

'A disabled Trinity' — help or hindrance to disability theology?

Jacqueline Clark

Positing a 'disabled God' or disability as a 'normal part of creation' is a recurrent theme of contemporary disability theology.¹ There are, however, theological challenges presented in these positions about how we are to understand disability in relation to God, and God in relation to disability. Does imputing normality of the 'good' creation into disability, or accepting, as the late theologian Nancy Eiesland proposed, that God is disabled, render disability divinely ordained?² What consequences do these views hold for a doctrine of God? Does imputing disability into God's being help or hinder theologies of disability? While exploring these challenges I will address the contemporary Trinitarian debate concerning the conflation or separation of the immanent and economic Trinity, and the implications for the traditionally conceived divine perfections of simplicity and self-sufficiency. By encouraging Christian scholars of disability to engage with these aspects of Trinitarian theology, I attempt to advance a truly abundant and life giving theology that addresses disability.

Jacqueline Clark is a doctoral candidate in theology at St Mark's National Theological Centre, Charles Sturt University, having previously worked as a lawyer and diplomat in the field of international development. Her doctoral research project is entitled 'Enriching Humanity: The Significance of the Doctrine of the Trinity as Theological Rationale for Development, with special reference to international development and humanitarian aid.'

A disabled God: various views

Nancy Eiesland's *The Disabled God: Towards a Liberatory Theology of Disability* is a significant interlocutor throughout this paper, as her text has been significant both for proposing a politically liberative model for disability, and for her call to reframe the theological paradigm in which disability is understood. She rightly challenges 'so-called' Christian attitudes towards people with disability, such as 'the conflation of sin and disability, virtuous suffering, and segregationist charity'.³ She outlines the discriminatory and marginalising actions and beliefs of ecclesial frameworks and religious symbols for those who live with disability. In response, Eiesland proposes a transformation of Christian attitudes and beliefs toward disability through an amended theological lens that alters the 'symbol of Christ, from that of suffering servant, model of virtuous suffering, or conquering lord, toward a formulation of Jesus Christ as disabled God'.⁴ Taking Christology as her launching point, she views the life of Jesus as representative of God embracing the vicissitudes of disability into God's being. Thus God becomes the 'disabled deity'.⁵ Of particular significance for her project is the affirmation of bodily impairment through the resurrected body of Christ that continues to display the scars of impairment on his hands and feet.⁶ God becomes inclusive, not exclusive, through disability being imputed into God's being. Eiesland's vision of God 'in a sip-puff wheelchair ... Not an omnipotent, self-sufficient God,' becomes programmatic for her theology.⁷

Eiesland is not alone in ascribing disability into God's being or viewing it as an original condition of creation. Tim Basselin advocates that 'Christ, and thus God, as disabled is the starting point for any theology of disability'.⁸ Hans Reinders views Weiss Block's⁹ theology as consistent with Eiesland's, stating that both their models inscribe 'disability' 'into the very being of God ... their accounts tend to construe intellectual disability as part of the human condition'.¹⁰ The Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network's Interim Statement¹¹ also poses the following rhetorical question: 'Is not disability something that God has created in order to build a plural, and richer, world?'¹²

Other theological views, however, question the desire to synthesise the ambiguity inherent in understanding disability as both a life that is marked 'by the God-given good of creation and the brokenness that is a part of human life'.¹³ Stanley Hauerwas views 'disability' as representative of *all* humanity's condition in relation to God—that is, the embodiment of the very meaning of what it means to be a human-being dependent on

God.¹⁴ Palmer, considering whether disability is a normal part of creation, acknowledges the strengths of this view, but also indicates an unease with it as it 'tends towards diminishing the struggle and pain that often come with disability'.¹⁵

While I agree with challenging and reforming theological considerations to ensure acceptance and removal of stigmatisation of those who live with disability, I question whether attributing 'disability' to God is helpful. Positing a 'disabled God' may actually create more theological problems than it solves. Two areas of Trinitarian deficiency are cause for concern. First, Eiesland's 'disabled God' model, with which scholars sympathise,¹⁶ suffers from a deficient Trinitarian grounding that fails to wrestle adequately with the distinctions and appropriations of the Triune God. And second, viewing disability as a normal part of creation, or declaring God a 'disabled deity', removes the distinction between the Creator and creature, essentially making God the metaphysical ground for disability (and therefore arguably suffering) in the world. This creates serious issues for theodicy.

