

## Edward Wilmot Blyden, Islam and African Emancipation

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**ABSTRACT:** The relationship between Islam and African emancipation raised intriguing questions not only about the way Islam challenged white supremacy and imperialism, but also about the suitability of Islam to Africans and as an instrument of black emancipation. Edward Wilmot Blyden was among the first who pointed out this relationship and maintained that Islam could serve the cause of blacks worldwide. For Blyden, the intersection of race and religion was a feature that made Islam a force in the hands of Africans to escape arrogance of Christian missionaries and construct a religious world in conformity with their indigenous beliefs and practices. The present study attempts to expose the nature and scope of Islam according to Edward Wilmot Blyden's philosophy. It suggests that Blyden's praise of Islam was a one way to remedy the distorted manhood of the African and a means to re-shape European Christianity to be entirely African with an Islamic taste.

**Keywords** -Edward Wilmot Blyden, Islam, African emancipation, European Christianity

### I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, religion shaped the lives of societies to the good or worst. The historical encounters of Africans with religious beliefs thus operated in a like manner. In Africa, there existed three main religions: indigenous religion, Islam and Christianity. As regards indigenous religion, the ordinary African believed in the presence of a Supreme Being (God) where he devised a set of practices to worship and identify with the Supreme Being. The belief in God as a supreme being was accompanied by a belief in divinities, ancestors, and spirits. These three formed the connection between the Supreme Being and individuals and much of the rituals were a reflection of the impact of these entities on African beliefs and practices. Furthermore, rituals were an important element in indigenous religion. They were a "means of communicating something of religious significance, through word, symbol and action" (1). Usually rituals provide expression to the nature of God and were significant in picturing African culture as an inseparable element of indigenous religion. The emphasis on the presence of African culture as a means for religious practices made the nature of indigenous religion fully Afrocentric. Through an intermingling between religion and culture, the African created a suitable theology that was in conformity with his environment. He saw God through African dress, dance, music and folktales and he scarcely did any efforts to understand religious principles, as they were closely tied to the African sense of self.

While African indigenous religion preached for the importance of spirituality and the individual as closely bound to God, the presence of European Christianity seemed to alter a complete departure from old beliefs and practices. For the missionary, everything associated with African life and customs was debasing. African arts, rituals and ceremonies were "Satanic" and were likely to warp the African from standing as a proper individual. These iconoclastic opinions led the missionary to introduce education, along with evangelization, as to facilitate indoctrination of Africans and make them an easy prey to European ideals and principles. In this regard, education introduced Western arts, history and culture. It further emphasized the use of the English language over the use of the vernacular as a means of instruction. Indeed, Eurocentric ways of seeing God prevailed over Africans old beliefs and practices. For Africans, European Christianity confiscated the African as it had many racial repercussions. The missionary attempted to create a theology based on casting God in the image of a European. A thing that stifled the African and enforced beliefs about the inferiority of African systems as compared to the European ones.

This vision of European Christianity and iconoclastic opinions came in marked contrast to Islam. Africans showed flexible views about Islam, as its basic ideals were compatible with African beliefs. The way

Islam saw the importance of individual regardless of race and its staunch attacks on slavery could equally find its parallel in African indigenous religion and thus made Islam in advance of Christianity. Edward Wilmot Blyden was the first to recognize the merits of Islam for African advancement. He was born on 3rd August 1832 in the island of St. Thomas, the Dutch West Indies. His father was a tailor while his mother was a teacher. It was stated that they were slaves before they got their freedom and settled at the Island of St. Eustatius in 1792 (2). Early in his life, he made contacts with some Jews. These contacts shaped a very positive view about Judaism and led Blyden to consider Jews as acquaintance of Africans because of their persecution and life prejudices. At the age of 12, he attended school. He was fortunate to meet the Rev. John Knox, a white priest at the Dutch Reformed Church at St. Thomas. As an accomplished student, Knox suggested for Blyden to go to the U.S. to continue higher education. Blyden did not hesitate and arrived at the U.S. in 1850. Upon his arrival, he, however, met a rejection by two colleges because of his race let alone his color. Much disheartened by the rejection, two of his friends, Walter Lowrie, secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and John B. Pinny of the New York Colonization Society, suggested for Blyden to repatriate to Liberia as a second destination to pursue higher education. In 1851, Blyden arrived at Liberia and attended Alexander High school. As an editor, teacher, educator, theologian and politician, Blyden made notable addresses and published highly authority books on the African race and the forces that worked for its destruction. In religion, the focus of this study, he published "Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race" along with other addresses. As a comparative study book, Blyden tried to compare European Christianity with Islam. Blyden never doubted the centrality of religion to freedom struggle and his encounters with Islam and Christianity were a one way to negotiate the fundamental principles and basic ideals that guided each religion. The response to the strengths of Islam and weaknesses of European Christianity was an example of how Blyden and Africans in general did not stand aloof to the presence of any religious doctrine. For Blyden, Islam succeeded in nudging the Muslim to know the sense of self as it did not attribute any special significance to color and race and was likely to make the individual exert a total control of his faith and destiny. The writing of this article emerged as a need to trace intellectual responses to the diffusion of many religions to the African soil. The choice of Blyden as a focus of this study was equally important, as the man was the first to try shape a theology with an Afrocentric reality. The praise of Islam was a one way to remedy the distorted manhood of the African and a means to re-shape European Christianity to be entirely African with an Islamic taste.

