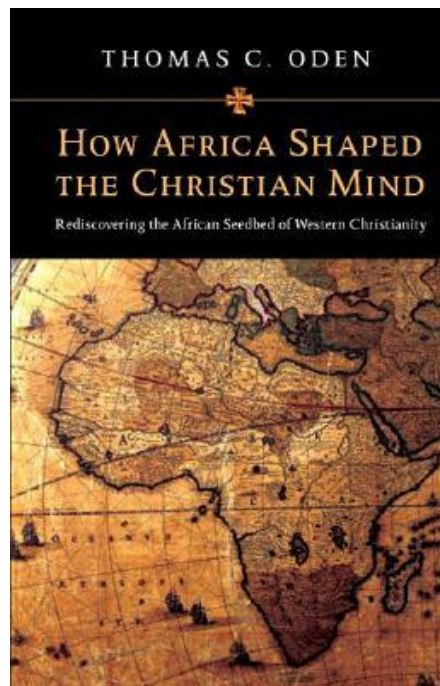




How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity

Thomas C. Oden

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Africa has played a decisive role in the formation of Christian culture from its infancy. Some of the most decisive intellectual achievements of Christianity were explored and understood in Africa before they were in Europe. If this is so, why is Christianity so often perceived in Africa as a Western colonial import? How can Christians in Northern and sub-Saharan Africa, indeed, how can Christians throughout the world, rediscover and learn from this ancient heritage? Theologian Thomas C. Oden offers a portrait that challenges prevailing notions of the intellectual development of Christianity from its early roots to its modern expressions. The pattern, he suggests, is not from north to south from Europe to Africa, but the other way around. He then makes an impassioned plea to uncover the hard data and study in depth the vital role that early African Christians played in developing the modern university, maturing Christian exegesis of Scripture, shaping early Christian dogma, modeling conciliar patterns of ecumenical decision-making, stimulating early monasticism, developing Neoplatonism, and refining rhetorical and dialectical skills. He calls for a wide-ranging research project to fill out the picture he sketches. It will require, he says, a generation of disciplined investigation, combining intensive language study with a risk-taking commitment to uncover the truth in potentially unreceptive environments. Oden envisions a dedicated consortium of scholars linked by computer technology and a common commitment that will seek to shape not only the scholar's understanding but the ordinary African Christian's self-perception.

How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity Details

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Stephanie Yates says

Great work

Joel McCarty says

I highly recommend this book, especially for those of us who have a primarily Westernized understanding of our theological history.

The only reason I gave the book four stars was because the writing style was difficult to follow at times. However, the content more than made up for the shortcomings in style.

Lauren says

I was so pumped to read about how Africa shaped the Christian mind...

...I am still so pumped to read about how Africa shaped the Christian mind. The author does start to get into it about 20 pages until the end, but only just.

The title is more of a misnomer, unfortunately. Had it been titled instead How Africa Has Been Ignored in Christian Studies and Please, Oh Please, Understand How Important Such Studies Are, I would have come to the book with more appropriate expectations.

On one hand, I understand why the author needs to spend so much time convincing the reader that this study is important. On the other, I do not need such convincing. That's why I picked up the book; I wanted the titular thesis explored!

The book would have made more sense if it served as an introduction to the Ancient Christian Commentary series, leading you in to further exploration of the thesis.

Tiffany says

The book introduces an important topic, and for that I am grateful. I was not aware of the African influence on scriptural study and analysis. However, I found the book extremely repetitive and not very deep. The author continued to say that additional study was necessary to truly appreciate the full extent of the influence. While making that statement is to be commended, I still expected there to be more substance to the book than what was provided. I enjoyed learning about true location of historical Ethiopia as it shed light on what's happening today in modern day Sudan.

Greg Miller says

It seems a bit like a 155 page introduction to a substance filled book that never quite comes

Ruth says

The title of this book seriously set my expectations in a different place from what this book delivers. While I was fully interested and engaged in Oden's essays, the repeated phrases along the lines of "more study is needed" and "young African scholars need to look into this" left me thinking the subtitle should have been something more along the lines of "casting a vision to rediscover the African seedbed of Western Christianity" or something. But that quibble aside, I'm still very glad to have read this! Along with the author, I look forward to focused works in which experts unveil the full depth of appreciation that global Christians owe not just to African church fathers and mothers but to the heritage passed down through generations. As the author says, "For no time in the last two thousand years has the Christian witness been absent from the African matrix of cultures. God has not left himself without witness."

Ciara Anderson (Browne) says

The first in a trilogy which traces the history of a "western" religion to its strong roots on the African continent. Intended to give a taste of such scholarship and to encourage others to continue and develop on this understudied area.

Cody Owen says

Huge collection of essay topics for someone else to research and write. Absolute waste of time. Next to no scholarly work. If you're interested in a collection of ideas with ZERO execution or articulation, this is the book for you.

Justin Lonas says

Profound and needed thesis, very lackluster writing/editing.

An important work, nonetheless.

Ryan Reed says

This book is worth reading. The thesis is great and will hopefully bring forth much fruit for the modern Christian Church.

Sara says

I'm mostly just echoing the words of other reviews, but basically the topic is so important and so fascinating, but the book is highly disorganized and incredibly repetitive.

Matthew says

Basically an invitation to considering the impact of African Christianity on global Christianity. An important thesis, though the book is more an introduction to the thesis than its main support.

Glenn Williams says

From Oden's research, he reveals that Africa was not only one of the early voices of Christianity and that it was indigenous, but that the ancient African theology of the first millennium played a key role in the formation of Christian culture and provided a critical interface for people in Africa and Asia who's religious beliefs were rooted in Judaism and Christianity. Because it played such a decisive role in shaping European and Asian theology Oden encourages African scholars to rediscover their heritage and appreciate it for its value rather than see intellectual Christian development as predominantly Western or European. This is at the core of Oden's hypothesis: that much intellectual history flowed south to north, something that is rarely acknowledged.

Chrys Jones says

Great introduction to Africa's place in Christian history. A little too ecumenical at times and sometimes overstates his case, but more books need to have this stuff in them.

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