

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

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

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

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

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

Roman Catholic and Sunni Muslim authorities saw their political power erode relative to secular governments, in an uneven but long-running process that began with the Protestant Reformation in Europe. Events such as the French Revolution; the unification of Germany; the assertion of French, British and Russian imperialism in Ottoman domains; and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I deepened their losses. In the twentieth century, nation-states ranging from Turkey and Italy to Algeria curtailed or subsumed Roman Catholic and Sunni Muslim institutions further. By the twenty-first century, religious authorities faced new challenges, as migration, globalization, and the proliferation of mass media complicated efforts to keep believers in line.

Faced with what Laurence describes as these three successive defeats—the “end of empire,” “the nation-state era,” and “the era of believers without borders” (ix)—religious authorities coped with political losses by pursuing “spiritual gains” and moving “away from the unrealistic goal of political office-holding toward advocacy, missionary work, and ritual uniformity” (5, 8). Coping entailed institutional expansion. Catholic and Muslim authorities trained clerics to reach higher and more consistent professional standards; established new schools and programs; and cooperated with governments in providing social and family services.

Meanwhile, national governments recruited Catholic and Muslim authorities in efforts to avert or quell social unrest. Laurence gives the fascinating example of how U.S. authorities, during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, entreated American Catholic leaders and the Vatican to supply the United States with more priests after a Polish American steelworker, anarchist, and baptized Catholic named Leon Czolgozic assassinated President William McKinley in 1901. Laurence considers similar efforts in countries like France and Tunisia, a century later, to enlist Muslim religious authorities in dissuading disaffected Muslim youth from joining the militant Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria. Such examples underline another argument: patterns of adaptation have been sufficiently similar in Catholic and Sunni Muslim contexts to make comparative study of religion–state dynamics possible and instructive.

Laurence provides detailed case studies. He draws examples from the late Ottoman Empire, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, the United States, Turkey, and the Maghreb (Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco). Laurence acknowledges omitting countries like Ireland and Poland in Catholic Europe, and Libya and Egypt in Islamic North Africa, citing their complexity. His sources include Vatican and Ottoman archival records and interviews that he conducted between 2011 and 2019 with officials from government ministries and educational bureaus.


This book is long—over 600 pages—including a main text of 438 pages, plus extensive endnotes, a bibliography, and supplementary materials. Yet with its jargon-free style; abundant charts, tables, and illustrations; and clear narrative, the book could work well as a textbook in an undergraduate survey—albeit a year-long survey, since it would probably be too much for undergraduates to digest in a single semester! If used as a textbook, educators might need to provide some additional context. The book assumes that readers will know what Sunni Islam is, as opposed to Shi’a Islam, and how that may matter or not. It also assumes knowledge of anticlericalism in Catholic societies and the sources of popular animosity toward church elites in the age of nation-states and republics. Readers who lack this knowledge may otherwise struggle to appreciate stories like the one the author shares about the installation in Rome in 1888 of the brooding statue of Giordano Bruno. A scientist and monk, Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600 for views deemed heretical about the structure of the universe (he thought it was infinite, and that the sun was one star among many)

and eternal damnation (he dismissed the idea). Italian politicians were not alone in coming to see this statue go up; a huge crowd (Laurence calls them a “mob”) gathered, as one can see from the picture on page 162. Understanding why the crowd chanted, “Death to the Priests, Down with the Vatican, Long Live Bruno!” is essential for grasping why so many Italians were happy to see the Church lose.

Laurence writes with a palpable and infectious enthusiasm. This is another reason why the book would work well in a classroom: it would be fun to read and debate with a group. Among questions that the book may provoke are these: Who really lost—and what exactly did they lose—amid battles between religious institutions and secular states? Were the losers only religious elites, or did rank-and-file believers lose, too? What did religious communities gain or win from these changes? And what consequences did blows to the power of corporate religious organizations have for ordinary Christians and Muslims?

Historians of the Middle East and North Africa may find Laurence’s inclusion of Morocco at the expense of Egypt somewhat puzzling, both because Sunni institutions in Egypt have been so important (think of al-Azhar) and because Morocco was never part of the Ottoman Empire, which provides a foundational case in the first part of the book. He also attributes more institutional coherence to the Ottoman caliphate than many experts would do—and more significance to the young Turkish republic’s announcement in 1924 of its dissolution. These are small reservations about a book that is otherwise ambitious, attentive to detail, and compelling.

*Coping with Defeat* is arguably a work of diplomatic, and not only religious, history. A photograph on page 316 illustrates why this is so, and at the same time points to one of the book’s major lessons. Taken in 2015, the image shows German governmental and religious authorities posing outside in their coats. In the front row, Chancellor Angela Merkel stands arm in arm with the chairman of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany. The dignified yet smiling expressions of those assembled—and the fact of their intertwined arms—suggest that the meeting was cordial, and they are allies. The photograph suggests, too, that while religious authorities may have decisively lost political control in the twentieth century, some commanded influence as intermediaries in the early twenty-first century, and as such, had power to negotiate and collaborate with state agents to their advantage.

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***Hong Kong’s Last English Bishop: The Life and Times of John Gilbert Hindley Baker.* By Philip L. Wickeri. Sheng Kung Kui: Historical Studies of Anglican Christianity in China Series. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2021. xv + 196 pp. \$62.00 cloth.**

At first blush, this book’s subtitle perfectly captures the tenor of the volume. Philip Wickeri, the advisor to the Anglican Archbishop of Hong Kong on theological and historical studies, explains that his biography has “no overall theme,” but simply aims to “narrate Gilbert Baker’s life in the context of his times, drawing on available documentary evidence.” No other biography exists, so Wickeri has “nothing to deconstruct, no position to advance” (4). The book is a sympathetic treatment of John Gilbert Hindley