Why consider the Trinity in relation to disability?

According to Karl Barth, '[t]he doctrine of the Trinity is what basically distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian'.¹⁷ Thus, the Trinity is not an add-on to the Christian religion, an interesting but irrelevant technical theological debate separate from Christian faith and life. It is the constitutive doctrine for those who claim to know the Christian God. The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be irrelevant for a disciple of Christ. Christ Jesus not only revealed the Trinity, but exemplified life in the Trinity—he acted in a manner consistent with the Father's will (John 5:19) and the Spirit's power (Acts 10:38). The Trinity is decisive for the question 'Who is God?', and also for 'Who are we?'—as the *Imago Dei*. On this basis, Trinitarian theology holds 'radical consequences for Christian life',¹⁸ and should form an integral component for those exploring theological questions relating to disability, as indeed some scholars have done, particularly with regard to social trinitarianism.¹⁹ While social trinitarianism has yielded positive implications for disability theology, care needs to be taken not to condense the riches of the doctrine of God into merely an analogy for human social relations. Broader Trinitarian considerations discussed here are certainly pertinent to scholars' reconfiguration of theologies of disability. As we shall

see, however, Christian contemplations of God that operate in isolation from a robust doctrine of the Trinity run the risk of distorted application.

Disability and deficient Trinitarian theology

One of the significant flaws in Nancy Eiesland's project of *The Disabled God* is a deficient Trinitarian theology. In particular, her conclusion that Jesus is the 'disabled deity'²⁰ fails to account for the unity or distinctions of the Trinity. In postulating Jesus Christ as the 'disabled God', with no corresponding implications for the Father or the Holy Spirit, God appears more mono²¹ than triune. Because Eiesland does not develop a Trinitarian conception of God, she simply imputes from Christ's impairment, from his scarred hands and feet, into 'God', without any explication of what this means for the distinctions of the Trinity. By dissolving 'God' into Jesus, Eiesland imputes impairment and suffering from the second person of the Trinity, the man-God Jesus, into an attribute of God. Her theology thus arguably runs into the problems of *patripassianism*, a form of heretical modalism debated in the early church that refused the distinctions of the persons of the Trinity by holding that the Father suffered with and in the Son on the cross.²² Is this Eiesland's understanding? Does scarring on the human body of Jesus mean that God the Father and God the Spirit are also disabled? And in what manner can non-embodied spirit be 'disabled'?

Furthermore, the controversy of *theopaschism*²³ regarding the two natures (divine and human) of Christ, which emerged after the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), has been completely ignored. Eiesland provides no explanation regarding the humanity or divinity of Jesus in relation to disability. Did Jesus in the divine or human nature become disabled? Or is St Cyril of Alexandria's authoritative Christological definition of hypostatic union, according to which the 'enfleshed' Word is a single reality, her understanding? These issues have not been addressed in Eiesland's formulation of her 'disabled God'. Exploration of these profound theological questions would have served project her well. As it stands, this theological formulation, although addressing a much-needed re-appraisal of disability, is limited in terms of its insights into the relation between God and disability because of its under-developed doctrine of God.