## II. EDWARD WILMOT BLYDEN: THE CONDEMNATION OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIANITY

Before 1870, Blyden was a staunch supporter to the presence of missionary agencies in Africa. He was committed to the idea that European Christianity was the essence of all progress that Africans needed. He encouraged African brethren's leaving in the U.S. to repatriate to Africa as to evangelize and uplift their fellow Africans from all sorts of barbarism. This vision, however, did not last for long, as Blyden was quick to point out the deficits of European Christianity on the intellect and physical development of the African. The change of vision was a result of many visits Blyden had to the interior of Sierra Leone and the Middle East where he met many Muslims who altered a complete change in his beliefs about the suitability of Christianity to African progress. His appreciation of Islam, thus, came because of the abuses Africans encountered with the Methodist Churches and the great admiration of the formularies and principles of Islam.

For Blyden, European Christianity enforced a Master-Servant relationship (3). While propagators of the Christian faith in Europe promised to enlighten and civilize Africans as their brothers, their work in Africa was an unmitigated disaster. Because the European missionary was overwhelmed by the myth of African inferiority, he saw the African as a slave or a subject race. For Blyden, though the missionary considered the Negro to be his brother because of the shared nature, still "diversity in type and color" overshadowed old beliefs and advanced that "the inferiority which...appears on the surface must extend deeper than the skin, and affect the soul"(3). Consequently, the missionary treated the African with utter contempt and was ready to enforce Western modes of life to the detriment of African customs and traditions. To this point, the African became an ape and a puppet to re-produce what the Master dictated for him. Referring to the distorted manhood of the African, Blyden concluded that European Christianity was retarding to the African wellbeing:

their (Africans) development was necessarily partial and one-sided, cramped and abnormal. All tendencies to independent individuality were repressed and destroyed. Their ideas and aspirations could be expressed only in conformity with the views and tastes of those who held rule over them. All avenues to intellectual improvement were closed against them, and they were doomed to perpetual ignorance (3)

Accordingly, the Christian Negro of the Coast developed what Blyden termed “a cringing and servile spirit”. He exhibits a very low opinion about himself and his systems. His personal characteristics were lost in favor of a merging Western lifeways. In all these, the Christian Negro lost “sense of the dignity of human nature” early in his contact with Christian biases and was made to believe of an inferiority complex which forced him to distaste all what was African(3).

European missionaries presented an erroneous picture of God. While the African saw God in every details of his surroundings (dress, dance, harvesting, folktales), the newly invented God of the missionary, however, was a caricature of European society. Blyden affirmed that the abnormality of the Christian Negro was a result of fallacious policy of the missionary who revealed blatant attempts to hide the truth and enforce the African to see God in the moral and intellectual advancements of a foreign race(3). Within this atmosphere, the Christian Negro acquired a contempt for African values and adjudicated that it was an “honor” to mimic Western modes of life, and if necessary, blend blood and skin color to achieve the “excellence” physical characteristics of Europeans. In such proceedings and under the influence of perplexing caste prejudices, peculiarities of the Christian Negro were ridiculed and his distinct African personality felt at one with hopeless and perpetual inferiority.

