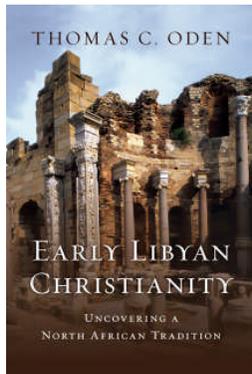


## BOOK EXCERPT



*Early Libyan  
Christianity:  
Uncovering a North  
African Tradition*  
**Available**

**November 2011**  
\$22, 336 pages, paper  
978-0-8308-3943-8

*“The study of early  
Christianity in North Africa  
has been largely confined  
to the regions around  
Carthage and Alexandria,  
but what lies between,  
Tripolitania and Cyrenaica,  
has been virtually  
ignored. In Early Libyan  
Christianity Thomas  
Oden uses literary and  
archaeological evidence to  
fill that gap. This is truly a  
groundbreaking work.”*

—Birger A. Pearson,  
Professor Emeritus of  
Religious Studies,  
University of California,  
Santa Barbara

## Understanding Libya’s Impact on Religion

The chronicle of early Libyan Christianity is not a story for a Christian audience only but also for Muslims, especially those who have an African heritage. Just as Spain has a rich history of Islam, Libya has a rich history of Christianity. In both cases the history has centuries of experience to offer to a broken and conflicted world. Libyans will benefit by more clearly realizing this fact: the soil on which they walk daily has embedded in it five hundred years of Christian roots and residues. This does not imply any claim to any form of territorial or political legitimacy. It only asks for the accurate recollection of a story long forgotten. Nor is it a story whose audience primarily resides in schools and churches and mosques. It is for all who seek the truth that is revealed through the honest study of history.

All three of the monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—hark back to Abraham. All three impinge on Libyan history. All three agree on one crucial premise: The majesty of God is revealed in history. The providence of God is being worked out in actual personal histories. This history can be examined by skeptics and secularists, as well as those already convinced. Whether recognized or not, the truth of God’s presence is being revealed before our eyes daily through humans, according to Jews and Christians, with some analogies in Islam. This is a beginning point in the comparative exegesis of sacred texts of all three traditions.

The Christian narrative will be informative to open-minded Muslims willing to listen to the ancient African background and ancestry of their own classic Muslim intellectual history. The Muslim phase of the African story emerges in the last half of the Common Era’s first millennium. The Muslim narrative will be illuminating to open-minded Christians without denying their faith. Christians will learn about how much of the spirit of Western intellectual achievement began in Africa, and in no small part in Libya. In doing so, they will learn of the ways in which Christians of Spain and Europe have been beneficiaries of Muslim philosophical, moral and scientific wisdom. Whether Christian or Muslim or secular or tradition-oriented, African youth have not had the opportunity to hear their own full story told. The texts and ideas and movements that Africa spawned before Europe discovered them must be more fully translated, disseminated and studied before this will happen.

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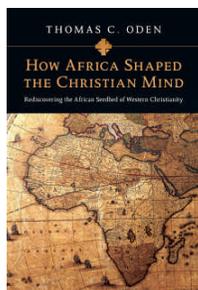


**Thomas C. Oden** (Ph.D., Yale University), formerly Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Theology at The Theological School of Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, is now director of the Center for Early African Christianity at Eastern University, St. Davids, Pennsylvania. He is the general editor of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture and the Ancient Christian Doctrine series as well as the author of *Classic Christianity*, a revision of his three-volume systematic theology.

Many Christians around the globe are intrigued by modern Africa. But most have not begun to ponder it in the light of its own stirring religious history. Similarly there are Muslim believers today who have a lively interest in contemporary Africa, yet many of them, especially those in modern Euro-American universities, have not had sufficient opportunity to glimpse the centuries that preceded modernity.

—from chapter ten, “Why Libya?”

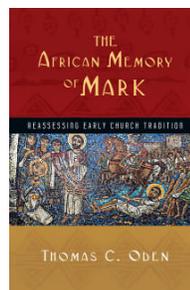
Thomas C. Oden, author of *Early Libyan Christianity*, is the general editor of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, from which much of his research on the study of African Christianity arose. This text gives readers the ability to learn about the faith that shaped Libya and its saints. Two other titles by Oden work together with *Early Libyan Christianity* to form a series on early African Christianity, one discussing the ways that Africa impacted western European culture, the other investigating Saint Mark’s mostly unexplored African heritage.



*How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity*  
\$17, 204 pages,  
paperback,  
978-0-8308-3705-2

*“Rarely has a work of such brevity distilled so much vintage wisdom with such élan. 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 impossible—and foolhardy—to ignore this book.”*

—Lamin Sanneh, Professor of World Christianity and of History, Yale University



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\$22, 279 pages,  
paperback,  
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