Black Indians and freedmen. The African Methodist Episcopal Church and indigenous Americans, 1816–1916. By Christina Dickerson-Cousin. Pp. xvi + 236 incl. 6 ills, 3 tables and 2 maps. Chicago–Urbana, Il: University of Illinois Press, 2021. $26 (paper). 978 0 252 08625 0

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'Since a boy I have heard of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee Indians. I am glad to see you face to face and to tell you that Jesus died for the red man as well as the black man', marvelled the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) bishop Thomas Myers Decatur Ward in 1879. Addressing the Indian Mission Annual Conference (IMAC), an AME group comprised primarily of African Americans, Indigenous peoples and Black Natives, the Black American minister described the 'bond of sympathy' that he saw linking his audience members. Just as 'the Man of Sorrows' had provided for 'the black man [who] was brought here [the United States] a slave', so too could the 'Gospel of Peace' assuage the suffering of Indigenous communities who had been 'reduced to hundreds' (p. 98). The racially inclusive Christology of African Methodism, Ward suggested, would provide both Black and Native peoples with the strength necessary to fight racial oppression. First organised by AME laity and leaders in the Choctaw town of Yellow Springs, IMAC represents one instance in the intersecting histories of Native and Black Americans, histories that have gained more critical attention through studies by scholars such as Kyle T. Mays (*An Afro-Indigenous history of the United States*, New York 2021), Tiffany Lethabo King (*The Black shoals: offshore formations of Native and Black studies*, Durham, NC 2019) and Tiya Miles (*Ties that bind: the story of an Afro-Cherokee family in slavery and freedom*, Berkeley, Ca 2005). Dickerson-Cousin's *Black Indians and freedmen* contributes to this budding historiography.

Chronicling the stories of AME clergy and laypeople like Bishop Ward, *Black Indians and freedmen* tells the overlooked history of how African Americans, Afro-Indigenous Peoples, and Indigenous Peoples built relationships and solidarities in a Protestant denomination often perceived as 'racially monolithic' throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (p. 3). While late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Black Methodist leaders such as Bishop Richard Allen and the evangelist Jarena Lee 'wrote Indigenous outreach into the very DNA of the AME Church', the most active period of AME evangelisation stretched from the 1860s into the early twentieth century (p. 13). In addition to illustrating the evangelism of Black AME missionaries among Indigenous peoples, Dickerson-Cousin uncovers the historical leadership of Native peoples and 'Black Indians' in the AME Church as preachers, missionaries and organisers. AME laypeople like the Chickasaw freedwoman Annie Keel, Dickerson-Cousin contends, found unique power in the denomination's assertion of racial autonomy at a time when some Indigenous Nations restricted the access of Black Natives – some of whom were formerly enslaved by these Nations – to tribal citizenship. Altogether, the study emphasises three primary themes in relation to Indigenous histories in the context of the denomination: the spiritual kinship bonds forged among Native, African American and Afro-Indigenous Protestants; the establishment of AME missionary infrastructure in the territories of the 'Five Civilized Tribes' (the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Seminole Nations); and the post-emancipation political advocacy of the AME Church on behalf of Indigenous rights.

On the first point, Dickerson-Cousin unfolds how some Black and Native AME adherents understood one another as kin because of their shared experiences of oppression and shared grammars of religious expression. Her exploration of John Hall, a nineteenth-century Ojibwe AME missionary, serves as a helpful window for considering how some Native Protestants viewed their connections with Black American Protestants: 'It has been handed down from one generation to another', he stated, 'that you are my dear cousins; that such is the relation between the Indian and colored man' (p. 48). Hall also noted a resonance between Black and Native worship practices. The Indigenous Christian practice of shouting during worship, for instance, which resulted from 'the Great Spirit [coming] into our hearts', was accepted among Black American Christians but pathologized by white ones (p. 48).

