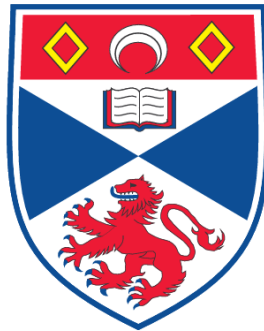


**BEING IN ENCOUNTER
TOWARD A POST-CRITICAL THEOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE OF
GOD FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES :
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KARL BARTH'S *CHURCH
DOGMATICS* III:2**

Tracy Allison Demmons

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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BEING IN ENCOUNTER

TOWARD A POST-CRITICAL THEOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOD FOR
PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

with special reference to Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* III:2

A thesis
submitted to the
Faculty of St Mary's College
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In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
Tracy Allison Demmons

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Abstract

This study is an exercise in understanding both doctrinally and pastorally the nature of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. Its central question is: “How might one know the Word of God without words?” At present, no extended theological systematical consideration has taken place of this question, and confusion arguably exists in the church and wider disability circles as to if/how persons with high support needs, such as intellectual disability, should be afforded pastoral care. This study addresses this need in dialogue with Karl Barth’s theological insights, and by developing an account of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities that is at once theologically informed and pastorally effective.

In the last thirty years theological reflection considered in light of the situation of disability has seen tremendous growth and change, as the discipline has budded and blossomed. In particular, theologians of disability have reflected on the significance of disability in relation to the Christian doctrines of creation, anthropology, Christology, the *imago Dei*, ecclesiology and eschatology, amongst others, with rich and varied results. Similarly, this project suggests that consideration of the doctrine of revelation and the discipline of pastoral care in light of the situation of intellectual disability will yield unique and valuable outcomes for the disability community, but also for the wider church. Karl Barth will be the primary dialogue partner in these preparatory, theological stages. His thought regarding the incarnation of the Word in various forms, perhaps surprisingly, opens new avenues for our reflection. By engaging Barth’s theological anthropology as well as his theology of co-humanity of being with others in encounter, this project aims to demonstrate that knowledge of God is possible for all persons of all abilities.

Declarations

I, Tracy Demmons, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 85, 000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date_____ Signature of Candidate_____

I was admitted as a research student in September 2004, and as a candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in May 2005; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2004 and 2008.

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In Memoriam

E. Niel Demmons (1920 -2007)

Who encountered all persons in joy and gladness, with a laugh (and the occasional wink).

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Chapter 1

Knowledge of God for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities: An Impossible Oxymoron?

1.1 Knowledge of God:

For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long. (Leviticus 21:18, RSV)¹

Knowledge of God has always been a thorny issue for persons with disabilities. The ancients addressed the issue through rejection and rebuff of persons with disabilities. Many (post-Kantian) moderns, as we will see, are ignorant that such a possibility exists. And yet, we find Jesus Christ in the New Testament proclaiming and demonstrating otherwise: the Son of God healing the sick, loving the unlovable and eating with sinners. People of all abilities knew God in the flesh; they were healed by him, ate with him and were loved by him. Knowledge of Him was not based on their ability to explicate his being or parse his significance; knowledge was realized through *living encounter* with Him.

Yet today talk about knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities² presents itself as a paradox of sorts to many modern ears, as will be demonstrated. I first encountered such an instance while working as a pastoral care giver for persons with profound and complex disabilities. A brief personal account of this experience may assist illustrate and clarify where my interest in this area

¹ All scriptural quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise stated.

² In this project I have chosen to use the phrase “persons with intellectual disabilities” to imply a certain state of functioning and being. I intend the term to be understood as signifying that persons with intellectual disabilities are persons before they are disabled, and therefore more than their disability. Also, it marks the fact that some people live with specific challenges in the cognitive realm. Examples of these challenges include the inability to be self-aware, deduce, rationally, and/or think abstractly. Reference might be made to other disabilities, such as blindness or paralysis, but the primary focus is intellectual disability and this is what is presupposed unless otherwise stated. A fuller, multi-dimensional definition of “persons with intellectual disabilities” is offered in chapter four.

originates in terms of further understanding the nature of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

1.2 The Account of Laura

For nine months, I was privileged to work with thirty or so adults who lived with “dual diagnosis”, or some form of intellectual disability in addition to some form of mental illness. A local religious group often came and led the service on Wednesday night in the chapel in the hospital. One evening I invited a client named Laura, a woman with several disabilities, who loved to sing old hymns at all hours of the day and night.³

Delighted with the invitation, Laura took care to get ready for the service brushing her hair and finding her Bible. We arrived to a sparse but enthusiastic congregation of approximately five clients. The worship leader arrived and was somewhat astonished to see Laura in the congregation. He took me aside and explained that generally he did not invite clients from her hall, as they could be quite disruptive. I promised to encourage Laura to be as quiet as possible out of respect for the others. He agreed and proceeded with the service.

Following his opening prayer, the worship leader read from a Liturgy. Laura interrupted right at the outset by asking the man his name. He quickly responded, citing his name, and proceeded. After another line or two, Laura asked what he had eaten for dinner. She then explained that she had eaten pizza because it was Wednesday. He responded, saying he would speak to her after the service if she wished to discuss personal matters. He again went onwards and Laura asked another question, but I put my finger to my lips, indicating a whisper, and she fell silent. At this time, the worship leader asked to speak to me outside, and requested that I remove her from the service.

When I asked why, he replied she was being disruptive. I suggested that perhaps we should have a short visiting time before the Liturgy began, and then I would insist upon Laura’s silence, or remove her as suggested. He agreed to this, but then asked me to remove her before the sermon, as she “obviously does not understand what is going on here anyway.”

³ All names have been changed to ensure privacy.

1.3 Sharpening our Queries

Why did the worship leader respond as he did, insisting that Laura “did not understand?” Certainly, at the level of biology and psychology he is correct; persons with intellectual disabilities are known to have endured injury or underdevelopment in the cerebral cortex, which is the part of the brain responsible for all sensory processing (King et al., 2005; 109).⁴ Laura certainly does not “understand” the nuances of the worship leader’s biblical exposition or the content of the recited liturgy due to her inability to conceive of abstract concepts, such as God. Laura is arguably also unable to “understand” much of the content of the sung hymns, due to her inability to grasp the meaning of complex, intangible ideas, such as “Amazing Grace” (the most popular hymn sung at the services). Laura’s interruptions and fidgeting may also indicate that she doesn’t know why there is an extended period of silence, whereby everyone bows their heads and closes their eyes. She does not know why one man interjects on occasion and that many cognitively able persons would identify this as a time of prayer. Is this lack of comprehension sufficient evidence, however, of a wider ignorance of knowledge of God?

The theological issue is arguably whether apprehension of ideas of God by the prefrontal lobes, through abstract and propositional understandings of God, is a necessary gate for knowing and experiencing God’s presence in the world. Is the reality or truth of divine revelation contingent upon one’s awareness of it? (i.e., a question of personal ability: “*She* obviously doesn’t know what is going on here

⁴ A more detailed account of the nature of intellectual disability will be undertaken in chapter four. May it suffice to say here that the cerebral cortex, located in the forebrain, is the known center for all sensory processing. This processing happens in three separate areas, in increasing levels of complexity. The sensory cortex is responsible for more primary, single-sensory and somatosensory information such as visual information and sounds. More complex information, such as arguably necessary to conceive of abstract concepts, such as God or the Holy Spirit, is processed in the multimodal association cortices which are located in the prefrontal, limbic and parietal lobes. King, et al point out that the cortex is thought to be responsible for logic, judgement, language, emotion, ambition and imagination (109ff). If disruption or mis-development occurs in this area, rational and cognitive abilities are affected, and the state known as “intellectual disability” results. For fuller accounts of the etiologies or causes of intellectual disability see Penrose, 1972; Crome and Steern 1972; Clarke and Clarke, 1974, chapter 4; and Ross, 1976.

anyway”).⁵ Or perhaps the theological issue is wider such that the question more properly concerns the mediums of revelation (i.e. a question of the proper form of revelation: “She obviously doesn’t know *what is going on here* anyway”). Immanuel Kant might have argued that the right question is more primary and concerns whether we can even know God at all, in a finite human realm (i.e. a question of possibility of knowledge of God. “What is going on here anyway? Is it revelation?”).⁶ For Christian theologians the question is different and concerns the ability of persons with intellectual disabilities, who may not have the ability of self-awareness, to conceive of abstract concepts, such as God, and/or to express themselves verbally.

1.4 Disability Discourse

Despite the tremendous attention and regard Jesus showed to persons with disabilities in scripture⁷, theological consideration of the embodied situation of disability is a relatively new endeavor, emerging only within the last thirty years.⁸ As will be demonstrated in chapters two and three however, the possibility of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities has been considered by theologians of disability such as Stanley Hauerwas (1977, 1986), Kathy Black (1994) and Amos Yong (2007), though normally in its relation to and interlay with another doctrine,

⁵ A position similar to this is pointed out by theologian John Swinton in his article “Restoring the Image” (Swinton, 1997). Swinton points to scholar Peter Burchenall, who argues:

“...people with a profound mental handicap possess a limited ability to reason at the complex level, and are therefore not able to work through any doubts and develop any sort of faith” (Birchenall as cited in Swinton, 1997; 22).

Birchanall goes on to argue that because persons with intellectual disabilities lack certain rational skills, they are thus unable to grow spiritually, or, similarly, have a relationship with God.

⁶ As will be further expounded upon in chapter five, Immanuel Kant most famously declared in *A Critique of Pure Reason* that God is unknowable to humans based on *a priori* existence outside the human realm of knowledge (Kant, 1964). The result of this argument is that no persons, whether intellectually able or not, are able to know God.

⁷ A sampling of some of the New Testament scriptures whereby Jesus interacts with someone with a disability include Matthew 4:23-25, 8:2-4, 5-12, 14-17, 9:1-8, 18-26, 27-34, 15:21-28, Mark 1: 29-34, 40-45, 2: 3-12, 3: 1-5, 5: 1-20, 21-43, 7: 31-37, 8: 22-26, 9: 14-32, 10: 46-52, Luke 4: 31-37, 38-43, 5: 17-26, 7: 11-17, 8: 26-39, 40-56, 9: 37-45, 13: 10-17, 17: 11-19, John 5: 1-15, 9: 1-12, 11: 1-44.

⁸ As will be further detailed in Chapter 2, disability theology has grown and developed significantly since the work of Rev. Harold Wilke in 1980, the noted “grandfather” of theological literature regarding persons with disabilities (Blair, 2004; 76).

such as anthropology or ecclesiology. Thus the question of revelation has typically been treated as subsidiary to the question of what it means to be human or the purpose and nature of the church, for example. The question of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities has been considered by theologian John Swinton in his article “Restoring the Image”, although his engagement with the question of revelation is in relation to his exploration of the significance of the image of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. Swinton points out that, “At a very basic level, the question which I intend to address in this article is this: How can we communicate the gospel with its God-given message of value and acceptance to people with profound cognitive disability?” (Swinton, 1997; 1). In other words, Swinton asks the question of how persons with intellectual disabilities contribute to the image of God in the church and how this message of worth might be communicated and shared. Alternatively this project seeks to pose the question of if/how knowledge of God is possible for persons with intellectual disabilities and if so, how this might be facilitated by pastoral care givers.

