BOOKS I HAVE READ: AFRICANS AND AFRICA IN THE BIBLE

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Africans are not late recipients of the gospel message; they are truly a part of the Christian message and that can be seen through their history, their ethnicity, and their geography, for all three can be traced through the Scriptures.
Category: Observations

This is one of those cases where the title tells you just about everything that you need to know about the book. Africans and Africa in the Bible: An Ethenic and Geographic Approach by Tim Welch lists and describes the African people and places that turn up in their Old and New Testament and examines their importance. It is a very useful little book.

The book is a medium format paperback (it is available in Kindle, too) of 142 pages. There are extensive indices and lists of people and places at the end of the book so that the actual text is only just over 90 pages. However, the text is rather small (too small for my comfort) so that a lot is crammed into the space. The style is accessible, with a few footnotes and references for anyone who would like to dig deeper. It will set you back just over Â£11 for the paperback and less for an ebook.

In a sense, there isn't much point explaining the content, it is rather self-explanatory. There is an introduction, a chapter on Africans in the Old Testament, another on Africans in the New Testament, one on African places in the Bible and a conclusion. It is pretty much as you would expect if you were to look consider what would go into a book like this. That being said, the content is encyclopedic and well worth reading. However, it is not so much the content of this book which makes it important, but rather the significance of the content.

In Africa, it is not unusual to hear Christianity referred to as a "white man's religion". The received wisdom is that it is white missionaries who brought Christianity to Africa and in many contexts, it is still white people who control the agenda, the training and (crucially) the money in the African church. Not only that, but the memory of colonialism is still very much present.

In this context, it is important for African Christians (and perhaps, even more so, for Westerners) to grasp the extent to which Africa is embedded in the Biblical narrative. Africa has a much longer Biblical and Christian heritage than Europe and people need to understand this.

> *The biblical references to Africans and Africa are more numerous than one thinks. These references can be found from Genesis to Revelation... Of the 66 books of the Bible, 47 of them contain a regerence to an African place or person.*
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> *p. 81*

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> *p.85*

Andrew Walls has pointed out that Christianity has been in Africa for far longer than it has in his native Scotland and infinitely longer than it has in the United States and Christians living and working in Africa (whether African or ex-pat) need to understand this.

So who should read this book? Frankly, anyone who is considering ministering in Africa in a short or long-term context should read it. It is important both to understand the actual situation on the continent and to disabuse ourselves of some of the false conceptions that we might have. This book will help on both counts.