Beyond mapping these kinship constructions, Dickerson-Cousin deftly weaves the story of the denomination's development of a missionary infrastructure in the American West. This period of 'African Methodist Migration' involved building schools, all-Black towns, churches and denominational conferences. Here, she intervenes in the historiography of late nineteenth-century Black westward migration by centring religion in Black American migrants' motivations to go West.[1] The drive among some AME Church members to establish the denomination's presence in the West was equally propelled by denominational visions for global expansion, a multi-continental missionary enterprise that reached as far as the Caribbean and the African continent.[2]

A third area of Dickerson-Cousin's focus is the political work of the AME Church on behalf of Afro-Indigenous rights. In particular, she highlights AME ministers' involvement in the Dawes Commission, a delegation that ran from 1893 to 1914 and made legal determinations on tribal citizenship and land allotment. Dickerson-Cousin unveils how numerous AME leaders 'testified before the Dawes Commission on behalf of their parishioners, friends and relatives' (p. 154). Furthermore, AME documentation gained legal significance in this context as 'many Black Indians, regardless of their religious affiliation, relied on AME birth, marriage, and death records to support their citizenship cases' (p. 154). As Dickerson-Cousin recovers the history of how the AME Church emerged on a national political scale through advocacy for the rights of Black Natives, she offers a novel account of how religion, race and law have intersected in the denomination's history. For Dickerson-Cousin, the AME Church's historical involvement in the Commission illustrates how the denomination tangibly supported 'marginalized people of color from diverse ethnicities' (p. 172).

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[1] See Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black migration to Kansas after Reconstruction*, New York 1976, and Kenneth Marvin Hamilton, *Black towns and profit: promotion and development in the trans-Appalachian West, 1877–1915*, Chicago, Il 1991. See also the forthcoming work of Cori Tucker-Price, currently titled *The people's platform: Black religion and the forging of Black resistance in Los Angeles, 1903–1953*, which will help fill the gap in historical work focused on African American religion in the American West.

[2] For more on the transnational scope of AME missions see James T. Campbell, *Song of Zion: the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa*, Chapel Hill, NC 1998, and Lawrence S. Little, *Disciples of liberty: the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the age of imperialism, 1884–1916*, Knoxville, Tn 2000. See also the forthcoming monograph of Christina C. Davidson, currently titled *The myth and the middleman: religious race-making at the Dominican crossroads*, which highlights the role of the AME Church in shaping racial formation in the Dominican Republic.

While Dickerson-Cousin skilfully shows how the AME Church served as a site of advocacy for racially marginalised groups, readers may still be left with questions about the presence of colonialism in shaping the denomination's missionary vision. The text is far less incendiary than other treatments of African American missionaries, such as Sylvester Johnson's *African American religions, 1500–2000* (Cambridge 2015).[3] While Dickerson-Cousin acknowledges that there is a 'problematic history of the Christian encounter with Native people', she asserts that 'these African Methodists believed that they were offering authentic racial egalitarianism' through their evangelistic work (pp. 7–8). She also claims that AME missionary-minded migrants who relocated to the West 'were not consciously engaged in the colonial enterprise that the US government was carrying out' (p. 67). 'Rather', she notes, 'they were an oppressed people seeking refuge and opportunity' (p. 67). Black AME congregants' and missionaries' experiences of oppression, however, do not negate their own abilities to produce violence, neither do their beliefs about their intentions mitigate their impact on the ground. More attention to Native Peoples' own perceptions of this missional labour, particularly the perspectives of those who chose not to convert, would have further enriched the formidable narrative. Additional questions remain about the Black missionaries themselves: Did they fear proximity between their evangelism and that of their white counterparts in other parts of the nation or globe? Are there recorded moments when they expressed anxieties about the capacity of missionary work to produce harm?

Dickerson-Cousin's rigorous research offers a gripping historical rendering of how African Americans, Black Native peoples, and Native peoples worked together to build the political, social, economic and religious engines of the first independent African American Protestant denomination. Unfolding new questions and themes for future scholarship about the longstanding interraciality of a predominantly Black religious body and the presence of Black religions in the American West, the study bolsters histories of (African) Methodism, African American religious history, American religious history and Afro-Indigenous Studies.

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Visions for racial equality. David Clement Scott and the struggle for justice in nineteenth-century Malawi. By Harri Englund. Pp. xvi + 309 incl. 12 figs and 2 maps. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. £75. 978 1 316 51400 9

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Harri Englund's book is a challenge to the scholarship on missions to Africa in the nineteenth century as well as a challenge to twenty-first century readers to reflect on how their own worldviews envisage strangers and issues of racial injustice. The

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[3] Sylvester A. Johnson, *African American religions, 1500–2000*, Cambridge 2015.