Furthermore, the embryonic suppression of African worldview heralded a domination of the material over the spiritual. According to Blyden, the West Aryan, with its despotic plan to Westernize God, entrenched a deep-rooted belief among Africans that “man is an end, not a means”. In this respect, the hierarchy of races became sound and true. The intellectual capability and achievements of any individual was a mark of superiority. This necessitated that “poor”, “undeveloped” and “uncultured” individuals must bend their might to the highest man. This also applied to races where “The more favored race must dominate and control the less favored race” (4). Religion in this respect became in tune with material progress while the “unseen”, the “immaterial” and spiritual became of secondary priority. African paintings and exquisite statues underwent a novel redefining to suit the West common agenda to use religion and civilization as a means for African exploitation, deterioration and demoralization. Under such prevailing contaminated religious doctrine, Blyden advanced that Islam was of most salutary consequences for the Christian Negro, as it would allow for greater freedom, amelioration and restoration of the African wellbeing.

### III. EDWARD WILMOT BLYDEN: REVERENCE FOR ISLAM

As mentioned in the previous section, Blyden’s vision of European Christianity had undergone another transformation when he visited the East and was lucky to meet Muslim “Ulamah” in the Sierra Leonean interior. Meanwhile, Blyden published five notable publications on the merits of Islam and the troubling aspects of European Christianity. He went against some widespread beliefs that Islam did not have any “wholesome” effects and that the Muslim Negro possesses “as a general thing only the external appendages of a system which they do not understand” (5). Contrary to these representations, Blyden was compelled to recognize major contributions of Islam that placed the religion and its adherents in advance of the Christian Negro. For Blyden, Islam was the only religion that overstepped the limits of race, brought the Muslim into direct contact with God, and became an instrument for the political, social, intellectual amelioration of the character of new converts(4). Islam’s benevolence also evinced through the wholly book “Koran” which, for Blyden, succeeded in uniting Muslims and became an appendage in the physical and intellectual aspirations of all Muslims. Islam further outlawed all forms of slavery and made an advance in the recognition of blacks as men with distinct personalities and capabilities regardless of face complexions (6).

#### 3.1 IMAN, GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

The power of caste did not have much impact on the representation of divinity. For Blyden, Islam did not attribute any significance to race and color. Instead, the Muslim “sees God in the great men of his country” (3). In sharp contrast to European Christianity, the Muslim individual did not experience any withering racial remarks that could debar him of pursuing social and political privileges. Blyden exemplified by a Negro, Bilal who was assigned to call for prayer though he was a black. This was because Islam recognized every men, though destitute, to have a direct communication with God without the overwhelming power of caste prejudices. In describing how Islam placed an important role to man irrespective of racial origins, Blyden concluded that: “to the Shemite, the spirit, the mind of man, was the great object of development and culture—the inward character rather than the outward form. And this devotion to external forms—this respect for appearances—is the great drawback to the Aryan in disseminating a religion which was meant for, and is adapted to, all mankind.” (4)

In this respect, Islam placed much stress on the essential and the integral of man status while European Christianity stood firm to reveal the accidental and adventitious. Blyden further stressed that the time when the Christian Negro was coerced to acquire Western lifeways to approach God, Islam, on the other hand,

extinguished all intermediaries between man and God. According to Blyden, “The Divine revelations, according to Islam, have no prescriptive or exclusive channels; no class are special intermediaries for the conveyance of Divine truth to mankind. No place is the chosen spot for the Divine teachings or worship” (6). This was especially true when Blyden strengthened his argument with how Islam forbade the making of images. For Blyden, the Prophet Mohamed warned his followers about such a practice and instructed that those who disobey would be severely punished. This Islamic law, according to Blyden, made “the thinking and reasoning powers” of the Muslim “developed rather than by what he read and heard than by what he saw”(7). Owing to the highly system of divine worship, the conditions, feelings and character of the Muslim improved notably. Blyden narrated many instances when he visited some Muslim communities in the Sierra Leonean interior along with a description of the nature and scope of Islam in the Western Soudan. In all these regions, Blyden explained that Muslim communities, in contrast to some Pagan communities and the largely dominating Negro Christian communities, were gifted with a highly moral atmosphere. The Muslim conceived himself distinct and superior to Pagans as he was the “one to whom a revelation has been “sent down” from heaven. He holds constant intercourse with the “Lord of worlds,” whose servant he is”. This moral connectedness between the creator and the created assisted the Muslim to not “indulge in the frivolities and vices which he considers as by no means incompatible with the character and professions of the Kafir or unbeliever” (5). The strict indulgence to follow Islamic rules and the fear of punishment in life and after-life, led the Muslim to exhibit an attractive personality. Describing the good impact Islam had on the individual, Blyden provided a lively, very motivational of the status of one Muslim community in Western Soudan:

