, One Hundred Years, 210-11 and Speer, Presbyterian Foreign Missions, 23. The issue and problem of race was more comprehensively addressed by Speer in his Of One Blood: A Short Study of the Race Problem (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions & Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1924) and Race and Race Relations: A Christian View of Human Contacts (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1924). For an uncritical assessment of Speer’s racial attitudes, see also Longfield, Presbyterian Controversy, 196-97. [↑](#endnote-ref-834)
835. Murray, Presbyterians, 195. Ironically, despite expression of a “deep interest” in Africa spurred and nurtured by Blyden’s addresses and publication, Grimke failed to join the growing ranks of black clergy who visited the continent. On Blyden’s efforts to keep Grimke and the wider African American community abreast of developments in Africa see, for example, Blyden to Grimke, Dec. 19, 1889, Woodson, Works 4,” 18 [↑](#endnote-ref-835)
836. See Lynch, Patriot, 98, 219, 238-40, 242, 245-46 and Leo Spitzer, The Creoles of Sierra Leon: Responses to Colonialism 1870-1945 (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 108-122, 73-74, 111-123. [↑](#endnote-ref-836)
837. Blyden to Professor Camphor, 22 September 1899, in The New Africa, November 1899, 9, 10, cited in Holden, Blyden, 701-2. Blyden, “Problems Before the Church,” in Blyden, The African Problem and other Discourses, 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-837)
838. Both responded in the tones of Friedrich Schleiermacher’s late eighteenth-century rejoinder to disparagers of religion. Blyden may also have been inspired by the German theologian and philosopher’s pioneering efforts to reconcile Christianity and modernity while defending the former from the acids and erosions of the latter. Friedrich Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, first published 1799). [↑](#endnote-ref-838)
839. Ironically, Shaw appears to have shared to some degree Blyden’s valorization of Islam relative to Christianity. He is also quoted as saying “I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age.” He also suggested that Muhammad would have greater relevance in the modern era than Christ: “I have studied him – the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much-needed peace and happiness.”

     # George Bernard Shaw, “Quotes on Religion” accessed at <https://ireland-calling.com/george-bernard-shaw-quotes-religion/> on 5/14/20 See also George Bernard Shaw, Shaw: An Autobiography 1856-1898 (London: Max Reinhardt, 1970).

     [↑](#endnote-ref-839)
840. Edward Blyden, Proceedings at the Banquet in Honour of E. W. Blyden . . . on his Retirement from his Official Labours in the Colony of Sierra Leone (London, 1909), 45-46. [↑](#endnote-ref-840)
841. Ibid. For a similar but more traditionally bibliocentric response by Grimke to the challenges posed to the authority and legitimacy of the Bible by “atheists,” etc., see Grimke to G. Campbell Morgan, 1914, Woodson, Works, 4:139-40, cited in Sidwell, “Grimke and the Fundamentalists,” 86-87. [↑](#endnote-ref-841)
842. Edward W. Blyden, “‘Africa and the Africans’; Proceeding on the Occasion of a Banquet Given at Holborn Restaurant, August 15, 1907, by West Africans in London,” (London: C. M. Phillipps, 1907), 32-33, 35. [↑](#endnote-ref-842)
843. Blyden described a world remodeled by the rise "of electricity . . . of aerial navigation, of motor cars, of radium. Of seismology, and seismometers, and all the nameless ographies and ologies,” Ibid, 42-43. Fifteen years earlier, in a lecture presented before the Liverpool Geographical Society, Blyden disabused the grand dream some held of an idealistic and naive application of the instruments and tools of European modernity in Africa as he chastised those “in Europe who believe in the power of machinery and other scientific appliances to take possession of Africa. They think it possible in a certain sense to spiritualize machinery and by that means to work upon the spirits of men and overcome both the physical and intellectual difficulties. And they will persist in their present efforts until they find out that they are following only a dream—a dream which posterity will wonder that their ancestors could encourage even for a moment. Their grand-children will laugh at the crude ideas of men who because they could do so much thought they could do everything.” Edward Blyden, England and the Black Race: An Address Delivered Before the Liverpool Geographical Society, August 4, 1892, 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-843)
844. Woodson, Works, 3:194, 252-54, 496, 523-24, 530, 536. [↑](#endnote-ref-844)
845. Grimke insisted that Woodson, Works, 3:239. [↑](#endnote-ref-845)
846. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, i-ii. Livingston, Education and Race, 15-16, 19-20 and Knox, Historical Account, 19-20. [↑](#endnote-ref-846)
847. Michael Gomez, Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of Muslims in the Americas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-847)
848. At the end of the seventeenth century, the island’s governor attempted with little success to suppress the slave’s practice of “drum dances” and other “heathenish customs brought with them from Africa.” Knox, Historical Account, 55-56. On the possibility that West African expressions of Islam were among these traditions see Gomez, Black Crescent, 47-90. [↑](#endnote-ref-848)
849. Livingston, Education and Race, 17. Edward Blyden “Christianity and the Negro Race,” originally published in Fraser’s Magazine, May 1876. Reprinted in Blyden, Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, 39-40. On the continued influence of African religion and culture on St. Thomas into the early twentieth century, see Maud Cuney Hare, “History and Song in the Virgin Islands,” The Crisis 40, no. 4 (April 1933): 83-84 and The Crisis 40, no. 5 (May 1933): 108, 118. [↑](#endnote-ref-849)
850. Although the precise nature, source, and function of these “African traditions” are unknown, they undoubtedly had religious implications. Hollis Lynch, ed., Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1978), 4.

     In an article published little more than a quarter after his immigration to West Africa, Blyden attested to continued African religious and cultural influences in the West Indies. Edward Blyden “Christianity and the Negro Race,” originally published in Fraser’s Magazine, May 1876. Reprinted in Blyden, Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, 39-40. On the continued influence of African religion and culture on St. Thomas into the early twentieth century, see Maud Cuney Hare, “History and Song in the Virgin Islands,” The Crisis 40, no. 4 (April 1933): 83-84 and The Crisis 40, no. 5 (May 1933): 108, 118. Blyden’s reminisces and comments anticipated contemporary discourse within the discipline of religious studies regarding African “survivals” and cultural transmission in the Diaspora. Melville J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past (New York: Harper Brothers, 1941); E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1964). For a more contemporary discussion of the religious impact of “Africanisms” and “African survivals” in the Diaspora see Albert Raboteau, Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 1978, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-850)
851. See Edward Blyden, The Jewish Question (Liverpool: Hart, 1898) and Hollis Lynch, “A Black Nineteenth-Century Response to Jews and Zionism: The Case of Edward Blyden” in Joseph R. Washington, Jr., ed. Jews in Black Perspective: A Dialogue (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-851)
852. Blyden’s heightened ecumenism and interfaith sensibilities did not extend equally nor consistently to all traditions. Mormonism, for example, was apparently not a beneficiary of his ecumenical largess.He contrasted popular perceptions of Islam and Mormonism to the advantage of the former as he contended that in the United States critics of Islam “look upon it probably as they look upon the Mormonism in their own country . . . [as] an excrescence, a fungus upon the body social and politic—an ugly protest of European civilization against itself.” Rather, “Mohammedanism,” he argued, “is a different thing altogether—a historical religion based upon the traditions of millions of people—some of whom were God’s chosen people.” Blyden to Grimke, Woodson, Works, 4:30, 33. It also appears that both Blyden and Grimke were also less tolerant of the ecclesiastical, theological, and ritual expressions of the emergent Holiness-Pentecostal movement. [↑](#endnote-ref-852)
853. # See also Blyden’s commentary on the ecumenical and interfaith significance of the Centenary Missions Conference held in London in the summer of 1888 which anticipated the famed 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 612. For a more critical perspective see Thomas A. Askew, “The 1888 London Centenary Missions Conference: Ecumenical Disappointment,” International Bulletin of Missionary Research 18, issue 3, 113.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-853)
854. Edward Blyden, The Problems Before Liberia: A Lecture Delivered in the Senate Chamber at Monrovia, January 18, 1909 (London: Phillips, 1909). Quoted in Givens, Selected Works, 71-72. Blyden noted that Lowell’s views were also “echoed” by religious scholars such as the pioneering Buddhist comparativist and Anglican missionary Rev. A. Lloyd (1852-1911) in his “Studies of Buddhism” See Arthur Lloyd, The Wheat Among the Tares: Studies of Buddhism in Japan (London: Macmilliam & Co., 1908). [↑](#endnote-ref-854)
855. Blyden, The Problems Before Liberia, quoted in Givens, Selected Works, 71-72. [↑](#endnote-ref-855)
856. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, 29 November 1888, Lynch, Letters, 395-96. [↑](#endnote-ref-856)
857. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, 29 November 1888, Lynch, Letters, 395-96. [↑](#endnote-ref-857)
858. See Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 53, 61-62 and Beckerlegge, “Max Muller,” in Wolffe, Religion in Victorian Britain, 207-17. [↑](#endnote-ref-858)
859. James John Garth Wilkinson, The African and True Christian Religion, his Magna Charta: A Study in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (London: James Spiers, 1892). [↑](#endnote-ref-859)
860. Blyden to Dr. Wilkinson, 17 November 1891, published under the heading “Dr. Blyden And Mohammedanism,” Lagos Weekly Record, December 3, 1892 (3, no. 15). [↑](#endnote-ref-860)
861. Edward Blyden to Henry Venn (Secretary of the Church Missionary Society), 6 September 1871, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 188-92. See also Livingston, Education and Race, 54; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 665; Lynch, Blyden, 174 and Curtis, Islam in Black America, 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-861)
862. Blyden to Grimke, 4 November 1889, Lynch, Letters, 406. [↑](#endnote-ref-862)
863. Edward Blyden, “Inaugural Address at the Inauguration of Liberia College, at Monrovia, January 23rd, 1862” as published in Blyden, Liberia’s Offering. See also Lynch, Black Spokesman, 219-22.

     . [↑](#endnote-ref-863)
864. Blyden additionally insisted that the college’s curriculum include the study of Africa’s more indigenous traditions and customs: “native law, tribal organization, native languages, native religion, native politics, and the effect of all these things upon their life.” To this end, he also expressed hope that the college would soon establish a chair of native languages. Blyden, “The Liberian Scholar: An Address Delivered on the Occasion of the Inauguration of the President-elect of Liberia College, February 21st, 1900,” Liberia Bulletin (1900), 11-23. See also Lynch, Black Spokesman, 265-68. [↑](#endnote-ref-864)
865. Blyden to Wilson, 8 September 1900, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 721. Blyden, “The Liberian Scholar: An Address Delivered on the Occasion of the Inauguration of the President-elect of Liberia College, February 21st, 1900,” Liberia Bulletin (1900), 11-23. See also Lynch, Black Spokesman, 265-68. [↑](#endnote-ref-865)
866. J. G. Stevens to Wilson, 18 June 1901, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 723. [↑](#endnote-ref-866)
867. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 723; Lynch, Selected Letters, 7. Ibid., #37, 989-90. Given the traditional evangelical orientation of the school, it is possible that related conflict was also engendered by Blyden’s successful effort to ensure that one of the first honorary degrees awarded by the college during his brief tenure was to Rev. Majola Agbebi. Inspired by Blyden’s theological, hermeneutical, comparative and ideological arguments, the Lagos based Agbebi was one of the first West African clergy to establish an independent African Church and an Africanized expression of Christianity. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 712 [↑](#endnote-ref-867)
868. Ironically, the abrupt termination of the aged scholar from the latter post came amid charges brought by Europeans that his often rough-hewed and incongruous methods had transgressed acceptable pedagogical and colonial policy and insulted Muslims. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 839. See also A. R. I. Doi, “Influence of Islam and the Spread of Islam Learning in West Africa: Contributions of E. W. Blyden to Islamic Studies,” The Islamic Review 54, no. 11 (November 1966): 32-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-868)
869. Edward Blyden, The Jewish Question (Liverpool: Lionel Hart, 1898). [↑](#endnote-ref-869)
870. Ibid. See Michael J. C. Echeruo, “‘The Jewish Question,’ and the Diaspora: Theory and Practice,” Journal of Black Studies 40 (March 2010): 544-65. See also Yvonne Chireau and Nathaniel Deutsch, eds., Black Zion: African American Religious Encounters with Judaism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15, and Robert A. Hill, “Black Zionism: Marcus Garvey and the Jewish Question,” in Vincent P. Franklin, Nancy L. Grant, Harold Kietnick and Genna Rae McNeil, eds., African Americans and Jews in the Twentieth Century: Studies in Convergence and Conflict (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 40-53. [↑](#endnote-ref-870)
871. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 839. Blyden has been described as the “the morning star of the Muslim renaissance” in Sierra Leone. See M. Saif'ud Deen Aklharazim, “The Origin and Progress of Islam in Sierra Leone,” Sierra Leone Studies, January 1939, 24-25. For a more critical perspective, see Mohammed Bassiru Sillah, “Edward Blyden and Islam in Sierra Leone: A Study of African Intellectual Response to British Colonialism,” Hamdard Islamicus 14 (1991): 23-42. However, a number of contemporary scholars have also noted and critiqued what has been described as Blyden’s “romanticized” and often “uncritical” portrayal of Islam in West Africa. See Livingston, Education and Race, 233 and Edward E. Curtis IV, Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African-American Islamic Thought (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), especially chapter 2: “Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) and the Paradox of Islam.” [↑](#endnote-ref-871)
872. H. B. Hayes, “Dr. Blyden’s Turkish Decoration, Interesting Investiture Ceremony in Liverpool,” Liberia Recorder, August 26, 1905. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 787. [↑](#endnote-ref-872)
873. Ibid. See also Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 715, 786-87, 808-9, 839. [↑](#endnote-ref-873)
874. Ibid. Hayes was currently Principal of the Preparatory Department of Liberia College. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 787. [↑](#endnote-ref-874)
875. Hayes, “Dr. Blyden’s Turkish Decoration.” [↑](#endnote-ref-875)
876. Proceedings at the Banquet in Honour of Edward Wilmot Blyden On the Occasion of His Retirement from His Official Labours in the Colony of Sierra Leone, January 24, 1907 (London: C. M. Phillips, 1907), 45-46. [↑](#endnote-ref-876)
877. Blyden, “Proceedings,” quoted in Holden, Blyden, 836. [↑](#endnote-ref-877)
878. Ibid. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 836-837. [↑](#endnote-ref-878)
879. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-879)
880. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-880)
881. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 837, quoted from Sierra Leone Times, February 2, 1907. [↑](#endnote-ref-881)
882. See, for example, Grimke’s contention that Unitarianism was a form of Christianity that is “not genuine” and his insistence that “Evangelical Christianity” was superior to all other forms of Christianity. Woodson, Works, 3:370-71. See also Sidwell, Fides, 14, 25, 42. Grimke also had reservations about Mormonism, and it is ironic, but not surprising, given their intellectual and academic proclivities as well as pronounced class orientation with its attendant bias and chauvinism, that both he and Blyden shared misgivings regarding what they considered to be more emotive and less intellectually grounded versions of Protestant Christianity as reflected in the emergent Holiness-Pentecostal movement. See Blyden to Grimke, 5 September 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:40-42; Blyden to Grimke, 31 October 1895, Woodson, Works 4:47. [↑](#endnote-ref-882)
883. Woodson, Works, 4:372. [↑](#endnote-ref-883)
884. Grimke on Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa, in Cooper, Life, and Writings, 67-69. See also “‘Thank God That He Is Not of This Great White Race . . .’: Francis Grimké Praises Toyohiko Kagawa,” cited in African-American Religion: A Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents, eds. David W. Wills and Albert J. Raboteau, <http://www3.amherst.edu/~aardoc/Grimke> Kagawa1936.htm, and Toyohiko Kagawa to Francis J. Grimké, Tokyo, January 1933, Woodson, Works, 4:469. [↑](#endnote-ref-884)
885. The Royal African Society was one of several “learned” and professional societies that emerged under the influence and impetus of late Victorian Modernity and its intellectual, academic, and religious corollaries and imperial concerns. [↑](#endnote-ref-885)
886. #### On Mary Kingsley, see New World Encyclopedia, s.v “Mary Henrietta Kingsley,” accessed October 4, 2016, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Mary\_Henrietta\_Kingsley?oldid=901958. See also Alison Blunt, Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa (New York: Guilford Press, 1994); Dea Birkett, Mary Kingsley: Imperial Adventuress (London: Macmillan, 1992).

     [↑](#endnote-ref-886)
887. Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 71. On the pioneering contributions of Frazer to anthropology and comparative religion, see New World Encyclopedia, s.v “James Frazer,” accessed October 4, 2016, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=James\_Frazer&oldid=976023. See also his classic study, James Frazer, The Golden Bough (1890). [↑](#endnote-ref-887)
888. Katherine Frank, A Voyager Out —The Life of Mary Kingsley (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), 93, cited in New World Encyclopedia, s.v “Mary Henrietta Kingsley”;Edward B. Tylor, Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1871). On the significance of Tylor and his contributions as the “father of cultural anthropology” and comparative religion, see especially New World Encyclopedia, s.v “Edward Burnett Tylor,” accessed October 4, 2016, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Edward\_Burnett\_Tylor&oldid=688071; see also Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion, 71-103. [↑](#endnote-ref-888)
889. Chidester, Empire of Religion, x, xi. Mary Kingsley, [Travels in West Africa: Congo Français, Corisco and Cameroons](http://archive.org/details/travelsinwestaf04kirbgoog) (London: Macmillan, 1897) and Mary Kingsley, West African Studies (London: Macmillan, 1899). See also “Ulrich Berner, “African and the Origin of the Science of Religion. Max Muller (1823-1900) and James George Frazer (1854-1941) on African Religions”, in Frieder Ludwig and Afe Adogame, European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), 141-150. [↑](#endnote-ref-889)
890. See Mary Kingsley, [Travels in West Africa: Congo Français, Corisco and Cameroons](http://archive.org/details/travelsinwestaf04kirbgoog) (London: Macmillan, 1897); Mary Kingsley, West African Studies (London: Macmillan, 1899), and Mary Kingsley, “West Africa, from an Ethnologist’s Point of View,” Transaction of the Liverpool Geographical Society 6 (1897): 58-73 (cited in Chidester, Empire of Religion, #16, 349). See also “Ulrich Berner, “African and the Origin of the Science of Religion. Max Muller (1823-1900) and James George Frazer (1854-1941) on African Religions”, in Frieder Ludwig and Afe Adogame, European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), 141-150. [↑](#endnote-ref-890)
891. Blyden to Mary Kingsley, 7 May 1900, Holden, Blyden, 728-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-891)
892. Mary Kingsley to Editor of The New Africa, August 1900, 9-11, Holden, Blyden, 728; Kingsley to Mr. Clodd, 30 August 1898, Holden, Blyden, no. 41, 990-91. [↑](#endnote-ref-892)
893. Kingsley to Mr. Clodd, 30 August 1898, Holden, 990-99. On Clodd, who authored Creation, The Story of a Plain Account of Evolution and The Childhood of Religions’ (1875), see E. S. P. Haynes, “Clodd, Edward (1840–1930),” rev. J. F. M. Clark, in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (online ed., 2013, first published 2004). On Charles Lyall, see M. Sprengling, “In Memoriam: Sir Charles James Lyall,” Journal of Near Eastern Studies 39, no. 3 (April 1923): 207-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-893)
894. Frank reports that “a good deal of Travels in West Africa . . . consists of an attack on West African missions.” Frank, Voyager Out, 112. The two also shared the conviction that the missionary effort stifled confidence and intellectual independence and consequently that “the Missionary-made man is the Curse of the Coast.” Blyden, African Life and Customs, 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-894)
895. Mary Kingsley to Editor of The New Africa, August 1900, 9-11, Holden, Blyden, 724-28. [↑](#endnote-ref-895)
896. Kingsley reportedly “used the word 'Allah' as often as she did 'God.'” Frank, Voyager Out, 134. [↑](#endnote-ref-896)
897. Frank, Voyager Out, 134-35. Nassau, who had served in the Presbyterian Church's West Africa mission since 1861 was also the author of several mission-oriented texts replete with unflattering and inaccurate views of African culture and religion. His views incised Blyden who publically chastised Nassau for descriptions of African character and culture that were "gross exaggerations . . . pernicious in their influences." See Robert Hamill Nassau, Crowned in Palm Land: A Study of African Mission Life (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1874) and Robert Hamill Nassau, Fetishism in West Africa: Forty Years’ Observation of Native Customs and Superstitions (London: Duckworth & Co., 1904). On Blyden’s critique see Edward W. Blyden, “Christian Missions in West Africa,” Fraser’s Magazine, October 1876, in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 65-66. See also Brown, One Hundred Years, 246, and The Presbyterian, June 5, 1880, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 454. [↑](#endnote-ref-897)
898. Frank, Voyager Out, 134-35. [↑](#endnote-ref-898)
899. Blyden to Mary Kingsley, 7 May 1900, Holden, Blyden, 732-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-899)
900. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-900)
901. Edward Blyden, The African Society and Miss Mary H. Kingsley, (London: John Scott, 1901). As early as 1897, Kingsley “suggested that a Learned Society was needed that would provide a meeting place especially for those who thought government, that is, imperial policy in Africa misguided and detrimental to African people.” Alison Blunt, Travel, Gender and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa (NY: Gilford Press, 1994), 53. Originally it was to be named “The Mary Kingsley Society of West Africa,” but was founded as “The African Society” and in 1968 the name was changed to the “The Royal African Society” to better reflect its focus and agenda. Ironically, a more critical appreciation of Kingsley and her efforts was penned by Rev. Mark C. Hayford, who was the brother of Casely Hayford. See Rev. Mark C. Hayford, Mary H. Kingsley: From an African Standpoint  (pamphlet ,October 1901) in [Papers of George Macmillan relating to Mary Kingsley](http://sca-arch.liv.ac.uk/ead/search?operation=full&recid=gb141d674), Archives of the University of Liverpool accessed at <http://sca-arch.liv.ac.uk/ead/help.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-901)
902. “The Seventieth Anniversary of the Founding of the Royal African Society,” African Affairs 70, no. 280 (July 1971): 217. [↑](#endnote-ref-902)
903. Edward W. Blyden, “Islam in Western Soudan,” Journal of the Royal African Society 2, no. 5 (October 1902): 11-37, accessed September 16, 2010, http://www.jstor.org/stable/715201. [↑](#endnote-ref-903)
904. See Edward Blyden, West Africa Before Europe and Other Addresses (London: C. M. Phillips, 1905) [↑](#endnote-ref-904)
905. Edward Blyden, “Islam in the Western Soudan,” Journal of the African Society, No. 5, October,1902):11-37.

