

ters do not build off the previous ones. One wonders if the book would have been better marketed as a collection of essays rather than a cohesive work of its own, especially considering that almost all of the chapters come from earlier published works. Despite this, the insights that Smith provides in *The Nicene Option* make it well worth the work. His deep understanding of Christian orthodoxy and the continental tradition allow him to illuminate a path forward in philosophy that remains faithful to both. If Smith's work is any indication of things to come, then there is much to look forward to within continental philosophy's study of religion!

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Brock, Brian. *Disability: Living into the Diversity of Christ's Body*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2021. pp. xii, 180. \$21.99. ISBN 978-1-5409-6297-3

Disability is a difficult phenomenon to define. Most people, therefore, operate on a “know it when I see it” basis, but this is often a serious mistake. This modus operandi is not problematic only because many disabilities are not visible at all; it also causes us to begin our thinking of and interacting with disabled people with unchecked, harmful presumptions. The hurtful presuppositions people often carry about disability, in the Church and in secular life, are legion. Christians have their own problems in this regard; for instance, many persons with visible disabilities have uncomfortable stories about strangers praying over them, attempting a “drive-by” faith healing. Often, theology exacerbates problems like this rather than alleviate them. No one intends this; rather, it is a sin of omission and a failure to pay attention. Disabled theologians notice what others generally do not when those things elude received wisdom. They are, by their lives, uniquely primed to see them.

For those who have not been so primed, Brian Brock's *Disability: Living into the Diversity of Christ's Body* provides the next best thing. Strictly speaking, it is not a work of disability theology. But Brock is no stranger to that field: he has written numerous publications about how disability impacts Christian reflection on practical theology, biomedical ethics, and Scriptural interpretation. In this book, he brings together the whole breadth of his knowledge to address pastors in a less academic, more practical register. Brock is concerned with the misconceptions Christians hold about disability, particularly as they often ap-

pear in pastoral ministry. He did not set out to write a manual of how to act around disabled persons or a penitential list of the Church's failures. Instead, he gracefully dispels misconceptions by inviting the reader into the point of view of disability theology and the disabled Christian experience, then calls them to think creatively about how churches need to adjust to match the true Church, into which Christ has called disabled people whom the earthly church neglects.

Each chapter is titled after a phrase or sentiment that Brock has often heard from pastors. For example, the first chapter is titled "Nobody with Disabilities in Our Church." This first section attempts to trouble the popular, pastoral assumptions about disability. Pastors, Brock says, are accustomed to view disabled members or visitors of their church as challenges. Brock, however, argues that disabled people are to be treated as people to be welcomed, not challenges to be overcome. He approaches this task on two fronts: first, Brock recounts a story about suffering a serious injury to his finger, encouraging the reader to sympathize with experience of becoming, in some sense, disabled; then, he provides the words and stories of disabled persons or their family members, along with statistics, all of which demonstrate the reality with which the reader is to sympathize also. All this sympathy is intended to pave over the view of disabled people as wholly "other" and to drive home that any calcified concept of what disability is becomes a mistaken and procrustean exercise.

The following chapters construct anew over what was demolished, drawing on Brock's deep engagement with disability theology, particularly regarding scriptural interpretation. Many of the insights on these pages seem obvious, but only in retrospect; for most, they would hardly be noticed. For instance, the reader learns that Jesus never heals anyone without their making their wishes known. This fact mantles a profound meaning for disabled readers, who often have their wishes assumed for them by family members, medical professionals, and even random strangers. This point flows into another: people in Jesus' setting are often less concerned with their bodies than they are with the cultural and religious attachments disability carried in Judea. Disability, among many things, made one ritually impure and barred from worship in the Temple. Some conditions had the potential to make others impure, which compounded society's physical and spiritual neglect of persons with social ostracization. Brock argues, then, that disabled people in the Gospels are not so much asking Jesus for bodily healing as they are asking for restoration as a member of the community; in other words, they ask for the welcome which churches today often fail to extend to those like them. There are many scriptural insights like this: Brock notes that Job is never said to have been healed of his skin condition at

the end, and in any case, Job's whole story spits in the face of the idea that such a state as his is a punishment for sin; Paul's blindness, far from being a sign of his irredeemability, is an occasion for his spiritual development, reversing cultural expectation. The grand array of scriptural interpretations, no matter their length, are some of the most engaging parts of the book.

The fifth and final chapter presents Brock's vision of what the church needs to do with this kind of insight. He does not, however, stoop to writing the kind of "manual" he protests against. He recommends against dedicated "special needs" ministries or any such programmatic approach. Instead, he insists that such approaches reduce disabled persons to objects to be ministered to, rather than subjects with whom God has worked, who are given the gifts of the spirit, and might even be ministers to their neighbors. His reigning symbol for how the church should be is the apostle Philip, who comes to the Ethiopian eunuch, spiritually neglected because of his bodily deprivation, enters his chariot, and speaks with him as an equal. Philip did not start with a "eunuch ministry" program that might or might not have fit the man but followed where God led him with full cognizance that God preceded him in his life. For Brock, a church community that separates itself from people because of their disabilities fails in its call as the body of Christ which already embraces them.

Brock thus leads the reader through a refreshing renewal of how they might think of disability in the Christian community: through a process like the mystic's way of purgation, illumination, and union, disabusing them of common illusions and inviting them to community with those with whom Jesus already communes. When the church clings to rarefied assumptions about disabled people and ignores what they truly need, it neglects persons made fully in the image of God. When a Christian uses someone's disability as a springboard to talk over them—or pray over them by surprise—they replace that person's dignity with their own prejudices. In all things, however, pastoral care is a ministry of listening, presence, and welcome. Disability clearly tells the pastor what that may mean for their ministry with disabled people in a generous and broad way and shows forth in writing the very same spiritual attitude it enjoins upon them. It is by far the most accessible of Brock's works, yet carries the same weight of thought which established him as a forceful voice in disability theology. In these pages, one witnesses the very basic grace that is listening to your neighbor, and hears the words of Jesus, saying, "stay and watch with me."

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