“It brings to him a consciousness of his place as a distinct, rational, responsible individuality, allied to the highest intelligences of the universe, all moving in entire subordination and submission to the one Supreme Will ; none by virtue of nationality or race taking precedence in the family of the Faithful Its invocations are always for the Prophet and his followers. The Prophet and all his people are one. Only God is supreme. Man, according to this system, is above all created beings, and inferior, whatever his worldly position, only to the Creator, who when He had made man commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before the new creature” (6)

Moreover, Muslims self-esteem, dignity and confidence heralded a political, social and economic independence. As regard politics, Blyden pointed out that many Mohammedan communities in Africa had their own decision as regards political and economic affairs “without the countenance and patronage of the parent country, Arabia”. He exemplified by Sierra Leone where there existed Mohammedan states which were self-reliant and able to manage their affairs without the interference of any local or imperial power. These states were able to erect ecclesiastical and literary institutions (3). Economically, there was an unsurmountable commercial activity. For Blyden Muslims were able to establish commerce in native produce namely woven and dyed cotton cloth. Market were centers for the exchange of produce and mediums for the sustenance of economy. There emerged also a great deal of trade on dressmaking. For Blyden, these intellectual and physical developments owed its existence to the wholly book “Koran” which, far more influential than the Bible, stood as a force to teach and guide the Muslim throughout his life (7).

### **3.2 THE KORAN AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR UNITY AND EMANCIPATION**

Blyden’s appreciation of Islam did not only evince through its enlightened character, but also revealed through the great impact the wholly book “Koran” had on its adherents. For Blyden, the Koran was much in advance of the ignorant fetishism and Shamanism(3). It was obvious that Blyden’s vision had undergone many transformations as he praised Islam and was against fetishism and Shamanism of the African society while in his last years, especially after the publication of his masterpiece “African Life and Customs”; he encouraged the revival of African religious practices with a much Islamic taste. Blyden’s praise on Islam at this time was a much more attempt to understand a system that would replace European Christianity and provide an avenue for Africans to escape the arrogance of European missionaries.

For Blyden, the Koran exhibits an accomplished language and style. According to Blyden, the way the words of the Koran were chosen and how they cohere all together had a captivating impact on its adherents. Though the words seemed difficult for readers and sometimes ideas could not easily be understood, the Koran still could create “a nameless beauty and music, a subtle and indefinable charm” (8). For Blyden, the poetic composition of the Koran further made its language and ideas inseparable. This special rhythmic structure became “a deeper power to rouse the imagination, mold the feelings, and generate action.” (5).

The Koran was a source of moral, intellectual, social and political guidance. The Muslim found in every chapter of the Koran a great deal of his intellectual and physical needs. In all, it represented a sacred, unquestioned, “whole religion” for all Muslims. Blyden averred that because the words of the Koran were “held in the greatest reverence and esteem” (3), it made the Muslim a distinguished, well-versed individual as compared to a Pagan or Christian convert:

“It is his code of laws and his creed, his homily and his liturgy. He consults it for direction on every possible subject ; and his pagan neighbor, seeing such veneration paid to the book, conceives even more

exaggerated notions of its character. The latter looks upon it as a great medical repository, teaching the art of healing diseases, and as a wonderful storehouse of charms and divining power, protecting from dangers and foretelling future events.” (5)

The Koran further became a powerful means of education. Throughout his visits to many Muslim states in Africa, Blyden stated that there was a system of schools spreading all over these states where the curriculum was entirely based on the Koran. A child was expected to read and memorize chapters of the Koran early in his childhood years. This process enabled the child acquire familiarity with Arabic words that would instill a common feelings, interests and opinions(6). To this point, the Koran, as an educator, became a source for unity for all Muslims around the world. Blyden stressed that in all Muslims walks of life the Koran became a unifying force. He narrated that people of different vernaculars be they Mandingoes, Foulahs, Jalofs, Mausas or Yorubas spoke use their languages in private. Yet, “when they meet all prostrate themselves before the great Creator with the same words of adoration and self-extinction” of the Koran (6). Another feature of union was revealed through the rigid annual fast of Ramadhan. According to Blyden, “No other region of the globe presents such a sight—sixty millions of people fasting at the same time.” (3). For Blyden, these features, indeed made Muslims one of the mighty forces on the continent and the only people who could exert sympathy and cooperation though separated by distances.