     Ibid., 37. [↑](#endnote-ref-905)
906. Ibid., 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-906)
907. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-907)
908. Ibid., 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-908)
909. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-909)
910. Ibid, 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-910)
911. Islam was most directly represented by the presence and presentations of Anglo-American convert Mohammad Alexander Russell Webb. On representations of Islam at the Parliament, see John P. Burris Exhibiting Religion, Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions 1851-1893 (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2001). Ironically, Blyden had been invited to deliver a paper at the Exposition on “comparative religion” but could not attend See also Naylor, “Black Presence at the Parliament of Religions” and Joseph M. Kitagawa, “The 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions and Its Legacy” (Eleventh John Nuveen Lecture, University of Chicago Divinity School, Baptist Theological Union, Chicago, 1983). [↑](#endnote-ref-911)
912. Blyden, “Islam in Western Soudan,” 12-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-912)
913. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-913)
914. Ibid., 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-914)
915. Ibid., 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-915)
916. Blyden also emphasized that this dynamic had special relevance for Islam in Soudan and wider Africa since it legitimated distinctions made by African Muslims in reference to the teachings and practices of their Arab brethren. Ibid., 20-22. [↑](#endnote-ref-916)
917. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-917)
918. Ibid., 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-918)
919. Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race and Edward Blyden, “The Koran in Africa” (paper presented before the Presbyterian Ministerial Society, 1890). Blyden “The Koran in Africa,” Journal of the Royal African Society 4, no. 14 (January 1905): 157-71, accessed September 16, 2010, http://www.jstor.org/stable/714813. [↑](#endnote-ref-919)
920. Blyden, “The Koran in Africa,” (1905), 157-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-920)
921. Ibid., 159. [↑](#endnote-ref-921)
922. Ibid.,161. [↑](#endnote-ref-922)
923. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-923)
924. Blyden, “Koran in Africa,” (1890), 106. [↑](#endnote-ref-924)
925. Blyden added that among the additional “objections to Christianity raised by African Muslims . . . which no argument can dispose” was the offensive chauvinism of Christian missionaries fostered by the intersection of race, class, culture, and power. In contrast, “the Muslim missionary of the Sudan or of Arabia can forget his race or his tribe in the intensity of his interest in the story he has to tell” whereas “the missionary from Europe has his race always on parade. He cannot help himself. He cannot avoid revealing his consciousness and his delight that he belongs to a power which, if need be, can force upon the people certain conditions.” Blyden, “The Koran in Africa,” (1905), 168-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-925)
926. Ibid., 167. [↑](#endnote-ref-926)
927. “Banquet to Dr. Blyden–West Africans Honor a Teacher,” Liberia Bulletin, no. 25 (November 1904): 43. Blyden’s remarks were widely disseminated in West Africa and the United States within the pages of the Liberia Bulletin. Established in 1892 as the official “Bulletin” of the American Colonization Society, the Liberia replaced The African Repository and Colonial Journal (established in 1825) as the information and “propaganda organ” of Liberia and the colonization society. See New World Encyclopedia, s.v “American Colonization Society,” accessed December 23, 2016, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=American\_Colonization\_Society&oldid=994544. See also the first issue of the Liberia Bulletin, November 1892. This issue opened with a memorial tribute to William Cooper, who served from 1864 to 1892 as Secretary of the American Colonization Society. “William Cooper—In Memoriam,” 1-3. [↑](#endnote-ref-927)
928. “Banquet to Dr. Blyden–West Africans Honor a Teacher,” 38. [↑](#endnote-ref-928)
929. Ibid., 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-929)
930. “Banquet to Dr. Blyden–West Africans Honor a Teacher,” 41. [↑](#endnote-ref-930)
931. Ibid., 40, 41. In a statement the provided insight into his view of the African Society, Blyden informed those assembled that it was “organized . . . to become the exponent of your views and the expounder of African institutions.” Ibid., 41. [↑](#endnote-ref-931)
932. Ibid., 42. [↑](#endnote-ref-932)
933. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-933)
934. “Banquet to Dr. Blyden–West Africans Honor a Teacher,” 42. It was not inconsistent that Blyden also offered a critique of the reported placing of restrictions on “the freedom of newspapers” in Lagos by the British colonial administration. The media had long been perceived by Blyden as an important tool in the encounter with modernity. During his early years in Liberia, he had served briefly as editor of the Liberian Herald and actively supported the founding of The Negro in Sierra Leone. Upon its demise, Blyden joined Joseph and Cornelius May in the establishment of the more successful Sierra Leone Weekly News which, according to Fyfe, “with Blyden as a regular contributor, tended to approve anything distinctively African, and deplored slavish imitation of European ways.” Christopher Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 496. [↑](#endnote-ref-934)
935. Efforts to define, date, and analyze the Pan-African phenomenon have given rise to an extensive, complex, and often conflicting body of literature. For a review of major efforts see P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1963 (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982). See also Owen Charles Mathurin, Henry Sylvester Williams and the Origins of the Pan-African Movement, 1869-1911 (Westport, Conn., and London: Greenwood Press, 1976); Immanuel Geiss, The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe, and Africa, trans. Ann Keep (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1974); and J. Ayodele Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). [↑](#endnote-ref-935)
936. Geiss, Pan-African Movement, 5-6. While Blyden would not be an active participant in the Pan-African conferences of the twentieth century, his influence and legacy in advocacy of black unity and related mediation of modernity and its religious and racial corollaries was obvious. [↑](#endnote-ref-936)
937. Cooper’s address was titled “The Negro Problem in America.” Walters address was titled “The Trials and Tribulations of the Coloured Race in America.” Accessed online April 25, 2008 at

     <https://friendsoftheafricanunion.com/african-civil-society/the-pan-african-congresses/the-1st-pan-african-congress/> See also Alexander Walters, My Life and Work (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1917), 253.  [↑](#endnote-ref-937)
938. Most students of Pan-Africanism note that Du Bois's Pan-African consciousness and race ideology were probably influenced by his study in Germany, where he "may have been exposed to the current race theories and Pan-German strands of thought." However, far less attention has been given to the implications of his exposure to currents of theological liberalism then prevalent in the German academic community. Du Bois's subsequent critique of traditional evangelical missiology and theology suggests the need for a closer study of the possible influences of these theological currents and influences upon his Pan-African ideology and activities. See for example, Edward J. Blum, W. E. B. Du Bois, American Prophet (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007),160. See also Jonathon S. Kahn, Divine Discontent: The Religious Imagination of W. E. B. Du Bois, (Cambridge: Oxford University Press), 201; and W. E. B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, Chicago, A. C. McClurg & Co.) 1903. Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism, 59-70, 72; William E. B. Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1940); Williams, Black Americans, 172; Harold R. Isaacs, "Du Bois and Africa," Race (Nov. 1960): 3-23. [↑](#endnote-ref-938)
939. Walters, My Life and Work, 257-260. See also George Mason Miller, “The Life and Times of Alexander Walters,” AME Zion Quarterly Review: 82(Winter 1970) 236-242. [↑](#endnote-ref-939)
940. Quoted in Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 28-29, 326-346. See also Geiss, Pan-African Movement,180-185, 199-228. [↑](#endnote-ref-940)
941. Edward Blyden, “African Life and Customs,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, 1908. A synopsis of Blyden’s views were also disseminated and defended in the same year on the American side of the Atlantic by Blyden’s American based protégé, Orishatukeh Faduma in a presentation before the American Negro Academy. Faduma, “Social Problems in West Africa from the Standpoint of an African." Moss, American Negro Academy, 160-61. [↑](#endnote-ref-941)
942. Blyden actively assisted Joseph C. and Cornelius May in establishment of the Sierra Leone Weekly News. Fyfe, History of Sierra Leone, 496. [↑](#endnote-ref-942)
943. Ibid. On the wider importance of black newspapers and journals as critical tools in the African and diaspora African engagement with the intersection of race, religion, and modernity, see, for example, David W. Wills, “Aspects of Social Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1884-1910” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1975). Blyden also supported and helped to disseminate African American journals such as the AME Review in West Africa. He was listed by its editor (Benjamin Tanner) as among those “scholars of the race “who so nobly helped to make to make the Review what it is.” AME Church Review, 5 (July 5, 1888) See also Lawrence S. Little, “The African Methodist Episcopal Church Media and Racial Discourse, 1880-1900,” The North Star 2, no. 1 (Fall 1998): 1-14. [↑](#endnote-ref-943)
944. Edward Blyden, African Life and Customs (London: Phillips, 1908); Lynch, Patriot, 66-67. Blyden protégés such as the United States based Orishatukeh Faduma and Majola Agbebi emphasized the importance of such studies for the success of the missionary enterprise in Africa: "To be successful (as missionaries) we have to study the names, designs, and influences of the stone and wooden gods of our fathers . . . . The lives and doings of our heathen sages, the origin of the several gods of whom our brethren worship will be useful instruments in the hands of the aggressive missionary." Ayandele, Holy Johnson, 301, and Ayandele, Missionary Impact, 264-265. Orishatukeh Faduma, “Religious Beliefs of the Yoruba People in West Africa,” in James W. E. Bowen, ed. Africa and the American Negro: Addresses and Proceedings of the Congress on Africa, 1896 (Reprint, Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing, 1969), 31-36. In 1899 Blyden’s colleague in Sierra Leone’s Native Pastorate controversy and African Anglican clergyman and Bishop, James Johnson, produced a similarly sympathetic but more conservative theological and philosophical analysis of Yoruba religion entitled Yoruba Heathenism. Ayandele notes that Johnson "was dumbfounded at the moral code of Yoruba religion, 'which only waits for the superior enlightenment of Christianity to raise it to a higher plane.'" [↑](#endnote-ref-944)
945. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-945)
946. Lynch, Patriot, 66-67 [↑](#endnote-ref-946)
947. Blyden, African Life, preface. [↑](#endnote-ref-947)
948. Blyden, African Life, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-948)
949. Ibid. 7-8 [↑](#endnote-ref-949)
950. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-950)
951. Blyden, African Life and Customs, 48. [↑](#endnote-ref-951)
952. Blyden’s list included Mary Kingsley, Lady (Flora S.) Lugard (journalist, wife of British colonial administrator Fredrick Lugard and author of A Tropical Dependency) as well as Richard Edward Dennett who had traveled extensively in West Africa and was author of a book with the presumptive title, At the Back of the Black Man’s Mind: Or, Notes on the Kingly Office in West Africa. Lady Lugard, An Outline of the Ancient History of Western Sudan with an account of the modern settlement of Northern Nigeria (London: Nisbet, 1905). Edward Dennett At the Back of the Black Man’s Mind: Or, Notes on the Kingly Office in West Africa (London, New York: Macmillan, 1906). See for example the collection of essays included in Frieder Ludwig and Afe Adogame, European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004). Of special importance are essays by Frieder Ludwig and Afe Adogame, “Historiography and European Perceptions of African Religious History, ” 1-22; Henk J. von Rinsum, “They became slaves of their definitions” Okot p’Bitek (1931-1982) and the European Traditions in the Study of African Religions”, 23-38; and “Ulrich Berner, “African and the Origin of the Science of Religion. [↑](#endnote-ref-952)
953. Blyden, African Life and Customs, preface; Chidester, Empire of Religion [↑](#endnote-ref-953)
954. Blyden, African Life and Custom, 33. [↑](#endnote-ref-954)
955. Chidester, Empire of Religion, xvi-xvii. [↑](#endnote-ref-955)
956. Blyden, African Life and Customs, 61. [↑](#endnote-ref-956)
957. Blyden was also in agreement with Dennett’s assessment of the too often overlooked missiological import of this fact: “The lasting effect of missionary effort in Africa must depend to a very great extent on the grasp the missionaries are capable of attaining of this higher conception of God which the native of Africa, in my opinion, undoubtedly have, and the use they may make of it in manifesting God to them as the one and only true God and not merely as the white man’s God.” Blyden, African Life and Customs, 61. [↑](#endnote-ref-957)
958. Muller, The Hibbert Lecture, 195, cited by Blyden in African Life and Customs, 62. Blyden also made direct reference to the pioneering scholarship of James George Frazer and that of Scottish writer and erstwhile anthropologist Andrew Lang. [↑](#endnote-ref-958)
959. Ibid. See also F. Max Muller, Chips from a German Workshop, vol. 1 (California: Scholars Press, 1985, first published 1869) and F. Max Muller, Lecture on the Origin and Growth of Religion (New York: AMS, 1976, first published 1882). Blyden was not the only West African student of religion to be influenced by the writings of Muller or the emergent discipline of comparative religion. Blyden protégé Orishatukeh Faduma, opened his address before the African Congress in 1895 with reference to the contributions made by religious scholars such as “Max Muller, [George] Rawlinson, and [Archibald H. Sayce” to an understanding of the “evolution” of the major world religions. Like Blyden, Faduma also insisted that “The study of religion in all its forms ought to be important to the student of comparative religion” and that such studies, if correctly applied could shed valuable light on the religions of Africa and their relationship to Christianity.” Faduma, “Religious Beliefs” 31-36. [↑](#endnote-ref-959)
960. “The Origin of Religion,” Walter H. Capps, ed., Religious Studies, The Making of a Discipline (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 53-104. [↑](#endnote-ref-960)
961. Blyden, African Life, 62. [↑](#endnote-ref-961)
962. Lynch, Patriot, 66-67. [↑](#endnote-ref-962)
963. Blyden, African Life, 62, 73. [↑](#endnote-ref-963)
964. Ibid., 63-64. [↑](#endnote-ref-964)
965. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-965)
966. Ibid., 33. [↑](#endnote-ref-966)
967. Lynch, Patriot, 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-967)
968. Blyden opined, “There was a time when the native Africa, brought up on European lines, looked upon everything European as absolutely superior, and as alone indispensable to the attainment of man’s highest happiness and usefulness in this world, and even to salvation beyond the grave. . .. [However] the African, is . . . rapidly arriving at a revision of his former immature ideas on the subject.” Blyden, African Life and Customs, 37-38. [↑](#endnote-ref-968)
969. Ibid., 31. [↑](#endnote-ref-969)
970. Ibid., 40. [↑](#endnote-ref-970)
971. Ibid., 63-64. [↑](#endnote-ref-971)
972. Ibid., 70-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-972)
973. Ibid.,70-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-973)
974. Ibid., 40. [↑](#endnote-ref-974)
975. Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 139-43. [↑](#endnote-ref-975)
976. Blyden, African Life and Custom, 66-67. [↑](#endnote-ref-976)
977. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-977)
978. Livingston reports that the text was positively reviewed by the Sierra Leone Weekly News, The African World, and the Journal of the Royal African Society; Livingston, Education and Race, 206. [↑](#endnote-ref-978)
979. Bishop Johnson, who had been adamant in opposition to polygamy, would be among West African clergy who reconsidered their opposition in light of the arguments advanced by Blyden in African Life and Customs See Lynch, Patriot 226 ;Webster, 66; and Lagos Weekly Record, IV 3 March 1894 See also James Johnson, “The Relations of Mission Work to Native Customs, 1908” cited in E. A. Ayandele, “An Assessment of James Johnson and his place in Nigerian History,” Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, III, Dec. 1964. [↑](#endnote-ref-979)
980. ## Lynch, Patriot, 240.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-980)
981. Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford, Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation (London: Phillips Press, 1911). [↑](#endnote-ref-981)
982. ## Joseph Ephraim Hayford, Gold Coast Native Institutions (London, 1903). See also D. A. Kimble, A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism,1850-1928 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963),158-160.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-982)
983. Lynch, Patriot, 240. [↑](#endnote-ref-983)
984. ### See Hayford’s “Introduction” in Blyden, West Africa Before Europe, 20-23.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-984)
985. Hayford was enthusiastic in his review of African Life and Customs as he informed the editor of the Sierra Leone Weekly News that “it was the learned Doctor who first pointed out that Africa needs no spiritual interference from without” but “ requires emancipation from the thralldom for foreign ideas inimical to racial development.” An appreciative Blyden saw fit to cite Hayford’s Gold Coast Institutions in African Life and Customs and attached to the text’s manuscript version an appendix that included Hayford’s extensive review. Lynch, Patriot, 241-42, Blyden, African Life and Customs, 77). [↑](#endnote-ref-985)
986. Blyden, African Life and Customs, 80-81.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-986)
987. Ibid, 83, 88

     [↑](#endnote-ref-987)
988. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-988)
989. Ibid*.* Hayford similarly voiced a critique of “meddlesome missionaries,” who failed to be aware of and acknowledge the “African religious reality.” Accordingly, he observed that they persisted in producing “converts who are only Christian . . .in form” but “at heart...remain true to the faith of [their] fathers.” Ibid, 83,88. [↑](#endnote-ref-989)
990. Ibid, 82-83.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-990)
991. Blyden, African Life and Customs, 82-83. [↑](#endnote-ref-991)
992. Ibid., 82-83. In effect, Blyden affirmed a black transatlantic version of the socialized version of a liberalized Christianity often referred to as the “Social Gospel” which was being embraced and practices by black and white theological liberals and modernists at the turn of the century. See Howard Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited and James Cone, [↑](#endnote-ref-992)
993. Blyden letter to British positivist philosopher Frederick Harrison. See also Lynch, Patriot, 185. [↑](#endnote-ref-993)
994. Ibid, 81 [↑](#endnote-ref-994)
995. Ibid, 81. To this end, Hayford was also a major advocate of three of the institutions that Blyden had long felt necessary for the African to successfully engage Western modernity and “work out his own salvation” —an independent church, an independent university, and an independent press. [↑](#endnote-ref-995)
996. African Life and Custom, 33. [↑](#endnote-ref-996)
997. Edward Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia: A Lecture Delivered at Lower Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, Liberia, January 26, 1908 (London: Phillips, 1908) and Edward Blyden, The Problems before Liberia: A Lecture Delivered in the State Chamber at Monrovia, January 18, 1909 (London: Phillips, 1909). See also West, “‘The Negro Experiment’: Black Modernity and Liberia, 1883-1910.” [↑](#endnote-ref-997)
998. On the use of the term see July, The Origin of Modern African Thought, 224 and Philip Serge Zachernuk, Colonial. Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 123. [↑](#endnote-ref-998)
999. Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia, 1-2. [↑](#endnote-ref-999)
1000. Ibid., 2-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-1000)
1001. Ibid., 2. Blyden made similar arguments about the history of Liberia as part and product of the transatlantic encounter with modernity in “The Future of Liberia,” widely disseminated as a published letter to the editor of The Liberian Recorder, Edward Blyden, “The Future of Liberia,” The Liberian Recorder, February, 1905, quoted in Givens, Selected Works, 52-54. [↑](#endnote-ref-1001)
1002. Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia, 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-1002)
1003. Ibid., 29, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-1003)
1004. Ibid., 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-1004)
1005. Blyden, “The Three Needs of Liberia, 7, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-1005)
1006. Ibid., 7. See also [Andrzej Diniejko](http://www.victorianweb.org/misc/diniejko.html), “The Origin and Early Development of the Salvation Army in Victorian England,” in The Victorian Web, accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/sa1.html>. No doubt, Blyden was also aware of Booth’s unflattering comparisons of British society under the press of late Victorian modernity with caricatures of African culture in his popular1890 text titled In Darkest England and the Way Out. William Booth, In Darkest England and the Way Out, (New York, London: Funk & Wagnals, 1890), 11-12, accessed November 27, 2016, [↑](#endnote-ref-1006)
1007. Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia, 14,15 16. [↑](#endnote-ref-1007)
1008. Ibid., 20. [↑](#endnote-ref-1008)
1009. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1009)
1010. The Three Needs of Liberia, 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-1010)
1011. Ibid., 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-1011)
1012. Ibid., 22, 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-1012)
1013. Ibid., 33. See also Edward Blyden, The Significance of Liberia: An Address Delivered in the State Chamber at Monrovia, Liberia, 20th May,1906, 2nd ed. (Liverpool: Richardson and Sons, 1907), 18, cited in Tibebu, Blyden, 141. [↑](#endnote-ref-1013)
1014. The Three Needs of Liberia, 32. [↑](#endnote-ref-1014)
1015. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1015)
1016. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1016)
1017. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1017)
1018. Ibid., 35. [↑](#endnote-ref-1018)
1019. In “The Problems before Liberia,”” Edward Blyden, The Problems Before Liberia, quoted from Givens, Selected Works, 68-73. [↑](#endnote-ref-1019)
1020. Lynch, Patriot, 170-71. Although Blyden reported that this action was the direct result of his “recent lecture . . . and other reasons affecting the natives,” he characteristically implied that a persistent “mulattoism” was also a factor. Blyden to J. Ormond Wilson (of the Colonization Society), 22 November 1908, cited in Holden, Blyden, 855. [↑](#endnote-ref-1020)
1021. See foreword by Namdi Azikiwe in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 9-10. On references to Blyden as “the most important progenitor of Pan-Africanism,” see Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 250. For Blyden described as the “Father of Pan Africanism,” see P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, Pan Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1963 (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982). [↑](#endnote-ref-1021)
1022. New York Daily Tribune, February 9, 1912 and New York Times, February 9, 1912; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 1008. [↑](#endnote-ref-1022)
1023. The New York Age, quoted in the St. Croix Avis, March 13, 1912. [↑](#endnote-ref-1023)
1024. See report of Blyden’s death and memorial service in The Crisis, vol. 5, No. 1 (November 1912), 12.