This relative lack of extended, explicit theological consideration of the question of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities, does not of itself suggest that the question has gone unconsidered. Certainly a wealth of resources exists in terms of theology and disability in other doctrinal areas and at times consideration in these realms have engaged in by proxy ways with the question of knowledge of God. Anthropology, ecclesiology and Christology, as well as other dogmatic areas such as creation and soteriology are all engaged significantly as evidenced in the works of Stanley Hauerwas, Nancy Eiesland, and Jean Vanier (Hauerwas, 1977, 1986; Eiesland, 1996; Vanier, 1998). Most recently the significant work of Amos Yong regarding *Down Syndrome and Theology* (Yong, 2007) points to just some of the significant work that has developed in the area of disability theology. These theologians of disability demonstrate that when doctrinal theology is considered from the perspective and experience of disability, unique and enriching insights are garnered that benefit not just persons with disabilities, but also the whole church.

Similarly, in the realm of pastoral theology, the work of John Swinton is ongoing and significant as he continues to consider the spiritual lives of persons with

profound and complex disabilities.⁹ In his article, “Restoring the Image” Swinton argues that the image of God in humans is not an attribute or a feature, but a form of being in relationship. Swinton argues that this being of dependence in relationship opens up and enlivens discourse about the nature and form of the *imago Dei* and knowledge of God. This emphasis on relationality is similar to aspects of the work of Karl Barth that I shall draw upon later. Part of my motivation in writing is to develop further Swinton’s emphasis on a relational understanding of the *imago Dei* as it bears upon pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities. Arguably the doctrine of revelation, or the doctrine that addresses the issue of knowledge of God, has an applied, pastoral component that is unique in doctrinal discourse. For if knowledge of God is possible theologically for persons with intellectual disabilities it may be argued that pastoral care is thus warranted, and indeed necessary. Conversely, if knowledge of God is deemed to be a theological impossibility for persons with intellectual disabilities, pastoral care givers and theologians of disability are unlikely to be compelled to consider the possibility of pastoral care, facilitating knowledge of God.

This sort of theological work in terms of the doctrine of revelation requires engagement with the major thinkers and writers in theology who contribute to the dogmatic conversation regarding knowledge of God. It was perhaps Barth’s unique understanding of the doctrine of election that earned him his greatest regard¹⁰, however it is Barth’s theological anthropology and his development of a relational understanding of the Word in co-humanity, which is of particular interest for our work in terms of illuminating the possibility of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.¹¹ In this project Barth’s theology will be engaged to both help

⁹ Most recently, John Swinton and Elaine Powrie (2004) of the University of Aberdeen’s “Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability” (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cssh/>) have undertaken the project of considering the spiritual life of persons with profound and complex needs. This study has resulted in empirical data suggesting “spirituality is important for the people involved with the Camphill Communities.” Further theological development of these findings however has yet to be carried out. See: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/divinity/news/camphill.shtml>.

¹⁰ Bruce McCormack notes, “His fundamental thesis was that Jesus Christ is both the Subject of election and its Object, the electing God and the elect human” (McCormack, 2000; 93). Additionally see CD II:2, 9-11, 103-105 note how and why election is viewed by many as the most significant aspect of Barth’s theology.

¹¹ In particular we will proceed to consider Barth’s theological anthropology and understanding of co-humanity as developed in *The Doctrine of Creation* III:2.

navigate pertinent issues in the doctrine of revelation as well as illuminate the unique possibilities and perspectives that persons with intellectual disabilities bring to the task of dogmatic reflection.

1.5 Karl Barth: Knowledge of God (ironically) in the Word

Karl Barth is a helpful dialogue partner for our work- perhaps surprisingly- as his thoughts regarding the incarnation of the Word in various forms, open new avenues for the pertinent questions. Unlike modern, Enlightenment-based understandings of knowledge and propositional understandings of the (vernacular) “word”, Barth develops and affirms knowledge of God that is a living knowledge of God, realized in loving relationships. Barth arguably, gives us *theological* “permission” to consider the question of knowledge of God for the intellectually disabled, by suggesting that revelation is an act of God, in Christ, in the context of the church. Revelation, in Barthian terms, is primarily *the work of God* in Christ, and not an act of humans. Despite, or perhaps because of his embroilment in post-Kantian questions about the possibility of human reason attaining to knowledge of God, Barth’s thinking validates the possibility of revelation being viable for the intellectually disabled as: (1) he reminds us that all are equal before God regardless of intellectual ability but that; (2) all knowledge of God is mediated through Christ regardless of ability and that knowledge of God goes far beyond epistemic knowing; (3) because of the Holy Spirit of Christ, knowledge of God is mediated through the Church in ways that can potentially be inclusive of persons with intellectual disabilities.

According to Barth, momentarily agreeing with Kant, the human mind can never know God of its own merit, as God’s being is of a different kind, which Barth describes as “wholly other.”¹² Yet Barth goes on, arguing that God’s capacity to be known overrides human inability, but without nullifying the former reality (CD II:1,

¹² Barth’s theology is marked by his claim to the “infinite qualitative distinction” between humans and God. The turn to this distinction, which was marked by analogy from the dialectic method, signalled Barth’s second major theological move. His first move is the abandonment of liberalism toward a more dialectical approach. For further discussion of these moves see Balthasar, 1992; 168ff, Price, 2002; 56-60, Hunsinger, 1991; 215-218, 223-224.

158-159).¹³ Barth uniquely leaves little room for epistemic arrogance, as ultimately it is God who accomplishes the knowing; all humans are thus all theologically disabled, so to speak, when faced with the realities of conceiving of God in both content and form. In this way, Barth's theology of revelation is radically equalizing for all persons. Barth maintains that knowledge of God is possible and mightily present through God's awesome and prodigious ability- and *never* through human ability, effort or endeavor; persons of any ability can thus be potentially gifted with knowledge of God because this knowledge is *not the work of humans, but the work of God*. Thus for persons with intellectual disabilities, just as for persons without intellectual abilities, the possibility of knowledge of God exists, but not because of epistemic ability, but because of God's gracious ability and act in Christ. It is in light of God's act in Christ that the church can begin to conceive of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities as well as the practiced and applied form of this knowledge, pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities.

1.6 An Exercise in Knowledge of God Doctrinally and Pastorally for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

In this study then, we will draw from Karl Barth's theological anthropology, his view of knowledge of God, and his theology of being in encounter, to begin exploring the possibilities and implications of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. More specifically, the following chapters will seek to answer these questions: Is a theology of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities theologically possible? If so, how should this be developed in light of the capacities of the profoundly disabled? Additionally, what are the implications of this knowledge for pastoral care?

In chapter two we will focus on the wider theological context of disability that currently exists. Tracing this tradition and situation, we will consider how disability theologians have customarily handled and addressed traditional Christian doctrines in light of the situation of disability and what similarities, if any, exist between these approaches. Additionally we will consider if and how these perspectives have been

¹³ In this project, all references to the *Church Dogmatics* will be represented with the letters CD, whereas references to the *Göttingen Dogmatics* will be represented by GD, followed by the Volume and part number (e.g., CD III:2) .

inclusive of persons with intellectual disabilities and what these discussions might contribute in terms of considering a theology of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Chapter three will undertake a related look at knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities in the context of pastoral care. In this chapter we will consider frameworks of pastoral care for persons with disabilities and their overall strengths and weaknesses in terms of care for persons with intellectual disabilities. In this work we will identify approaches that have been less effective and suggest a more amiable approach, as exemplified in the works of Lowell Colston and John Swinton.

In chapter four we will undertake a task that has yet to be completed in disability theology and seek to develop a thoroughly *theological* definition of intellectual disability. This will be done in dialogue with the work of Karl Barth so as to appropriately address and handle the issue of the theological significance of the human person. Additionally, for biological and anatomic clarity we will engage the definition and criteria of intellectual disability as utilized by the United Nation's health and welfare division, the World Health Organization and found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV*, the primary diagnostic tool of mental health care givers, in diagnosing intellectual disability.

Through the course of chapter five we will first explore the potential "pathologies of revelation", or conditions and states in theology that have led to the exclusive state of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. This will trace Enlightenment tendencies regarding such conceptions as autonomy and foundationalism, as well as demonstrating the vernacular tendency of pastoral care, which are arguably largely due to this "Enlightened" heritage. Additionally we will develop a biblical understanding of knowledge that will demonstrate that knowledge in scripture is often a living, sensory knowledge bound up with obedience in relationship. Touching briefly on Michael Polanyi's concept of tacit knowledge, which closely allies the form of knowledge developed in scripture, we will consider these relational, pre-cognitive forms of knowing that may be utilized by many persons with intellectual disabilities. Upon completion of this "pathological" introduction and the biblical reorientation to a proper, scriptural view of knowledge, we will begin to move forward by again engaging the theology of Karl Barth. In short, we will consider how Barth's suggestion of co-humanity allows for a relational understanding of knowledge of God that is entirely possible for persons with intellectual disabilities. This view of

revelation will be undertaken through an “expository” look at Barth’s view of revelation, in dialogue with Christoph Schwöbel’s categories of the “five moments” of revelation.

Having established the possibility of revelation in co-humanity in chapter five, chapter six will continue to develop this possibility, further considering the significance of encounter in co-humanity for the pastoral relationship. Barth argues that humanity’s true form of being as a being *with* the other in covenant relationship (CD III:2, 243). In particular we will consider the implications for the covenant for the pastoral relationship, as it involves the pastoral caregiver, the person with disabilities and Christ. We will also consider how Christ’s being as a “being for the other” in encounter might offer additional direction for caregivers. Additionally Barth’s suggestions for embodied encounter will be developed in a pastoral direction, considering how these suggestions such as “eye contact” and “mutual speech and hearing” might apply to persons who are often limited in the sensory realm.

In chapter seven we will draw all of the work of the whole project together, applying the framework of “being with the other in covenant relationship” to a clinical case study. “The account of Charlie” will be considered, as well as the possibility of knowledge of God in a theological and pastoral sense. This work will demonstrate how the “being with others in encounter” framework operates in practice and facilitates knowledge in a variety of ways and forms.

Given the wide-ranging nature of this study, we will need to establish parameters in three areas before attempting to develop an analogy for care. Firstly, as will be developed in the review of literature and frameworks for pastoral care in chapter two and three, other theologians in certain respects have addressed the issue of knowledge of God for persons with disabilities. These works differ from this project in terms of the nature and scope of their engagement. While theologians of disability such as John Swinton have indeed made significant contributions in this regard, a systematic, in-depth study regarding the doctrine of revelation, engaging one theological dialogue partner, has yet to be undertaken. As mentioned, this project aims to consider the question of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities through dialogue with the theology of Karl Barth.