### 3.3 SLAVERY IN THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW

Slavery was another important dimension by which Blyden addressed differences between European Christianity and Islam. For Blyden, the time when the European missionary used the sword to impose Christianity of their own and showed infringeable desire to subdue the African and enforce his slavery, the Muslim, on the other hand, received Islam in a peaceful manner. In sharp contrast to the European missionary, Blyden hinted to the positive impact of the Muslim Missionary:

“Mohammedanism found its Negro converts at home in a state of freedom and independence of the teachers who brought it to them. When it was offered to them they were at liberty to choose for themselves. The Arab missionaries, whom we have met in the interior, go about without “ purse or scrip,” and disseminate their religion by quietly teaching the Koran...Their converts, as a general thing, become Muslims from choice and conviction, and bring all the manliness of their former condition to the maintenance and support of their new creed” (3)

Blyden exemplified by Al Hajj Omaru, a native of Futa Toro, and Samudu, of Liberian origin, as having a distinct “religious propagandism” which had a “wonderful activity and success”. Omaru had great activity in the Upper Niger where he successfully brought the inhabitant of the region to believe in Islam. Blyden stressed that his methods were neither political nor contaminated religious ends. He instead worked to disseminate the word of God peacefully and without a reward. Samudu, on the other hand, was not less successful than Omaru. Samudu reached the Soudan and his impact was believed to reach Europe and the Americas. For Blyden, Samudu “ displays...a soldierly, as well as fatherly, heroism; so that he has the art, as a rule, without carnage, of making his iconoclastic message acceptable to the sympathies of the Pagans whom he summons to the faith”(7).

Islam further attacked slavery and considered blacks as their brothers. Blyden stated that Islam had been the sole force against the desolations of slavery. Unlike European Christianity which was endowed with the belief of African inferiority, Islam provided newly converted tribes a protection as soon as they start resisting slave hunters. Furthermore, Blyden opined that in Islamic rules, persons who provide slaves are “Kafir” and the time when a slave converted to Islam, he was considered free. On the other hand, servile blood could not debar him/her from sharing the same rights as free persons (5). Part of these Islamic rules owed its spread to the Prophet Mohammed. For Blyden, the liberality of the teaching of the prophet Mohammed made Islam a distinguished religion especially when it came to the status of a slave. In many instances, the Prophet Mohammed addressed his followers:“ I admonish you to fear God, and yield obedience to my successor, although he may be a black slave.”(4). The impact of the Prophet’s teaching was great that many slaveholders decided to grant freedom to many slaves as part of identification with God and Islamic rules. Indeed, the Islamic doctrine succeeded in removing all barriers against black elevation and no doubt, that within these Islamic states one could find blacks holding important positions within the society. A very interesting description of one of these personalities who had great respect among Muslims was the King of Egypt, Kafur. Blyden wrote that he was

“One of the most distinguished of the Mohammedan rulers of Egypt was Kafur, “a Negro of deep black color, with a smooth, shining skin,” who rose to be Governor of Egypt, from the position of a slave. He had shown himself equally great as a soldier and a statesman. His dominion extended not only over Egypt, but Syria also; and public prayers were offered up for him, as sovereign, from the pulpits of Mecca, Hijaz, Egypt and the cities of Syria, Damascus, Aleppo, Antioch, Tarsus, &c.” (4)

Blyden continued that Islam extinguished all barriers upon race and color and stressed that if man was qualified he could bear responsibility:

“Islam...makes room for all. If a Muslim Negro from Soudan or a Malay from India, or a Chinaman from Pekin, is competent he can be sent on any—the most important mission—in connection with his religion, and he will be invited to lead the prayers in any mosque in Europe, Asia, Africa or America. A Negro Muslim from Sierra Leone has lately been leading the devotions of English Muslims in the mosque at Liverpool. The Sheikh-ul-Islam of England, Abdullah Quilliam, an Englishman, whose nationality does not debar him from holding that high position in the Mohammedan community, delivered by his faith from racial prejudices and restrictions, has named one of his sons after an African slave— Bilal” (6)

The belief in black capacities was also revealed in many parts of the Koran. Blyden stated that there was a mention of a great black man named Logman in the 31st chapter of the Koran. He was described as having wisdom and piety as part of a gift from God. Blyden averred that the Prophet Mohammed “did not believe that any slur would be cast upon the new religion by connecting the Koran with the name of that remarkable slave.”(8). This justified why among the right-hand man of the Prophet advisors was a free slave.

