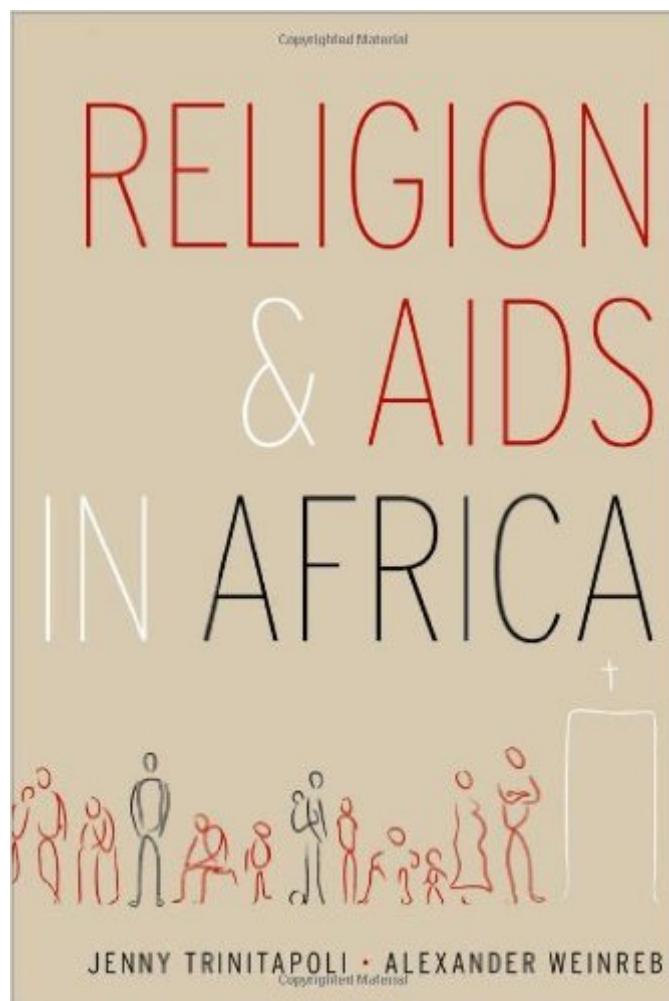


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Religion And AIDS In Africa



Synopsis

The African AIDS epidemic has sparked fierce debate over the role of religion. Some scholars and activists argue that religion is contributing to the spread of HIV and to the stigmatization of people living with AIDS. Others claim that religion reduces the spread of HIV and promotes care and support for the sick and their survivors. Religion and AIDS in Africa offers the first comprehensive empirical account of the impact of religion on the AIDS epidemic. Jenny Trinitapoli and Alexander Weinreb draw upon extensive fieldwork in Malawi, including hundreds of interviews with religious leaders and lay people, and survey data from more than 30 other sub-Saharan African countries. Their research confirms the importance of religious narratives and institutions in everything related to AIDS in Africa. Among other key findings, Trinitapoli and Weinreb show that a combination of religious and biomedical approaches to prevention reduces risk most effectively; that a significant minority of religious leaders encourage condom use; that Christian congregations in particular play a crucial role in easing suffering among the sick and their dependents; and that religious spaces in general are vital for disseminating information and developing new strategies for HIV prevention and AIDS mitigation. For anyone wishing to move beyond the rhetoric and ideology that plague debates about one of the most challenging crises of our time, Religion and AIDS in Africa is the authoritative account. It will change the way readers think about religious life and about AIDS in the region.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you are interested in religion and/or AIDS and/or sub-Saharan Africa, you should probably read

this book. If you think African religion and AIDS don't matter to churches, Religion and AIDS in Africa may challenge you to think again. It provides one of the best empirical investigations of practical theology (how what people believe affects daily life) I have seen and it will challenge you to think more carefully about the importance of everything you say and do. Regardless of your own religion (or lack thereof), I challenge you to read it without coming away believing that religion is somehow critical in the mess of HIV/AIDS in contemporary Africa. Not only that, it is never preachy or didactic, presenting the data in a compelling manner without making blanket statements about what is right or wrong or even trying to guilt the reader into caring. The layout is straightforward: after a few chapters of introduction and background for the AIDS crisis and international response in sub-Saharan Africa, the authors launch into explorations of nearly every conceivable means religion might play a role in the spread, care, or social meaning of HIV and AIDS. In the process, Trinitapoli and Weinreb draw on a fantastic array of high-quality data regarding every country in sub-Saharan Africa, enriched by rich historical research, interviews, and even sermon transcripts collected both in their Malawi study and throughout Africa. Finally, the authors make an unusual claim, at least coming from demographers: HIV and AIDS are changing the churches in turn. In every chapter, the reasoning is compelling, the facts are clear, and the authors are forthright about the limits on what they can reasonably conclude.

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