A second delimitation that must be made is with regard to Karl Barth’s work. Barth’s writings are famously labyrinth and lengthy. Given this reality, our study will

focus primarily on his work as found in the *Doctrine of Creation* III:2, though we will engage other works as necessary.

Thirdly, the very nature of persons with intellectual disabilities and their unique embodiments invites and ignites a variety of theological discussions, including questions surrounding the *imago Dei* (image of God), the nature of form of being human (or the criteria of personhood) and ethical issues regarding abortion, euthanasia and genetic testing and persons with disabilities. All of these issues are important areas for consideration, and at times we will touch upon many of these in some way due to necessity. The aim of this project however is to primarily address issues of knowledge of God and persons with intellectual disabilities and thus, to this end, we will limit our discussions to the realm of the doctrine of revelation and the issue of pastoral care for the intellectually disabled. This study is intended for persons with disabilities and their families, pastoral care givers (be they professional caregivers, lay caregivers, or clergy) who seek to further understand the nature of relationship and pastoral care for another person who lives with profound and complex needs.

This study, then, is an exercise in understanding the nature and form of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities dogmatically and pastorally. In order to further the discussion in this direction we will be engaging to a significant degree the theology of Karl Barth. This study may be appreciated as contributing: (1) to the continuing project of understanding the theological significance of the theology of Karl Barth by providing an analysis of an underutilized and under-explored aspect of his work and (2) to the ever-evolving area of disability theology and finally (3) to the relatively new area of the consideration of the theological implications of persons with intellectual disabilities I wish to contribute the suggestion that knowledge of God is a bona fide possibility, and in many cases, a significant reality.

Chapter 2

Doctrinal Disability Discourse:

From Creation to Eschatology...Toward Revelation

2.1 Introducing....(Intellectual) Disability Theology

This chapter surveys selected discussions that examine the human experience of disability in relation to central doctrines of the Christian faith. Eight theologians will be considered (Stewart Govig, Stanley Hauerwas, Kathy Black, Nancy Eiesland, Stephen Pattison, John Swinton, Frances Young and Amos Yong) each of who engages variously with one or more theological doctrines, namely anthropology, ecclesiology, Christology, the school of liberation theology, creation, providence, the *imago Dei*, soteriology, and eschatology. Each brings their unique perspectives and challenges to bear on disability theology, and have been chosen because of their potential contributions to knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities, in engaging other respective doctrines and schools of thought, such as liberation theology. This review is by no means exhaustive of the literature in this area however these theologians are arguably a sample of the pertinent theological disability literature as it relates to knowledge of God.

The reviews in this chapter demonstrate where and how the discipline of disability theology, as represented by these writers, has garnered resources and strengths in recent years, and what work remains to be done. We look especially at how the contributions of these writers have challenged, widened and expanded traditional understandings of Christian doctrines through consideration of the experience of disability. This review prepares the way for more focused consideration

in later chapters of possible ways in which we might develop a theology of revelation, or knowledge of God, for persons with intellectual disabilities.

In the case of each review we shall attempt to navigate or trace how each writer relates the experience of disability to the respective theological doctrine that they engage. Additionally we shall consider two questions: 1. Does the theology engaged include the experience of persons with *intellectual* disabilities?; and 2. What does this engagement contribute to disability theology in terms of knowledge of God doctrinally and/or pastorally? After the author's argument is presented in its own terms, its potential relevance for the theologian or pastoral care giver seeking to understand or facilitate knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities will be considered. The main issue for our purposes in each of these works is what might be helpful to the pastoral caregiver who seeks both theological and pastoral direction in terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

The choice and review of the respective disability theologians reflects the wider history of the discipline of disability theology. Interest in the area of disability and disability theology arguably grew significantly following the United Nations "Year of the Disabled" in 1981.¹⁴ Rev. Harold Wilke, the noted "grandfather" of disability theology and practical literature related to people with disabilities, published one of the first major works exploring the intersection of disability and theology around this time, entitled *Creating the Caring Congregation: Guidelines for Ministering with the Handicapped* (Wilke, 1980). Disability theologian Daniel Blair notes in his article "Christian Theology and Human Disability: A Literature Review" (Blair, 2004; 76ff) that Wilke's work was foundational as it addressed the issue of disabling attitudes that prevented the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the church:

Wilke invites faith congregations to consider the "special needs" of people with disabilities. He calls their attention, first and foremost, to the attitudinal barriers that contribute to physical and architectural barriers, which, in turn discourage and even prohibit persons with disabilities from full access to the community of faith. Wilke himself was born with no arms, and thus writes from personal experience. Among his other numerous accomplishments as a pastor, chaplain, and advocate for disability rights, Wilke pronounced the "blessing" at the historic ceremonial signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of

¹⁴ See <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disidydp.htm>

1990, and was a key note speaker at the 1992 Pastoral Care Conference convened by Pope John Paul II in Rome (Blair, 2004; 76).

Wilke's work continues to impact disability theology, especially through the reflections of scholars and theologians who learned and reflected following Wilke's lead and teachings. The writings of theologians Brett Webb-Mitchell (*Unexpected Guests at God's Banquet*, 1994, and *Dancing With Disabilities*, 1996) and Stewart Govig (*Strong at the Broken Places*, 1989) followed Wilke's lead with works that again addressed attitudinal and architectural barriers that prevented full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the church. Their work represents literature at this time in regard to persons with disabilities and the church that tended to concentrate on issues of inclusion and acceptance in the church, with attention paid to disability generally and without particular attention to the situation of persons with *intellectual* disabilities.

Concurrently with this practical area of disability theology, theological reflection regarding theology of the body grew in measure as evidenced in both protestant and Roman Catholic realms, as evidenced in the respective works of Elizabeth Moltman-Wendell (*I am My Body: A Theology of Embodiment*, 1995) and Mary Timothy Prokes (*Toward a Theology of the Body*, 1996). Attention grew in the contested areas of the *imago Dei*, or the image of God, and the incarnation, or theological areas of discourse that directly related to issues of embodiment in some way. This attention may have been due to a number of issues, such as the rise of the womanist movement, which resists the notion that the body is a taboo matter (Dean and Cullen, 1991; Kendrick, 1994; Miller-McLemore, 1992). Or perhaps the rise in disability theology may be linked to the wider interest in the situation of disability in society generally (Shapiro, 1993; Pelka, 1997; Longmore, Paul K. and Laurie Umansky, Eds., 2001). Blair argues that this focus on the body resulted from the influence of Eastern conceptions of "inherent goodness and dignity of humanity retained since the fall" away from Augustinian conceptions of bodily sin and depravity, and that this influence eventually segued into literature that explicitly links disability and theology (Blair, 2004; 74). The influences and reason for the rise of interest in disability theology are no doubt mixed and numerous, and the important thing to note is not necessarily the exact cause of this interest, but rather the eventual results for the discipline of disability theology.

The increase in positive reflection regarding the body in other realms arguably segued into the similar position that disability is neither necessarily a pejorative or

depraved experience, representative of a sinful nature. Theologians of disability responded with considerable force, arguing that disability represents the variety of creation, and that Christ himself is arguably disabled in his crucifixion on the cross. This thinking is evidenced in the work of such disability scholars as Nancy Eiesland, who claims Jesus Christ on the cross is a picture of *The Disabled God* (1994). In this work, to be reviewed later, Eiesland argues that persons with disabilities might identify with Christ as disabled, bringing a new level of acceptance and inclusion in the church.

Similarly during this time, scholars such as Deborah Creamer (1995) and Kathy Black (1996) engaged in the process of “reconceptualization” or reconsidering or understanding a traditional idea or doctrine in light of the experience of disability. Black undertook scriptural reconceptualization to this effect, exegeting traditional disability scriptures formerly misinterpreted or mis-conceptualized (Black, 1996; 46). Black then developed a work of “healing homiletics” derived from these reconsidered passages (Black, 1996; 57ff). Blair terms the work of theologians such as Black, Eiesland and Creamer as “liberatory” theology of disability, while all other theology of disability tends to fall under the category of practical theology of disability, as evidenced in the work of Wilke, Govig and Webb-Mitchell. In terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities, it is important to be aware of these two areas and their significant contributions as many disability theologians consciously write and think within these parameters.

Due to their significance in developing the field of disability theology as well as their own particular theological reflections and contributions regarding disability and theology the works of Stewart Govig, Kathy Black and Nancy Eiesland will be reviewed in this chapter. Stewart Govig’s work *Strong at the Broken Places* will be representative of the works found in the area of practical theology of disability, which is generally concerned with functional and logistical concerns, such as welcoming with persons with disabilities into churches both architecturally and attitudinally (Govig, 1989; 6). These practical works of disability are generally found in a variety of formats, such as books (as is the case with Govig’s work) pamphlets and leaflets.¹⁵

¹⁵ For examples of these sorts of works see The National Organization on Disability’s handbook, *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Handbook to Assist Congregations in Welcoming Persons with Disabilities*, Religion and Disability Program of the National Organization on Disability, (2000); *Money*

As will become apparent however in the review of Govig's book, this practical area of literature, persons with intellectual disabilities are normally included in the wider population of persons with disabilities, and at times this can overlook their own unique gifts and needs.

In addition to Govig's work, we will also review the works of Kathy Black and Frances Young and the wider school of liberation theology (Black, 1996; Young, 2007; Eiesland, 1994; Stephen Pattison, 1997; John Swinton, 2000; and Frances Young, 1997). A noticeable difference in the approach and level of engagement will be immediately apparent in these works, as they are not as concerned with the practical issues of welcome, but rather focus on issues of theological and scriptural inclusion. Nancy Eiesland famously contributes to the area of liberatory theology of disability with her book *The Disabled God*, describing a liberatory theology of disability as, "a theology of coalition and struggle in which we identify our unique experiences while also struggling for recognition, inclusion, and acceptance from one another and from the able-bodied society and the church" (Eiesland, 1994; 29). Disability theologian Deborah Creamer, who further identifies issues and describes the areas in need of "reconceptualization" or liberation, goes on to define this area of reflection further:

Ablest language (blind to the truth, lame excuse) in our worship and in our writings needs to be re-examined. Traditional theological categories, including the nature of God, creation, anthropology, Christology, healing, eschatology, sin, suffering and the role of the church all come with possibilities for review and new insight when we take seriously the human experience of disability (Creamer, 1995; 64).

