



Volume 63 | Issue 1

Article 14


5-1-2020

Bowers' "Christian reflection in Africa" (book review)

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Recommended Citation

Rawson, David (2020) "Bowers' "Christian reflection in Africa" (book review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 63: Iss. 1, Article 14.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.2159>

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Book Reviews



Bowers, P. (Ed.). 2018. *Christian reflection in Africa*. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK. Langham Global Library. \$37.00. ISBN 9781783688975

Christian Reflection in Africa is an immensely helpful compendium for librarians and researchers. A collation of reviews from the journal *BookNotes for Africa* taken from a nine-year period, this volume offers more than a thousand entries. Dr. Bowers, who has taught in theological education in Africa since 1968 and has been involved with *BookNotes* since its inception in 1992, has arranged the text of entries alphabetically by authors' names but also provided an index of authors, a subject index and an index of book titles. The collection is thus easily used to access the well-written reviews, often with brief notes on the authors' lives.

According to editor, *BookNotes* and this collection of its reviews seek "to encourage and facilitate informed Christian reflection and engagement in Africa, through thoughtful encounter with the published intellectual life of the continent." (Preface) This volume certainly meets that ambition, continental in scope, broadly intellectual with key works of economic, political and developmental analysis, and ecumenical in its choice of theological and ecclesiological studies. While generally sourced from Africa's evangelical mainstream, *Christian Reflections in Africa* includes well known works of Catholic scholars and some two dozen studies on Islam in Africa. Reviewers have illuminated little known works on liberation theology or the East African revival.

The collection's virtues lead into its vices. Each review is dated by the time it was published. No one would know, without further biographic investigation, that Elie Buconyori, author in 1993 of *The Educational Task of the Church*, founded Hope Africa University in Kenya, took it to Burundi, became bishop of the Free Methodist in Burundi, and built one of the most dynamic Christian universities in Central Africa. Regrettably, he succumbed to cancer in 2013. The collection at large, though published in 2018, is largely of reviews written a decade or more previous. Some important studies are missing, Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*, for example.

These are perhaps necessary lapses in a compendium this large. The volume remains an invaluable reference source for librarians and a necessary research tool for any scholarly inquiry into the dynamics of the Christian faith and the evolution of Christian institutions in Africa.

Reviewer

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