      [↑](#endnote-ref-1024)
1025. London Times, May 24, 1912. [↑](#endnote-ref-1025)
1026. African World, February 10, 1912, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 868, 1008. [↑](#endnote-ref-1026)
1027. Under the caption, “An Illustrious St. Thomian,” the St. Croix Avis echoed the St. Thomas Bulletin and St. Thomas Tidende. The St. Croix Avis, February 17, 1912 from the St. Thomas Bulletin, February 12, 1912 and St. Thomas Tidende, February 14, 1912. [↑](#endnote-ref-1027)
1028. Sierra Leone Weekly News, February 10, 1912. [↑](#endnote-ref-1028)
1029. Sierra Leone Weekly News, March 2, 1912. [↑](#endnote-ref-1029)
1030. Ibid. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 864, 1008. [↑](#endnote-ref-1030)
1031. E. D. Morel, “The Passing of a Great Figure,” African Mail, February 16, 1912, 191. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 876-77. [↑](#endnote-ref-1031)
1032. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1032)
1033. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1033)
1034. African Repository 63 (1987); The Christian Recorder, November 3, 1887 and January 12, 1888. See also William Coppinger to Blyden, 27 January 1988, in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 599-601, 871-76. [↑](#endnote-ref-1034)
1035. Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails 7, February 16, 1912, cited in Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 245; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 863; Sierra Leone Weekly News, February 10, 1912. [↑](#endnote-ref-1035)
1036. Blyden to Grimke, 25 October 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:45. Blyden to Grimke, 7 September 1908, Lynch, Letters, 285-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-1036)
1037. On Grimke’s often eloquent commemorations and eulogies occasioned by the passing of key figures such as Daniel Payne, Alexander Crummell, Frederick Douglass, John Reeve, and Matthew Anderson, see Works, 1:1-28, 28-34, 34-54, 146-47, 150 and “Matthew Anderson, with a Eulogy by Dr. Francis Grimke,” Alumni Files of Princeton Seminary, April 1928. See also “A Short Address Delivered at Howard University; November 11, 1930, in connection with the presentation of a Portrait of the Rev. John B. Reeve, D.D.,” Woodson, Works, 1:153. Ironically, in 1902, Grimke paid a posthumous tribute to Blyden’s erstwhile mentor William Gladstone describing him as “the Grand Old Man” and “a matchless orator, a profound thinker, a great scholar, a man of encyclopedic information.” Francis Grimke, “A Resemblance and A Contrast Between the American Negro and The Children of Israel, in Egypt, Or the Duty of the Negro to Contend Earnestly for His Rights Guaranteed Under the Constitution.” Woodson, Works, 1: 347-64. Although Gladstone also embraced a moderate liberalism or progressivism, Grimke’s tribute was probably occasioned by Gladstone’s defense of key tenets of biblical Christianity in his debate with “Darwin’s bulldog,” Thomas Huxley. On the evolving religious and theological posture of Gladstone and his controversy with Huxley, see Jonathan Conlin, “Gladstone and the Debate about Evolution” in Gladstone: Bicentenary Studies,eds. Roger Swift David, Bebbington and Roland Quinault (London: Ashgate, 2009); see also P. A. Butler, “The Religious Ideas and Attitudes of William Evart Gladstone (1809-1859)” (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1977); Moore, Post-Darwinian Controversies, 65-69. [↑](#endnote-ref-1037)
1038. Woodson, Works, 1:189, 191-92, 199-200. [↑](#endnote-ref-1038)
1039. Woodson, Works,1: xviii, 547-48. See also Sidwell, “Fides,” 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-1039)
1040. See, for example, Edward Blyden, “The Elements of Permanent Influence, Discourse Delivered in the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, Washington, D. C., Sunday, February 16, 1890.” [↑](#endnote-ref-1040)
1041. Blyden’s final writings reflected his persistent embrace of the principle of continued intellectual and academic development that had informed his life, ministry, and scholarship as summarized in his assertion that “in this world, if men live, they grow.” It was a principle that he had also encouraged his more conservative colleague Grimke to embrace. West Africa, August 22, 1903, 199-201, cited in Holden, Blyden, 771-72; Blyden to Grimke, 27 June 1903, Woodson, Works, 4:80-81. [↑](#endnote-ref-1041)
1042. Blyden, "The Koran in Africa," Journal of the African Society no. 14 (January 1905): 161. [↑](#endnote-ref-1042)
1043. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1043)
1044. Ibid. For insights regarding the broader legacy of Blyden’s pedagogical thought relating to the miseducation of blacks, see Carter G. Woodson, The Mis-Education of the Negro (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1933) and Livingston, Education and Race, 212, 193-94. See also within the West African context the pedagogical writings of Casely Hayford and Orishatukeh Faduma, especially in relationship to the founding and agenda of the Blyden-inspired National Congress of West Africa. [↑](#endnote-ref-1044)
1045. See, for example, Grimke’s response to what he perceived as unorthodox teachings at Howard’s School of Religion. Woodson, Works, 3:191. On black “Progressives” see Carter G. Woodson, History of the Negro Church (Washington, D. C.: Associated Publishers, 1921 second edition), 247, 276- 278, 303. [↑](#endnote-ref-1045)
1046. Blyden noted that his study was focused on “a discussion of ‘Yahweh’ and ‘Elohim’ of the Old Testament,” which, he opined, were “words much misunderstood by the generality of theologians.” Blyden to Grimke, 7 September 1908, Lynch, Letters, 486. The term “Comparative Theology,” was sometimes used interchangeably with “Comparative Religion” during the nineteenth century. [↑](#endnote-ref-1046)
1047. The text incorporated essays that Clarke published in The Atlantic eighteen years earlier. James Freeman Clarke, Ten Great Religions: An Essay in Comparative Theology (Boston and New York: Houghton and Mifflin and Company, 1886), Preface. [↑](#endnote-ref-1047)
1048. Ibid, 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-1048)
1049. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1049)
1050. Ibid, 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-1050)
1051. Ibid, 507, 509. [↑](#endnote-ref-1051)
1052. Blyden to Grimke, 11 September 1889, Woodson, Works, 4:11-13. Although he had earlier critiqued aspects of Renan's work, by the turn of the century, Blyden indicated that he was more appreciative of Renan's religious and philosophical insights. See Blyden to Mary Kingsley in Holden, Blyden, 730. [↑](#endnote-ref-1052)
1053. Blyden, African Life and Customs, 11-29. Moss, Academy, l60, l61-66. See also Craufurd D. Goodwin, "Economic Analysis and Development in British West Africa," Economic Development and Cultural Change 15, no. 4 (July 1967): 438-451, especially 448. [↑](#endnote-ref-1053)
1054. Emphasis his. Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia, 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-1054)
1055. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1055)
1056. A more critical perception of an emergent modernism was previewed in Blyden’s 1903 assertion that “neither modernity nor its handmaidens, wealth, science, and technology,” could be “the last word for humanity.” E. W. Blyden, “Africa and the Africans; Proceedings on the Occasion of a Banquet Given at Holborn Restaurant, August 15, 1903, by West Africans in London,” (London: C. M. Phillipps, 1903), 32-33, 35, cited in Lynch, Patriot, 63. [↑](#endnote-ref-1056)
1057. Edward Blyden, "The Koran in Africa,” Journal of the Royal African Society 4, no. 14 (January 1905): 161. [↑](#endnote-ref-1057)
1058. Blyden to John E. Bruce, 15 July 1910, Lynch, Letters, 503-4. On the controversy provoked in missiological circles by evolution, biblical criticism, comparative religion, and an emergent modernism, see Chadwick, Victorian Church, vol. 2, 58, 90-97 and William R. Hutchison, “Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity, 1875-1935,” in The Missionary Enterprise in China and America, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1974), 110-31. See also William R. Hutchinson, The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976). [↑](#endnote-ref-1058)
1059. Blyden, The Arabic Bible in the Soudan; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 848. [↑](#endnote-ref-1059)
1060. Edward Blyden, The Arabic Bible in the Sudan: A Plea for Transliteration (London: C. M. Phillips, 1910). Specifically cited were Robertson Smith, Old Testament in the Jewish Church: A Course of Lectures on Biblical Criticism (Edinburgh: A & C Black, 1881, 1892), 337; Dr. George F. Moore, Commentary on Judges; Karl Marti, Religion of the Old Testament; and Joseph Jacobs, Biblical Archeology. Robertson, professor and theologian, was one of the era’s pioneering proponents of biblical criticism. Moore was a Yale University and Union Theological Seminary trained Presbyterian minister who pioneered the application of the critical historical methodology and perspective to the study of religion and served as Professor of History of Religion at Harvard. See [“Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University Deceased during the Year 1930-1931](http://mssa.library.yale.edu/obituary_record/1925_1952/1930-31.pdf),” Yale University, December 1, 1931, 31*;* Dictionary of American Biography(New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1928-1958). Blyden also referenced Arthur Tappan Pierson, a graduate of UTS, missionary activist, and editor of the Missionary Review of the World; Blyden, “Arabic Bible,” 8; Dr. Davidson in Hastings Dictionary of the Bible; and Dr. Bruce in Church Missionary Review, 1907. [↑](#endnote-ref-1060)
1061. Blyden, “Arabic Bible,” 7. Smith’s “liberal” theological and hermeneutical views would result in his trial for heresy. Notably, his related contributions as an Orientalist have drawn the attention of contemporary scholars. See Jonathan Skinner, “Orientalists and Orientalisms: Robertson Smith and Edward W. Said,” in William Robertson Smith: Essays in Reassessment, ed. William Johnstone (Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 376-82. See also E. G. Brown, “Obituary Notice: Prof. Will Robertson Smith,” Journal of Royal Asiatic Society (July 1894); John Sutherland Black, The Life of William Robertson Smith (1912); and John William Rogerson, The Bible and Criticism in Victorian Britain: Profiles of F. D. Maurice and William Robertson Smith (Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). [↑](#endnote-ref-1061)
1062. Emphasis his, Blyden, Arabic Bible, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-1062)
1063. Ibid., 18. [↑](#endnote-ref-1063)
1064. Ibid., 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-1064)
1065. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1065)
1066. The reviewer was astute enough to discern that Blyden’s "main contention” was “that the Arabic version of the Scriptures prepared and published by the American Missionaries at Beirut (Syria) . . . is calculated to cause needless perplexity and offense to Muslims by transliteration (of) the various Hebrew names applied to the Divine Being." Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 848. On the controversy provoked in missiological circles by biblical criticism, comparative religion, and an emergent modernism, see Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii, 58, 90-97 and William R. Hutchison, “Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity, 1875-1935,” in The Missionary Enterprise in China and America, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1974), 110-31. See also William R. Hutchinson, The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976) and John Wolffe, ed., Religion in Victorian Britain: 5 Culture and Conflict. [↑](#endnote-ref-1066)
1067. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1067)
1068. Cooper, Life and Writings, 13-18, 20. [↑](#endnote-ref-1068)
1069. In an important addendum, Cooper added that she “mentioned these differences as establishing one fact, namely; a lasting friendship is not conditioned on identity of views nor dependent on the self-immolation of either personality.” Cooper, Life and Writings, 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-1069)
1070. Cooper, Life and Writings, 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-1070)
1071. On the rise and religious impact of “modernism” within the American religious community, see especially Averill, American Theology in the Liberal Tradition, 95,100-106; Cauthen, American Religious Liberalism, 30, 147-206. [↑](#endnote-ref-1071)
1072. On the Fundamentalist-Modernist conflict, particularly as played out among Presbyterians, see Bradley J. Longfield, The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). More broadly see Willard Gatewood, Controversy in the Twenties: Fundamentalism, Modernism, Evolution (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969); N. F. Furniss, The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954) and Stewart G. Cole, The History of Fundamentalism (New York: R. R. Smith, 1931). [↑](#endnote-ref-1072)
1073. See however Sidwell, “Grimke and the Fundamentalists” and the concluding chapters of Woodson, History of the Negro Church. [↑](#endnote-ref-1073)
1074. Louis B. Weeks III, “Racism, World War I and the Christian Life: Francis James Grimke in the Nation’s Capital,” Journal of Presbyterian History 50, no. 9 (1973): 471-88. For Grimke’s comments on the race riots of 1919, see Ferry, Portrait, 330-32. [↑](#endnote-ref-1074)
1075. In 1913 simmering conflict between Gresham Machen, professor of New Testament, and Benjamin B. Warfield, professor of Theology ignited. Although ostensibly over increased racial proscriptions at the seminary, the conflict also delineated the relative positions that each would assume in the impending theological/doctrinal conflict that would divide the Seminary and the wider Presbyterian denomination. Moorhead, Princeton Seminary, 196, 254-55. For the more racially and theologically conservative Machen’s aggressive rejoinder to “modernism” and “liberalism,” see especially J. Gresham Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009, first published 1923). The more theologically and racially moderate Warfield’s enrollment at the seminary (1873-76) had overlapped with that of Grimke, and he reportedly “had a high regard” for Grimke. Ethelbert D. Warfield to Grimke, 28 December 1922, Woodson, Works, 4:357-58. [↑](#endnote-ref-1075)
1076. Francis Grimke, “Evangelicalism and Institutes of Evangelism,” Woodson, Works, 1:526, cited in Sidwell, “Grimke and the Fundamentalists,” 85. [↑](#endnote-ref-1076)
1077. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1077)
1078. Grimke to the members of the Class of 1878 of Princeton Theological Seminary, Washington D.C., 27 April 1918, Woodson, Works, 4:216. [↑](#endnote-ref-1078)
1079. Cooper, Life, and Writings, 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-1079)
1080. Woodson, Works, 1: xxii. See also Carter G. Woodson’s

      broader assessment of the black church and ministry during this era in Woodson, History of the Negro Church ,247, 276- 278, 303. [↑](#endnote-ref-1080)
1081. Sidwell agrees with Randal Balmer and John Fitzmier who contend that “Grimke was broadly evangelical in his sympathies and was neither a fundamentalist nor a promoter of the Princeton Theology.” Balmer and Fitzmier, The Presbyterians, 170. Sidwell, “Grimke and the Fundamentalists,” 81. [↑](#endnote-ref-1081)
1082. Sidwell, Fides, 28. On Grimke's stance on the fusion of orthodoxy and racism by

      fundamentalist leaders such as J. G. Machen and Williams Jennings, see Sidwell, “Grimke and

      the Fundamentalists," 83, 85-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-1082)
1083. Woodson, Works, 3:185-86, 244, 31. [↑](#endnote-ref-1083)
1084. Grimke was also probably personally offended when in 1896 eight students at Lincoln University volunteered for foreign missionary service and were rejected by the Board of Missions. Murry, Presbyterians, 195. The Presbyterian Board of Missions was only one of several Protestant Mission Boards which began to restrict the use of black missionaries during this era. The Church's capitulation to the prevailing mood of American racism was affirmed in 1906 when the General Assembly agreed to the formation of racially segregated presbyteries and synods (judicatories) in exchange for union with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. See David M. Reimers, "The Race Problem and Presbyterian Union," Church History, XXXI, No. 2 (June 1972), 203-215. On the protests presented by Grimke' and Anderson see Murry, Presbyterians, 196- 200 and Woodson, Grimke', 115-116, 165-169; and especially, Henry Justin Ferry, "Racism and Reunion: A Black Protest by Francis James Grimke'", Journal of Presbyterian History, vol. 50, Number 2 (Summer, 1972), 77-88. For Blyden's comments on increasing racism in the American Presbyterian Church and community see Blyden, "Christianity and the Negro Race" in Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race,35-36. For explicit charges of racism within the Presbyterian mission field see the protests of Taka Truman of the Crisco and Gabon mission over discrepancies in support provided black and white missionaries by the Board. See Taka Truman to the Board, October 10, 11, 1881, Africa Letters, 6. Such views contributed to an unofficial but effective policy that denied black candidates appointment to foreign mission posts from 1896 to 1928Murray, Presbyterians, 195. [↑](#endnote-ref-1084)
1085. See Frank Field Ellinwood, Oriental Religions and Christianity: A Course of Lectures Delivered on the Elly Foundation Before the Students of Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1891 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1892); Frank Field Ellinwood, Questions and Phases of Modern Missions (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1899); Rev. F. F. Ellinwood, D. D., “The Great African Mission Field,” The Missionary Review, from The African Repository 66, (October 4, 1890): 107-12; and Anson Phelps Atterbury and Frank Field Ellinwood, Islam in Africa: Its Effects-Religious, Ethical, and Social-Upon the People of the Country (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1899). [↑](#endnote-ref-1085)
1086. Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" Christian Work, June 10, 1922, 716-22. See also Peter J. Paris, John W. Cook et al., The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York (New York: New York University Press, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-1086)
1087. See Harry Emerson Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible (New York: Association Press, 1926). [↑](#endnote-ref-1087)
1088. See the series of articles published in Christian Century under the title, “How My Mind Has Changed in This Decade.” Christian Century 56 (January 18-September 20, 1939). See also Harry Emerson Fosdick, “Beyond Modernism,” Christian Century 52 (December 1935): 1549-52. [↑](#endnote-ref-1088)
1089. Grimke references and cites Fosdick’s text The Challenge of the Present Crisis in his “Victory for the Allies and the United States a Ground of Rejoicing, of Thanksgiving,” in Negro Orators and Their Orations, ed. Carter G. Woodson (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1925), 690-708. See also Louis Weeks, “Racism, World War I and the Christian Life: Francis Grimke in the Nations’ Capital,” in Black Apostles: African American Clergy Confront the Twentieth Century, eds. Randall K. Burkett and Richard Newman (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978), 57-75. [↑](#endnote-ref-1089)
1090. On the “mediating theology” exhibited by Henry van Dyke of the class of 1877, see Sydney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of American People (New Haven: Yale U Press, 1972), 815, cited in Moorhead, Princeton Seminary, 345; Ferry, “Portrait,” 87. [↑](#endnote-ref-1090)
1091. Woodson, Works 4:139-40, cited by Sidwell, “Grimke and the Fundamentalists,” 86-87. [↑](#endnote-ref-1091)
1092. The directors, faculty, students, and graduates of Princeton Seminary also remained susceptible to the intense controversy which would contribute to the division and reorganization of the seminary in 1929. Moorhead, Princeton Seminary, 343-69. [↑](#endnote-ref-1092)
1093. Woodson, Works, 3:185-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-1093)
1094. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1094)
1095. Francis Grimke M S Sermon, July 1, 1928, Cooper, Life, and Writings, 129; Ferry, “Portrait,” 86-87. See also Francis P. Weisenberger, Ordeal of Faith: The Crisis of Church-Going America, 1865-1900 (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959) and Ferenc Morton Szasz, The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930 (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1982). [↑](#endnote-ref-1095)
1096. Woodson, Works,1: xviii, 547-48. See also Sidwell, “Fides,” 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-1096)
1097. See for example Edward Blyden, “The Elements of Permanent Influence: Discourse Delivered in the Fifteenth Street Church, Washington, D.C, Sunday, February 16, 1890.” Washington, DC: Pendleton, 1890. [↑](#endnote-ref-1097)
1098. On Blyden’s comments related to the potential impact the teaching of “higher criticism” within black colleges and theological institutions see Blyden, "The Koran in Africa," Journal of the African Society no. 14 (January 1905): 161. [↑](#endnote-ref-1098)
1099. Despite Grimke’s attack, Nelson would become the first black President of Shaw Universities, the first president of Dillard University and subsequently Dean of the Howard School of Religion. He would also travel to India to study with Gandhi and assist in efforts to mediate conflict between Moslems and Hindus. Nelson became a friend and associate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. See Jean R. Hailey, “William Nelson, Dean at Howard, Dies,” The Washington Post, March 30, 1977. [↑](#endnote-ref-1099)
1100. # Woodson, Works, 3:191. Ironically, from 1940 to 1949, Nelson served as Dean of the Howard School of Religion and was one of the founders of the progressive Journal of Religious Thought. Jean R. Hailey, “William Nelson, Dean at Howard, Dies,” Washington Post, March 30.1977 accessed at www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1977/03/30/