Eiesland's work particularly considers a liberatory Christology of disability, reconceptualizing the traditional theological understanding in light of the experience of disability. Although some wider theological problems come when developing disability theology within an overreaching liberatory praxis, as will be argued in the review of Eiesland's book in this chapter, it is necessary and useful to consider the works of Black and Eiesland for their theological suggestions, for their contribution to the development of the field of disability theology, but also because of the themes they

and Ideas: Creative Approaches to Congregational Access (2001); Peter L. Norgren, *Space for Physically Impaired Persons* (1996); *How Accessible in Our Worship Space*; Jessie van Dongen-Garrad's *Invisible Barriers* (1983); Sheila Hollins/Margaret Grimer *Going Somewhere* (1988); Robert F. Molsberry *Blindsided by Grace* (2004).

both draw out in terms of interdependence (Black) and identification (Eiesland), which I will later argue in chapter five are both important to consider in developing a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Two theologians of disability who arguably do not fall under the category of practical theology or liberatory theology of disability, but who are still necessary to consider, are Stanley Hauerwas and Amos Yong. Somewhat surprisingly Blair does not mention the significant work of ethicist and disability theologian Stanley Hauerwas in his review of literature. Hauerwas, a prolific and dynamic figure in the area of disability theology, is well known and regarded, and perhaps most recognized for his theological and ethical reflection on the experience of “mental retardation” (Swinton, Ed., 2004; 2ff). Such statements as “God’s face is the face of the retarded; God’s being is that of the retarded”, are illustrative of his often jarring and challenging suggestions that do not seek so much to “liberate” certain doctrines or ideas from an able-bodied praxis, but rather that seek to induct and graft the situation of disability into the parameters of the church, seeking to understand the church’s theological and ethical responsibility toward persons with intellectual disabilities (Hauerwas, 1986; 176). Hauerwas argues that rather than eliminating disability and suffering, the church should seek to be a body of care, viewing such experiences as pain as a necessary part of the human experience. The shift from a liberatory praxis is subtle, but essentially maintains that the work of the church is not normalizing the experience of disability and suffering in theological doctrines themselves, such as arguably the case in a meta-sized liberatory stance, but rather that of seeking to include, care and assist in the best ways possible persons with disabilities.

Regardless of one’s reactions or conclusions about Hauerwas’s work, which includes significant contributions such as *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped and the Church* (1986), *Truthfulness and Tragedy* (1977), and *God, Medicine and Suffering* (1990), it is indisputable that Hauerwas has notably contributed to disability reflection. As John Swinton points out: “Hauerwas’ writings on disability are disparate and diverse. They are to be found in various journal articles and book chapters which have been written over the course of the past thirty years” (Swinton, Ed., 2004: 2). Due to this prolific diversity, his significance as a pioneer in the area of intellectual disability and theology, his numerous and importance of his writings, and because of the challenge his reflection

brings in terms of the church's role in communicating the love of God in and through care, a portion of Hauerwas's works will be considered in this chapter.

Additionally the newly released work of Pentecostal theologian Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome*, will be reviewed as this is considered "the most comprehensive analysis" of the philosophical [and arguably theological] issues involved in Down syndrome and intellectual disability to date (Yong, 2007; back cover). Yong also consciously stands outside of the liberatory school of disability, claiming instead to operate by the framework of the "pneumatological imagination", which "can be said to be an epistemic posture shaped in part by the biblical narratives of the Holy Spirit and in part by the Christian experience of the Spirit" (Yong, 1997; 11). This posture, Yong argues, "alerts and invites us to listen to the plurality of discourses and languages in the hope that even through 'strange tongues,' the voice of the Holy Spirit may still speak and communicate" (Yong, 1997; 11-12). In other words, Yong's work invites thinking about the variety of ways that God may be present, represented by the diversity and variety of the Holy Spirit. Yong's work is significant in terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities as he insists upon imagination by the Spirit when it comes to the situation of persons with intellectual disabilities in terms of ways they may be included within the theology and practices of the church. I will further argue this position in terms of knowledge of God, maintaining that Yong's position of pneumatological imagination may be strengthened by further Christological engagement.

All of these reviews will be concluded with a summary at the end of the chapter, highlighting the major themes that currently exist in disability theology today, so that we might learn and draw from them throughout the remainder of this project in terms of developing a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. In addition, this overview will also demonstrate the gap in the current literature in regard to knowledge of God for persons with disabilities. This gap relates to both the dogmatic and pastoral realms of knowledge of God; both the doctrine of revelation and the issue of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities have yet to be extensively considered and signals the urgent need for this sort of project.

2.2 Review of Literature: Critiquing and Considering the Intersection of Disability and Theology

2.2.1 Stewart Govig, *Strong at the Broken Places*

In his book, *Strong at the Broken Places*, Stewart Govig writes accessibly for the church, urging Christians to remove physical and attitudinal barriers thrust on people with disabilities (Govig, 1989). Govig writes from the perspective of a pastor, from the experience of a person with a disability and also as the parent of an adult child with mental illness. Writing with these three experiences in view, Govig outlines the biblical, social and psychological contributions which lead to personal brokenness and suggests new “reservoirs of strength,” which he hopes will “lower [the] barriers” that are experienced by persons with disabilities (Govig, 1989; 6). Govig’s book is important as it emphasizes the need for inclusive practices in the church for all persons in practical ways however it is also significant in that it demonstrates how far the discipline has come in terms of finding appropriate language. Govig’s work also represents the start of the discipline, so to speak, in terms of the emphasis on the role of the church and practices of inclusion in the spiritual lives of persons with intellectual disabilities. In terms of knowledge of God, Govig’s work was one of the first of its kind to emphasize the role of the church in welcoming persons of all abilities, hence communicating knowledge of God in loving relationships. This work also shows however the wider problem in disability theology that sees the experience of persons with intellectual disabilities effectively included under the wider umbrella of disability theology. As will become clear there are instances where particular consideration is needed in terms of the unique cognitive experiences of persons with intellectual disabilities in order for practices to be truly inclusive.

The first half of the book is “filled with tough times and tough people: crippled, marked, pitied and avoided- debris on the landscape of brokenness” (Govig, 1989; 70). Govig describes the horrors of structural barriers, societal ignorance and of “pity [being] one of the cruelest dimensions of brokenness” (Govig, 1989; 49). Govig takes care to communicate the many wrongs that the church and wider society have inflicted on persons with disabilities. At the time of writing, many of these suggestions, such as “the stair and stare barrier”, would have been new and indicting accusations- the first of their kind (Govig, 1989; 11-12). Many of Govig’s suggestions such as the comment “to label is to libel” and his discussion regarding how people with mental illness are “dispossessed” by the church were groundbreaking at the time, shedding light on areas formerly avoided (Govig, 1989; 25, 57). This work helped to

establish and form a discipline and contributed in primary ways to the current discipline of disability theology.

The choice of Govig however to name the first four chapters “Crippled,” “Marked,” “Pitied” and “Avoided” is problematic in a modern context. These terms may have been more commonly utilized at the time, but today such names are stark and inappropriate. Perhaps in utilizing these monikers Govig is attempting to illustrate the harsh history of the disabled, or perhaps he is merely intending to use “biblical” words that have been widely employed in Christian tradition to denote disability. Whatever the reason, the style may be offensive to some. In choosing to utilize these destructive names as chapter titles, Govig merely serves to proliferate that which he wishes to eradicate and in the opening years of the twenty-first century and in a western context, such terms overshadow his good intention. Again however Govig’s use of these terms is also indicative of the growth in the discipline in terms of sensitivity and language; today scholars of disability most often seek to use affirming language that utilizes a “people first” approach (ie. “persons” with disabilities).¹⁶ This criticism however is also advanced with the recognition of the context, time and generation in which Govig wrote where many of these hurtful appellations (ie. “retarded”, “slow”, “cripple”) would have been more readily utilized in the discipline.

While the choice of terminology may be questionable at times, Govig’s message of inclusion and acceptance of persons with disabilities in the church is well developed. Having depicted the places of brokenness in the first half of the book, Govig turns his attention in the second half to ways of “transforming brokenness”-ways in which the church today may facilitate inclusiveness and healing. The book uses extensive biblical references, and also regularly makes use of “everyday” stories, interweaving them to create a nexus of argument. Dramatic examples are given of how this brokenness is healed in people’s lives through “Fellowship”, “Ministry”, “Encouragement” and “Promise”, which also entitle the respective chapters. In the chapter on encouragement Govig argues “success is not measured by popular fanfare but rather by risk taking and first steps” (Govig, 1989; 96). Similarly in the other chapters that seek to overcome the brokenness of the first half of the book Govig

¹⁶ In *The Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Care and Counseling* Vol. 3, William Gaventa, Jr. points out the importance of utilizing language that recognizes that disability is just one attribute of a person (Wicks and Parsons, Eds., 2003; 121ff).

makes suggestions that maintain change and healing come in a variety of ways in the church. These suggestions include practices of inclusive attitudes and encouragement that is subtle and yet meaningful. Additionally Govig suggests that persons with disabilities should be involved in fellowship and ministry in ways that they are able, assisted by the community. The stories and accounts Govig shares of these ways forward demonstrate how the church can go about healing brokenness in ways that truly demonstrate knowledge of God.

Thirdly, in terms of Govig's work and the evident advancement of the discipline, Govig generally treats the experience of intellectual disability within the wider category of disability, insisting upon inclusion. On two occasions Govig refers to the work of Stanley Hauerwas. As mentioned in the opening, Hauerwas has extensively considered the situation of persons with "mental retardation" in his works *Suffering Presence* (1986), *Truthfulness and Tragedy* (1977) and *God, Medicine and Suffering* (1990), and Govig's use of Hauerwas's work demonstrates an awareness of such special consideration of the situation of persons with intellectual disabilities. In citing Hauerwas, it appears Govig seeks also to include persons with intellectual disabilities in his wider suggestions for acceptance and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the church.

This suggestion is a positive sign in terms of arguing for inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities, but arguably in terms of the cognitive capability of persons with intellectual disabilities itself, further reflection is warranted as to how this inclusion might take place. Persons with disabilities, whose disabilities are not intellectual or cognitive in nature, such as blindness and deafness, seemingly might be included in the church when issues of attitudes and communication or mobility are addressed, as Govig suggests. But for persons with intellectual disabilities who may have difficulty conceiving of abstract concepts, expressing themselves in words or thinking in rational terms, more thought is necessary and warranted about the nature of this inclusion. Thus suggestions such as "encouragement", which "goes both ways, *to* and *from* people with disabilities" may need reconsideration in terms of persons with intellectual disabilities (Govig, 1989; 95). How might the church encourage people who are profoundly cognitively disabled and non-verbal? A spoken word of encouragement may not be understood and thus perhaps application of this idea requires further consideration in terms of persons with profound and complex needs.