#### IV. BYDEN, ISLAM AND THE “AFRICANIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY”

As noted in the previous sections, Blyden had great hope in Islam as a path for Negro elevation. Nevertheless, this should not lead readers to assume that Blyden wanted to be a Muslim. Throughout his life, Blyden was accused of being crypto-Mohammedan. In response to these allegations, Blyden falsified the news stating that “I have written of what I know, and testified to what I have seen, from which it has been hastily inferred that I have become an admirer and adherent of Islam” (9). This was especially true when Blyden addressed a paper before the Presbyterian Ministerial Association of Philadelphia where he directly stated that “Islam has never yet superseded a pure Christianity, nor will it ever give way before the elaborate system which coming from Europe”(8). His admiration of Islam thus was a way to compare religious doctrines prevailing in Africa and analyze their effects on the intellectual and physical psyche of the African. But to what extent could African indigenous religion be saved along with the falsifying nature of European Christianity and the newly established religion of Islam?

A remedy to the delinquencies of present African situation rested on the search for pure Christianity. For Blyden, A pure Christianity was neither Islamic nor indigenous but an amalgamation of the two. Blyden stated that African Negro could benefit from Islam when Arab superstructure was introduced with a keep up of a permanent indigenous substructure. This way the African could reach “a healthy amalgamation, and not an absorption or an undue repression” (3). Blyden further noted that Islam could have successful effects among Negroes when the Oriental aspects of Islam including its traditional customs were shaped to suit the most of African customs and traditions. To this point, Blyden called for a real reservation of African traditions and customs as part of religious beliefs and practices, the fusion of many Islamic laws especially those which had great relation to African emancipation and lastly encourage conversion to pure Christianity as an intricate religious doctrine. With the latter, one can assume that Blyden believed that Muslims’ conversion to Christianity with their uncontaminated methods could introduce a pure Christianity for the Negro:

“We are persuaded that with the book knowledge 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 a higher culture and a nobler civilization. And, 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”(5)

Along with Muslims zealous and energetic activity, Blyden also saw in the African a source for a pure Christianity(7). The Church was in need of Africans who could understand African peculiarities without being absorbed by the physical and intellectual aspects of a foreign race. Their work should be for the Negro race and for the spiritual redemption of the African psyche from a long and distorting alien experience.

The Africanization of Christianity became at the hub of Blyden’s activity. Because of the great plight experienced by Christian Negro in the Methodist Church, Blyden made the point that the distorted manhood of the African could only find its remedy through a purely African Church. For Blyden, the African should find in the new church marks of his distinct African personality. The African could no longer remain a caricature of Western habits and norms. Rather, he should through a well-established Church, shape a new destiny and new beginning that drew on African life and customs to shape an uncontaminated religious world. Consequently, Blyden toured many West African colonies to preach for the new project. His appeals, indeed, had great impact on the time and it was not a surprise to find many West African intellectuals of the 20th century who endorsed his views and objectives and created their own pure African Christianity.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The present study attempted to expose the nature and scope of Islam in the philosophy of Edward

Wilmot Blyden. It first described Blyden's attitudes toward European Christianity and revealed that his praise of Islam was the outcome of a malign experience with European Christianity. The attempt of the European missionary to discard the African of his religious worldview and emphatically enforce European religious thought and behavior that was most frustrating for Blyden. The study further drove deep into the Blyden's vision of Islam. It revealed that Islam, unlike European Christianity, was of a salutary nature and the only religion that could elevate Africans and suit their socio-cultural and religious evolution. The analysis further showed that Blyden's admiration of Islam was far away from being a crypto-Mohammedan. Rather, he longed for a day when the African could form a purely African Church that was an amalgamation of Islam, African indigenous beliefs and a pure Christianity.

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