

representative of current scholarship on this issue. Due to the crucial nature of this issue for Mettinger's hypothesis, if Ezek 28 and the other passages he quotes are dated later than Gen 2–3 his argument would collapse, thus, the issue of dating should have warranted more attention. Regarding the dating of the Eden Narrative, it would have been relevant to have dealt with Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur Quinn's argument for the important role Gen 2–3 plays in the larger unity of Gen 1–11 in light of its structural parallel with the *Atrahasis Epic (Before Abraham Was: The Unity of Genesis 1–11* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1985], 36-53). From this parallel comparison, they argue that Gen 1–11 follows the same pattern as other ancient Near Eastern epics and, as such, it should be viewed as an early composition. Walter Brueggemann's article regarding the parallels between Gen 1–11 and Samuel-Kings ("David and His Theologian," *CBQ* 30 [1968]: 156-181) also lends support for a preexilic dating of Gen 2–3. Jacques Doukhan also makes a convincing argument that Gen 1–2 is structurally unified, which again supports a preexilic dating (*The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, 5 [Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1978]).

On the whole, *The Eden Narrative* is a great contribution to the study of the Eden Narrative. Mettinger provides numerous references throughout the monograph and a substantial bibliography. It is a solid work, well edited, and enjoyable to read. This is a great introduction to narrative studies and should be considered as a textbook for a variety of courses relating to the Bible and the ancient Near East.

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Oden, Thomas C. *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007. 204 pp. Hardcover, \$22.00.

There is a widespread belief among Christian believers and non-Christian observers alike that Christianity is a Western religion and was introduced to Africa by Western missionaries during the colonial period, but is this assertion really true? Christianity has had a much longer history in Africa than in the West. The fundamental belief structure, the exegetical methodology, monasticism, conciliar patterns, Christian leadership, and the rhetorical and dialectical skills of early Christianity have their roots in Africa. The brightest theological minds, the foremost historians, the great teachers and preachers of early Christianity were born and matured in Africa. How then can Christianity be classified as a religion of the West when it was born and matured within the African context?

The author of this small book seeks to set the record straight by demonstrating the decisive role that Africa has played in shaping Christianity. This is an incredibly difficult task as the weight of the historical evidence of the past 1,000 years seems weighed against him. He is aware of the herculean task he is undertaking and throughout the book he keeps repeating the need for future African scholars to explain and uncover the necessary evidence to prove beyond a doubt the African roots of the Christian faith.

Oden asserts that uncovering the past “will call for a generation of African scholars to reevaluate prejudicial assumptions that ignore or demean African intellectual history” (9). He further states that “Christianity would not have its present vitality in two-thirds of the world without the intellectual understanding that developed in Africa between 50 C.E. and 500 C.E.” (9).

Oden begins his quest by claiming that this is a story that begs to be told in its factual truth. He describes it as a story “laden with mystery[,] . . . unanticipated providence, heavy with sacrifice and miracle, with unforeseen twists and turns, unrepeatably choices to be confronted and learnings to be treasured” (12). He further states that this is a story not just for a Christian audience, but for everyone from the skeptic to the believer, from seekers to the scholars and even children.

The writer first established the cultural, historical, linguistic, and geographical affinity of Africa to early Christianity. This evidence is well documented and indisputable. Some scholars however, have dismissed the evidence by ignoring the African context and focused primarily on the Greco-Roman world created by the colonial Western powers of Rome and Greece.

From the evidence of the book of Acts, it appears Christianity went immediately to Africa as soon as it was proclaimed at Pentecost via the Ethiopian eunuch. It spread very rapidly in the 40s, 50s and 60s. Africa became the main target for Christian witness because of the large numbers of Diaspora Jews living in Africa (e.g., large Jewish communities in the African city of Alexandria in Egypt) (125).

The letters of Paul focused mainly in the northern movement of Christianity, but there is no corresponding established literary tradition that tracked Christianity to the south. But are there not pieces of evidence that tell something of this story? Oden suggests that the traditions of Mark and Apollo and Simeon of Cyrene and Ethiopia and the history of martyrdoms provide some proof. But this archeological and textual evidence “has been largely ignored by European historians, except as it served European form-critical interests and speculations” (125).

The failure on the part of Western historians to connect Christianity with its African roots is part of this story. African pilgrim sites have been neglected and little archeological work done there. The ancient Christian texts and basilicas that were clearly African have also been neglected.

Oden attempts to provide some evidence by identifying seven ways in which Africa has shaped the Christian mind. He begins with the assumption that contrary to the popular belief, Christianity was not a north to south movement, but a south to north movement. First, the Western idea of a university was born in the crucible of Africa and the unrivaled libraries of Alexandria would serve as a model for university libraries in Europe. Second, the Christian method of biblical exegesis was first matured in Africa and scholars such as Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianus, Gregory of Nyssa along with Origin, Didymus the blind, the blessed, Tyconius, and Augustine of Hippo. Third, theological sources that shaped early Christian dogma as dogmatic definitions were hammered out chiefly in Africa, especially in the Maghreb and the Nile Valley.

The great Christian dogmas and concepts were articulated in Africa and the major battles of heresy against Gnosticism, Arianism, Montanism, Marcionism, and Manichaeism were also fought in Africa before they were argued in Europe (47). Fourth, the early African councils provided the model for ecumenical debate and resolution. This conciliar movement, which began in Jerusalem in 45 C.E. was formalized in the African debates in Carthage, Alexandria, Hippo, and Milevis. Fifth, Monasticism was born in the desert of African, years before it migrated to Europe. Monastic communal life was firmly built upon the exegesis and liturgical traditions in African before Benedict wrote his Monastic rules. African monks established communities in the Theban heart of the Nile and in Scetis and Mimidia (Nitria?). Sixth, Christian Neoplatonism, spear-headed by central players such as Philo, Ammonias, Saecas, and Plotinus were all Africans. Early Christian teachers such as Clement of Alexandria were among the earliest to “set forth the circumspect connections between logos philosophy and the Christian teachings of God. Seventh, the rhetorical and dialectical skills that have shaped Christian thinking were honed in Africa and later used in Europe. African rhetoricians frequently moved from Africa to Europe, bringing with them the “rich subtleties of African communication talents, literary passion and dialectical skills.” This evidence is yet to be demonstrated conclusively!

Questions such as, why was Lactantius found so useful to Diocletian? Why was Marius Victorinus considered the most skilled dialectician of his day? Why did the major European academic centers value the African rhetorical tradition so much?” (p 57) need to be explored further.

Oden’s book has the potential to span major scholarly research in a much neglected area of early Christianity and its connection to Africa. It is clear from his research that this is a neglected area that is crying out for bold, creative, and innovative scholarly enterprise. Because of the enormity of the task that he has undertaken, it should come as no surprise that this book comes nowhere near the successful completion of his mission. But he has succeeded in laying the scope and breadth of the mission, the contours of the scholarly landscape, the urgency of the task, and the importance and relevance of the subject matter,

Oden has condensed in a small but excellent starter book a great amount of information and, at times, he has provided convincing and compelling evidence for Christianity’s debt to its African roots. He has attempted to explain why Africa has been left out of the story, but there is much yet to be written on this matter. He has left me with a great hunger for exploring more deeply into this vitally important subject.

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Perkins, PHEME. *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 312 pp. Hardcover, \$28.00.

In her book, *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*, PHEME PERKINS fills a gap among available literature. As Professor of New Testament at Boston College and a renowned writer and editor, she has contributed largely to the study of