There are moves in this direction in considering the particular needs of persons with intellectual disabilities however Govig does not focus on their development. In his chapter addressing “Ministry”, Govig suggests in a chart on ministry and disabilities that a “Wholistic [sic.] approach to education, as for retarded persons, etc.” be undertaken (Govig, 1989; 106). Govig then recognizes that “less cognitive” forms of engagement need be considered. This “holistic” approach to inclusion and involvement however is arguably needed in all areas if persons with intellectual disabilities are to be fully included in the church. Worship, liturgy, and education all need reconsideration in this form that is apprehensible and meaningful for the intellectually disabled, and not just the area of ministry. In one sense, all of Govig’s suggestions in the second half of the book (barring, arguably, attitudinal changes) regarding inclusion are only applicable to persons with intellectual disabilities when consideration of the particular cognitive situation of intellectual disability is done.

Stewart Govig is indisputably concerned for persons with disabilities, their treatment by the church, and his work in the late 1980s helped pave the way for further growth of the area of disability theology. His emphasis on social stigma serves to remind the church of their responsibility in demonstrating God’s love through proper attitudes and inclusive practices. His dated terminology and limited suggestions remain somewhat problematic in some areas in the modern era, but they depict the growth of the discipline and must be handled with an appreciation of the time in which Govig wrote. It is apparent however that the situation of intellectual disability at times requires further comment as it is not only architecture and attitudes which pose difficulty for persons with intellectual disabilities, but also the nature and form of the worship services, religious education offered and ministry availabilities. Govig’s work is helpful to a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities however as it emphasizes the significance of the church in communicating God’s being of love and acceptance.

2.2.2 Stanley Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence/ Truthfulness and Tragedy*

Stanley Hauerwas is a significant, if at times contentious figure, in the realm of disability theology. In his two books *Truthfulness and Tragedy* and *Suffering Presence*, Hauerwas argues that freedom, autonomy, free will and self-interest are being lauded as an ethic whereby to unite a pluralistic, secular society (Hauerwas, 1977, 1986). Hauerwas however maintains that an ethos of freedom in terms of health

care is dangerous as it seeks to build upon a secular morality, which has grave consequences for persons with intellectual disabilities. This morality, Hauerwas argues, is sustained through subordinating the “private conscience”, which includes personal or religious beliefs. Hauerwas argues that while this subordination is ethically perilous for society ethically, it is virtual ethical suicide for persons with disabilities (Hauerwas, 1986; 9). Given the “right” to utilize and exercise an unbridled ethical freedom, Hauerwas argues that the conclusion might be reached that persons with intellectual disabilities suffer, and thus should be eliminated, particularly if their level of conscious awareness is low.

Alternatively, Hauerwas argues that the notions of care, wisdom of finitude, moral commitments, and presence in illness, should be pursued by an ethical society. Hauerwas calls on the church to be a leader in this area of care, one that provides a place for suffering and pain. In terms of persons with intellectual disabilities, Hauerwas’s work is significant as it paves the way for a theology of knowledge of God for persons with profound and complex needs that does not seek to justify the “right” for this sort of knowledge, as arguably may be the case from an ethical point of view. Rather, knowledge from Hauerwas’s perspective would view knowledge of God as a gift and privilege to be shared by all in and through the community of the church. In a sense, Hauerwas’s ethic of care in the church potentially relocates the “problem” of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities to a place of potential.

The first area that arises with regards to the mentally handicapped in Hauerwas’ books is the area of suffering in *Suffering Presence*, where Hauerwas bluntly asks the question, “should we prevent mental retardation?” Hauerwas is posing the question in regard to technological advancements and the choice and freedom” that is now arising in regard to eliminating fetuses with disabilities who may potentially suffer. With this stark chapter title and question, Hauerwas confronts the issue of eliminating the handicapped, pointing out that the issue has more to do with the notion of suffering, than retardation. He states, “Thus it has become common in our society to assume that certain children born with certain birth defects who also happen to be retarded should not be kept alive in order to spare them a lifetime of suffering. But why do we assume that it is the role of medicine to save us from suffering?” (Hauerwas, 1986; 160). Hauerwas fundamentally questions the belief that pain and

suffering should always be avoided,¹⁷ and that existence is only valued when it is free of suffering (Hauerwas, 1977; 167).

Instead Hauerwas goes onto suggest that pain and suffering are a necessary part of life.¹⁸ He states, “We are never quite what we should be until we recognize the necessity and inevitability of suffering in our lives” (Hauerwas, 1986; 168). Hauerwas observes that these sufferings give rise to a moral identity, a part that society might try to integrate into our projects, socially and individually. It restricts our “freedom” but this is an important part of our self-identity and of life as it helps us recognize limits and the human need for community. Hauerwas thus argues for what he terms, “more imagination” in terms of dealing with suffering, urging the church to be with those in pain (Hauerwas, 1977; 167). This imagination would include places of “being with the retarded” rather than just “doing for the retarded” (Hauerwas, 1986; 176). He adds an “Inconclusive Theological Postscript” in *Suffering Presence* focusing on being with the handicapped we experience in the flesh the opportunity to recognize our own neediness for each other, and especially for a relationship with God (Hauerwas, 1986; 178).

Similarly to Hauerwas’s argument regarding suffering, perhaps the church need not view the sufferings and incapacities of persons with intellectual disabilities in their midst “problems to be solved or eliminated”, but opportunities to experience God in a new way, to see the world in a new form and to experience community, inter-relatedness and the Spirit of God in relationships of essential dependence. Intellectual disability need not be seen as a trouble or a crisis, but a chance to allow the renewing presence of God to open up people to new ways of being and relating to one another and to God.

¹⁷ For a more philosophical, in-depth look at the experience of pain, Elaine Scarry *The Body in Pain* (Scarry, 1985). Here Scarry argues that pain is the absolute definer of reality. For the person in pain, there is no reality besides pain; if it hurts, it must be real. This characteristic of pain makes it useful politically, and can result in social change. Scarry’s book is a philosophic and historical-critical look at the experience of pain, and is useful in contrast to Hauerwas’s suggestion of further consideration regarding the particularly Christian view of pain and suffering. Rather than suggest pain be used as a catalyst for change, Hauerwas suggests that the church be a body of care that responds to people in pain.

¹⁸ Mary Timothy Prokes, in her book *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Prokes, 1996), chapter 11, similarly discusses the presuppositions of bodily pain.

The second theme that Hauerwas addresses in terms of questions and presuppositions regarding the disabled is the area of care. Hauerwas begins his questioning with the basic question, of, “Why do we have retarded children?” (Hauerwas, 1977; 147). He claims that the idea that society sees the family, and especially the parents, as having the primary responsibility for their children, is wrong (Hauerwas, 1986; 189). In this view, parents, being the sole persons responsible for their children who “chose” to have children, must be able to provide for them a “good” life, free of pain and suffering. This “choosing” is viewed as an exercise of their “freedom” or “rights” as parents (Hauerwas, 1986; 191). Again, this line of thinking is saturated with “freedom” language. Hauerwas states, “The birth of a child is no longer a gift from God but an event for which we can be held accountable” (Hauerwas, 1986; 11). Thus, questions of suffering and quality of life quickly result in questions of personhood and rights to life.

Hauerwas goes right to the root of the question, asking why we seek this criterion of personhood at all.¹⁹ He acknowledges that much of this defining work has been done in the name of protecting the “retarded” from “increased technological skill,” but he points out that these definitions may also be used for the control or extermination of those not deemed “human” (Hauerwas, 1977; 162). In the name of “freedom” some may be prematurely meet their unfortunate end as an exercise of their “rights” and thus these criteria may be used for ill just as it may be used for good. Hauerwas points out that Christians should not be of this mindset. Rather, Christians are obligated to have children- they are commanded to do so. This ties the experience of having children to a much wider community, one that provides that child with symbols of significance beyond that family (Hauerwas, 1986; 153). Thus community becomes vital in having children, for it is where a sense of purpose and identity is found for the very act itself and the life that is nurtured.

¹⁹ John Kavanaugh also addresses the notion of criteria of personhood in his book *Who Count as Persons?* (Kavanaugh, 2001). With an Aquinas based set of presuppositions, he argues that freedom, love and the awareness of awareness are the criteria for personhood. However, he subordinates freedom and love to awareness; this is a perilous position for persons with disabilities, especially for those with limited cognitive abilities. His position is not uncommon however, and as mentioned, finds its roots in the theology of Thomas Aquinas, who claimed that “rational nature” is what defines a human. See McDermott, 1989 for a translation of Thomas Aquinas’s, *St. Summa Theologiae* I,29,3,c

Hauerwas moves a theology of disability from a framework of autonomous freedom, to a framework of care, urging Christians to care for one another. He states, “The primary argument of this book [*Truthfulness and Tragedy*- TAD], put in simplest terms, is that a humane medicine is impossible to sustain in a society which lacks the moral capacity to care for the mentally handicapped” (Hauerwas, 1977; 18). Thus, Hauerwas turns questions regarding the termination of life due to retardation turn into issues of how to care for those who are suffering. Questions regarding the “problem” of care of mentally handicapped children turn into questions regarding how we might work together as Christians to help each individual human being grow, and truly actualize herself in a community of faith. In terms of knowledge of God, Hauerwas’s argument would similarly follow that knowledge of God in terms of persons with intellectual disabilities is the task of the whole community of the church. In relational love, all of the church is called to demonstrate a knowledge and love of God to each other and the person with the intellectual disabilities.

Hauerwas’ work in identifying a secular root (freedom as autonomy) that is potentially harmful for persons with disabilities is groundbreaking in that he introduces the world of medical ethics to theology, and vice versa.²⁰ His suggestion that care in community should replace freedom as autonomy is significant both for persons with intellectual disabilities and the church. His ethic of care is most assistive for a theology of intellectual disability, as it is not grounded in criteria, but in notions of care found in the community of the church. In terms of knowledge of God, Hauerwas’s work, similar to Govig, challenges the church to be a place and people that represents God through the nature and quality of its caring relationships. An ethos of care represents a unique approach to revelation and suggests that people with disabilities (including persons with intellectual disabilities) might know God as they

²⁰ In *Critical Reflections on Stanley Hauerwas’s Theology of Disability: Disabling Society, Enabling Theology*, John Swinton, Ed., physician David L. Coulter opens the book with a “Foreword: A Doctor’s Debt to Stanley Hauerwas” (Swinton, 2004; xiii). Here Coulter explains how “Hauerwas’ writing has influenced his work as a pediatric neurologist” in terms of Hauerwas’s suggestion that “persons with intellectual disabilities have intrinsic value and that this value is based upon a spirituality that is shared with all of us” (Swinton, Ed., 2004; xiii). Thus it may be said that just as disability theology and persons with intellectual disabilities have benefited from the care and consideration of the medical profession, so too has the medical world benefited from the experience and presence of persons with intellectual disabilities as developed by disability theologians.

know care that values their inherent worth as children of God. John Swinton notes that in terms of Hauerwas's work: "Hauerwas's talent lies not simply in what he actually says, but equally in what he challenges others to say" (Swinton, Ed., 2004; 3). This is certainly true in terms of consideration of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities: we are challenged to say and demonstrate that such knowledge is possible and important.

