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A Review of "Disability, Society, and Theology: Voices from Africa"

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BOOK REVIEWS

Disability, Society, and Theology: Voices from Africa. Samuel Kabue, Esther Mombo, Joseph Galgalo, and C. B. Peter, eds. (Limuru, Kenya: Zapf Chancery, 2011). xiv + 464 pp. Paper, $42.95, ISBN 9966734171.

The twenty-three chapters in this volume derive from presentations made mostly by African scholars at a workshop organized jointly by the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the ecumenical Saint Paul's University Faculty of Theology in Mombasa, Kenya, in June 2008. They are divided into six parts. The first introduces the fundamental issues at the interface of theology and disability, taking up historical, sociological, and biblical perspectives, the task of liberation theology vis-à-vis people with disabilities, the question of theodicy, and ministry related issues. Part two, titled "The Able Disabled and the Disabled Church," presents disability perspectives on contextual Bible study, ecclesial policies and practices, and cultural barriers, all of which suggests how much of the church—in Africa and elsewhere, truth be told—operates according to cultural stereotypes regarding disability rather than according to the gospel. The topic of disability and society is next, with chapters on education, employment, and health, on the lack of leadership in disability issues, and the social challenges confronted at the family level. Discussions of sexuality, gender, and HIV/AIDS are the focus in part four's disability theology interfaces. The ministry of caregiving, the focus of the fifth part, is approached in interdisciplinary fashion (deploying psychological, psychosocial, and pastoral counseling methods).

Although the final part is titled "Disability in the African Experience," African perspectives are actually prevalent throughout and interwoven into the fabric of the volume. The discussion here, however, focuses on developments in disability awareness at the sociopolitical levels as well in Madagascar, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa, which show both how far things have come in the sub-Saharan regions but also how much remains to be done. These national snapshots are complemented by other chapters discussing the Ghanaian and especially Kenyan contexts (since over half of the contributors either derive from and/or are currently working in Kenya). Together, the contributions still barely scratch the surface of what is happening on the "disability ground" in Africa, but the lack of other theological resources engaging particularly the African situation means that this volume is one of the first to begin to fill the existing gap.

Inevitably, since most of the authors (except for three or four) are working on the African continent, some of the more recent theological work on disability in the West is not registered. And while a few of the chapters do address the specifically African religious and cultural challenges related to disability stigmatization, there do not seem to be proffered any uniquely African approaches to engaging the biblical, theological, ecclesial, and practical issues. Still, intended as a textbook—the volume will be promoted by the WCC Program on Ecumenical Theological Education initiative which is committed also to ensuring that disability perspectives are included internationally in theological education—*Disability, Society, and Theology* provides important African perspectives on the wider global theological discussion. Its consistent focus on the policy and practical dimensions of the church's engagement with disability issues not only launches an urgent theological conversation for the church in Africa but also ought to be relevant for evangelical and Roman Catholic considerations as well.

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No Easy Choice: A Story of Disability, Parenthood, and Faith in an Age of Advanced Reproduction. Ellen Painter Dollar. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012). xiii+191 pp. Cloth, $13.92, ISBN 978-0-664-23690-8.

In her book *No Easy Choice: A Story of Disability, Parenthood, and Faith in an Age of Advanced Reproduction,* Ellen Painter Dollar welcomes the reader to join her on an intimate journey; one where questions about childbearing, disability, medical ethics, and faith all intertwine. She tells her own story of life with OI (osteogenesis imperfecta), a disabling genetic bone disorder, and how her condition impacts her desire to bear children. *No Easy Choice* is a deeply moving, professional, and personal account of one family's journey with the ethics of reproduction. She speaks openly and freely about the many questions she faced regarding prenatal diagnosis and advanced reproductive technologies. She shares, quite candidly, how lonely a journey this can be. This book is an engaging mix of personal story interspersed with chapters that speak of current literature on this topic in the fields of science, bioethics and theology.

As a healthcare chaplain who works with families facing challenging pregnancies and difficult decisions (and as a mother who lives daily with questions brought into my own life through disability), I deeply appreciate Ms. Dollar's ability, and willingness, to sit with her many questions . . . to