      [↑](#endnote-ref-1100)
1101. See Francis Grimke, Meditations on Preaching (Log College Press, 2018), 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-1101)
1102. Woodson, Works, 4:560-67. See also Richard I. McKinney, Mordecai, the Man and His Message: The Story of Mordecai Wyatt Johnson (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997). For a broader perspective see Randall K. Burkett and Richard Newman, eds. Black Apostles: Afro-American Clergy Confront the Twentieth Century (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co. 1978). [↑](#endnote-ref-1102)
1103. Woodson, reported that “Certain professors at Howard University at this time were boldly attacking religious principles, and Dr. Grimke wanted to be sure that the head of the University at least was orthodox.” Woodson, Works, 4 :667-568 [↑](#endnote-ref-1103)
1104. See Mordechai Johnson to Francis J. Grimke, March 5, 1937, Woodson, Works 4, 567-568. It was in keeping with his concern and efforts to maintain a traditional Christian orientation at Howard that Grimke gifted the school with “two thousand five hundred valuable books” from his personal library. Benjamin Brawley to Grimke, October 16, 1937, Woodson, Works 4, 557. [↑](#endnote-ref-1104)
1105. # On the significance of the thought and work of E. Franklin Frazier see <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/history/historians-miscellaneous-biographies/edward-franklin-frazier> (accessed 1/15/2019). See also S. F. Fullinwider, The Mind and Mood of Black America: Twentieth Century Thought (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1969) and Anthony M. Platt, E. Franklin Frazier Reconsidered, (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 1991). On the academic and religious significance of the University of Chicago and its affiliated divinity school see John W. Boyer, The University of Chicago: A History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015) and Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr. No Ivory Tower: The Story of the Chicago Theological Seminary (Chicago: The Chicago Theological Seminary, 1965).

      [↑](#endnote-ref-1105)
1106. Anna J. Cooper to Mordechai Johnson, February 24, 1937, Woodson, Works, 4:565-566. [↑](#endnote-ref-1106)
1107. Cooper to Grimke February 28, 1937. Woodson, Works, 4 :566-567. [↑](#endnote-ref-1107)
1108. See Aldridge, “Progressivism.” [↑](#endnote-ref-1108)
1109. On Du Bois’ incorporation of the insights of “the science of religion” and his maturing religious and theological orientation see Chidester, Empire, 191-221; W. E. B. Du Bois, The Negro (New York: Henry Holt, 1915); W. E. B. Du Bois, Prayers for Dark People, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980); Herbert Aptheker, “W. E. B. Du Bois and Religion: A Brief Reassessment,” Journal of Religious Thought 39, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 1982): 4-6; W. E. B. Du Bois, Du Bois on Religion, ed. Phil Zuckerman (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira, 2000). Phil Zuckerman, “The Sociology of Religion of W. E. B. Du Bois,” Sociology of Religion 63, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 239-253; Edward J. Blum, W. E. B. Du Bois: American Prophet (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). See also Luke Sinitiere, “Of Faith and Fiction: Teaching W. E. B. Du Bois and Religion,” The History Teacher, volume 45, No. 3 May 2012: 421-436. [↑](#endnote-ref-1109)
1110. William E. B. Du Bois, “Credo,” New York Independent, October 6, 1904. Accessed at <http://scua.library.umass.edu/duboisopedia/doku.php?id=about:credo>, April 14, 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1110)
1111. Francis James Grimké, 1850-1937. Letter from Francis J. Grimké to W. E. B. Du Bois, January 7, 1905. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. Accessed online at credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b002-i321 on May 10, 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1111)
1112. Upon Du Bois’ 50th birthday in 1918, Grimke sent him a congratulatory letter to which Du Bois responded. See Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to Francis J. Grimké, February 14, 1918. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. [↑](#endnote-ref-1112)
1113. See Grimke on Du Bois, Woodson, Works, 3:465. [↑](#endnote-ref-1113)
1114. Woodson, Works,3: 194, 523-524. [↑](#endnote-ref-1114)
1115. See Francis Grimke, “The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: Its Value—Its Aims—Its Claims,” (1921) and Sidwell, Fides, 16, 18 and Woodson, Works, 1:621, 624, 626; 3:447 and 4:102, 484. [↑](#endnote-ref-1115)
1116. See Grimke’s 1935 sermon “Conditions Necessary to Permanent World Peace,” in Cooper, Life and Writings, 187-97. See also Sidwell, “Grimke and the Fundamentalists,” 80 and Woodson, Works, 3:342. For a broader perspective on black “Progressives and Conservatives” during this era see Woodson’s concluding chapters in Woodson, History of the Negro Church, 247-313. [↑](#endnote-ref-1116)
1117. The Fraternal Council was headed by the progressive and liberal AME Bishop Reverdy Ransom. Its forum, The Journal of Religion, which billed itself as an “Interdenominational Review,” was edited by Lendell Charles Ridley who was also an AME minister and head of the Department of Philosophy at Wilberforce University. [↑](#endnote-ref-1117)
1118. See “Thus we Go,” Negro Journal of Religion 1 (February 1935):15; "Editorial," Negro Journal of Religion 1 (Feb. 1935): 3. See also Daniel, Black Journals of the United States, 279-281. A review of existing copies of the Journal reveals an impressive list of contributors commenting on a broad range of theological, social, racial, political and missiological issues. [↑](#endnote-ref-1118)
1119. Negro Journal of Religion I (Nov. 1935): 10. See “Modernism Destroys Evangelicism,” Negro Journal of Religion 1 (Nov. 1935):10. [↑](#endnote-ref-1119)
1120. See Arthur Evans, Jr., "College Students' Attitude toward Religion," Negro Journal of

      Religion 1 (Feb. 1935): 7, and "Address to the Country," Negro Journal of Religion 2 (Mar. 1936): 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-1120)
1121. "Message to the Churches and to the Public from the Fraternal Council of Negro Churches," Ransom, Pilgrimage, 297-300. On Ransom and the Fraternal Council, see Reverdy C. Ransom, "Why a Federation of Negro Denominations in the United States?," Negro Journal of Religion (Feb. 1935): 5. See also Reverdy C. Ransom, Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom’s Son (Nashville: The A. M. C. Sunday School Union, 1948), 96-300 ; David Wills, "Reverdy Ransom: The Making of an A.M.E. Bishop;" Burkett and Newman, eds., Black Apostles,181-212; See also Calvin S. Morris, “Reverdy Ransom , the Social Gospel and Race,” The Journal of Religious Thought (Vol 41, No.1 Spring -Summer 1984): 7-21 and Calvin S. Morris, Reverdy C. Ransom: Black Advocate of the Social Gospel (Lanham, Md. New York, London: University Press of America, 1990). [↑](#endnote-ref-1121)
1122. William H. Ferris, "The New Negro's Attitude towards Theology," Negro Journal of Religion 1 (July 1935): 6, 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-1122)
1123. Ferris grew up in New Haven and graduated from Yale University in 1895. After briefly pasturing a Congregational Church in Wilmington, North Carolina, Ferris became a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and later the A.M.E. Church. For a critical evaluation of Ferris and his works see Moses, Golden Age, 212-213. [↑](#endnote-ref-1123)
1124. On the international linkages and Pan-African significance of the "New Negro Movement" see Geiss, Pan-African Movement, 315. [↑](#endnote-ref-1124)
1125. Kelly Miller, “A Man of God in An Age of Gold,” The Afro-American, June 13, 1925. [↑](#endnote-ref-1125)
1126. The contributions of European scholars such as the Swiss theologian Karl Barth in formation of “crisis” or dialectical theology” were seminal. See Sydney Ahlstrom, Theology in America,77-82; Hordern, Layman’s Guide, 130-149. [↑](#endnote-ref-1126)
1127. On the rise of Neo-Orthodoxy within the United States see Ahlstrom, Theology in America, 77-84, Hutchinson, Modernist Impulse, 288-310. On its distinctive tenets and the issues and concerns that shaped it see Smith, Changing Conceptions of Original Sin, 201-229; Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932); Donald B. Meyer, The Protestant Search for Political Realism, 1919-1941 (Berkeley and Los Angles: University of California Press, 1960). Theological liberalism and modernism provided rationale and impetus for the independent and “younger” church movement which had been encouraged in Africa by Blyden. In contrast, the theological and missiological impact of Neo-Orthodoxy was basically a reaffirmation of traditional Western Christianity. See Hendrick Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (London: International Missionary Council, 1938). [↑](#endnote-ref-1127)
1128. Charles L. Hill, “The Religious Crisis of the Present,” Negro Journal of Religion I (March 1935): 5,6,13. [↑](#endnote-ref-1128)
1129. Cooper, Life and Writings, 13-18, 20-21. [↑](#endnote-ref-1129)
1130. “Leaders Laud Dr. F. Grimke at last Rites,” Afro-American, October 23, 1937, 16, 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-1130)
1131. The Crisis: A Journal of the Darker Races 44, no. 27 (December 1937): 380. [↑](#endnote-ref-1131)
1132. Louis H. Jordan, Comparative Religion: Its Genesis and Growth (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons 1905); and Ahlstrom, American Encounter. As the twentieth century proceeded progressive universities in the United States such as a Harvard and Chicago would increasingly refer to the developing discipline as the “history of religions.” On the continued development of the emergent discipline see Eustace A. Haydon, “From Comparative Religion to History of Religions.” The Journal of Religion, vol. 2, no. 6, 1922: 577–587.  www.jstor.org/stable/1195525. See also “Sharpe, “From Comparative Religion to Religious Studies,” in Sharpe, Comparative Religion, 294-313.; Eric J. Sharpe, Comparative Religion: A History (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1975); Joseph M. Kitagawa, “The History of Religions in America” in Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959): 1-30. See also A Eustace Haydon. Ed. Modern Trends in World-Religions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934) and George F. Thomas, “The History of Religion in the Universities,” Journal of Bible and Religion, (Vol. XVIII (1949). [↑](#endnote-ref-1132)
1133. See Herbert Lewis, “Social and Cultural Anthropology and the Study of Africa,” African Studies, Published online July 2014; Keith Hart, “The Social Anthropology of West Africa,” Annual Review of Anthropology14 (1985):243–272; Jack Goody, The Expansive Movement: Anthropology in Britain and Africa 1918 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Adam Kuper, Anthropologists and Anthropology: The British School, 1922–1972*.* (New York: Pica, 197); Mwende Ntarangwi, David Mills, Mustafa Babiker*,* African Anthropologies: History, Critique and Practice*, (*London: Zed Books, 2006); Sally F. Moore*,* Anthropology and Africa: Changing Perspectives on a Changing Scene (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press,1994). For related developments on this side of the Atlantic see Kevin A Yelvington, Afro- Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora, (Santa Fe New Mexico : School of American Research Press, 2006) and Ira E. Harrison and Faye V. Harrison , eds, African American Pioneers in Anthropology (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 1998). [↑](#endnote-ref-1133)
1134. Blyden, African Life and Thought, 8. This process would contribute to the emergence of a new generation of African and diaspora African scholar-activists who, like Blyden, would interrogate, critique, and selectively appropriate theories, methodologies, and perspectives associated with these developing disciplines in defense of Africa and the quest for the liberation of her offspring. For insight into the complexities of this process and the contributions of Blyden see for example Tejumola Olaniyan and James H. Sweet, eds, The African Diaspora and the Disciplines (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 148,157,30. [↑](#endnote-ref-1134)
1135. On developments within the American context see for example, Bainton, Yale and the Ministry; John Boyer, The University of Chicago: A History, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Robert Handy, A History of Union Theological Seminary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). See also Eric J. Sharpe, Comparative Religion, 125-194. See also James Turner, Religion Enters The Academy: The Origins of the Scholarly Study of Religion in America (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011) and Ahlstrom, “American Protestant Encounter with World Religions.” Of special importance on the far side of the Atlantic were developments taking place in the University of London and establishment of its School of [African and] Oriental Studies in 1916 “to advance British scholarship, science and commerce in Africa and Asia.” Its establishment would lay the foundation for development a decade and a half later of its “Department of African languages and Cultures” and its enrollment of increasing numbers of African students. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SOAS_University_of_London> ; <https://www.soas.ac.uk/centenary/the-soas-story/first-expansion-1937-69/> See also Barnard, History of English Education 83-87, 135-143 and Ian Brown, The School of Oriental and African Studies: Imperial Training and the Expansion of Learning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-1135)
1136. Blyden, "The Koran in Africa," Journal of the African Society no. 14 (January 1905): 161. See also Blyden’s controversial efforts to introduce the insights and perspective of comparative religion as professor and President of the College of Liberia in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 723, March 29, 1901 and Blyden, “The Liberian Scholar: An Address Delivered on the Occasion of the Inauguration of the President-elect of Liberia College, February 21st, 1900,” Liberia Bulletin (1900), 11-23.  For related developments at Howard University see Rayford W. Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years (New York: New York University Press, 1968). On developments at Lincoln University see Horace Mann Bond, Education for Life: A History of Lincoln University, Pennsylvania (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). More generally see Raymond Wolters, The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). [↑](#endnote-ref-1136)
1137. Kenneth James King, Pan-Africanism and Education: A study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) and Richard D. Ralston, “A Second Middle Passage: African Students Sojourns in the United States during the colonial periods and their influence upon the character of African Leadership” Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1972, 193. [↑](#endnote-ref-1137)
1138. 23. Masilela, “New Negro Modernity,” 5-6. See also Donavan Williams, Umfundisi: a biography of Tiyo Soga, 1829-1871 (Lovedale, South Africa: Lovedale Press, 1978);  *“*Tiyo Soga,”[The Journal and Selected Writings of the Reverend Tiyo Soga](http://books.google.com/books?id=x4AmAQAAIAAJ) ([Grahamstown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grahamstown): [Rhodes University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhodes_University), 1983),8*;* John A. Chalmers, Tiyo Soga: A Page of South African Mission Work (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1877) and J. A. Millard, “Tiyo Soga,” in Dictionary of African Christian Biography, http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/soga1\_tiyo.html.. [↑](#endnote-ref-1138)
1139. See Graham A. Duncan, “Ethiopianism in Pan-African perspective, 1880-1920,” Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*.* [online]. 2015, vol.41, n.2 [cited 2019-01-28]:198-218. Available from: <http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\_arttext&pid=S1017-04992015000200013&lng=en&nrm=iso>. ISSN 2412-4265.  <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2412-4265/2015/85>. For a broader historical perspective on the transnational aspect of this dynamic see also George Shepperson, “Notes on Negro American Influences On The Emergence Of African Nationalism,” Journal of African History, vol. I, no.2, July 1960:299-312. [↑](#endnote-ref-1139)
1140. Moses, Golden Age, 249. On related changes taking place on black campuses see Raymond Wolters, The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) 3-28,70-136, 276-348. [↑](#endnote-ref-1140)
1141. William H. Ferris, "The New Negro's Attitude towards Theology," Negro Journal of Religion 1 (July 1935): 6,12. [↑](#endnote-ref-1141)
1142. Moses, Golden Age, 212-213. [↑](#endnote-ref-1142)
1143. See Chapter XI, “A Historical and Psychological Account of the Genesis and Development of the Negro’s Religion,” in William H. Ferris, The African Abroad, (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Press, 1913), 236-237, 416. [↑](#endnote-ref-1143)
1144. Ferris, The African Abroad. Ferris was actively supportive of the Pan-African agenda of Marcus Garvey and he served for a time as editor of The Black World, the official journal of Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). [↑](#endnote-ref-1144)
1145. Wolters, The New Negro On Campus. On the international linkages and significance of the "New Negro Movement" see Geiss, Pan-African Movement, 315. [↑](#endnote-ref-1145)
1146. Hubert Harrison, When Africa Awakes: The "Inside Story" of the Stirrings and Strivings of the New Negro in the Western World (New York: Porro Press, 1920), 76. Quoted in Moses, Golden Age, 248. [↑](#endnote-ref-1146)
1147. Moses, Golden Age, 249. See Blyden, African Life and Customs. [↑](#endnote-ref-1147)
1148. Alaine Locke, "Apropos of Africa," in Adelaide Cromwell Hill and Martin Kilson, eds. Apropos of Africa: Afro-American Leaders and the Romance of Africa, (New York: Doubleday and Co. 1971), 350-357, 412. See also Locke's fuller articulation of the concerns and significance of the New Negro Movement in Alaine Locke, The New Negro (New York, 1925). [↑](#endnote-ref-1148)
1149. Geiss, Pan-African Movement, 315. [↑](#endnote-ref-1149)
1150. Quoted from Freedom from Religion Foundation accessed at <https://ffrf.org/news/day/dayitems/item/37646-alain-locke> See also Leonard Harris, ed. The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1991). [↑](#endnote-ref-1150)
1151. Consistent with this agenda and his personal religious orientation, Locke was reportedly “reprimanded” early in his tenure as professor at Howard for refusing to attend Chapel. Ibid. See also Jeffrey Conrad Stewart, A Biography of Alaine Locke: Philosopher of the Harlem Renaissance, 1886-1930 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1981). [↑](#endnote-ref-1151)
1152. Locke, "Apropos," 412. [↑](#endnote-ref-1152)
1153. [↑](#endnote-ref-1153)
1154. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1154)
1155. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1155)
1156. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1156)
1157. Ibid, 413. [↑](#endnote-ref-1157)
1158. “Address to the Nations of the Worlds,” J. Ayodele Langley, Pan Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa,1900-1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Classes (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-1158)
1159. [↑](#endnote-ref-1159)
1160. [↑](#endnote-ref-1160)
1161. J. Ayodele, Langley, Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa, 1856-1970 (London: Rex Collings, 1979), 748-752. See also Blyden, “Proceedings,” quoted in Holden, Blyden, 836. [↑](#endnote-ref-1161)
1162. “The Pan African Congresses,” Crisis (Oct 1927): 263-264. [↑](#endnote-ref-1162)
1163. J. A. Langley, "Chief Sam's African Movement and Race Consciousness in West Africa," Phylon 32 (Summer 1972):164-178; William E. Bittle and Gilbert L. Geiss, The Longest Way Home: Chief Alfred C. Sam's Back-to-Africa Movement (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, l964), 20-24. [↑](#endnote-ref-1163)
1164. On theological, missiological, and broader pedagogical changes at Yale Divinity School and University during this era see Roland H. Bainton, Yale and the Ministry: A History of Education for the Christian Ministry at Yale from the Founding in 1701 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 169-195. At Yale Divinity School Faduma appropriated theological, intellectual, and academic tools that were consistent with Blyden’s theological, missiological, pedagogical and ideological views. [↑](#endnote-ref-1164)
1165. See Orishatukeh Faduma, “African Negro Education: Some Demands of Modern Education,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, August 10, 1918; Martin Kilso, “The National Congress of British West Africa, 1918-1935,” Journal of Politics 20 (May 1958): 368-87; J. Ayodele Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945: A Study in Ideological and Social Classes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 37-38, 110-111; Orishatukeh Faduma, “Christianity and Islam in Africa,” African Mail, 22 May 1914; Orishatukeh Faduma, “ Christianity and Islam in Africa : A Native African’s View of the Situation,” Missionary Review of the World 48 (Nov. 1925) :865-68: Orishatukeh Faduma, “Khalil’s Mohammedan Code, from the French of N. Seignette,” Sierra Leone Weekly News 24 Dec, 1921; 14 Jan., 21 Jan. 1922. [↑](#endnote-ref-1165)
1166. Faduma, “The New Theology,” 143. “Revered Orishatukeh Faduma,” Sierra   
      Leone Weekly News, 2 Aug. 1902. [↑](#endnote-ref-1166)
1167. Orishatukeh Faduma, "The African Movement: Its Idea and Methods," Sierra Leone Weekly News, October 2, 1915. [↑](#endnote-ref-1167)
1168. Faduma was hopeful that he might contribute to establishment of the movement’s envisioned “Ethiopian College.” Faduma, "Drawbacks and Successes of Missionary Work in Africa," Sierra Leone Weekly News, April 20, 1918. [↑](#endnote-ref-1168)
1169. Orishatukeh Faduma, "The African Movement: The Perils of Pioneering--A Parallel," Sierra Leone Weekly News, 11(Sept. 1915); Sierra Leone Outlook 7 (Dec. 1916): 20; Orishatukeh Faduma, "The Man of Dreams," Sierra Leone Outlook 7 (Apr. 1916): 3-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-1169)
1170. Faduma, "The Man of Dreams," 3-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-1170)
1171. Orishatukeh Faduma, “African Negro Education: Some Demands of Modern Education,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, August 10, 1918; Orishatukeh Faduma, “What the Study of Science Means,” Sierra Leone Weekly News October 21, 1922; Orishatukeh Faduma, “The Study of Science in Elementary and Secondary Schools,” Sierra Leone Weekly News October 7, 1922; Orishatukeh Faduma, “The New Education,” Sierra Leone Weekly News April 8, 1916; Orishatukeh Faduma, Negro Development : Its Meaning and Aims, Sierra Leone Weekly News September 17, 1921. [↑](#endnote-ref-1171)
1172. [↑](#endnote-ref-1172)
1173. Faduma, "Drawbacks and Successes of Missionary Work in Africa," Sierra Leone Weekly News, 20 Apr. 1918. [↑](#endnote-ref-1173)
1174. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1174)
1175. Martin Kilso, “The National Congress of British West Africa, 1918-1935,” Journal of Politics 20 (May 1958): 368-87 [↑](#endnote-ref-1175)
1176. J. Ayodele Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945: A Study in Ideological and Social Classes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 37-38, 110-111. [↑](#endnote-ref-1176)
1177. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 248 [↑](#endnote-ref-1177)
1178. See Robert A. Hill, “Before Garvey: Chief Alfred Sam and the African Movement, 1912-1916,” in Robert A. Hill, ed. Pan-African Biography (Los Angeles: African Studies Center, University of California and Crossroads Press, 1987): 57-77. [↑](#endnote-ref-1178)
1179. Orishatukeh Faduma, “Africa’s Claims and Needs,” Southern Workman (May 1925) :221-225. [↑](#endnote-ref-1179)
1180. The increasing difficulty that Kalibala and other African students had in gaining access to study in the United States was rooted in the fear of missionaries, British Colonial officials, and organizations such as the Philipps Stokes Agency, that African students would be radicalized by such study. Consequently, a concerted effort was made to try and ensure that African students would study at ostensibly “safe “ institutions such as Hampton and Tuskegee. See Kenneth James King, Pan Africanism and Education: A study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971): 72, 228-230, 240 See also Woodson, History of the Negro Church, 286-287. [↑](#endnote-ref-1180)
1181. Ernest Kalibala, “Education for the Villages in Uganda, East Africa” (Master’s Thesis, Teacher’s College, 1934). [↑](#endnote-ref-1181)
1182. Ernest Kalibala, “The Social Structure of the Baganda Tribe” (Ph.D. diss. Harvard University, 1946). [↑](#endnote-ref-1182)
1183. See Earnest Kalibala, “Africa-The Unknown Quantity,” Mission Herald (May/June 1940): 10-12 and (July /Aug 1940):11-13. On Kalibala see also “Editorial, The Foreign Mission Board Takes Over a New Station in Uganda, East Africa,” Mission Herald 43 (Jan/Feb. 1940): 12-15 and King, Pan-Africanism and Education: 228-30; 240-245; 374-378. [↑](#endnote-ref-1183)
1184. Faduma’s publications included several works that were clearly influenced by Blyden’s comparative assessments of Islam and Christianity in West Africa. See Orishatukeh Faduma, "Christianity and Islam in Africa," African Mail, May 22, 1915 and Orishatukeh Faduma, "Christianity and Islam in Africa: A Native African's View of the Situation," Missionary Review of the World 48 (Nov. 1925): 865-868. In both works, Faduma, reminiscent of Blyden, contrasted Islam's successful propagation in Africa with the failings of the Christian missionary enterprise. Contrary to the old missiological notions that depreciated the positive influence of Islam in Africa, he insisted that in relative terms the influence of Islam had been salutary. Similarly, convinced that Christian mission theorists had much to learn from Islam's success in West Africa, he attempted to disabuse his readers of the often superficial and stereotypical notions that hampered their understanding of the factors that accounted for Islam's rapid spread in West Africa. [↑](#endnote-ref-1184)
1185. On the significance of the Fifth Pan-African Conference which was held in Manchester, England see Esedebe, Pan-Africanism, 161-173 and Geiss, Pan-Africanism, 402-404. [↑](#endnote-ref-1185)
1186. See letters and commentary from African Series Sample Documents Volume VIII: October 1913-June 1921,” UCLA African Studies Center accessed online at <https://www.international.ucla.edu/asc/mgpp/sample08>**.** [↑](#endnote-ref-1186)
1187. Marcus Garvey, “A Talk with Afro-West Indians,” Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1187)
1188. See Edwin S Redkey, Black Exodus: Black Nationalist and Back-to Africa Movements, 1890-1910 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969.) 1-23, 99-100 and Robert A. Hill, ed., The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 536-547; also vol. 2, 122-123. [↑](#endnote-ref-1188)
1189. On Garvey's theological and missiological convictions, see Tony Martin, Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Westport, and London: Greenwood Press, 1971): 67-88. See also Marcus Garvey, Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or Africa for the Africans, ed. Amy Jacques-Garvey, (1923, 1925; reprint, New York: Athenium 1974). [↑](#endnote-ref-1189)
1190. Euba was born in Lagos and like Faduma attended the Boy’s High School in Sierra Leone where he also came under the influence of Blyden. As a minister he attempted to synthesis aspects of African culture with Christianity and later became a member of the Lagos branch of the UNIA. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, 271-278. Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism, 92,185,190. [↑](#endnote-ref-1190)
1191. F. H. Johnson, "Marcus Garvey and the Negro Race," Sierra Leone Weekly News, 25 Aug. 1923. [↑](#endnote-ref-1191)
1192. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1192)
1193. See Pan-African Manifestos and Resolutions, 1900-1969, 48-752 and Langley, Ideologies of Liberation, 738-61. [↑](#endnote-ref-1193)
1194. See Amy Jacques-Garvey, Garvey and Garveyism (Kingston: United Printers, 1963), 133-34. Note also Faduma’s efforts to address problems posed by religious diversity within the membership of the National Congress of British West Africa. See Langley, Ideologies of Liberation, 738-761 [↑](#endnote-ref-1194)
1195. For example, Ntongela Masilelap insists that “the intellectual [and cultural] construction of a New African modernity was forged or theorized on the pages of the New African newspapers.” Masilelap, “New Negro Modernity,” 4. See also Willie Givens, Selected Works Of Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden: Statesman, Politician, Linguist, Educator and Great Pan-Africanist (1832-1912) (unpublished collection, Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount Country Liberia: The Tubman Center of African Culture, 1976), 187; Lynch, Pan Negro Patriot, 89. [↑](#endnote-ref-1195)
1196. Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 93-94. [↑](#endnote-ref-1196)
1197. On the founding of the Sierra Leone Weekly News and Blyden’s contribution see Fyfe, History of Sierra Leone, 464, 496 and Cyril P. Foray, Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone. African Historical Dictionaries No. 12. (Metuchen, N. J. and London: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1977), 138. [↑](#endnote-ref-1197)
1198. A. M. E Church Review July 5, 1888. [↑](#endnote-ref-1198)
1199. William E. Seraile, Bruce Grit: The Black Nationalist Writings of John Edward Bruce (Knoxville: University of Tenn. Press, 2003), 84, 138-139. Blyden also shared his theological and hermeneutical reflections with Bruce who with Arthur Schomburg founded “The [Blyden] Society for the Study of African History” and laid the foundation for the famed Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. For Blyden’s sharing of his religious and theological orientation with Bruce see Blyden to John E. Bruce, 15 July 1910, Lynch, Letters, 503-4. On the significance of Bruce and his relationship to Blyden see Ralph L. Crowder, “John Edward Bruce, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Alexander Crummell, and J, Robert Love: Mentor, Patron, and the Evolution of a Pan-African Network,” Afro-American in New York Life and History 20 (July 1996); 59-91. See also Richard L. Beard and Cyril E. Zoerner, “Associated Negro Press: Its Founding, Ascendency, and Demise” Journalism Quarterly 46 (Spring 1969): 47-52; and Ralph L. Crowder, John Edward Bruce: Politician, Journalist, and Self-Trained Historian of the African Diaspora ( New York: New York University Press, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-1199)
1200. # Garvey initially presented himself in Britain as a “student and journalist” and would be mentored and employed by Duse Mohamed Ali who founded the African Times and Orient Review in the year of Blyden’s death. On Duse Mohamed Ali and his relationship with Garvey See letters and commentary from African Series Sample Documents Volume VIII: October 1913-June 1921,” UCLA African Studies Center accessed online at <https://www.international.ucla.edu/asc/mgpp/sample08>. Check also Ian Duffield, "Dusé Mohamed Ali, Islamic Politics and Pan-Africanism in Early-Twentieth-Century London" [paper presented at annual meeting of African Studies Association, New Orleans, November 1985]). Azikiwe, an admirer of Blyden, edited the African Morning Post and the West African Pilot. He also “founded the Zik Group of Newspapers” which published numerous newspapers which advanced a pro-African, pan-African. and nationalist agenda throughout West Arica and Nigeria. “Nnamdi Azikiwe,” New World Encyclopedia accessed online at <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Nnamdi_Azikiwe>.

