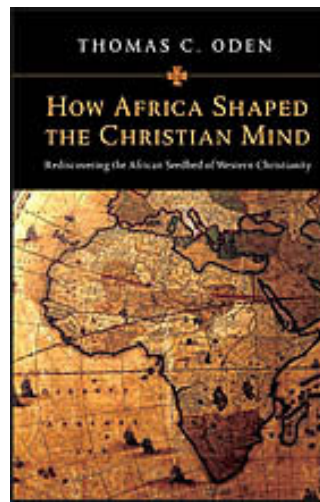


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I wanted to extend a word of thanks to the kind folks at InterVarsity Press for furnishing me with a review copy of Thomas C. Oden's *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity*.

The basic question Oden attempts to answer in this work is, "How did the African mind shape the Christian mind in the earliest centuries of Christianity?" The framework within which he answers this question is known as the "African Seedbed Hypothesis". The gist of the hypothesis is that Africa's role was crucial in the formation of multiple areas of early Christian culture. They are as follows:

- Western idea of university was first conceived in Africa
- Exegesis of scripture first matured in Africa
- African sources shaped early Christian Dogma
- Method for seeking ecumenical consent began in Africa
- African desert gave birth to worldwide monasticism
- Christian Neo-Platonism emerged from Africa
- Rhetorical and dialectical skills were honed in Africa for Europe's use

Oden also contends that early Christian ideas did not flow from Europe to Africa. He says it was quite the opposite, early Christian ideas actually began in Africa and then moved to Europe. Much of this book is spent presenting historical data to further expand on the "African Seedbed Hypothesis". While this book makes a good case for Africa as the seedbed of early Christianity, it is by no means exhaustive. Oden challenges young African scholars to catch a vision for undertaking a much greater "theological and historical reassessment of early African Christianity".

I would recommend this book to anyone interested in church history. Those of you wanting to do additional research on this subject will appreciate the *Literary Chronology of Christianity in Africa in the First Millennium* and the bibliography found at the end of the appendix.

Thomas Oden is recently retired as Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Theology and Ethics Emeritus at The Theological School and the Graduate School of Drew University, a chair he held from 1980 to 2004. He is a senior editor of Christianity Today. The general editor of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (InterVarsity Press), Oden's many other books include, most recently, Turning Around the Mainline and The Rebirth of Orthodoxy.