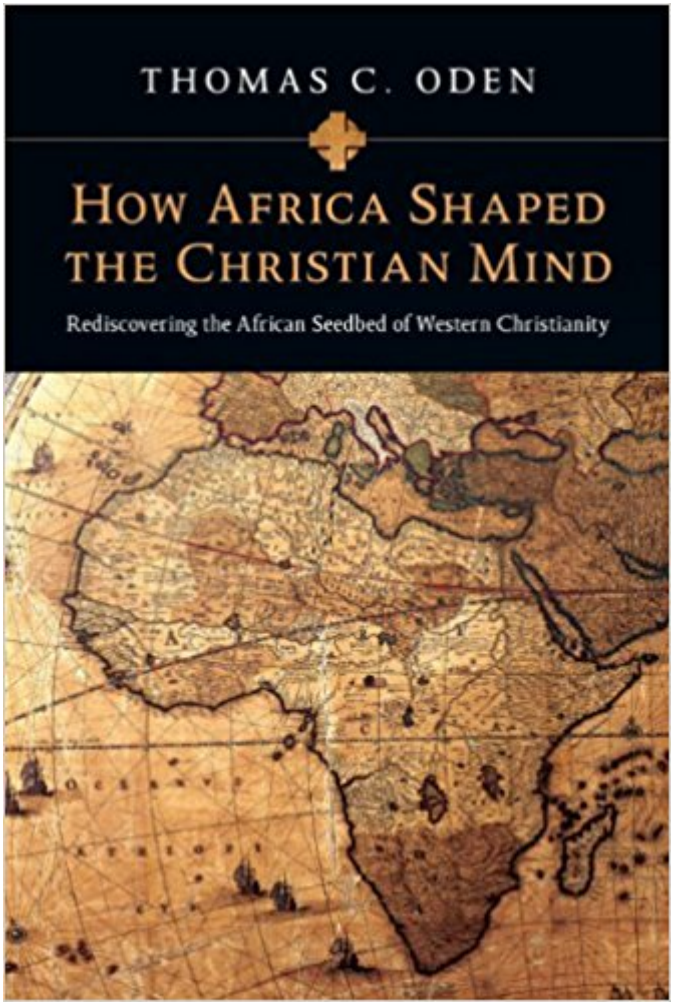
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How Africa Shaped The Christian Mind: Rediscovering The African Seedbed Of Western Christianity



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Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Where is the cradle of ChristianityÃ¢â ¬â •Europe or Africa? After teaching historical and systematic

theology, Oden is surprisingly just discovering what other scholars have argued for some time: that the earliest contours of Christianity can be easily traced to Africa. After all, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Plotinus and AugustineÃ¢â ¬â •to name only a few early Christian thinkersÃ¢â ¬â •were Africans. In this tiresome and repetitious book, Oden belabors the already well-established notion that Christianity's roots can be found in Africa. He does draw helpfully on his work on the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture series to demonstrate that the intellectual contours of ChristianityÃ¢â ¬â •academics, exegesis, dogmatics, ecumenics, monasticism, philosophy, and dialecticsÃ¢â ¬â •developed in Africa. However, Peter Brown (Augustine of Hippo) and other writers have clearly recognized this contribution, and Oden's naÃƒÂ ve and hyperbolic book is more embarrassing than enlightening. Oden's study is most suited to those who are entirely new to the debate and who will benefit from resources such as a time line of early African Christianity and a reading list for further investigation of the subject. (Jan.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind . . . is essential for all libraries East, West, South devoted to Christian historical and theological issues." (Roger E. Hedlund, Dharma Deepika, January-June 2011)"A gripping and inspiring book." (James Nkansah-Obrempong, Evangelical Review of Theology, April 2009)"An exciting book generously documented and passionately written." (Gie Vleugels, Stone-Campbell Journal, Fall 2009)"A helpful challenge to consider the primacy of African theology in the first centuries of the church. A very good beginning to what Oden sees as a multigenerational task." (J. Scott Horrell, Bibliotheca Sacra, January - March 2010)"I found this brief book both interesting and important. I am certain that everyone needs to know and process Oden's argument." (Denis Haack, Critique, Issue 3, 2009)"Oden has condensed in a small but excellent starter book a great amount of information and he has provided convincing and compelling evidence for Christianity;s debt to its African roots. He has left me with a great hunger for exploring more deeply into this vitally important subject." (Trevor O'Reggio, Seminary Studies, Andrews University, Autumn 2008)"This book is a challenge, a shot across the bow of young historians. If Oden is correct, that Africa did in fact play a more decisive role in the formation of Christianity than just about everyone realizes, then the Church will profit from the investigation he calls for. This is a tremendous book and is worthy of being read by anyone who enjoys church history, or even African history. Thomas Oden has served the Church over the last few decades by editing the Ancient Christian Commentary Series and reminding us of the necessity of remembering our roots in the