      [↑](#endnote-ref-1200)
1201. By the 1930’s a partial list of prominent African American scholars evidencing to varying degrees a similarly changed orientation in their religious and theological beliefs as well as research and publications would have also included, for example, the Chicago University educated sociologist E. Franklin Frazier and historian Carter G. Woodson ; the Harvard University educated philosopher Alaine Locke, as well as the Oberlin and Sorbonne educated Anna J. Cooper. [↑](#endnote-ref-1201)
1202. On Du Bois’ reflections on his religious metamorphosis from youth to the theological heterodoxy of adulthood see W. E.B. Du Bois, The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century (New York: International Publishers, 1968), [285-286](http://books.google.com/books?id=NL2U7pN7Q18C&pg=PA285&vq=religion&source=gbs_search_r&cad=1_1#PPA284,M1). For contemporary assessments that explore and confirm Du Bois’ break with Protestant orthodoxy see [Jonathon S. Kahn](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&text=Jonathon+S.+Kahn&search-alias=books&field-author=Jonathon+S.+Kahn&sort=relevancerank), Divine Discontent: The Religious Imagination of W. E. B. Du Bois (London: Oxford University Press, 2009); [Brian L. Johnson](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&text=Brian+L.+Johnson&search-alias=books&field-author=Brian+L.+Johnson&sort=relevancerank), W.E.B. Du Bois: Toward Agnosticism, 1868-1934 (Lanham. Maryland: Roman and Littlefield Publishers). [↑](#endnote-ref-1202)
1203. W. E. B. Du Bois, The Negro’s Church: Report of a Social Study Made under the Direction of Atlanta University: Together with the Proceedings of the eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903; W. E. B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk (1903); W. E. B. Du Bois, The Negro (New York: Henry Hold, 19150. See also W. E. B. Du Bois, more informal sharing of his views on religion with students at Atlanta University in W. E. B. Du Bois, Prayers for Dark Peoples and Curtis Evans, “W. E. B. Du Bois: Interpreting Religion and the Problem of the Negro Church,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol., 75, Issue 2, June 2007: 268-297, accessed at https//doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfm001 [↑](#endnote-ref-1203)
1204. Chidester, Empire of Religion, 4, 11, 95. [↑](#endnote-ref-1204)
1205. Chidester’s study noting the African engagement with the discipline of comparative religion is primarily focused on developments within Southern Africa. Although he highlights more broadly the contributions of Du Bois, he inexplicably ignores the pioneering engagement of Blyden with the emergent discipline. Chidester, Empire of Religion, 4, 11, 193-221. Among pioneering South African scholars of religion noted by Chidester is the previously mentioned Tiyo Soga and Silas Modiri Molema (1891-1965). Educated in Scotland, Molema appreciated the import of religion in the South African context and fully engaged the era’s religious discourse as reflected in his familiarity with and critical appropriation of the works of religious theorists such as Herbert Spencer, Friedrich Max Muller, Andrew Lang and William James. Molema’s synthesis of religious, historical and anthropological studies and interests were illuminated in his 1920 publication The Bantu Past and Present: An Ethnographical and Historical Study of the Native Races of South African. See Silas Modiri Molema, The Bantu Past and Present: An Ethnographical and Historical Study of the Native Races of South African (Edinburgh: W. Green, 1920). Chidester, Empire of Religion, 191, 240-245. [↑](#endnote-ref-1205)
1206. The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1910); Dan S. Green, "W.E.B. Du Bois: His Journalistic Career". Negro History Bulletin 40.2 (1977): 672–677; and Rachael Farebrother, "The Crisis (1910-34)". The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines. Eds. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker. Vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012: 103–124. [↑](#endnote-ref-1206)
1207. DuBois reportedly informed Edith Holden that he “never met Dr, Blyden, but I know of him and have greatly admired his work.” Harry N. K. Odamtten, Edward Blyden ‘s Intellectual Transformations: Afropublicanism, Pan-Africanism, Isla, and the Indigenous West African Church (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2019), 34. See Holden, Blyden of Liberia, [↑](#endnote-ref-1207)
1208. Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to Edward W. Blyden, January 7, 1909, <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/pageturn/mums312-b001-i280/#page/1/mode/1up> accessed 4-10-2017. Shortly before Blyden’s death, Du Bois paid tribute to Blyden as “the leading representative of his race in West Africa.” “Man of the Month,” The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races, January 3, 1912, 103. See also Du Bois’ subsequent tributes to the life and work of Blyden as the “‘Grand Old Man of West Africa.’” “Along the Color Line,” Crisis, 3, no. 3 (March 1912):187. Cited by Odamtten, Intellectual Transformations, 36. In 1915, Du Bois, honored Blyden as the “prophet of the renaissance of the Negro race” in his text titled “The Negro.” W. E. B. Du Bois, The Negro (New York: Cosimo Classics, 1915) 41. Cited by Odamtten, Intellectual Transformations, 41. It is also of significance that in 1913 the posthumous publication of Blyden’s most iconoclastic pamphlet, The Arabic Bible, was cited in the Crisis. “Along the Color Line,” Crisis, 6, no. 1 (May 1913):13. [↑](#endnote-ref-1208)
1209. Henry Louis Gates, “W. E. B. Du Bois and the Encyclopedia Africana, 1909-63,” The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol. 568, 2000: 203–219. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1049481](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1049481). See also the introduction by Appiah and Gates to their own magisterial contemporary contribution to this project. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah, eds., Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience(New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999): ix-xvi. [↑](#endnote-ref-1209)
1210. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1210)
1211. Gates and Appiah add that “for Du Bois, marshalling the tools of ‘scientific knowledge,’” would make available critical corrective information and data. In a statement that evoked the broader concerns earlier expressed by Blyden in African Life and Customs, Du Bois added “There is need for young pupils and for mature students of a statement of the present condition of our knowledge concerning the darker races and especially concerning Negroes, which would make available our present scientific knowledge and set aside the vast accumulation of tradition and prejudice which makes such knowledge difficult now for the layman to obtain: *A Vade mecum* for American schools, editors, libraries, for Europeans inquiring into the race status here, for South Americans, and Africans.’ The publication of such an encyclopedia, Du Bois continued, would establish ‘a base for further advance and further study’ of ‘questions affecting the Negro race.’ An encyclopedia of the Negro, he reasoned, would establish both social policy and ‘social thought and discussion… upon a basis of accepted scientific conclusion.’” “W. E. B. DuBois and the Making of the Encyclopedia Africa, 1909-1963.” Retrieved from <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/w-e-b-dubois-and>-making-encyclopedia-african-1909-1963/.

      See also Blyden, African Life and Customs. Gates and Appiah also reference a number of literary “antecedents” that include Reverend James T. Holly’s 1895 publication of the Afro-American Encyclopaedia, Daniel Murray’s unpublished “Historical and Biographical Encyclopaedia of the Colored Race Throughout the World.” and a number of more denominationally focused efforts by Alexander Wayman, Charles O. Boothe, and Revels Adams. Gates and Appiah, Africana, xiii- xiv.