2.2.3 Kathy Black and Frances M. Young, *A Healing Homiletic/ Brokenness and Blessing*

In her book *A Healing Homiletic*, Kathy Black addresses the potentially problematical territory of the "healing Scriptures", homiletics, and persons with disabilities (Black, 1996). She identifies two major issues that are important when considering a "disability" homily: 1. Effective exegesis of the passage, which plays close attention to context and; 2. A responsible handling of the topic of theodicy, so that persons with disabilities might be properly understood as able to contribute to the ecclesiology of the church. This work culminates in a theology of interdependence for all persons, whereby all people might equally be included and participate in the life of the church. Black argues that interdependence "honors the value of all individuals, not for what they do, but for who they are and sees the community, and God, as independent upon one another" (Black, 1996; 42). Similarly, Frances M. Young in her book *Brokenness and Blessing: Towards a Biblical Spirituality* argues that in the midst of struggle, loss and even the situation of disability, the opportunity exists to know God's love (Young, 1997; 122). As the body of Christ in earth embraces loss, struggle and death, overcoming the lie of self-fulfillment, Young maintains that the opportunity exists for healing love and true community that is the true nature of the body of Christ. Briefly we will consider here the arguments of both these theologians, considering how a theology of interdependence in community might contribute to a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

The main body of Black's book is saturated with systematic scriptural exegesis, and again, is helpful in clarifying "hermeneutical hazards" surrounding disability (Black, 1996; 43). She carefully details scriptural passages that make reference to the disabilities of blindness, deafness/hearing loss, paralysis,

leprosy/chronic illness²¹ and mental illness. Each of these topics includes pertinent biblical passages, and reflection on the context of the situation, the implications for the first century church, and for the church of today. Black speaks often to the present state of people with disabilities, interjecting the comments into the hermeneutical discussion, focusing on the past but without losing sight of the situation of the present. Black does well to maintain this tension between past and present and at the end of all the sections offers practical tips for preaching with sensitivity to persons with a disability. She also suggests ways in which certain texts reveal inappropriate and appropriate ways in which to respond to disability. Black encourages expositors to utilize sensitive analogies, inclusive language, and also encourages preachers to emphasize the social norms, which were crossed by Jesus in order to reach out to persons with disabilities.²² This is Black's hope in terms of this reframed exegesis: that again, the church will warmly welcome and reach out to persons with disabilities.

The areas related to hermeneutics are valuable and consider the particular situation of disability. Upon the discussion regarding the nature of God's power, Black takes care to detail more specific points regarding hermeneutics, such as the vast cultural differences which must be noted between the first century and the twentieth century Black, 1996; 46). She points out that for first-century peoples, "it was one's sense of *being* in the community that was most crucial, and illness and disability interfered" (Black, 1996; 46). Whereas in today's culture, health could be defined as, "the ability to perform [doing] those functions which allow an organism to maintain itself [individualism]..." (Black, 1996; 46). This focus of being versus doing is especially noticeable today in relation to persons with disabilities, as many express

²¹ For further reading on the oft cited "purity codes" of Leviticus, explaining the rationale for barring persons with disabilities from approaching the altar, see Sarah J. Melcher's chapter "Visualizing the Perfect Cult: The Priestly Rationale for Exclusion" in *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice* Nancy Eiesland and Don E. Saliers, Ed., (1998). This chapter explains the serious consequences of deviation from Priestly Torah and the implications that this had for persons with disabilities.

²² Roy McCloughry and Wayne Morris in their book *Making a World of Difference: Christian Reflections on Disability* (McCloughry, 2002) have a useful chapter on ways to build community amidst difference entitled, "Healing and Wholeness." In this ninth chapter they describe positive and negative approaches to healing and common Biblical misinterpretation. They argue that healing should be the ultimate act of inclusion (107).

frustrations over the inability of the disabled to “do” anything, as if doing is the prerequisite to justify existence.

Black also takes time to distinguish between cure and healing, pointing out that although the words are used interchangeably in the world today, they in fact are very different in meaning and outcome. Healing “elicits a sense of peace and well-being” whereas cure refers to the actual empirical experience of disease or sickness eradication (Black, 1996; 51). She encourages churches to once again be places of healing, and not simply places that petition God for a cure.²³

As mentioned, the book introduces such large themes as theodicy and the issue of miraculous healing, detailing the analytical problems with over-simplistic theology in these complex areas. Black points out in a chapter entitled “Hermeneutical Hazards” that the theology one holds greatly influences how the healing narratives of the Bible are interpreted. These improper interpretations thus lead to improper conclusions regarding the nature of persons with disabilities in the church. Black looks at many of the common theological answers to disability, including the thorny idea of “God’s Will,” which she explains results from humanity’s need to “want to make sense out of times of struggle in our lives” (Black, 1996; 23). The theological conclusions which can be made takes many forms, but Black outlines the five major types which she has identified in relation to disability: (1) punishment for sins, (2) a test of faith, (3) opportunity for character development, (4) manifestation of the power of God, and (5) redemptive suffering (Black, 1996; 23). She points out that many of these answers operate to make sense out of a difficult life situation, while trying to sustain faith in an “all powerful God” (Black, 1996; 34). But this “all-powerful God” belief has been detrimental for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the church, as it wrongly implies that their disability is somehow directly tied to their spiritual life.

Black asserts, however, that the understanding of “all-powerful” needs to be redefined, as God is not an all-controlling puppeteer, one who blesses and curses at will in order that humanity might learn a lesson, or be forced to draw near to him (Black, 1996; 37). Black argues that God does not cause natural disasters and disease

²³ Similarly, in *Becoming Human* (Vanier, 1998) Jean Vanier discusses the isolation commonly experienced by people with disabilities. He argues that every person, no matter what ability, needs to feel like they belong and that isolation leads to chaos. He encourages the Church and society to be this place of inclusion for the weak and dispossessed, and claims that this will bring true freedom and healing for all.

that we might need him, calling out to him for help in desperation. Rather life is interconnected and interdependent and Black implies that God is part of this interdependence. God wills our well-being and “in the midst of our suffering and death, God can bring about transformation” (Black, 1996; 35). She states that God is present in many ways, through community. Ultimately Black reconciles the disability-theodicy question with the answer of God manifested in a community of interdependence, bringing about change and transformation through the love and care of others.²⁴

The theological implications of including God in this theology of interdependence however, are numerous. Black states, “Interdependence acknowledges not only our dependence on God, but also God’s dependence upon us to be agents of God’s healing compassion in the world” (Black, 1996; 42). In other words, Black is implying that God is dependant upon humanity, ultimately conflating God with humanity in terms of action in a changing world, which indicates that Black sees the nature of God a changeable. Elements of process theology are present in Black’s theology here, in particular the way in which she implies that God changes as his creation changes. This denies God his sovereignty, hegemony, and transcendence, as well as his creative and coercive abilities.

Developed initially by Alfred North Whitehead and more recently by John Cobb Jr., this process theology school of thought is also panentheistic believing that the only absolute in existence in the universe in change (Suchocki, 1982; 36). However, in scripture God declares, “I am the Lord, and I change not” (Malachi 3:6). Psalm 33:6 declares “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” Traditional Christian theology takes these verses to mean what they say; namely that God is unchanging and that by the Lord’s word the heavens were created whereas, process theologians tend to argue that both the universe and God are continually changing, and that the scriptures merely represent an account

²⁴ For a further discussion around community and disability, see Jennie Weiss-Block’s book *Copious Hosting* (Weiss-Block, 2002). Her terms and ideas are similar; her theology of access is very similar to Black’s theology of interdependence. This theology of access for persons with disabilities is developed as practical access, and then as access to freedom through friendship (160). She argues that our common vulnerabilities in relationship give way to communion in the Kingdom and that, “Our route to union with God and each other is through the sharing of our joys, our tears, our pain, our limitations and our hopes” (163).

of a situation that was once present. The process theology of Cobb, for instance, understands the scriptures as people merely expressing their experiences with God, not God objectively revealing himself and his ways to his chosen people (Gunton, 1973; 292-296). A theology of disability not grounded in a strong doctrine of scriptural revelation is unlikely to support an adequately Christian view of disability. This is not the place to examine further the tenets of process theology, though my contention is that it would be detrimental for a theology of disability as it is contrary to scripture.

Despite problems with aspects of Black's exegesis of the bible and doctrinal positions, her suggestion of a "theology of interdependence" is potentially useful for the church today as a way in which to fully include persons with disabilities theoretically and practically. However, Black's theology of interdependence is useful only when God is considered independent of humanity's interdependence. God's power and ability to move, heal and intervene must not be limited to the actions of humanity; his transcending capacities must be preserved. Analytically Black's theology of interdependence needs further theological discussion around the nature of God's divinity, freeing him to be a God of wonder and might. But when this work is done, Black will have a strong ecclesial theology of disability, which will not just make room for the disabled, but which will see persons with disabilities as a necessary and vital component of the Church.

Arguably theologian Frances M. Young, in her book *Brokenness and Blessing*, suggests something similar to Black's interdependence, though perhaps furthering the reflection on weakness and struggle (Young, 2007). A well known biblical scholar and the mother of Arthur, a man with disabilities (Young, 1985), Young draws these two experiences together, developing what she terms a "biblical spirituality" (121). This spirituality seeks to recognize "how difficulty it is to live with our vulnerability and mortality", offering a "realistic view of the human condition and the wondrous gift of grace that brings about hope and transformation" (Young, 2007; 8). This condition Young likens to a wilderness experience; but she also points out that in the wilderness, one is more likely to meet God (Young, 1997; 121). Meeting God in and through the "other" results in a rich and

Young reflects throughout her work on the biblical motifs of "The Desert Experience", "Wrestling Jacob", "The Way of Jesus", "Strangers and Exiles" and "Desire Fulfilled and Frustrated." These motifs are often introduced and illustrated by familiar hymns, echoing the ancient songs of struggle, hope and fulfillment.

Through engagement with the apophatic tradition, Young argues:

The wilderness is not a comfortable place to be, but it is a place where one is likely to meet God and discover one's own limitations. Peace is hardly found when wrestling with God, and one can end up wounded and disabled; yet the wound of love is exactly what heals us. The way of Jesus involves self-emptying, and it is where we can allow the "other", the stranger, those who are different, to challenge our self-sufficiency that we learn what it means to be his disciples. So a biblical spirituality necessitates openness, receptivity, and mutuality, not patronizing "do-gooding" backed up by the assurance that we are right and we have power because we are sent by God (Young, 1007; 121).

In this way, interdependence and discovering one's limitations becomes not an obstacle to be overcome, but an opportunity to meet God in new and healing ways.

This theology of interdependence as developed by Black, which recognizes a place for weakness and struggle as furthered by Young, also shows great promise for an ecclesiology conducive to persons with intellectual disabilities- one that reveals much about knowledge of God. In many churches where membership and participation in the church rests upon "doing", interdependence represents a framework where "being"- even a being of struggle and suffering-is as equally valued as action and work.