early church." (BostonBibleGeeks.wordpress.com, March 2, 2009)"Oden has offered a compelling and positively provocative work. [This] significant and timely work ought to be read by undergraduate and seminary students studying early Christianity, intercultural studies, and historical and systematic theology. It will surely be a catalyst for future generations of scholarship." (Edward L. Smither, Criswell Theological Review, Fall 2008)"[A] great reminder that what we are doing is recovering a great Christian past, in which the entire Christian world owes a debt to early Africans." (Gary S. Maxey, The Arminian, Spring 2008)"While the book may be provocative to some, it is a potent reminder that Christianity is not a European religion but a worldwide religion and always has been." (Chris White, SoulEpigraph.blogspot.com, June 25, 2008)"I would recommend this book to anyone interested in church history." (Shaun Tabatt, BibleGeekGoneWild.com, July 29, 2008)"Oden's book is a call to take seriously the oral and written tradition of material spoken and penned on the African continent. It is then a call to explore the past, present, and future impact of that legacy." (Robert Kelleman, TitusOneNine blog, April 25, 2008)"Read it, be challenged, considerÃ¢â ¬â ¢and beware: for some it may lead to a life work!" (The Rev. Dr. Colin Reed in Church Missionary SocietyÃ¢â ¬â ¢Victoria, March 2008)"Some of the major Church Fathers were from Africa. These Church Fathers were greatly involved in theological disputes of the time. Oden presents the case that these theologies moved from Africa to Europe and Asia. Oden proposes that present-day Africans need not create a new theology, but rediscover the theology that was born on the continent before the Arab conquests. Oden reminds Christians of the major cultural and religious centers in North Africa." (Br. Benet Exton, O.S.B., Curled Up with a Good Book (www.curledup.com), February 2008)"In a little more than 200 pages, Dr. Oden documents how some of the most crucial intellectual achievements of Christianity were explored and understood in Africa long before they were in Europe. In this landmark book, Oden gives several ways Africa has shaped the Christian mind. From Africa came the idea of university, the development of Christian exegesis of scripture, the earliest intimations of ecumenical conciliar patterns, the rise of monasticism and categorization of Christian dogma." (Jim Miller Book Review, February 12, 2008)"[A]n outline and an agenda for research . . . [by] classic forward-thinking Oden. . . . The story of Christian theology has been told from a European perspective. Oden wants to tell that story differently: classical Christian theology was heavily shaped by Africans." (David Neff, ChristianityToday.com, February 29, 2008)"How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind is a bold call to rehabilitate the earliest African contributions to the shaping of world Christianity. As such, it is a major resource for all people interested in the history of the Christian movement. Oden's focus on the intellectual dimension of Africans' role in the formation of Christian culture may surprise some,

but it is a much-needed, welcome corrective to the assumptions held by many. In my opinion, this book is one of the most significant contributions to the literature on world Christianity. Must reading!" (Tite TiÃƒÂ©nou, Dean and Professor of Theology of Mission Trinity Evangelical Divinity School)"Rarely has a work of such brevity distilled so much vintage wisdom with such ÃƒÂ©lan. How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind fills a crucial gap between the early church in Africa and Western Christianity, and represents a timely challenge to Christian Africans and to a post-Christian West. It will be impossibleÃ¢â ¬â ¢and foolhardyÃ¢â ¬â ¢to ignore this book." (Lamin Sanneh, Professor of World Christianity and of History, Yale University)

A Must read and much research given to explore more study . . can’t wait for future editions

I enjoyed the book, but I felt like the title should have been "Africa Shaped the Christian Mind." With it being "HOW Africa Shaped the Christian Mind" I expected to read more about specific early Christians or specific cultures and the legacy they left.

Outstanding good book. Good condition as described.

Thomas Oden balances the obvious importance of Africa in establishing early Christian doctrinal orthodoxy with the great gulf of academic knowledge of early African Christianity and his appeal to the academy to bridge that gulf. Well written. In my opinion, required reading for anyone seeking to work toward reconciliation between Anglo-Americans and African-Americans. This book establishes respect for Africa for anyone who might doubt.

A great read, recommended to anyone searching for history on the topic.

great

This is a call for church renewal and a new ecumenism based on common beliefs, not organic union. JW

This book is loaded with information. There are spots where it can come off redundant but overall it serves a good source of reference when explaining Christianity and it’s roots.

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