

have too much of their own baggage to direct the reclamation of Africa's Christian past. What is needed is for the "young Africans of today" to "sit at the feet" of the "young Africa of their ancestors" (125).

As already suggested, the great weakness of Oden's ideas is the thinness of the evidence upon which they are constructed. Oden characterizes the Christianity that was practiced in early Christian Africa as the source to which contemporary Christianity has to return if the latter is to free itself from the moral turpitude brought on by accommodation to modern secular values. Yet nowhere does he ever describe early African Christianity in an empirical or historical way. In his defense, he sees the discovery of the evidence to support his claims as the task of generations of young African scholars to come. Oden has thoughtfully appended to his volume a research agenda for them to follow, one based on the research he has led in the recovery of ancient texts as director of the Early African Christianity Project at Drew University. Perhaps of more immediate value to scholars will be the book's second appendix, a 40-page-long "Literary Chronology of Christianity in Africa in the First Millennium."

Oden's efforts to enlist future generations of African scholars in his mission highlight the most problematic aspects of his ideas. The lands where early African Christianity thrived are now for the most part Muslim. Oden dedicates his last chapter to the topic of "Seeking the Reconciliation of Christianity and Islam through Historical Insight," but the chapter never spells out why Muslim states should help in the recovery of a Christian past that would only aid the further Christian evangelization of Africa. Again, to be fair to Oden, Islam is not the intended target of his assault. It is a detail Oden is determined not to let get in the way. "Ultramodern" Christianity is Oden's true culprit. *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind* is best appreciated as a plan for the regeneration of Western Christianity through the rediscovery of its African heritage.

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***Christians in Egypt: Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Communities Past and Present.*** By **Otto F. A. Meinardus.** Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006. xii + 179 pp. \$24.50 cloth.

The late Otto Meinardus is best known for his insightful and informative efforts presenting Egyptian and Eastern Christianity to a wide audience. *Christians in Egypt*, the third in the Meinardus trilogy on Egyptian Christianity,

all published by the American University in Cairo Press, continues that effort. Meinardus also wrote more than 15 books on historic and contemporary Eastern Christianity.

Meinardus asserts in his preface that “the present volume responds to a deficit in our knowledge of the wide spectrum of the various forms of Christianity in Egypt” (vii). *Christians in Egypt*, perhaps best considered a reference or guidebook, concisely accomplishes that goal, provoking the curiosity of the reader to investigate more. Naturally, a significant portion of the history and events presented situate the Coptic Orthodox Church—the oldest and largest of the Egyptian churches—as the point of reference. Many other churches are included and discussed, however, and this comprehensive picture is the real value of Meinardus’s book.

The first two chapters are historical background. Chapter 1 delves into the question of identity, considering similarities between the Egyptian Christians (or “Copts”) and Pharaonic Egypt, including symbolism in art, customs, theology, and sacred stories. Identity continuity between the ancient Egyptians and the Coptic community of today is a fairly common idea among Egyptian Christians, but the question of Egyptian identity today is complex, more so than Meinardus’s conclusion that “these Coptic customs and practices merely illustrate the changelessness of the Egyptian way of life!” (12) would indicate.

Chapter 2, “Egyptian Christians as Citizens of an Islamic Society in the Middle Ages,” treats the history of institutional Christian-Muslim relations (those between patriarch and governor). Meinardus offers three Christian perspectives on the state, based on New Testament scripture: “seeing in the state a divine institution . . . , opposition to the state . . . ; and acceptance of the state” (16). Meinardus provides theological rationale for each of these models and applies them historically. It is sometimes difficult to discern each one’s temporal prevalence, but that is indicative of a reality reflecting a variety of attitudes at any given time. The chapter raises interest in relations at non-official social settings and in other time periods.

The heart of the book—nearly half its length—is chapter 3, “The Christian Churches of Egypt.” Here, the tone of the book changes from academic to background and information. Meinardus presents the history and distinctiveness of the churches of Egypt. The Coptic Orthodox Church is primary, given its long history, wide presence, and reach. Meinardus tells of the early foundations of the church and its place in broader, global church history, including how it figured in the Council of Chalcedon, and the healing of that schism (59–60, 67–68). Brief historical notes and the current status of presence (both within and outside of Egypt), bishoprics, monasteries, and convents proceed from there. Mention of strong Coptic Orthodox associations in the United Kingdom and United States and their advocacy work on religious freedom might have been informative, though not necessary.

