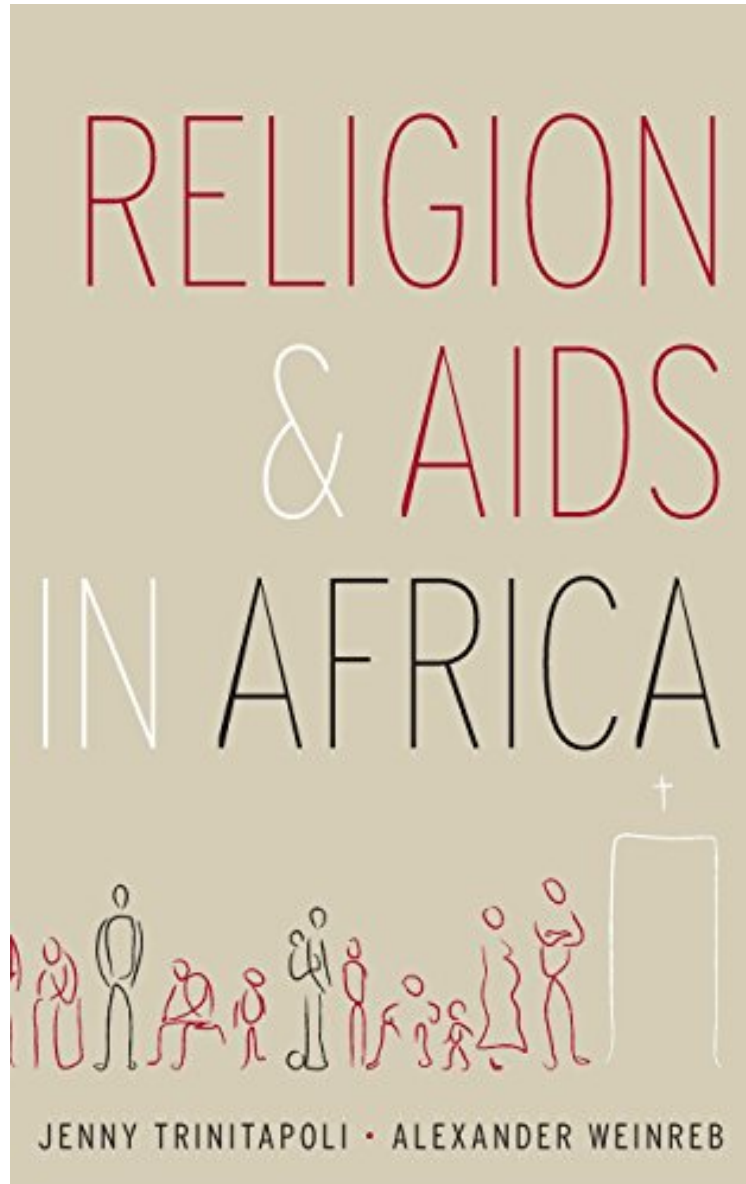


(Mobile book) Religion and AIDS in Africa

Religion and AIDS in Africa

Jenny Trinitapoli, Alexander Weinreb

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Jenny Trinitapoli, Alexander Weinreb : Religion and AIDS in Africa before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Religion and AIDS in Africa:

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helpful. Important for health, society, and religion. By Nathaniel Alena Porter. 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. The book is powerful and well worth reading, both for social scientists and religious leaders, for one primary reason: it challenges us to think carefully about the processes that actually make up social and religious life, how they impact people, how they impact the ways we understand religion, and how we can begin to understand them in their beautiful complexity. Mixed methods studies can at times suffer from split personalities and end up lopsided or mediocre. This study, however, demonstrates the power and necessity of an all of the above approach in tackling tough, important questions with real implications.

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.

"A terrifically important book. While academics and policy makers are often so ignorant about religion, Trinitapoli and Weinreb bring the best evidence and argument to a topic of massive significance, showing once again that we simply cannot understand our world without taking religion seriously—not imposing prejudices and ideologies, but understanding real religions empirically, from the inside, in all their complexity and consequence." --Christian Smith, William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society, University of Notre Dame "Religion AIDS in Africa is superb... For religion scholars in particular, this book serves as a stellar example of the application of multiple sources of data from a variety of methods to build and test theory about religion's role in the most massive social problem of our time." --Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion "In response to AIDS in Africa, the role of religion is often framed as a nemesis and/or barrier to that promoted by the secular west. The authors brilliantly present extensive evidence of the important role that Africa's religious groups have had in shaping local responses. These responses range from providing care for the sick and dying to stimulating interpersonal and group debates on appropriate community action. As more so-called biomedical breakthroughs come to pass, it is critical that health and development organizations not forget the powerful adaptive features that characterize many religions in Africa and that they take advantage of such capital in a cooperative and constructive manner." --Rand L. Stoneburner MD, MPH, Former Senior Advisor, Strategic Intelligence and Analysis, UNAIDS, Geneva Switzerland 2009-2011 "It is a broad, deep, and respectful consideration of the subject, clearly organized and presented...the book provides much-needed insights that should shape AIDS prevention policies." --CHOICE About the Author Jenny Trinitapoli is Assistant Professor of Sociology, Demography and Religious Studies, Pennsylvania State University. Alexander Weinreb is Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Texas at Austin.