Developing a theology of disability that takes into consideration the distinctions and unity within the Trinity should yield a rich harvest. A non-Trinitarian 'disabled-God' is, however, not the 'diverse'²⁴ and unified God of

Christianity. Theologies that fail to advocate diversity-in-unity as a model extrapolated from the Trinity to the Church,²⁵ within which each member, whether disabled or not, is part of God's unified but diverse redeemed humanity, may perpetuate the very thing they seek to challenge—disability being a distinct separating factor. Certainly, Reinders criticises this flaw in Eiesland's theology: '[The] insight of an interdependent relationship between people with disabilities and 'the able-bodied,' a 'we' that potentially includes all, does not receive a great deal of attention in Eiesland's book.'²⁶ Eiesland's dissolution of Triune distinctions and unity into 'the disabled God' arguably provides a distorted model for the communal image of God, the Church. Thus, her overall proposal is unable to unify the diversity of the members of the Church.

Amos Yong has attempted to save the 'disabled God' model by providing a 'pneumatological assist' to forge a more robust theology of disability.²⁷ Yong's pneumatological perspective moves the discourse towards a model of the Trinity's diversity-in-unity. Yong utilises Pentecost's narrative of the Holy Spirit being 'poured out on all flesh' (Acts 2:17) to advocate for an ecclesial community that embraces this concept. Yong submits that through the Spirit's outpouring 'there remain no marginalized, oppressed, or unredeemed voices in the new economy of the Holy Spirit.'²⁸ He further connects Pentecost's multiplicity of the gift of Tongues (Acts 2:6), diverse languages not homogenised, with Pentecost's miracle that redeems " "weak" bodies and lives in all of their diversity,' rather than creating 'a new community according to able-bodies standards of "normalcy"'.²⁹ The gift of the Spirit represents, for Yong, not 'so much the curing of biomedical afflictions, but the healing of human lives and relationships.'³⁰ The Spirit moves humanity towards that which resembles the Trinity's life of diversity-in-unity.

While Yong brings a much-needed theological corrective to Eiesland's thesis, he arguably presents a similarly limited Trinitarian perspective. Eiesland's 'disabled God' model cannot be saved by merely adding the corrective of the Holy Spirit into the equation. Yong's addition brings us forward to a 'binitarian' view, but still does not provide the wholly Trinitarian antidote that is required to advance a life-giving theology of disability.

The relevance of the economic and immanent Trinity debate for disability

There are two ways in which theologies addressing disability arrive at a 'disabled God.' They either take the direct route, like Eiesland, making

direct statements that extrapolate from the acts of Jesus in the world to God's being; or they take an indirect approach that equates disability with normal creation. The logic of both routes implies that God, as the Creator, becomes the source of disability. Both approaches render God contingent on creation by a conflation of the economic and immanent trinity. In removing the distinction between the 'wholly other' Creator from the creation, divine simplicity and self-sufficiency are also necessarily rejected. These two approaches, by depicting God's very being as 'disabled,' hinder rather than help the discernment of an affirming theology of disability.

Stemming from Karl Rahner³¹ and Karl Barth's³² ground-breaking work, the economic and immanent Trinity are categories by which to apprehend who God is. The 'economic trinity' is a term used to describe God's life and activity *in the world*. The term 'immanent trinity' is used to describe the consideration of God's interior life *apart from the world*. Whilst these terms are utilised to conceive the difference between 'God as God' and 'God with the world,' the terms are connected. Knowledge about the immanent trinity is only derived from knowledge of the economic trinity, otherwise one would be merely speculating. Thus, we can describe God as immanently being Father, Son and Holy Spirit through the economic work of God in Jesus.

The immanent Trinity is, therefore, also connected to the concepts of the traditional divine perfections of simplicity and self-sufficiency. Simplicity is a metaphysical term that depicts the divine as free of composition and preserves the undividedness of divine being, which represents perfection. James E Dolezal explains its importance, not as a philosophical category, but as a theological one:

If God were to be so determined [by external accidents] ... he would depend upon something non-divine (i.e. the accident) for some aspect of his being. The doctrine of God's simplicity aims to rule out just such dependence.³³