In terms of knowledge of God it seems that Black and Young's interdependence and biblical spirituality encourages thought in regard to how God, through the church as the body of Christ, brings about healing and reconciliation. Unlike Hauerwas however, Black does not approach the question from the perspective of care, but rather from the perspective of theodicy, and in particular how/why God allows (or causes) disability. In other words, whereas Hauerwas seeks an ethic to unite a pluralistic society, suggesting an ethic of care, Black seeks to address mishandlings of theodicy and scripture, suggesting a proper, scriptural view of interdependence. Young offers a biblical spirituality for further understanding these weaknesses as opportunities to meet and further know God. God is present and responds to evil in the world through the reconciliation and renewal of human relationships, and persons with intellectual disabilities can certainly participate in such a realm. Thus knowledge of God may come through participation in such a community, such as the Christian church. For a theology of intellectual disability, Black's theology of interdependence

and Young's biblical spirituality of mutual limitations contributes to an inclusive disability-ecclesiology.

With note of this inclusive ecclesiology in mind, we turn our attention now to the work of liberatory theologians, such as Nancy Eiesland, who demonstrate how even seemingly esoteric doctrines, such as Christology, have much to offer a theology of disability, and vice versa. It should be noted at the fore that Eiesland particularly states that her work is not for persons with intellectual disabilities (Eiesland, 1991; 10). The rationale to engage her work however lies not in the content of her liberatory Christology, but rather in the framework of her engagement, which draws from personal narratives. Similarly in engaging with issues of revelation and knowledge of God, so to will this project utilize an approach that begins with personal experiences. Additionally, Eiesland's work introduces the important area of liberatory theology of disability- an area that is vast and diverse in nature. Engaging theologians such as Stephen Pattison, John Swinton and Frances Young, we will discuss the appropriateness of a liberatory framework for a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. Thus in addition to considering how Eiesland forms her Christology, we will also consider the appropriateness of a liberatory stance for developing a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

2.2.4 Liberatory Theology, Pastoral Care and Disability Theology: Nancy Eiesland, Stephen Pattison, John Swinton and Frances M. Young

Theologians in the last thirty years have grappled with how to understand, consider and at times, integrate the newly born school of liberation theology into the realm of dogmatic theology, disability theology and pastoral care.²⁵ Theologians of disability have reached diverse conclusions as to the significance of a liberatory stance for

²⁵ Briefly, liberation has succinctly been described as "the social emancipation of the oppressed" (Boff and Boff, 1984; 116). Liberation theology may be more broadly described as the attempt to "draw from various aspects of the social sciences (primarily Marxism) and use them as critical tools to explore the cultural milieu of particular contexts in an attempt to unearth forms of injustice and oppression that are embedded in the social and political order" (Swinton, 2000; 14). For further reading see the following: G. Guiterrez, 1988.

disability theology, and a sample of these diverse views are represented in this critique. We will consider four of these perspectives in turn, each which seeks liberation in a different form: symbolic and terminological, social and political, relational and finally, none at all. We will begin with theologian Nancy Eiesland, who argues for a liberatory stance by suggesting that Jesus Christ be viewed symbolically as the “disabled God”. As will be demonstrated, problems arguably exist with this blanket acceptance of a liberatory stance, however her work is also important for reasons of format and style, which we will seek to adopt. Next we will consider the works of theologians Stephen Pattison and John Swinton, who understand and integrate a liberatory framework in less symbolic, and more social and relational ways. We will conclude by considering the position of Frances Young, who argues that a liberatory framework is wholly inappropriate for persons with disabilities. Briefly considering the works and arguments of these four writers in this critique, we will attempt to locate our project, and the relevance of liberation theology for a theology of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities.

In her book *The Disabled God*, Nancy Eiesland proposes that a reconceptualization of Jesus Christ is needed as the “disabled God.” A symbolic view of Christ as impaired and disabled on the cross, Eiesland maintains, leads ultimately to social transformation, which encompasses, “imaginings of wholeness and new embodiments of justice” for the able-bodied and disabled alike (Eiesland, 1994; back cover).²⁶ This symbol, she argues, encompasses the body and in experience, and ultimately allows vision and hope for persons with disabilities. This Christological conception, Eiesland maintains, has tremendous consequences for disabled persons, all at once addressing major issues such as bodily ambiguity, disability sin/superhero stereotypes, and pre-supposed able-bodied presuppositions regarding male hegemony.

²⁶ It should be noted that Eiesland specifically states that her work is not for persons with mental health problems of intellectual disability (Eiesland, 1997). It is nonetheless important however to consider her work as she represents both a unique and pioneering voice in terms of a liberatory theology of disability, as well as a theologian who recognizes the importance of narratives in shaping and forming an engaged framework. Additionally, Eiesland is one of only a handful of theologians to engage directly with a theological doctrine in relation to disability: Christology. Although our engagement and interplay with liberation theology will differ slightly in this project from Eiesland’s, our utilization of personal narratives will be similar, as well as our direct engagement with the theological doctrine of revelation.

All at once, the disabled God is pictured as one who struggles in the body, who knows personally of embodied ambiguity, and who rules from the periphery of society in an immobilized body. Yet, the story of the disabled God is a story of hope. Eiesland convincingly argues the point that this Christological reconceptualization is necessary for a full, liberatory theology. This position of Jesus Christ as the disabled God allows disabled bodies to participate in the *imago Dei*, “not in spite of our impairments and contingencies, but through them” (Eiesland, 1994; 101). This is ultimately the place of liberation: “to engage one or more ‘names’ of God and to follow these names into the worlds they open” (Eiesland, 1994; 105).

In terms of liberation theology and disability, Eiesland’s work focuses on the liberation of persons with disabilities from symbols and language that are exclusive and barring of the less able body. She argues that persons who are disabled might not be able to identify with an able-bodied God, thus increasing the experience of isolation and exclusion. These points are valid, and a picturing Christ as the “disabled God” does neatly overcome these realities, however, concurring with scholars such as Graham Monoleith, Deborah Creamer and Christopher Hinkle, I would argue that a “disabled God” has its limits conceptually (Monoleith, 2005; Creamer, 2004; Hinkle, 2003). Deborah Creamer insightfully points out that while Eiesland’s Christology might be helpful for some people, it does not account for those people whose experiences of their disability as less positive. For people who have mixed and more ambiguous feelings regarding their disability, a disabled God would not hold the same liberatory force (Creamer, 2004; 260-261). Additionally scholars such as Christopher Hinkle question the value of labeling God as retarded against the background of knowing God is an intelligent, rational being (Hinkle, 2003). Symbolically it certainly maybe said that Christ adopts the “marks” of disability, but realistically it would be difficult to argue that Christ became disabled in conventional terms of terms of blindness, deafness or intellectual disability, on the cross.

Whereas Eiesland argues for the liberation of persons with disabilities from harmful and oppressive language and symbols, Stephen Pattison argues in his book *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology* that pastoral care givers should be engaged in liberating the medical system from traditional forms of patriarchal oppression and hierarchy (Pattison, 1997). Pattison does not write with respect to persons with disabilities, but nonetheless his insights both challenge and illuminate the wider call of

the pastoral care giver to be engaged in social and political liberation that are greatly relevant to the situation of many persons with disabilities.

Upon outlining a broad critical account as per the nature and method of liberation theology in the first half of the book, Pattison turns in the second half to an analysis of the social and political context of pastoral care (223). In this he demonstrates how pastoral care givers have participated in caring models that have oftentimes existed and worked within the status-quo, reinforcing stereotypes and Marxist power structures (96-128). In dialogue with a liberatory praxis, Pattison points to the work of F. Longbottom suggests that in addition to the conventional work of healing, the call of pastoral care givers is also that of “ask[ing] questions of the institution. He alone is the non-hierarchical member of the team and part of his role as patients’ advocate should be to ask questions such as, ‘Is this a healthy place to be?’ (as cited in Pattison, 1997 178). This prophetic role of the chaplain is of particular relevance to the situation of persons with intellectual disabilities whereby persons with reduced cognitive functioning may not be able to voice social and political concerns.

John Swinton, in his book, *Resurrecting the Person: Friendship and the Care of People with Mental Health Problems*, approaches the issue of liberation from a different perspective, arguing that liberation occurs through friendship (Swinton, 2000; 31). “It is within the relationship of friendship that we discover a critical tool of liberation and healing. This can enable the church to fulfill its task of re-humanizing those whom society has dehumanized through its attitudes and a refusal to relate with them in a way that is meaningful and life enhancing” (Swinton, 2000; 37). Swinton utilizes and engages a liberatory framework, however he seeks not to liberate people from their physical or mental health conditions, nor does he argue for the reconceptualization of symbols and icons, or social and political structures, but rather Swinton argues for a liberation that is born of friendship.

In particular, Swinton considers the importance of friendship with persons with mental health problems, but the suggestions arguably go much further, and may relate as well to the situation of persons with intellectual disabilities. What is friendship and why is it so radical in a Christian context? Swinton points out that Christian friendship is unconventional as it is best described as *messianic friendship*. This sort of friendship differs from Western friendship as it is not based in “likeness, utility or social exchange” (Swinton, 2000; 39) but rather a messianic vision of the church. This vision focuses on “the outsider”, based on a radical ethic of *solicitude*, or

anxiety over the good of another, as described by Stephen Post (Swinton, 2000; 48). Swinton points out that solicitude offers a “ ‘non-appraisive attitude of radical equality’ underpinned by an ethic and an attitude that adopts a position of moral solidarity with the other, irrespective of circumstance. Such a stance is very much in line with the ethical and social position adopted by Jesus- the one who came to reveal God’s agapic love in all its fullness” (Swinton, 2000; 49). This friendship is the call of the whole church, in deinstitutionalized care in the community. “Friendship in Community” focuses on a ministry of “introduction, education and enablement” that seeks to understand the other, caring with and for the other (Swinton, 2000; 145). This is a liberation realized in a caring community, such as the Church.

Alternatively, theologian Frances Young argues that liberation theology is a wholly inappropriate framework for persons with intellectual disabilities (Young, 1997). She points out that in order for liberation to be appropriate approach for all, you need to have a group of people who can “rise up” and take responsibility for freeing themselves from the bondages of oppression. The bottom line is that people with profound disabilities cannot do so, and so liberation theology is inherently exclusive of persons with disabilities, and thus an inappropriate model to utilize in disability theology.

