

For Immediate Release

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***JETS* Publishes Review by FWBBC's Hester**

NASHVILLE, TN—The *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS)* published a 1,500-word review (March 2009 issue) by Dr. Kevin Hester, Biblical Studies program coordinator at Free Will Baptist Bible College, in which Hester analyzes Thomas C. Oden's book, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2007, 204 pp., \$19).

Dr. Hester said the book "is born of ecumenical concerns that are both historical and political." Oden's primary thesis is that Africa played a decisive role in the formation of Christian culture, and that Africa is the seedbed of Western Christianity.

Defining "Africa" in geographical terms, Oden claims that African teachers such as Augustine, Athanasius, Clement, Tertullian, and others have been studied as individuals who were more Greek or Roman rather than as North African intellectual giants.

Hester cites Oden's seven fountains from Africa that contributed to the Western Christian tradition—anticipation of the European university, exegesis of Scripture, basic Christian dogma, conciliar patterns, spiritual formation within monasticism, Neoplatonic philosophy, and application of such skills as rhetoric and didactic Christianity.

Hester concludes, "What Oden calls for is an ecumenism that is ecumenical in the original sense of the word: A church that is united in one Spirit, one faith, and one hope that is not confined to geographical, linguistic, or racial boundaries."

While he praises Oden's 40-page chronology of Christianity in Africa that covers the first millennium, Hester questions the functionality of the literary chronology and the book as a whole which

is hampered by the absence of an index, and questions the lack of footnotes referencing sources that could substantiate Oden's claims.