Divine simplicity is thus connected with the concept of divine self-sufficiency, such that 'no perfection of God would be lost, no triune bliss compromised, were the world not to exist.'³⁴ God's self-sufficiency and simplicity therefore function theologically to maintain the distinction between the Creator and the creature. Thus, the related issues pertaining to the immanent and economic trinity have provoked much debate. Some scholars conceive that a self-sufficient God is a God shut-off from real relations with humanity—therefore,

the concept of the immanent trinity is rejected; others maintain that divine self-sufficiency is actually the basis for divine–human relations. Although there are diverging in views among the scholarly community regarding this debate, the theological perspectives concerning the immanent and economic trinity fall into two broad camps—what I am calling the ‘conflation camp’ and the ‘separation camp’. Those belonging to the ‘conflation camp’ generally conflate or converge the economic and immanent Trinity, or reject the importance of the immanent trinity entirely.³⁵ In contrast, the ‘separation camp’ defend a separation of the immanent trinity from the economic trinity.³⁶ Whilst both ‘camps’ generally agree that the doctrine of God should commence with a consideration of God’s self-communication through God’s actions in the world (the economy), they part ways about what the economy infers about God. It is this aspect that is highly relevant to disability theology.

Broadly speaking, the ‘conflation camp’ perceives God’s being as dependent on creation, in a mutuality of conditioning between Creator and creation, such that God’s being is *defined* by his work in the economy, rather than *demonstrated* in the economy. Advocates of this view have a converged process of understanding God—God is defined as God-with-us. Thus, the Trinity is not a teaching about God in Godself, but about ‘God’s life with us and our life with each other.’³⁷ ‘Conflationists’ seek to give God’s acts in creation noetic *and* ontological significance for God. In other words, God’s acts in the economy not only provide information about who God is, but these economic acts determine God’s being. This methodology is employed in Eiesland’s determination that God is disabled. Eiesland interprets the work of God in Jesus (the economic) as determinative for who God is, rather than the work of God in Christ being a demonstration of who God eternally is (the immanent). This same reasoning constructs human disability as a normal part of God’s good creation (a work of the economic trinity). The creation determines who God is noetically *and* ontologically. God becomes the source of disability—the ‘disabled deity’.

Conflating the economic and immanent trinity, where there is no difference between the two, necessarily involves rejecting God’s simplicity and self-sufficiency. Divine simplicity and self-sufficiency are attributes equated by ‘conflationists’ with a non-relational God. Thus, LaCugna states that ‘Trinitarian theology rooted in salvation history leads us to think of divine freedom as the freedom of relationship ... not freedom conceived

as autonomy and self-sufficiency.³⁸ Eiesland's theology contains the same assumption. She connects 'belief in the transcendence of God constituted as radical otherness'³⁹ with a 'god whose attention we cannot get.'⁴⁰

Advocates of the 'separation camp', however, arrive at their position on quite different terms. They argue that God's being is conditioned only by God, thus, God is free in God's self-sufficiency. God does not need creation for God to be who God is. God is toward us in the economy as God is immanently. Molnar defends God's transcendence as a way to uphold God's freedom for grace and love to exist, on the basis that if God is dependent on creation to determine God's being, then love becomes necessitated, not freely gifted.⁴¹ Those who guard the separation of the economic and immanent trinity conceive a two-step process in understanding God: that we can know 'God', and then we can know God-with-us.

Furthermore, 'separationists' emphasise that God's self-sufficient freedom does not imply a distant, non-relational God, but is rather the necessary foundation for God to be truly relating to the world.⁴² While the traditional Christian doctrine of divine simplicity denotes God with no composition *from the world*, this does not preclude God from being dynamically involved *with the world*. The simplicity of God is a dynamism where there is 'trine bliss' and the 'enactment of his utter aliveness.'⁴³ It is with this perfect God that the creature participates rather than defines. Divine simplicity and self-sufficiency should not be characterised as advocating that 'God is less sympathetic, loving, and responsive than [*sic*] we are.'⁴⁴ This caricature is simply an erroneous distortion of the traditional treatment of these perfections.⁴⁵ As David Bentley Hart states, these Christian doctrines 'never concerned an abstract deity ontologically incapable of knowing and loving us.'⁴⁶ Rather, simplicity and self-sufficiency guard a detrimental conflation of the Creator with the creation.