      [↑](#endnote-ref-1211)
1212. Gates and Appiah report that “On September 26, 1960, Du Bois announced that Kwame Nkrumah, the president of the newly independent Republic of Ghana, had invited him to repatriate to Ghana, where he would serve as the editor in chief of The Encyclopaedia Africana. Du Bois accepted, moving in 1961. On December 15, 1962, in his last public speech before his death on the eve of the March on Washington in August 1963, Du Bois addressed a conference assembled expressly to launch—at last—his great project.” The legacy of Blyden and the extended impact of modernity’s challenges and tropes were evoked, as Du Bois noted that although “long overdue,” the project remained relevant since “present thought and action. . . [remained] too often guided by old and discarded theories of race and heredity, by misleading emphasis and [the] silence of former histories.” Moreover, he conceded that it was “logical that such a work had to wait for independent Africans to carry it out [because] the encyclopedia is concerned with Africa as a whole ” since “After all of these centuries of slavery and colonialism, on the eve of the independence of the Continent, ‘it is African scholars themselves who will create the ultimate Encyclopaedia Africana.’” Although Du Bois would die within a year of his address, “the Secretariat of the Encyclopaedia Africana, based in Accra, Ghana, which Du Bois founded, eventually published three volumes of biographical dictionaries, in the late seventies and early eighties and . . . announced plans to publish an encyclopedia about the African continent in 2009.” “Du Bois and the Making of the Encyclopedia Africa,” [↑](#endnote-ref-1212)
1213. See especially Ama Barbara Biney, “Kwame Nkrumah: An Intellectual Biography,” Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies History Department, April 2007. [↑](#endnote-ref-1213)
1214. Horace Mann Bond who was a student at Lincoln University in the early 1920’s and later served as Lincoln’s first black president noted the historic role that Lincoln played in education of generations of African students and opined that the education of African students was a crucial part of Lincoln’s legacy: “The African story of Lincoln University. . . is the institution’s chief glory.” Lincoln would name one of its historic buildings Azikiwe-Nkrumah Hall in honor of two of its most famous African Alumni-Nnamdi Azikiwe and Kwame Nkrumah and in 1951 awarded Nkrumah an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. Bond, Education for Life, 487. Holden, “Modernity’s Body,” 313. In his study of Nkrumah’s synthesis of religion and politics, Addo contends that Lincoln “served as an incubator, as it were, where Nkrumah hatched and fashioned his political ideas and ideals.” Critical to this process was his appropriation of several important intellectual and academic trends that he was introduced to during his years of study at Lincoln and ten-year sojourn in the United States. Addo, Kwame Nkrumah, 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-1214)
1215. Livingston, Education and Race, 107,190. [↑](#endnote-ref-1215)
1216. A year later Nkrumah was also awarded the Master of Arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania as part of his preparation and quest for a doctorate that was never completed. However, upon departing the United States and before returning to the Gold Coast, Nkrumah spent two years in London where he attended lectures in economics at the London School of Economics and in philosophy at University College. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah (New York: International Publishers, 1957) 31-33; 48-51; Geiss, Pan-African Movement, 293 and Biney, “Kwame Nkrumah,” 30-31, 34. On the importance of Nkrumah’s decade long sojourn as a student in the United States see John Henrik Clarke, “Kwame Nkrumah: His Years in America,” The Black Scholar vol. 6, No.2 Black Politics 1974 (October 1974): 9-16. See also Marika Sherwood, Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad 1935-1947 (Accra: Freedom Publications, 1996). [↑](#endnote-ref-1216)
1217. Biney, “Kwame Nkrumah,” 64. [↑](#endnote-ref-1217)
1218. One of Nkrumah’s biographer provides an insightful, though romanticized assessment of the intellectual, religious, academic, and ideological metamorphosis fostered during Nkrumah’s ten-year sojourn in the United States amid disturbing manifestations and experiences of twentieth-century currents of modernity not unlike those which Blyden earlier warned Africans about. The narrative concludes with the suggestion that Nkrumah’s orientation toward theology and religion would henceforth be more critical as he incorporated them into his agenda for African liberation “In America, God’s own country, Theology had Nkrumah studied: The Bible, the Book of books Puzzled him as he read---'To him that hath, shall be given; To him that hath not, shall be taken away. Even that which he hath.’ Then took he one glance at Chicago—Blacks segregated and lynched, he saw: If this is Christianity, Nkrumah exclaimed, Then a layman, not a parson I’ll be. Philosophy, theology, economics, Political science and experience. In plenitude and variety With these he prepared For the Battle of Freedom.” Bankole Timothy, Kwame Nkrumah: His Rise to Power (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955), 43-44. [↑](#endnote-ref-1218)
1219. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1219)
1220. The subsequent license and freedom that Nkrumah would display in reinterpretations of “Biblical and God Language” was reflected in his well- known “parody” of Matthew 6:33 (“Seek ye first the kingdom of God”). It’s traditional and literal apolitical interpretation was boldly reinterpreted as “Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added to you.” in support and legitimation of Nkrumah’s political and social agenda, See Ebenezer Obiri Addo, Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion and Politics in Ghana (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997): 65, and 101-104. [↑](#endnote-ref-1220)
1221. At least one scholar has suggested that Nkrumah was at least indirectly introduced to Blyden’s ideological thought related to West African nationalism prior to his sojourn in the United States. This introduction coming by way of his brief association with Samuel R. Wood who served as secretary of the National Council of West Africa founded by Blyden devotees to give institutional focus to his dream of a united West Africa “transcending tribal, religious, and possibly territorial divisions created by the colonizing powers.” Biney, “Kwame Nkrumah” 18, 24 and Nkrumah, Ghana,17. On references to Blyden as “the ideological father of the idea of West African unity” See Lynch, Blyden, 250; Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism, 37-39, 110-111, 119-120, 128-129 207-212. See also J. E. Casely Hayford, United West Africa, (London: Phillips, 1919) and National Congress of British West Africa: Resolutions of the Conference of Africans of British West Africa, held at Accra, Gold Coast from 11th to 29th March 1920 cited in Langley. Pan-Africanism and Nationalism, 128-129. See also Geiss, Pan -African Movement, 286-287. See also Clarke, “Kwame Nkrumah.” On the “Blyden Society” and Bruce see Shepperson, “External Factors in the Development of African Nationalism” and Blyden to John E. Bruce, 15 July 1910, Lynch, Letters, 503-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-1221)
1222. Aggrey who was born on the Gold Coast is readily acknowledged by Nkrumah and his biographers as having had a profound influence on his early thought. Nkrumah, Ghana, 32, Biney, “Kwame Nkrumah,” 21-22. On Aggrey see Edwin W. Smith, Aggrey of Africa: A Study in Black and White (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1929). For a recent assessment of Blyden’s influence on Nkrumah see also Odamtten, Intellectual Transformations, x,134-136, 186-187. [↑](#endnote-ref-1222)
1223. Of related significance was the interest which Nkrumah also shared with Blyden and Max Muller in the importance of comparative philology and linguistics. Reportedly, while studying at the University of Pennsylvania, he cooperated in the production of “the first descriptive grammar of his native [Fante dialect](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fante_dialect) of the [Akan language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akan_language) .“ See William Everett, A Descriptive Grammar of Fanti (Linguistic Society of America, 1946): 7. Accessed online at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwame_Nkrumah> [↑](#endnote-ref-1223)
1224. Kwame Nkrumah, “African Background on the Mind and Thought of the New World Negro” (Unpublished paper). Biney, “Kwame Nkrumah,” 40. See also Nkrumah, Autobiography, 36. This orientation was also reflected in another student paper that reflected Nkrumah’s study of the history and importance of “The Negro Church.” Kwame Nkrumah, “The History of the Negro Church.’ referenced in Biney, “Kwame Nkrumah,” 40, 41. [↑](#endnote-ref-1224)
1225. Kwame Nkrumah, “The History of Religion in a Critique of West African Fetishism,” (Unpublished paper, 1940); Geiss, Pan-Africanism, 510. Although unpublished, Nkrumah’s paper would be cited by scholars such as Miles Mark Fisher. Miles Mark Fisher, Negro Slaves Songs in the United States, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1953; New York: Citadel Press, 1978). See also Nkrumah’s anthropologically and philosophically focused study of Akan society. Kwame Nkrumah, “Akan Society” and reference to his never completed doctoral thesis entitled “Mind and Thought in Pre-literate Society: A Study in Ethno-Philosophy with special reference to the Akan people of the God Coast” accessed 2/21/19 at https: //nathybongo wordpress.com/2014/05/26/the-nkrumah-you-didn’t-know/. [↑](#endnote-ref-1225)
1226. The African Students Association was one of the more progressive and politicized of the African student organizations that emerged among Africans studying in the North American diaspora. King, Pan- African Education. [↑](#endnote-ref-1226)
1227. See Johnson’s Letter to Nkrumah quoted in Biney, Kwame Nkrumah, 36-37. See also Ebenezer Obiri Addo, Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion and Politics in Ghana (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997), 63. [↑](#endnote-ref-1227)
1228. Geiss, Pan-Africanism, 371 and Bankole Timothy, Kwame Nkrumah: His Rise to Power (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955), 32. [↑](#endnote-ref-1228)
1229. For an insightful analysis of Nkrumah’s engagement with modernity see Philip Holden, “Modernity's Body: Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana,” Postcolonial Studies, (2004) 7:3, 313-332, DOI: [10.1080/1368879042000311106](https://doi.org/10.1080/1368879042000311106) [↑](#endnote-ref-1229)
1230. Nkrumah, Ghana, 11-12. [↑](#endnote-ref-1230)
1231. Blyden, “Christianity and the Negro,” 31. Arguably, Blyden’s idealistic defense of an indigenous African socialism that emphasized communalism and equalitarianism, anticipated Nkrumah comparative analysis of African and “Scientific” Socialism. See Blyden, African Life in Customs, 29-53. Kwame Nkrumah, “African Socialism Revisited,” African Forum: A Quarterly Journal on African Affairs 1 (3) Winter 1966: 3-9. See also John H. McClendon III, “Nkrumah’s Consciencism as Philosophical Test: Matters of Confusions,” Journal on Africa Philosophy, 3 (2003): 25-35. Notable also is the contention by Odamtten that Blyden’s magnum opus, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race was “a theoretical antecedent” of Nkrumah’s text titled Philosophical of Consciencism. See Odamtten, Intellectual Transformations, 134, Kwame, Nkrumah, Philosophical of Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology foe Decolonization, (London: Panaf, 1978), and Blyden, African Life and Customs, 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-1231)
1232. See especially Edward Blyden, The Aims and Needs of a Liberal Education for Africans (Cambridge: JK. Wilson & Sons, 1882) and Nkrumah’s thesis for the master’s degree in Education at the University of Pennsylvania cited by Biney, Kwame Nkrumah, 41- 44. See also the similar pedagogical arguments made by Faduma and Ernest Kalibala. [↑](#endnote-ref-1232)
1233. Biney, “Nkrumah,” 41-44. [↑](#endnote-ref-1233)
1234. Ibid, 43-45. [↑](#endnote-ref-1234)
1235. Ibid, 46-50. Kwame Nkrumah, “Mind and Thought in Primitive Society: A Study of Ethno-Philosophy with Special Reference to the Akan Peoples of the Gold Coast, West Africa.” Written in 1944 at the University of Pennsylvania, USA. Accessed at <https://marxistnkrumaistforum.wordpress.com/karl-marx-the-poverty-of-philosophy/kwame-nkrumah-phd-dissertation/> July, 6, 2019. [↑](#endnote-ref-1235)
1236. Biney,“Nkrumah,”49. On Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1857-1939) a pioneering and prominent French anthropologist and sociologist who was engaging in exploring the alleged differences between the “Modern” and “Primitive” mind, see Lucien Levy-Bruhl, How Natives Think (1910) and Lucien Levy-Bruhl, Primitive Mentality, (1926). [↑](#endnote-ref-1236)
1237. On the rejection of Nkrumah's dissertation as “ too politicized” see Philip Holden, “Modernity's body: Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana,” Postcolonial Studies, 7:3, 313-332, DOI: [10.1080/1368879042000311106](https://doi.org/10.1080/1368879042000311106). See also Sherwood, Kwame Nkrumah, 62–65. For insight regarding the historical and contemporary support provided racism and colonialism within and by the academy see Gurminder K. Bhambra, ed. Decolonizing the University, (London: Pluto Press, 2018). Biney correctly notes that the ideas advanced by Nkrumah in his proposed dissertation had long been popular among West Africans such as “James Africanus Beale Horton (1853-1883), John Mensah Sarbah (1864-1910), [and] Dr. J. B. Danquah (1895-1965).” However, Biney fails to also note the special and more dynamic prominence given these ideas in the writings of Edward Blyden. Not only Nkrumah’s conclusions but also the theoretical and methodological strategy employed in both critical appropriation and refutation of prevailing Western and European scholars and their scholarship in defense of the culture, intelligence, and humanity of indigenous West Africans were previewed more than three decades earlier by Blyden most prominently in African Life and Customs. See Biney, “Nkrumah,” 49-50 and Blyden, African Life and Customs. [↑](#endnote-ref-1237)
1238. Addo, Kwame Nkrumah, xi. [↑](#endnote-ref-1238)
1239. Ibid, 65,66. [↑](#endnote-ref-1239)
1240. Titube, Blyden, 165. See also Kwame Nkrumah, Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for decolonization (New York: International, 1963) and Edward Blyden, The Significance of Liberia: An Address Delivered in the State Chamber, Monrovia, Liberia, 20th May 1906. (Liverpool: Richardson and Sons, 1907). [↑](#endnote-ref-1240)
1241. Addo, Nkrumah, 69. [↑](#endnote-ref-1241)
1242. Addo, Nkrumah, 162-173. See also Nkrumah, Consciencism, and Kwame Nkrumah, Towards Colonial Freedom (London: Heinemann,1963), 332-33. It is also significant that Blyden’s idealistic and romanticized defense of an indigenous African socialism anticipated the comparative analysis of African and “Scientific” Socialism engaged in by Nkrumah and several other emergent African scholar-activists and political leaders. See Blyden, African Life in Customs, 29-53*.* Kwame Nkrumah, “African Socialism Revisited,” African Forum: A Quarterly Journal on African Affairs 1 (3) Winter 1966: 3-9. See also John H. McClendon III, “Nkrumah’s Consciencism as Philosophical Test: Matters of Confusions,” Journal on Africa Philosophy, 3 (2003): 25-35 [↑](#endnote-ref-1242)
1243. Duodu contends that “It was his [Blyden’s]writings as a sociologist, historian and philosopher that impressed George Padmore.” [Cameron Duodu](https://www.pambazuka.org/taxonomy/term/6674)**, “**[Edward Wilmot Blyden, Grandfather of African Liberation](https://www.pambazuka.org/pan-africanism/edward-wilmot-blyden-grandfather-african-liberation)” July 06, 2011 accessed online at [https://www.pambazuka.org/pan-africanism/edward-wilmot-blyden-grandfather-african-liberation on 5/26/2018](https://www.pambazuka.org/pan-africanism/edward-wilmot-blyden-grandfather-african-liberation%20on%205/26/2018) at 6:10 AM. See also [http://www.blackpast.org/aah/padmore-george-1901-1959 accessed 5/26/20 at 6:19](http://www.blackpast.org/aah/padmore-george-1901-1959%20accessed%205/26/20%20at%206:19) AM. Peggy Von Eschen, Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Kwadwo Afari-Gyan, “Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, and W. E. B. Du Bois,” Research Review NS vol.7 nos. 1 & 2,1991 accessed online at <https://www.google.com/search?q=Kwadwo+AfariGyan%2C+%E2%80%9CKwame+Nkrumah%2C+George+Padmore+and+W.+E.+B.+Du+Bois%2C%E2%80%9D+Research+Review+NS+vol.7+nos.+1> on 5/16/2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-1243)
1244. The continued influence of Blyden’s vision of a united people of African descent was both symbolically and substantively reflected in the roles of Nkrumah and Padmore as conveners of the Fifth Pan-African Conference held in Manchester, London in 1945. It was also reflected in Padmore’s move to Ghana where he served as a key advisor when Nkrumah assumed the position of Ghana’s first president. Clarke, “Nkrumah,” 14; Duodu, “Edward Blyden.” [↑](#endnote-ref-1244)
1245. Gloria Chuku also provides an insightful comparative analysis of the legacy of Blyden and his contributions to this later generation of African intellectuals and activists who studied in the United States during the interwar years. Of special focus for her is the West African activist Mbonu Ojike. Gloria Chuku, “African Intellectuals as Cultural Nationalists: A Comparative Analysis of Edward Wilmot Blyden and Mbonu Ojike,” The Journal of African American History, vol. 99, no. 4, 2014: 350–378. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5323/jafriamerhist.99.4.0350. [↑](#endnote-ref-1245)
1246. ["Biography of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe,"](http://www.onlinenigeria.com/people/ad.asp?blurb=66) [www.onlinenigeria.com]. Retrieved 2019-03- [↑](#endnote-ref-1246)
1247. See for example Herbert Lewis, “Social and Cultural Anthropology and the Study of Africa,” African Studies, Published online July 2014; Keith Hart, “The Social Anthropology of West Africa.” Annual Review of Anthropology*14* (1985): 243–272; Jack Goody, The Expansive Movement: Anthropology in Britain and Africa 1918 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995). [↑](#endnote-ref-1247)
1248. The importance of ethnographic studies was emphasized in Malinowski’s development of “the theoretical framework of functionalism” which stressed the importance of “linking kinship, economy, and religion in the analysis of any functioning social system. ”Ibid. See also Chidester, Empire of Religion, 244. [↑](#endnote-ref-1248)
1249. Chidester, Empire of Religion, 244; Blyden, African Life and Customs. [↑](#endnote-ref-1249)
1250. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Liberia in World Politics (New York: Greenwood Press, 1931). See for example Edward Blyden, The Significance of Liberia, (Monrovia, 1906); Edward Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia (London,1908) and Edward Blyden, The Problems Before Liberia (London, 1909). [↑](#endnote-ref-1250)
1251. Nnamdi Azikiwe,Renascent Africa (New York: Routledge, 1968). [↑](#endnote-ref-1251)
1252. Ibid. See also Nnamdi Azikiwe, My Odyssey: An Autobiography (New York: Praeger, 1970).  [↑](#endnote-ref-1252)
1253. Gloria Chuku, “African Intellectuals as Cultural Nationalists,” 371; Nnamdi Azikiwe*,* The Future of Pan-Africanism (London, 1961), 19, and Azikiwe, Renascent Africa 169. [↑](#endnote-ref-1253)
1254. Nnamdi Azikiwe,” Foreword,” Edith Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-1254)
1255. Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya (London: Martin Secker & Warihijrg Ltd., 1938). [↑](#endnote-ref-1255)
1256. Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, 316. [↑](#endnote-ref-1256)
1257. Ibid, 222-269. [↑](#endnote-ref-1257)
1258. Ibid, 303-304. See also Blyden, African Life and Customs. [↑](#endnote-ref-1258)
1259. On Leopold Senghor, see Irving Markovitz, Leopold Sedar Senghor and the Politics of Negritude (Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational Books, 1990); Washington Sylvia Ba, The Concept of Negritude in the Poetry of Leopold Sedar Senghor (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973). [↑](#endnote-ref-1259)
1260. Diagne, points out that “One of the main activities of Senghor when he first arrived in Paris at the end of the 1920s was to visit the ethnographical museum at Place Trocadéro in Paris.” Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “Negritude,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2018), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL=<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/negritude/>. [↑](#endnote-ref-1260)
1261. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1261)
1262. Lynch, Patriot, 252. On Blyden’s contributions to formation of the Negritude Movement see Robert R. July, “Nineteenth-Century Negritude: Edward W. Blyden,” The Journal of African History, vol 5 (1964):73-86. For more contemporary discussions of Blyden’s posthumous contributions to development of the Negritude Movement see also Tibebu, Blyden, 146-72. [↑](#endnote-ref-1262)
1263. “Leopold Sedar Senghor” <http://www.presidence.sn/en/presidency/leopold-sedar-senghor> accessed 6/21/19. Senghor quoted by Bertrade NJo-Ngijol Banoum, Africana Age: African and African Diaspora Transformations in the 20th Century (New York: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture) accessed 6/24/19 at http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-negritude.html. Their “provocative” coinage of the term “Negritude” also has parallels in the 1870’s efforts in Sierra Leone of Blyden and his colleagues in declaration and rehabilitative explanation of “The Negro” as the name of their influential but short-lived journal. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “Negritude.” [↑](#endnote-ref-1263)
1264. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “Negritude,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL=https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/negritude. [↑](#endnote-ref-1264)
1265. Lynch, Selected Letters. [↑](#endnote-ref-1265)
1266. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “Negritude.” [↑](#endnote-ref-1266)
1267. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1267)
1268. Diagne, notes that “One of the main activities of Senghor when he first arrived in Paris at the end of the 1920s was to visit the ethnographical museum at Place Trocadéro in Paris.” Diagne, “Negritude.” For a more critical assessment of Senghor’s religious orientation see Lilyan Kesteloot, “Senghor et la religion. Ambivalence et ambiguïté,” Littérateurs 15, 1986: 161-165. Accessed 6/24/10 on line at [www.persee.fr/doc/litts\_0563-9751\_1986\_num\_15\_1\_1889](https://www.persee.fr/doc/litts_0563-9751_1986_num_15_1_1889). [↑](#endnote-ref-1268)
1269. Diagne, “Negritude.” See Placide Temples, Bantu Philosophy (1945). The thought and works of both Senghor and Temples are occasionally cited as “antecedents” of the synthesis of ethnography and philosophy referred to as “Ethnophilosophy.” See

      <http://halleinstitute.emory.edu/karp/articles/african_philosophy/1998_ethnophilosophy.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-1269)
1270. Ibid. It is also notable that what Nkrumah criticized as Senghor’s “metaphysics” rooted notion of “African socialism” was anticipated and perhaps influenced by Blyden’s articulation and defense of an indigenous African socialism that similarly emphasized a more religious rooted and orientated communalism and equalitarianism. Senghor, African Socialism, (Prager: London and New York, 1964) Blyden, African Life in Customs, 29-53*;* Nkrumah, “African Socialism Revisited,” 3-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-1270)
1271. Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia, 20-21; Blyden, African Life and Customs, 63-64. [↑](#endnote-ref-1271)
1272. Blyden, Liberia’s Offering, ii. See also David Wilson to Walter Lowrie, 1 October 1851

      and 28 July 1851, Holden, Blyden, 29-33; Livingston, Education and Race, 39 and Wheeler-

      Barclay, Science of Religion. [↑](#endnote-ref-1272)
1273. Blyden to Coppinger, April 13, 1887; June 6, 1887, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 580-581. [↑](#endnote-ref-1273)
1274. See Curtis J. Evans, The Burden of Black Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-1274)
1275. Wheeler-Barclay, Science of Religion; Chidester, Empire of Religion. [↑](#endnote-ref-1275)
1276. Blyden to Booker T. Washington, 1894. [↑](#endnote-ref-1276)
1277. Blyden letter to William Gladstone, 16 April 1862, British Museum, Ms.; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 124; Blyden to William Gladstone, 3 February 1866. Holden, Blyden, 148-50. Blyden to William Gladstone, 25 March 1861, British Museum, Add. Ms. 44395.f 223-26. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 117-18; Blyden to William Gladstone, 3 February 1866. Holden, Blyden, 148-50. See also C. Collyer, “Edward Wilmot Blyden-A Correspondent of William Evart Gladstone,” Journal of Negro History 35 (1950): 75-78; Lynch, Patriot, 3; Blyden, “Christianity and Race,” 5; Blyden, “Aims and Methods,” in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 98; Blyden to Rev. Byron Sutherland, 11 March 1895, cited in Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 649. On Blyden’s extended appropriation of the evolutional insights of Huxley and Spencer, see Blyden, “Liberal Education for Africans,” Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 88, 94, 98; Blyden, The Three Needs of Liberia, 2-3; Blyden, “Phillip and the Eunuch,” Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, 196; Blyden to Professor Camphor (of the College of West Africa), 22 September 1899, The New Africa, November 9, 1899; Blyden, "The Koran in Africa,”; Blyden, “Philip and the Eunuch;” Correspondence from Blyden to Governor Hennessy, 6 December 1872 and 11 December 1872; Blyden to Coppinger, 7 September 1878, American Colonization Papers 18; Blyden, “Africa and the Africans,” Fraser’s Magazine, August 1876; Blyden, “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans;” Blyden to Francis Grimke, 11 September 1889; Blyden, “The Prospects of the African,” African Repository 50 (1874): 298; Blyden to Rev. John Miller, 29 November 1888; Blyden, The Jewish Question

      and Blyden, letter to Booker T. Washington; and Blyden, commentary on the Parliament of Religion. [↑](#endnote-ref-1277)
1278. Blyden, “The Koran in Africa,” Journal of the African Society, (January 1905). See also