Meinardus identifies, describes, and discusses the history, basic doctrine (compared to the Coptic Orthodox Church) and presence of what, for some readers, may be an unexpectedly ecumenical variety of ecclesial life. Sections include other Orthodox churches (the Greek, Armenian, and Syrian Orthodox), Catholic presence and involvement in Egypt in all of its complexity (including Vatican relations with the Christian East and the emergence of a Coptic Catholic Church), and the Episcopal and Evangelical (Protestant) churches (from Presbyterian to pentecostal). With chapter 4, "Christian Agencies, Social and Ecumenical Organizations" (institutions such as the Bible Society of Egypt, the YMCA and YWCA, the Coptic Orthodox Bishopric for Public, Ecumenical, and Social Services, and the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services), the deep roots and broad engagement of the Christian community in Egypt are clear.

Chapters 5 and 6, "Christian Feasts and Fasts" and "The Hierarchs of the Churches Represented in Egypt," are useful lists, perhaps better included as appendices. The postscript, "Multicultural and Ecumenical Spirituality in Egypt," is a short historical article inviting further inquiry, particularly on the issue of today's foreign mission efforts (particularly by Western evangelicals) in Egypt and their impact on ecumenical Christian and Christian-Muslim relations among Egyptians.

Where else can one find such a succinct and useful resource in English on the Christian community of Egypt in its diversity? This is indeed a rare volume in that regard. The preface states that "an additional effect of this book will be to lead toward a more mature mutual understanding" (vii), presumably among the various Egyptian Christians. In fact, Arabic references do exist to accomplish that goal, such as *al-Hala ad-diniyya fi misr*, published by the Al-Ahram Center for Strategic and Political Studies. The absence of that extensive report in Meinardus's bibliography—indeed the evidentially minimal interaction with church leaders or representatives, or citation of contemporary Arabic publications about the churches—may detract somewhat from this volume's authority, although Meinardus himself is an authority in his own right.

There are some other ways that this work might be improved. First, the Christian population's size—actual or relative to the total Egyptian population—is not given. While membership figures do not exist, and counting communities becomes a political act beyond the regular maintenance of rolls, mention of these problems and a note on the range of size of the churches given by various sources would have been useful. Meinardus simply refers to the Christian community as "minority" (54), a problematic designation that has numerical, sociopolitical, and identity implications. Second, the three maps (ix–xi) are good but are limited to the Coptic Orthodox dioceses. Third, the number of typographical errors is small and could be corrected for a future edition.

The strengths of *Christians in Egypt* far outweigh its weaknesses. The currency and importance of Meinardus's work cannot be understated. The Christian communities of Egypt want their histories and stories to be told. This volume provides access to those stories, less as a textbook and more as a reference for academician, clergy, and layperson alike.

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*Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present.* By **Michael D. Bailey**. Critical Issues in History. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. x + 276 pp. \$25.95 paper.

With this survey of the history of magic and witchcraft in Western Europe, Michael Bailey has provided an accessible textbook for an advanced undergraduate setting. Unfortunately, however, there are too few references (even among the "Sources and Suggestions for Further Reading" at the book's conclusion) to make the work a good choice for a graduate seminar. From its opening, the work raises a number of issues critical to understanding the historical difficulties of addressing the phenomena of magic and superstition in the premodern world; to start, the historian must avoid the assumption that they were limited to the manipulation of supernatural forces outside the bounds of organized religion as suggested by many premodern authors. Nor did these practices form part of a thought world considered diametrically opposed to science as they are today (2). In his thoughtful presentation of the subject's central themes, Bailey thus lays the groundwork for fruitful classroom discussions.

The survey opens with a brief introduction to views of magic and superstition in the ancient world. More schematic than detailed, this portion of the book is the thinnest, moving quickly through attitudes toward practitioners of magic in ancient Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome. Egypt, for instance, receives only passing attention despite its rich tradition regarding manipulation of the supernatural. It is clear that the main objective of the first portion of the book is to lay the groundwork for subsequent Christian stances toward the supernatural and condemnation of those who claimed to control it. This continuity may be seen in the often negative stereotypes of practitioners in the ancient world and the similar accusations typically leveled against them in later centuries. Bailey's