The problems of a 'Disabled God'

A God that is determined by creation has serious consequences for who we say God is; for theodicy; for *Imago Dei* theology; and for understanding disability. Hart warns that those who reject the divine perfections 'have not sufficiently thought through the implications of the alternatives.'⁴⁷ Hart's summation appears to be true with regard to a 'disabled God' model.

The implication of abandoning the distinction between the Creator and the creation is that God's identity necessarily becomes a reaction to the

world, and the world becomes necessary to who God is. This type of God arguably lacks ontological stability and trustworthiness, and jeopardises the conviction that 'God is Love' (1 John 4:8). Hart highlights how problematic it is to reject the divine perfections. A collapse of the immanent and economic Trinity does not make God 'our companion in pain,' he says, 'but simply the truth of our pain and our only *pathetic* hope of rescue; his intimacy with us has not been affirmed at all: only a truly transcendent ... God can be the fullness of love dwelling within our very being.'⁴⁸ Hart concludes that the implication of such a deficient conception of God is that God's identity as love becomes realised in the triumphing over evil and suffering in the world, thus love requires evil or suffering in order to be able to manifest itself. Hart clarifies:

if God's identity is constituted in his triumph over evil, then evil belongs eternally to his identity, and his goodness is not goodness as such but a reaction, an activity that requires the goad of evil to come into full being.⁴⁹

This argument is not to equate disability with evil, but rather to show that when theology makes God's identity dependent on the world, then worldly suffering—or in this case, disability—become necessary for the expression of God's identity. Rather than affirming God's solidarity with humanity, this view describes God as an affirming entity of the vicissitudes of life. Rejecting the divine perfections not only implicates God in our mess, but removes God's ability to redeem us from pain or suffering because the pain and suffering become necessary for God's love to be made manifest.

The counter argument, however, is that it is only through God immanently and eternally being God, being good, being blessing and being love, that God can freely demonstrate these characteristics to us. Theologians who contend for divine freedom maintain that the distinctness of God from creation is essential for love and grace.⁵⁰ There can be no love or grace if love and grace are necessitated, rather than gifted. If God's being is 'actualised' rather than 'revealed' in creation, then creation becomes necessary for God to be who God is. Thus, the argument flows that God is not free if one conflates the economic and immanent trinity. If we consider the statement that God 'is love,' we are provided with an interesting example of the necessity to recognise God's immanent self-sufficiency as the basis for God's profound relationality in the economy. God must first be love before

creation was created in love, otherwise God could not *be* love (if God's love is derived from the act of creation). Love is relational, but this is first and eternally within the triune God. It is from the reality that 'God is love' that God moves towards us. If God's being as love becomes determined by creation existing, do we then contend that there was a time before the creation of the world when God was not love? The concept of the immanent Trinity is what provides us with a conception of God as eternal love; for God has always been eternally acting and being love in the enriching subsistent relations⁵¹ of God. A theology of disability should explore, not reject, what Hart calls the 'loveliest (and most widely misunderstood)⁵² divine perfection of self-sufficiency, as it affirms a God that loves freely and unconditionally. The attribute of free and un-necessitated love is what we would want to see reflected in the Church in relation to disability—not a 'love' that is necessitated from pity or need towards the disabled, which is deeply patronising, but freely given love.