      Blyden, “Islam in the Western Sudan,” Journal of the African Society (October 1902). See also [↑](#endnote-ref-1278)
1279. Blyden, African Life and Customs. [↑](#endnote-ref-1279)
1280. Sharpe, Comparative Religion, Chidester, Empire of Religion, ix-xx. [↑](#endnote-ref-1280)
1281. Blyden, African Life and Customs, 62. In doing so, Blyden refuted Louis Jordan’s suggestion that Africa would have minimal importance and provide minimal support for the development of the academic study of comparative religion. See Louis Henry Jordan, Comparative Religion: Its Genesis and Growth (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1905), 580. Cited by Chidester, Empire of Religion, ix. [↑](#endnote-ref-1281)
1282. Blyden, African Life and Customs, 62. For a historical and contemporary overview see Armin Geertz, Kristoffer Nielbo & Ryan McKay, “Evolutionary Theories of Religion,” Journal for the Cognitive Science of Religion Vol 4, 2018: 1-5. 2018-02-07T13:44:50Z DOI: 10.1558/jcsr.35720. On the perceived urgency of the discourse regarding the “origin of religion” within the academic establishment see Preface and “Memorial For The Foundation Of A Hibbert Lecture” in F. Max Muller, The Hibbert Lectures on Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religion of India, April, May and June 1878 (London and Bombay: New Longman’s Green and Company,1901), vii-x. See also Max Muller on “The Origin of Religion” in the first chapter (“The Perception of the Infinite”) of The Hibbert Lectures: 1-52. For a more contemporary perspective see “The Origin of Religion,” in Capps, Religious Studies, 53-104. [↑](#endnote-ref-1282)
1283. Blyden, African Life and Customs, 61. [↑](#endnote-ref-1283)
1284. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1284)
1285. Muller, The Hibbert Lectures. See also F. Max Muller, Introduction to the Science of Religion: Four Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution in February and May,1870 (Elibron Classics Series, 1882). [↑](#endnote-ref-1285)
1286. Muller, Hibbert Lectures. As noted earlier, Blyden was not the only West African student of religion influenced by the writings of Muller or the disciplines associated with the emergent “science of religion.” His American based protégé Orishatukeh Faduma, opened his address before the African Congress in 1895 with reference to the contributions made by religious scholars such as “Max Muller, [George] Rawlinson, and [Archibald H. Sayce” to an understanding of the “evolution” of the major world religions. Like Blyden, Faduma also insisted that “The study of religion in all its forms ought to be important to the student of comparative religion” and that such studies, if correctly applied could shed valuable light on the religions of Africa and their relationship to Christianity.” Faduma, “Religious Beliefs” 31-36. For a more critical contemporary interpretation and analysis of Muller’s reflection on African religion see for example Ulrich Berner, “Africa and the Origin of the Science of Religion : Max Muller (1823-1900) and James George Frazer (1854-1941) on African Religions” in Frieder Ludwig and Afe Adogame, eds. European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004):141-149. [↑](#endnote-ref-1286)
1287. Blyden, African Life and Customs,7. [↑](#endnote-ref-1287)
1288. Ibid.,7-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-1288)
1289. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-1289)
1290. Edward Blyden, The Arabic Bible in the Sudan: A Plea for Transliteration (London: C. M. Phillips, 1910). [↑](#endnote-ref-1290)
1291. On Robertson as a pioneering and controversial proponent of biblical criticism see Robertson Smith, Old Testament in the Jewish Church: A Course of Lectures on Biblical Criticism (Edinburgh: A & C Black, 1881, 1892). Dr. George F. Moore was a Yale University and Union Theological Seminary trained Presbyterian minister who pioneered application of the critical historical methodology and perspective to the study of religion and served as Professor of History of Religion at Harvard. He authored A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895) and was co-editor of Studies in the History of Religion See David Gordon Lyon and George Foot Moore, eds. Studies In The History of Religions (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912) ; [“Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University Deceased during the Year 1930-1931](http://mssa.library.yale.edu/obituary_record/1925_1952/1930-31.pdf),” Yale University, December 1, 1931, 31; Dictionary of American Biography(New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1928-1958). Blyden also referenced Drs. Karl Marti, author of Religion of the Old Testament and Joseph Jacob author of Biblical Archeology, as well as Arthur Tappan Pierson, editor of the Missionary Review of the World. Blyden, Arabic Bible,8. [↑](#endnote-ref-1291)
1292. Blyden, Arabic Bible,”7. Smith’s “liberal” theological and hermeneutical views would result in his prosecution for heresy. Notably, his related contributions as an Orientalist have drawn the attention of contemporary scholars. See Jonathan Skinner, “Orientalists and Orientalisms: Robertson Smith and Edward W. Said,” in William Robertson Smith: Essays in Reassessment, ed. William Johnstone (Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 376-82. See also E. G. Brown, “Obituary Notice: Prof. Will Robertson Smith,” Journal of Royal Asiatic Society (July 1894); John Sutherland Black, The Life of William Robertson Smith (1912); and John William Rogerson, The Bible and Criticism in Victorian Britain: Profiles of F. D. Maurice and William Robertson Smith (Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). [↑](#endnote-ref-1292)
1293. Emphasis his, Blyden, Arabic Bible, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-1293)
1294. Additionally, enlisted by Blyden to support his argument and emphasize the inevitable inadequacy of all theological and hermeneutical constructions as well as the implied universalism that had become a stable of his mature religious orientation were the poetic and spiritual insights of Tennyson: “Our little systems have their day: They have their day and cease to be: They are but broken lights of thee; And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.” Ibid., 18-19 [↑](#endnote-ref-1294)
1295. Ibid. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 848. Blyden’s scholarly ruminations and novel contributions to this seminal hermeneutical and theological discourse were acknowledged and appreciated by an American reviewer who candidly confessed that "into the points of scholarship raised we can hardly follow him, and some of his positions must perhaps be controverted by theologians; but like all that Dr. Blyden writes, this little paper bears the marks of wide reading and original thought." That the text also inspired a posthumous notice in the pages of the Dubois edited Crisis Magazine suggested that the elderly West African scholar’s most iconic religious scholarship and insights still elicited respect and admiration from at least the most progressive segments of black intellectual culture. “Along the Color Line,” Crisis 6, no. 1 (May 1913):13. See also the Crisis on Blyden’s death and scholarship and acknowledgement of his role as the “’Grand Old Man’ of West Africa.” Cited by Harry N. K. Odamtten, Edward Blyden’s Intellectual Transformations: Afropublicanism, Pan-Africanism, Islam, and the Indigenous Church (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2019), 37. [↑](#endnote-ref-1295)
1296. Edward Blyden, "The Koran in Africa,” Journal of the Royal African Society 4, no. 14 (January 1905): 161. On the heightened controversy being provoked by biblical criticism, comparative religion, and an emergent modernism, Longfield observed that the “advent of the study of comparative religions. . . provided another area of contention. Rather than demonstrating the superiority of Christianity to other faiths, the study of comparative religion seemed to place Christianity on a par with all religions. . . .In opening the question of the relativity of Christian truth, the study of comparative religions further agitated the already-trouble waters of Protestant America." Longfield, Presbyterian Controversy, 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-1296)
1297. In a letter to African American journalist and staunch admirer John Bruce. Blyden pessimistically expressed concern that his more recent and iconoclastic theological, hermeneutical, and missiological writings would be responded to in the same way that an earlier generation of defenders of orthodoxy had reacted to the perceived threat of biblical criticism: "Of course if what I have written is correct, 'it will cut the nerve of missions' as Prof. Park of Andover once said of the 'Higher Criticism.' The so-called Christian public are not yet prepared for such a catastrophe to their enterprise, which nevertheless, so far as Africa is concerned, is hopeless.” Blyden to John E. Bruce, 15 July 1910, Lynch, Letters, 503-4. On the intense trans-Atlantic controversy being provoked in missiological circles by biblical criticism, comparative religion, and an emergent modernism, see Chadwick, Victorian Church, vol. 2, 58, 90-97. William R. Hutchison, “Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity, 1875-1935,” in The Missionary Enterprise in China and America, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1974), 110-31. See also William R. Hutchinson, The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976) and C. W. Emmet, “The Modernist Movement in the Church of England,” The Journal of Religion, Vol. 2, No. 6 (Nov.,1922): 561-576. Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1195524 Accessed: 20-01-2020 20:33 UTC [↑](#endnote-ref-1297)
1298. Livingston, Education and Race, 229 and Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot, 174. See also Blyden to Coppinger, 20 July 1871, A. C. S. Papers, and vol. 204. Blyden to Coppinger, 20 July 1871, Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 183-84; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 171; Lynch Patriot, 88. Other European scholars who noted and expressed appreciation for the contributions of Blyden included Rev. Cannon Isaac Taylor, (Anglican missiologist and Islamic scholar) and Professor Hartmann, (Professor of Arabic and Oriental languages in the University of Berlin). Lynch, Patriot, 76. [↑](#endnote-ref-1298)
1299. On Blyden and James McCosh see Blyden to Coppinger, November 21, 1882, Holden, Blyden, 507. On Schaff’s invitation to Blyden requesting his attendance at an ecclesiastical conference see Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 455-456. For Swing’s commentary on Blyden see Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 597-599; Lynch, Blyden, 76-77; Lynch, Letters, 397; and African Repository, Vol. LXVI., 1890, 23-24; Balmer and Fitzmier, The Presbyterians, 226-227. See also Frank Field Ellinwood,[Oriental Religions and Christianity: A Course of Lectures Delivered on the Ely Foundation Before the Students of Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1891](http://www.archive.org/details/orientalreligio01elligoog) (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1892),204; Frank Field Ellinwood, Questions and Phases of Modern Missions (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1899) and Anson Phelps Atterbury and Frank Field Ellinwood, Islam in Africa: Its Effects– Religious, Ethical, and Social– Upon the People of the Country (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1899). Boston University, History of Missiology accessed at <http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/e-f/ellinwood-frank-field-1826-1908/> [↑](#endnote-ref-1299)
1300. See for example Lynch, Blyden, 98, 219, 238-240, 242, 245-246 and Leo Spitzer, The Creoles of Sierra Leon: Responses to Colonialism 1870-1945 (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 108-122.73-74, 111-123. Rev. J. R. Frederick, “Has Dr. Blyden gone Over to Mohomet?”, The Christian Recorder, Jan. 12, 1888. On James Johnson, who like Faduma would revise his opposition to polygamy and other aspects of traditional Yoruba religion culture in the wake of Blyden’s defense of African customs in African Life and Customs, see James Johnson, Yoruba Heathenism (Exeter: J. Townsend, 1899) and James Johnson, The Relations of Mission Work to Native Customs, 1908 PNP226-227. See also E. A. Ayandele, Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism 1836-1917 (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), 301 and E. A. Ayandele, “An Assessment of James Johnson and his place in Nigerian History” , Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, III, Dec. 1964: 486-518. [↑](#endnote-ref-1300)
1301. Livingston, Race and Education, 54-55. [↑](#endnote-ref-1301)
1302. In 1874 Blyden was awarded an honorary LL.D and in 1880 an honorary “Doctor of Divinity” degree by Lincoln University. Livingston, Education and Race, 107, 190; Lynch, Patriot, 81. [↑](#endnote-ref-1302)
1303. Blyden was unable to attend either of these gatherings. But while noting the importance of the Parliament of Religions for its contribution to the advancement of religious knowledge and toleration, Blyden criticized its lack of representation of indigenous African religious traditions including Islam. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 646. His appreciation of the progressive agenda of the Congress on Africa was communicated in a “Letter of Greeting and Commendation,” sent from West Africa. Edward Blyden “Letter of Greeting and Commendation,” in Bowen, Africa,16. [↑](#endnote-ref-1303)
1304. Blyden to Henry Venn, Sept 6, 1871; Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 189. See also Odamtten, Intellectual Transformations, 129-130. On Blyden’s reception of “the Decoration of the Order of the Medjidieh,” Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 808-809, 839. See also Odamtten, Intellectual Transformations, 133-134. [↑](#endnote-ref-1304)
1305. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 808-809, 839.

      [↑](#endnote-ref-1305)
1306. See for example, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “AAR Centennial Roundtable: Religion, Conquest, and Race in the Foundation of the Modern/Colonial World,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol. 82, Num. 3 September 2014; Asad Talal, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline of Reasons and Power in Christianity and Islam (Baltimore, MD : John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Tomoko Masuzawa, The Invention of World Religions (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 20015); Catherine Bell, “Modernism and Postmodernity in the Study of Religion,” Religious Studies Review 22/3: 179-190; John Hick, “The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity.” In John Hick and Paul Knitter, eds., The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: toward a pluralistic theology of religions, ( Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1987); Reid B. Loughlin and Hugh Nicholson, “The Return of Comparative Theology,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol 78 Number 2, June 2010; 477-514; Donald Wiebe, The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict With Theology in the Academy (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); Hugh Nicholson, “Comparative Theology after Liberalism,” Modern Theology, 23/2:229-251. See also Evans, The Burden of Black Religion. [↑](#endnote-ref-1306)
1307. For a contemporary exploration of this tradition, its pernicious history and parallels within religious history and related disciplines see August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915-1980 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Michael R. Winston, “Through the Back Door: Academic Racism and the Negro Scholar in Historical Perspective,” Daedalus 100 (Summer 1971): 678-719. See also Aldon Morris’ insightful expose of the academy’s repression of W. E. B. Du Bois’ contribution to the “birth of modern scientific sociology in America.” Aldon D. Morris, The Scholar Denied: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015). The Fisk, University of Berlin, and Harvard educated Du Bois shared Blyden’s conviction that religion was a critical arena and component of the black encounter with modernity and eventual liberation from modernity’s many faceted shackles. The parallel engagement of Blyden and Du Bois in the interrogation of the scientific, intellectual and academic corollaries of modernity was also reflected not only in their expansive engagement with the religious discourse of the era but also in their challenges to the theoretical and methodological theories being forged amid and in response to the tenets of modernity. See Morris, Scholar Denied, xvi and [Christopher A. McAuley](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&text=Christopher+A.+McAuley&search-alias=books&field-author=Christopher+A.+McAuley&sort=relevancerank),The Spirit vs. the Souls: Max Weber, W. E. B. Du Bois, and the Politics of Scholarship (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019). For recent attention to Du Bois’ engagement with modernity’s religious and racial corollaries and challenges see David Chidester who points out that Du Bois’ critical engagement with comparative religion and corollary disciplines such as sociology led him, like Blyden, to “raise critical issues for the study of religion” and to “develop a critical engagement with the problem of indigenous African religion that stands in counterpoint to the constructions of primitive religion by classic theorists of imperial comparative religion.” Chidester, Empire of Religion, 4, 11, 95. Within the arena of critical historical scholarship one should also note the parallel contributions and struggles of the remarkable cadre of black historians that included most prominently Carter G Woodson. On Woodson and his struggles as a black historian and academic see Jacqueline Googin, Carter G. Woodson: a Life in Black History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1993). See also Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, The Early Black History Movement, Carter G. Woodson, and Lorenzo Johnston Greene, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007). Note also the treatment by the academy of the contributions to the discipline of anthropology by Blyden contemporary Antenor Firmin by Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, “Antenor Firmin: Haitian Pioneer of Anthropology,” American Anthropologist 102 (3): 449-466. See also Moyo Okediji, Tejumola Olaniyan and James H. Sweet, The African Diaspora and the Disciplines (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Ira E. Harrison and Faye V. Harrison eds., African American Pioneers in Anthropology (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999). <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/firmin-antenor> . [↑](#endnote-ref-1307)
1308. See Curtis Evans, “The Social Sciences and the Professional Discipline of Black Religion,” in Curtis J. Evans, The Burden of Black Religion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008):105-139. [↑](#endnote-ref-1308)
1309. See for example Chidester’s neglect of Blyden’s role as an “indigenous comparativist” and his broader contributions to the study of comparative religion in Empire of Religion. [↑](#endnote-ref-1309)
1310. Evans, Burden of Black Religion, 13-16, 105-139, 223-280. [↑](#endnote-ref-1310)
1311. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americas (New York: Doubleday & Co, 1972; New York, Orbis, 1998 ). On Wilmore’s contribution to the scholarly dimensions of this renaissance see <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/wilmore-gayraud-stephen-1921/> [↑](#endnote-ref-1311)
1312. Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism, (1998), 134, 142-147. [↑](#endnote-ref-1312)
1313. In the first page of his dissertation, Long confessed that it dissertation “arises out of concerns that have been the preoccupation of three of my teachers, Professors Joachim Wach, Robert Redfield, and Mircea Eliade.” Although their publications would provide the dissertation’s conceptual, theoretical and methodological framework, Long would also cite the works of formative scholars such as Rudolf Otto (The Idea of the Holy), E. B. Tylor (Primitive Culture),Lucien Levy-Bruhl (Primitives and the Supernatural; How Natives Think) Bronislaw Malinowski (Magic Science and Religion) and Emile Durkheim (The Elementary Forms of Religious Life). Charles Long, “Myth, Culture and History in West Africa,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago,1962, 1-5, 6-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-1313)
1314. See Charles Long, Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Study of Religion (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). [↑](#endnote-ref-1314)
1315. Long’s footnote illuminates the parallel scholarship of secular historians such as George Shepperson and subsequently Hollis Lynch, who similarly emphasized Blyden’s expansive ideological and Pan-African and Pan-West African contributions at the expense of his contributions as a pioneering scholar of religion. See George Shepperson, “External Factors in the development of African Nationalism with Particular Reference to British Central Africa,” Phylon 22, (Fall, 1961):207-225 and especially Hollis Lynch, Pan-Negro Patriot (1967) and Hollis Lynch, “Edward Blyden: Pioneer West African Nationalist), Journal of African History, 6 (1965)373-388; This tendency was repeated in a number of other biographically focused studies of Blyden that emerged in the final quarter of the twentieth century. See for example Livingston, Education and Race (1975), and Holden, Blyden (1966). A similar trend is also to be noted among African scholars who were researching the influence of the religious factor in West Africa. See J. F. A. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: the Making of A New Elite, (London : Longmans, 1965); E. A. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria ( 1842-1914) (New York: Humanities Press, 1967); O. U. Kalu, The History of Christianity in West Africa (London and New York: Longman, 1980). See also Robert July, The Origins of Modern African Thought (London: Farber and Farber, 1968); J. Ayodele Langley, Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa, 1856-1970 ( (London: Rex Collins, 1979) and J. Ayodele Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900-1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Classes ( Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). [↑](#endnote-ref-1315)
1316. Charles Long, “Perspectives for the Study of Afro-American Religion,” History of Religions 11, no. 1 (August 1971): 54-66. Long, Significations, #8, 183. [↑](#endnote-ref-1316)
1317. See Charles Long, “America and the Academic Study of Religion: Hermeneutics and Method." Lecture, Indiana University, Bloomington 9/28/2013, accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIxXvTL39os>. [↑](#endnote-ref-1317)
1318. Charles H. Long, Significations, Author comments, (backcover). [↑](#endnote-ref-1318)
1319. See Charles E. Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America (Boston: Beacon, Press, 1961) and Penne J. Laubenthal, “C. Eric. Lincoln,” Encyclopedia of Alabama accessed online at <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3089> A similar absence of attention to Blyden’s contributions is reflected in political scientist E. U. Essien-Udom’s Black Nationalism in America. Nevertheless, both texts and several others from this era explore the growing perception and role of Islam as a solution to the black search for an empowering religious, racial, and cultural identity in tones previously sounded by Blyden. See E. U. Essien-Udom, Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) Among more recent scholars who illuminate Blyden’s role as progenitor of a more positive concept of Islam in the United States and wider diaspora see Edward E. Curtis IV who notes that Blyden “promoted Islam as a tradition more in tune with the with the political, social, and cultural aspirations of blacks” and that his “innovative thinking about Islam foreshadowed most of the central themes of African-American Islamic thought in the twentieth century.” See “Edward Blyden and the Paradox of Islam” in Edward E. Curtis, IV, Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation and Difference in African-American Islamic Thought (Albany: State university Press of New York, 2002): 21-43. See also Richard Brent Turner, Islam in the African American Experience, ((Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1997).

      [↑](#endnote-ref-1319)
1320. On Blyden’s role as a progenitor of black liberation theology see David Hulmes who observed that Blyden “anticipated the work of the liberation theologians who seek to interpret the social, political, and economic implications of Christian belief and discipleship." Edward Hulmes, “Edward Wilmot Blyden's understanding of Christianity and Islam as instruments of black emancipation in West Africa”, Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, 1:1 1990, 45-46, 63-64 (published online 44-65 Published online: 18 Apr 2007 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596419008720924> See also James H. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books,1969); James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1970). Note however the works of Josiah Young who was one of Cone’s doctorial students at Union Theological Seminary. See Josiah Young, Black and African Theologies: Siblings or Distant Cousins (New York: Orbis, 1986). [↑](#endnote-ref-1320)
1321. See Lamin Sanneh, Summoned From the Margin: Homecoming of an African (Grand

      Rapids, Michigan, and Cambridge: William B. Eerdman’s Publishing Company, 2012), [↑](#endnote-ref-1321)
1322. Lamin Sanneh, “The History of the Jakhanke People of Senegambia: A Study of a Clerical Tradition in West African Islam” University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (United Kingdom), Ann Arbor, 1974. ProQuest, 460.

      http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/docview/1818733480?accountid=4485. [↑](#endnote-ref-1322)
1323. See Nehemia Levtzion, “European Perceptions of Islam in Africa: Missionaries, Administrators and Scholars” in Ludwig and Adogame, European Traditions: 47-48 and Anson Phelps Atterbury, Islam in Africa: Its Effects- Religious, Ethical and Social-Upon the People of the Country (New York and London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1899). See also criticisms of Blyden’s views of Islam by fellow members of the Presbytery of West Africa. [↑](#endnote-ref-1323)
1324. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 616, 618-620. Blyden to Grimke', November 4, 1889, Lynch, Letters, 406. Livingston, Education and Race, 206. African Repository, Vol. LXVI, 1890, 101-107; Lynch, Letters, 399; 410. [↑](#endnote-ref-1324)
1325. Blyden to Grimke, 25 October 1895, Woodson, Works, 4:45. Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 618-625. On the impact of these developments within the American Presbyterian community see Bradley J. Longfield, The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). [↑](#endnote-ref-1325)
1326. Orishatukeh Faduma, “Social Problems in West Africa from the Standpoint of an African,” Moss, American Negro Academy, 160-161. [↑](#endnote-ref-1326)
1327. Moss, American Negro Academy, 160-161. See also Blyden, African Life and Customs. [↑](#endnote-ref-1327)
1328. F. H. Johnson, "Marcus Garvey and the Negro Race," Sierra Leone Weekly News, 25 Aug. 1923. [↑](#endnote-ref-1328)
1329. The Christian Recorder, November 3, 1887. Rev. J. R. Frederick felt compelled to refute the charge from Sierra Leone in a subsequent edition of the Recorder, under the heading “Has Dr. Blyden Gone Over to Mohomet?” Rev. J. R. Frederick, “Has Dr. Blyden gone Over to Mohomet?”, The Christian Recorder, January 12, 1888. For one of Blyden’s earliest responses to this charge, see the African Repository 64 (1888): 134-35, and Holden, Blyden of Liberia, 600-603. [↑](#endnote-ref-1329)
1330. See for example Richard Turner, “Edward Blyden and Pan-Africanism: The Ideological Roots of Islam and Black Nationalism in the United States,” The Muslim World, Vol. 87, #2, April 1997: 169-182. [↑](#endnote-ref-1330)
1331. Odamtten, Intellectual Transformations, 136. E. Geoffrey Parrinder (1910-2005) was senior lecturer in religious studies at University College, Ibadan, professor of Comparative Religion at Kings College, London and the author of a number of key texts focused on African religion. See E. Geoffrey Parrinder, African Tradition Religion (London: Sheldon Press, 1962). See also Lamin Sanneh, “The Domestication of Islam and Christianity in African Societies: A Methodological Exploration, Journal of Religion in Africa 11, no. 1 (1980): 1-12. [↑](#endnote-ref-1331)
1332. See collection of essays in Bhambra, Decolonising the University. [↑](#endnote-ref-1332)
1333. See especially documents and studies related to Blyden role in the “Native Pastorate Controversy in Sierra Leone in the 1870’s. [↑](#endnote-ref-1333)
1334. Eugene Stock, The History of the Church Missionary Society (London: 1899), 231. See also Livingston, Education and Race, 213. [↑](#endnote-ref-1334)
1335. Blyden, Return of the Exiles. See alsoBlyden, African Life and Customs. [↑](#endnote-ref-1335)
1336. On Harris see Watson A. O. Omulokoli, “William Wade Harris: Premier African Evangelist,” African Journal of Evangelical Theology 21, no. 1 (2002): 3-11; David Shank, Prophet Harris “The Black Elijah” of West Africa (New York: Brill, 1994). See also Odamtten, Intellectual Transformations, 165-167, 17. On Simon Kimbangu see Aurelien Mokoko Gampiot, Kimbanguism: An African Understanding of the Bible (Penn State University Press, 2017); and Bengt Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1961). [↑](#endnote-ref-1336)
1337. On the African Independent Church Movement and Blyden’s broader influence on it and the related Ethiopian Movement see James B. Webster, The African Churches among the Yoruba, 1888-1922, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), Lynch, Patriot, 237-240. [↑](#endnote-ref-1337)
1338. On the neo-orthodox critique of liberalism and modernism see Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932); H. Richard Niebuhr, Wilhelm Pauck, and Francis P. Miller, The Church Against the World (Chicago: Willett, Clarke and Co., 1935). For a broader perspective on neo-orthodoxy and the issues and concerns that contoured it, see Donald B. Meyer, The Protestant Search for Political Realism, 1919-1941 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960). [↑](#endnote-ref-1338)
1339. The liberal and modernist perspective and agenda was presented in the “Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry, Commission of Appraisal” titled Rethinking Missions: A Laymen's Enquiry After One Hundred Years which was authored by Harvard philosopher and modernist, Dr. William Ernest Hocking. William Ernest Hocking, Rethinking Missions: A Laymen's Enquiry After One Hundred Years (New York: Harper, 1932). Neo-orthodoxy’s missiological rejoinder was sounded by Hendrick Kramer in The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World which reemphasized the uniqueness of the Christian Revelation and the radical discontinuity between Christianity and all other religions. Hendrick Kramer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (London: International Missionary Council, 1938). [↑](#endnote-ref-1339)
1340. Lyman Van Law Cady, “The Liberal Attitude Toward Other Religions” in David Everett Roberts and Henry Pitney Van Dusen, Liberal Theology: An Appraisal: Essays in Honor of Eugene William Lyman, (New York: Scribner’s 1942),147-148. Blyden would have been appalled by the missiological impact of Kramer’s theology and missiology which reportedly produced a Balinese Church that “in all its inner and outward life the Balinese Church [was] more like the Dutch Reformed Church than the Dutch Reformed Church is like itself.” Consequently it “manifest[ed] hardly a trace of the wonderful art and culture of the most beautiful island.” Neill, History of Christian Missions, 535. [↑](#endnote-ref-1340)
1341. See Robert E. Speer, "Rethinking Missions" Examined (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1933); Brian Stanley, The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott (A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movement and Ideas in the English -Speaking World), (IVP Academic Press, 2018); ); George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006 ; Joel Carpenter, Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and James Davison Hunter, American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983). On the growth and impact of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Church Movements in West Africa see S. ‘Jide Komolafe, “Turning Point **:**A Survey of the Decisive Moments of Christian Mission in Nigeria”, Nigerian World January 5, 2013. Accessed online at <https://nigeriaworld.com/feature/publication/jide-komolafe/010513.html>

      See also David B. Barrett, Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968) and Vinson Synan, The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movement in the Twentieth Century (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997). [↑](#endnote-ref-1341)
1342. On the theoretical and methodological shift from “Comparative Religion” to “History of Religions,” see Eustace A. Haydon, “From Comparative Religion to History of Religions.” The Journal of Religion, vol. 2, no. 6, 1922: 577–587.  [www.jstor.org/stable/1195525](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1195525). See also Eric Sharpe, “From Comparative Religion to Religious Studies,” in Sharpe, Comparative Religion, 294-313 and Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959). See also Malory Nye, “Modernity and the disciplinary formation of religious studies,” June 26, 2017 accessed at [https://medium.com/religion-bites/modernity-and-the-disciplinary-formation-of-religious-studies-1cbe73070cf5 on March 22](https://medium.com/religion-bites/modernity-and-the-disciplinary-formation-of-religious-studies-1cbe73070cf5%20on%20March%2022), 2019 and Darryl G. Hart, The University Gets Religion: Religious Studies in American Higher Education ( Baltimore, M. D; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). [↑](#endnote-ref-1342)
1343. Blyden, West Africa Before Europe, 143. [↑](#endnote-ref-1343)
1344. The germinal contributions made by Blyden and other clergy-intellectuals such as Faduma to the development and maturation of the religious roots and dimensions of an evolving Pan-Africanism and West African nationalism were often overlooked. See for example Moses N. Moore, Orishatukeh Faduma: Liberal Theology and Evangelical Pan-Africanism 1857-1946 (Lanham, Md., and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996). See also Tony Martin, “Some Reflections on Evangelical Pan-Africanism, or Black Missionaries, White Missionaries, and the Struggle for African Souls 1890-1930,” Ufahamu1(Winter 1971):77-92. [↑](#endnote-ref-1344)
1345. Note however recent study of the religious factor in Nkrumah’s development and policies by Ebenezer Obiri Addo, Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion and Politics in Ghana (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997). [↑](#endnote-ref-1345)
1346. This alarm was reflected in the careful vetting of African students and African American institutions desiring study in the United States by missionary and colonial agencies and agents. See for example the struggles of Ernest Kalibala to migrate to the United States to obtain a “useful” education and his subsequent difficulties with traditional mission agencies upon his return to Uganda. King, Pan-Africanism and Education, 72. 226, 228-230, Editorial, “The Foreign Mission Board Takes Over a New Station in Uganda, East Africa” Mission Herald 43 (Jan./Feb. 1940):12-15. See also Carter G. Woodson’s awareness and critique of this dynamic as reflected in his denouncement of the role of Thomas Jesse Jones and the Phelps-Stokes Agency in selecting and managing black students and their educational opportunities. Woodson, Negro Church, 286-287. See also Woodson’s broader critique of this dynamic and its fostering of “indoctrination” instead of “education” in Carter G. Woodson, The Mis-Education of the Negro (Washington, D. C. Associated Publishers, 1933). [↑](#endnote-ref-1346)
1347. This awareness was reflected in the inter-war addresses, publications, and even memoirs of even established Blyden disciples such as Orishatukeh Faduma. See Orishatukeh Faduma, “My Nigerian African Background,” Yale Divinity School Alumni File [↑](#endnote-ref-1347)
1348. Biney, Kwame Nkrumah, 36-37. See also Ebenezer Obiri Addo, Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion and Politics in Ghana (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997), 63. [↑](#endnote-ref-1348)
1349. Holden, “Modernity's body,” 313-332. [↑](#endnote-ref-1349)
1350. One of the more significant illustrations of this development has been the attention payed Blyden’s contributions and legacy in various essays that comprise the recent study titled European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa. Notably, in its “Introduction” its editors foreground Blyden’s 1880 manifesto to Africa’s place amid the myriad currents that shaped both the historical and contemporary world: “Africa is no vast island separated by an immense ocean from other portions of the globe and cut off through the ages from the men who have made and influenced the destines of mankind. She had been closely connected, as both source and nourisher, with some of the most potent influences which have affected for good the history of the world.” Edward Wilmot Blyden, “Africa’s Service to the World,”1880). [↑](#endnote-ref-1350)
1351. See for example the works of Jacob F. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite ( London, 1965); Emanuel Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria , 1842-1914 (London: Longman, 1966); Bolaj Idowu, Towards an Indigenous Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); Ogbu Kalu (ed.) Christianity in West Africa: The Nigerian Story (Ibadan: Saystar Press, 1978); Fashole-Luke, et al (eds.) Christianity in Independent Africa ( Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1978) ; Kwame Bediako, Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995). [↑](#endnote-ref-1351)
1352. On Blyden’s call for the development of a West African University and an accompanying professorship of West African Religions as “absolutely necessary” for accurate study of African religious and cultural institutions as well as for the “healthy development of an independent [and modern] Negro state” see Blyden to Mary Kingsley, 7 May 1900, quoted in Holden, Blyden, 734. [↑](#endnote-ref-1352)
1353. Blyden to Grimke, 29 October 1889, Woodson, Works, 4:14-15. [↑](#endnote-ref-1353)
1354. Of special importance in this regard are the careers and publications of prominent African scholars such as Lamin Sanneh, Jacob Olupona, Mercy A. Oduyoye, Toyin Falola and Afe Adogame. See for example Jacob Olupona (ed.) African Traditional Religions: In Contemporary Society (New York: Paragon House, 1991); Mercy A. Oduyoye, The Vocabulary of Yoruba Religious Discourse (Ibadan, 1972); Toyin Falola, The African Diaspora: Slavery, Modernity, and Globalization (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013); and Frieder Ludwig and Afe Adogame,(eds.) European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa (Wiesbadan: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004). ` [↑](#endnote-ref-1354)
1355. See Moses Moore, conversations with Lamin Sanneh in New Haven, Connecticut and Tempe, Arizona regarding Blyden’s contributions and legacy. See Lamin Sanneh, The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism (Boulder, Co: Westview Press,1997); Lamin Sanneh, Abolitionist Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999); Lamin Sanneh, Whose Religion is Christianity: The Gospel Beyond the West , (Grand Rapids, Mi.: William B. Eerdmans, 2003); Lamin O. Sanneh, Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Lamin Sanneh, ed. Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture (Mary Knoll, N. Y :Orbis, 2009); Lamin Sanneh, West African Christianity: The Religious Impact (Mary Knoll, N. Y., Orbis, 2015); Lamin Sanneh and Joel A. Carpenter eds., The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West and the World ( New York: Oxford University Press, 2005 ); and Lamin Sanneh, Beyond Jihad: The Pacifist Tradition in Western African Islam, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). See also Sanneh’s biography, Lamin Sanneh, Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an Africa (Grand Rapids, Mi: William B. Eerdmans, 2012). [↑](#endnote-ref-1355)
1356. “Remembering Lamin Sanneh, the World’s Leading Expert on Christianity and Islam in Africa” Christianity Today Jan. 8, 2019. https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/january/lamin-sanneh-died-world-christianity-islam-africa-yale.html?share= [↑](#endnote-ref-1356)
1357. See for example the valuable collection of essays exploring varied aspects of this intersection in Ludwig and Adogame, European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa. For contemporary assessments of the relationship between African religion, science and modernity See Robin Horton, “African Traditional Thought and Western Science,” Journal of the International African Institute (2012). See also Arie Molendijk and Peter Pels (eds), Religion in the Making :The Emergence of the Science of Religion (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1998); Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press,1993); Talal Asad, Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity (Cultural Memory in the Present) (Stanford : Stanford University, 2003); Ugo Bianchi (ed.) The Notion of “Religion” in Comparative Research: Selected Proceeding of the XVI IAHR Congress (1994); Michel Despland and Gerard Vallee (eds.) Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality (1992); Isomae Jun’ichi, “Introduction: The Development of the Concept of Religion and the Discipline of Religious Studies,” in Religious Discourse in Modern Japan: 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004272682_002> [↑](#endnote-ref-1357)
1358. See, for example Blyden’s early delineation of the “Pastor’s Work” and the subsequently evolution of his intellectually and pedagogically engaged ministry amid the currents and demands of modernity. Blyden, The Pastor’s Work. [↑](#endnote-ref-1358)
1359. See Adelaide M. Cromwell, An African Victorian Feminist: The and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford, 1868-1960 (Washington, D.C. :Howard University Press,1992); Nemata Blyden, “The Search for Anna Erskine: African-American Women in nineteenth century Liberia” in Catherine Higgs, Barbara Moss, Earline Rae Ferguson (eds), Stepping Forward: Black Women in Africa and the Americas (Ohio University Press, 2002): 31-43; Mercy Oduyoye, Introducing African Women’s Theology (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001 and Mercy Oduyoye, Beads and Strands: Reflection of an African woman on Christianity in Africa (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004). On Blyden’s influence on former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf see “Liberia Remembers Edward Wilmot Blyden, the Father of Pan-Africanism,” Awareness Times, February 12, 2007, 23:46. [↑](#endnote-ref-1359)
1360. Liberian Bulletin, no. 11 (November 1897): 40, quoted in Lynch, Patriot, 165; See also Holden, Blyden, 678 and Lynch, Blyden, 246. [↑](#endnote-ref-1360)
1361. Edward Hulmes opines that "By several decades” Blyden “anticipated the work of the liberation theologians who seek to interpret the social, political, and economic implications of Christian belief and discipleship." Edward Hulmes, “Edward Wilmot Blyden's understanding of Christianity and Islam as instruments of black emancipation in West Africa”, Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, 1:1 1990, 45-46, 63-64 (published online 44-65 Published online: 18 Apr 2007 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596419008720924> . See also Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism, 116-120; and Josiah U. Young, A Pan-African Theology: Providence and the Legacies of the Ancestors (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-1361)
1362. See Vincent L. Wimbush, “Introduction: Reading Darkness, Reading Scriptures,” in Wimbush, African Americans and the Bible. See also Cain Hope Felder, ed., Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). [↑](#endnote-ref-1362)
1363. Chidester, Empire of Religion. See also Frieder Ludwig and Afe Adogame, eds. European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004) [↑](#endnote-ref-1363)
1364. Blyden, African Life and Customs. On the contemporary history of this ongoing debate within religious studies see Sharp, Comparative Religion and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion (New York, 1963). See also William Cantwell Smith, “Traditional Religions and Modern Culture “ in Proceedings of the XIth International Congress of the IAHR (Leiden, 1968) and William Cantwell Smith, “Comparative Religion: Whither-and Why?” in Eliade and Kitagawa (eds.) The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology. For a more contemporary discussion of this continued problematic see Masuzawa, The Invention of World Religions. [↑](#endnote-ref-1364)
1365. See the contemporary debate as framed by Albert J. Raboteau in Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-1365)
1366. See Blyden, “Christian Missions in West Africa,” and Blyden, The Return of the Exiles and the West African Church. [↑](#endnote-ref-1366)
1367. Livingston, Education and Race, 233. See also A. R. I. Doi, “Influence of Islam and the Spread of Islam Learning in West Africa: Contributions of E. W. Blyden to Islamic Studies,” The Islamic Review 54, no. 11 (November 1966): 31-34; Sillah, “Edward Blyden and Islam,” 23-42; See also Curtis, Islam in Black America; Turner, Islam in the African-American Experience, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) and Michael Gomez, Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of Muslims in the Americas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-1367)
1368. Curtis, “African American Islam Reconsidered,” 659-84; Edward Said, Orientalism (Vintage Books, 1979); Dorman, “Lifted Out of the Commonplace Grandeur of Modern Times,” 398-418. See also Richard King, Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and “The Mystic East,” (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) [↑](#endnote-ref-1368)
1369. Blyden, The Jewish Question; Lynch, “A Black Nineteenth-Century Response to Jews and Zionism”; Neuberger, “Early African Nationalism,” 151-66; and Chireau and Deutsch, Black Zion. [↑](#endnote-ref-1369)
1370. See Lamin Sanneh, Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), Lamin Sanneh, Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) and Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom: the Coming of Global Christianity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). See Moses N. Moore, “Edward Blyden: Pioneer Religious Theorist, Theologian, Missiologist and Historian of ‘World Christianity.’” Paper delivered at “Currents, Perspectives, and Methodologies in World Christianity” Conference, Princeton Seminary, January 20, 2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-1370)
1371. See the Critical Comparative Scripture program as described by the Religious Studies Department at Claremont Graduate University, <http://www.cgu.edu/pages/7135.asp> and at the University of Virginia at https://religiousstudies.as.virginia.edu/comparative-scripture-interpretation-and-practice. [↑](#endnote-ref-1371)
1372. See for example Reid Locklin and Hugh Nicholson, “The Return of Comparative Theology,” Journal of American Academy of Religion 78, no. 2 (June 2010): 482-89. See also Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “AAR Centennial Roundtable: Religion, Conquest, and Race in the Foundation of the Modern/Colonial World,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol. 82, Num. 3 September 2014; Linnell E. Cady and Delwin Brown, eds. Religious Studies, Theology, and the University, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002) ;Timothy Fitzgerald, The Ideology of Religious Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Paul Griffiths “On the Future of the Study of Religion in the Academy,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion 74/1, 2006: 66-74. [↑](#endnote-ref-1372)
1373. See Catherine Bell, “Modernism and Postmodernity in the Study of Religion,” Religious Studies Review 22/3,1996 : 179-190; Jeannine Fletcher Hill, ”Religious Pluralism in an Era of Globalization,” Theological Studies 69/2, 2008: 394-411; Donald Wiebe, The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academy (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); Luther H. Martin, Donald Wiebe, “Religious Studies as a Scientific Discipline: The Persistence of a Delusion,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion 80/3, Sept. 2012: 587-597. Scott Elliot, ed. Reinventing Religious Studies: Key Writings in the History of a Discipline (Durham, UK: Acumen 2013); Timothy Fitzgerald, The Ideology of Religious Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

      [↑](#endnote-ref-1373)