When theology posits suffering disability as a normal part of creation, or when God is determined as the 'disabled God', does this not impute disability, suffering and pain to the absolute being of God? Does this not mean that God, rather than being able to help me out of the pit, out of the ashes, is actually as helpless as I am? Although I agree with discussions that question whether disability is always to be equated with suffering or tragedy, we cannot diminish the suffering that some experience through disability. While, for Eiesland, to describe God as 'disabled' and to see the bodily impairments in Christ's body assisted her to see God's acceptance, what happens if other disabilities are imputed into God? Do we end up with a depressed God? A schizophrenic God? A deaf or mute God? How are these conceptions of God useful for theologies of disability? How are these images of God 'good news' for those who actually suffer in disability? Do we really want a God that suffers-with us, or do we actually want a God who loves us unconditionally? As Weinandy states, 'God is perfectly compassionate not because he suffers with those who suffer, but because His love fully and freely embraces those who suffer ... What human beings cry out for in their suffering is not a God who suffers, but a God who loves wholly and completely, something a suffering God could not do.'⁵³

In my disability I do not want a God that is the very source of my suffering, but a God who is compassionate and loving towards me (because that is God's eternal being), hears my cries and, in wisdom, provides what

is personally relevant to the core of my need. This means, as Hans Reinders reminds us, not that 'God will solve our troubles, but rather that he will be with us with his Spirit.'⁵⁴ I want to suggest that for all the good-will of people positing a God that is our 'fellow-suffer', and even taking into account Christ's sufferings, one does not need to reject the distinction between the Creator and creature to posit a compassionate and relational God. In fact, it is the radical distinction between humanity and God that is the basis for a radical connection between God and humanity. While we will continue to wrestle with the vicissitudes and disabilities of life—some through profound disability, some through disabling illness, some through disabling dysfunctional relationships, and some through disabling abuse—it is highly problematic to assert these as of God's making or from God's being, because 'God is Love'.

Perhaps we need to consider disability as Hauerwas envisages it—reminding us that we are all dependent on God and each other, and that the good news of the gospel redeems us back into the God of life and love. While we might not fully grasp the 'why' of disability, we know that the Incarnation is God's absolute 'Yes' to humanity, and the Cross and Resurrection show us that the Triune God dealt with the most severe disability we will all suffer—death. Imputing disabling death into the being of God would make a nonsense out of this divine act. Why would God give us eternal life if disabling death were a normal part of creation? God overcame disabling death not by becoming the 'God of death', but by defeating death because he is the 'God of life'.

Final thoughts: who's defining whom?

Those redeemed in Christ are defined by the 'God of love' as 'accepted' (John 6:37), 'holy and beloved' (Colossians 3:12), a 'new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17), a 'friend of God' (John 15:15). These defining characteristics apply to *all* in Christ: those with identifiable disability, those with hidden disability, those who deny any disability, and those who will become disabled, which, as we age, is all of us. The discussion of complex Trinitarian issues contained in this paper is offered to make a simple point. Humanity does not need to define God in our image for God to have solidarity with us and to accept us. God does not need to be the 'disabled God' to be *for* the disabled. In fact, as I have argued here, there are strong reasons to resist this definition. Rather, the Church needs to reconfigure a theology of disability from the

heart of the eternal God seen in God's self-communication to us—that of a wholly distinct, dynamically relational and abundantly loving *Triune* God.

Endnotes

1. Damian J Palmer, 'Disability: Consider the Crepe Myrtle,' in Phillip Tolliday and Heather Thomson (eds), *Speaking Differently: Essays in Theological Anthropology*, Barton Books, Canberra, 2013, p. 99.
2. Nancy L Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1994.
3. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p. 93.
4. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p. 94.
5. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p. 104.
6. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p. 101.
7. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p. 89.
8. Tim Basselin, 'Why Theology Needs Disability,' *Theology Today* 68(1): pp. 47–57, 53.
9. See Jennie Weiss Block, *Copious Hosting: A Theology of Access for People with Disabilities*, Bloomsbury Academic, New York, 2002.
10. Hans S Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology and Ethics*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2008, pp. 191–192. My italics.
11. Palmer, 'Disability,' p. 96.
12. Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network, *A Church of All and for All: An Interim Statement*, World Council of Churches Publications, Geneva, 2003, paragraph 18.
13. Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network, *A Church of All*, paragraph 20.
14. Stanley Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped, and the Church*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1986, p. 179.
15. Palmer, 'Disability,' p. 100.
16. See for example Burton Cooper, 'The Disabled God' *Theology Today*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1992, p. 180; Stanley Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence*, p. 178; Basselin, 'Why Theology,' p. 53.
17. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* Volume I/1, GW Bromiley (trans), T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1975, p. 301.

18. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, HarperCollins, New York, 1993, p. 1
19. Social trinitarianism is a contemporary term for the ecstatic reciprocal relations of the Trinity. It is used in disability theology as an analogy for the reframing of human relations into inclusive community that is 'other' centred. See, for example, Myroslaw Tataryn and Maria Truchan-Tataryn, *Discovering Trinity in Disability: A Theology for Embracing Difference*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 2013.
20. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p. 104.
21. I use this term to connote single-ness of divinity rather than the Christian conception of God's oneness defined by the triunity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is the mystery of the Trinity: One in Three, Three in One. The Christian God is triune, not Jesus Christ alone.
22. For more information regarding Patripassianism see Paul L Gavriilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, pp. 91–100.
23. For more information regarding Theopaschite controversy see Paul L Gavriilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God*, pp. 135–71.
24. I use this term to denote the distinguished hypostases of the Godhead. While one can distinguish the diversity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one cannot separate them in their unity.
25. Miroslav Volf has undertaken such a project. See Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1998.
26. Reinders, *Receiving the Gift*, p. 176.
27. Yong's article is reprinted as the first article in this journal edition. References here are to the original version of the article: Amos Yong, 'Disability, the Human Condition, and the Spirit of the Eschatological Long Run', *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health*, Vol. 11. No. 1, 2008, pp. 5–25.
28. Yong, 'Disability, the Human Condition', p. 15.
29. Yong, 'Disability, the Human Condition', p. 15.
30. Yong, 'Disability, the Human Condition', p. 15.
31. Rahner's axiom is "The "economic" trinity is the "immanent" trinity and the "immanent" Trinity is the "economic" Trinity": Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, Joseph Donceel (trans), Herder and Herder, New York, 1970, pp. 21–22.

32. The immanent for Barth constitutes the ontological ground for the economic and this is not reversible (as it is with Rahner). Barth always starts noetically with the economic but the immanent has ontic precedence. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/I*, p. 479.
33. James E Dolezal, 'Trinity, Simplicity and God's Personal Relations,' *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, Vol 16. No. 1, 2014, pp. 79–98.
34. John Webster, 'Trinity and Creation,' *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2010, p. 12.
35. See for example Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, R Wilson and J Bowden (trans), Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1993; Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 1993; LaCugna, *God For Us*.
36. See for example Paul Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity*, T&T Clark, London, 2002; Thomas G Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2000; David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2003.
37. LaCugna, *God For Us*, p. 228.
38. LaCugna, *God For Us*, p. 169.
39. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p. 104.
40. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p. 105.
41. Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, p. ix.
42. Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, pp. 275–76.
43. John Webster, 'God's Perfect Life,' in Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker (eds), *God's Life in Trinity*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2006, p. 147.
44. Bruce G Epperly, *Process Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, London, 2011, p. 38.
45. Gavrilyuk describes this distortion as the uncritically received 'Theory of Theology's Fall into Hellenistic Philosophy' in idem, *The Suffering of the Impassible God*, pp. 21–45.
46. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, p. 160.
47. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, p. 166.
48. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, pp. 165–66.
49. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, p. 165.

50. Molnar, *Faith, Freedom and the Spirit: The Economic Trinity in Barth, Torrance and Contemporary Theology*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 2015, p. 130.
51. For more on divine persons as subsistent relations see James E Dolezal, 'Trinity, Simplicity', pp. 88–91.
52. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, p. 157.
53. Thomas G Weinandy, 'Does God Suffer?', *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, November 2001, p. 41.
54. Hans Reinders, 'Is There Meaning in Disability? Or Is It the Wrong Question?', *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health*, Vol 15, No. 1, 2011, p. 69.