This suggestion however hedges on the assumption that “rising up” may only occur in verbal or cognizant ways. Arguably however, dissent need not be viewed as only an active exercise, but rather that liberatory stances may also be assumed in less active ways, such as behaving in less common ways or expressing one’s self in alternate ways. “Rising up” may in fact at times more closely resemble “lying down”, but this should not lessen the statement made. Theologian and ethicist Hans Reinders points out in his book *The Future of the Disabled in Liberal Society* that liberal society, operates by principles of freedom and autonomy, and is generally guided by “activist” tendencies. Briefly, Reinders argues that, “the modern quest for meaning is characterized by activist notions such as ‘giving’, ‘constructing’, and ‘inventing’” (Reinders, 2001; 193). It is pointed out that society supports and values active ways of engagement, which attain, gain and actively engage the other. The problem with this framework however is the consequential displacement of previous notions such as ‘giving’, ‘finding’, and ‘discovering’ (Reinders, 2000; 193), which are often present in the lives of persons with disabilities. In a liberal context, whereby activist notions are valued over other forms of engagement, persons who are unable or limited in their

abilities to act in such self-directed ways have the potential to be viewed as not valuable- or as problems to be eliminated.

Reinders suggests that this activist praxis may be done through moving toward a social praxis of engagement. In this sense, meaning and engagement may come in a variety of forms, including that of what Reinders borrows from Clude Lévi-Strauss: *bricoleur* (Reinders, 201; 197). “The *bricoleur* is not a constructor, but a collector. He does not work from blueprint, but sorts out whatever materials he is able to find and puts his objects together from bits and pieces (as cited in Reinders, 2001; 197). In terms of a liberatory stance, in light of Reinders’s comments, it may be argued that persons with disabilities are in fact able to “rise up” and participate in the acts of liberation, but not in activist forms. *Bricoleur* forms of being and participation however are possible: giving and receiving love, finding and discovering friendship are valid ways of participating in a wider liberation of humans from oppressive, autonomous alienation, that seeks to divide. In this view, persons with disabilities might not only be participators in the task of liberation, but leaders and guides in this endeavor.

For our work regarding a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities however, the works of Stephen Pastison and John Swinton in terms of liberation in community stands out as most relevant to our concerns. Certainly the issue of language and symbols utilized in Christianity and persons with disabilities is important, but due to the conceptual difficulties highlighted and the nature of lack of ability to understand metaphysical issues such as symbols and the nuances of language, Eiesland’s suggestions have limited relevance for our project. The suggestions of Pattison and Swinton however highlight the call of the whole Church, including pastoral care givers and persons with disabilities, to liberating friendships, which lead to prophetic voices of liberation in wider spheres. As persons with and without disabilities come together, freeing one another from the bonds of oppression, exclusion, isolation and loneliness, true life and liberty might be found together, in Christ. This is a liberation of the heart by the Holy Spirit, one that is potentially foundational for political, social and symbolic freedoms. As mentioned, Young’s voice is the only dissenting one in regard to the suitability of liberation theology for disability theology. A re-framing of the “limitations” of persons with disabilities however highlights how persons with disabilities might actually participate and guide in liberating ways, albeit in less active forms.

In conclusion we see that as an overreaching framework for engaging disability, liberation theology has potential limitations. As a catalyst for thought and discussion however, particularly in regard to the liberatory aspects of relationships, liberation theology has much to offer. The following critique of Amos Yong demonstrates how he convincingly and effectively continues this liberatory work, albeit in a “pneumatologically imagiatory” praxis rather than a liberatory one, continuing to engage the major doctrines of the church with the reality of the disabled mind and body.

2.2.5 Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome*

2.2.5 (a) Introduction

Amos Yong in his book *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* opens with Stanley Hauerwas’s comment that, “God’s being is that of the retarded” (Yong, 2007; 1). In other words, God’s being is a being that identifies and allies with the most weak and dispossessed of society. This statement essentially illustrates the engagement that is to come methodologically between the areas of disability and doctrinal theology, or “the complex set of contested questions surrounding how best to understand God and things divine” and “the equally disputed set of issues about how best to understand retardation and disability” (Yong, 2007; 4). Yong’s work builds on the previous disability theology of all the other disability theologians mentioned in this chapter, including Govig, Hauerwas, Black, and Eiesland, further emphasizing the importance of the relational realm for relating doctrinal theology and persons with disabilities. Yong recognizes that a seeming challenge exists in this work, however he proposes that these difficulties may be overcome by utilizing what he terms the “pneumatological imagination” (Yong, 2007; 10). This stance, derived from the account of Acts 2:4-11 whereby the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, is described by Yong as, “an epistemic posture shaped in part by the biblical narratives of the Holy Spirit and in part by the Christian experience of the Spirit” (Yong, 2007; 11). With this imagiatory position as his point of departure, Yong goes on to engage and explicate the doctrines of creation, providence, the *imago Dei*, ecclesiology, soteriology and eschatology from the perspective of intellectual disability.

Yong goes on to cover a considerable amount of work whilst “heeding” this imagiatory framework; biblical, historical, medical, philosophical and dogmatic

realms are addressed with incredible ease and skilled handling, and this is to be commended as it is primary work in this area. This “imagination”, Yong argues, “enables human witness both in word (testifying to the truth) and deed (living the truth), so that we may work to establish righteousness, peace and justice, and in that way participate in the redemptive work of God in the world” (Yong, 2007; 14).

2.2.5 (b) Considering the Pneumatological Imagination...

In terms of a methodological framework, Yong engages the pneumatological imagination in three separate but interrelated areas: through account of “Anticipating Down Syndrome and Disability” in Part I, the place of “Down Syndrome and disability in the Modern World” in Part II and finally, “Reimagining and Renewing Theology in Late Modernity” in Part III, where Yong takes up a more doctrinal engagement.

This work is illuminating in Part I and II as the departure point for engagement in terms of the pneumatological imagination is engagement proper, or the engagement itself; Yong seeks to detail how the texts formerly read in an exclusive way may be “redeemed” when (“imaginatively”) engaged with the thought from other disciplines. He suggests that despite biblical accounts of persons with disabilities that are pejorative and discouraging, a “theology of disability for the twenty-first century...[must read] beneath and between its lines...a redemptive theology for our times has to go beyond merely a surface reading of scriptural texts on disability, and set them within a wider biblical and theological- even pneumatological- horizon” (Yong, 2007; 42). Imagination then justifies and invites interdisciplinary dialogue with relevant resources.

In this way, the resources of the modern world, such as those found in medical, political, feminist and multi-faith realms, and disability studies itself, may serve to help disability theology as a whole to understand itself as a modern phenomenon in order to better engage with the scripture and theological understandings of disability. This engagement, motivated by the catalyst of “pneumatological imagination” is enlarging and helpful and a more comprehensive picture of the current understandings of disability in a modern sense is effectively delineated. Similarly, in terms of a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities, this project will use such interdisciplinary imagination in chapter four, engaging medical sources. This

work will be done so as to develop a thoroughly theological definition of intellectual disability.

It is in Part III however where Yong takes up a more doctrinal engagement, that we find the most pithy work pertinent to our concerns in terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. Yong begins by suggesting, “Christian theological reflection and praxis in the twenty-first century can be invigorated and renewed when the scriptural and dogmatic traditions of the church (most if not all of which are silent about disability) are retrieved and reinterpreted in close dialogue with disability perspectives” (Yong, 2007; 152). In what follows, he unpacks what this “retrieval and reinterpretation” entails, detailing traditional views of the doctrines, making further suggestions from the point of disability. Yong’s exploration covers an immense amount of theology in a short amount of time, and thus, in view of time and space, rather than review each of the seven doctrines and Yong’s “reimagination” of each one, we will engage those doctrines that directly relate to issues of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. Thus we will set aside for now Yong’s treatment of the doctrines of creation, providence, Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology and namely consider his assessment of the traditional doctrines of theological anthropology, the *imago Dei*, and Yong’s interpretation and understanding of the doctrine of salvation as they relate to persons with intellectual disabilities.

In the last half of chapter six, following his consideration of the doctrines of creation, providence and Christology as they relate to persons with intellectual disabilities, Yong takes up the doctrine of theological anthropology, considering how the reconstruction of the doctrine of creation and providence might help reform the task of theological anthropology. The discussion begins by reviewing dominant positions of the doctrine, considering how dichotomist, Cartesian soul-body views have influenced conceptions of what it means to be human. In its place, Yong suggests engagement with more recent views of what it means to be human—views “that suggest the soul as an emergent set of distinctive features and capabilities constituted by but irreducible to the sum of the body’s biological parts” (Yong, 2007; 170). In other words, Yong suggests that emergentism is a framework for better understanding human nature and embodiment in an organic, arising way, which resists static, inert categories.

This “emergentist” view of the human person includes the recognition that: 1. The human body and brain are essential for consciousness and; 2. The provision of

building blocks for a scientifically robust understanding of mental or downward causation (which most humans take for granted but which yet remain rather inexplicable by science) without recourse to a body-soul dualism (Yong, 2007; 171). Emergentism also emphasizes the holistic character of human nature and the inter-relationality of body, mind and spirit. Yong later argues that this emergentist view is compatible with a Christian eschatology that is inclusive of the experience of persons with intellectual disabilities. Similarly I would suggest that the emergentist perspective might be useful in further understanding the forms of knowledge of God possible for persons with intellectual disabilities. Rather than states of knowledge to be rationally conceived of and understood, I will later argue in chapter four, five and six that the form of knowledge for persons with intellectual disabilities is rather likely to be something that emerges in engagement, relationship and encounter, realized by the Holy Spirit.

In terms of the influence of disability on this doctrine, Yong suggests that it is vital that the body not be relegated to secondary status in theological anthropology in any way and it is also vital that human beings are “constituted by these webs of significance that surround them [biological, social, political, economic, geographic and so on]” (Yong, 2007; 172). Additionally it is of chief importance, as is supported by the emergentist view, that “the transcendental value of each human life” resists positivistic quantification (Yong, 2007; 172). In relation to knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities this view of the human person allows for a view of the person that embraces an emergent knowledge, constituted and formed by a variety of influences, be they social, biological, sacramental, etc. in nature. Additionally, Yong’s anthropology emphasizes inherent human worth as well as valuing the body intrinsically; these premises are both assistive in a theology of knowledge of God for persons who at times are considered less important by society because of cognitive inability.

Related to the theme of theological anthropology is the issue of the *imago Dei*, or the image of God. With respect to disability, Yong suggests that the theological anthropology of Karl Barth is most helpful from the perspective of disability. In this view, Barth argues that “real humanity” stands in relationship to God, self, and others. Much like the inner-relations of the Trinity, which exists in relationship to itself, Barth argues that humans are in the image of God as they are interdependent upon others. “In their relationship to God, their interrelationality with other persons, and their

embodied interdependence with the world”, the possibility exists for persons with disabilities to stand in the image of God (Yong, 2007; 174). In short, Yong’s view of the *imago Dei* in light of the situation of disability, is:

...less about some constitutive element of the human person and more about God’s revelation in Christ and in the faces of our neighbors; yet the life of Jesus provides a normative account of what it means to be human, and the Holy Spirit creatively enables and empowers our full humanity in relationship to ourselves, others and God, even in the most ambiguous of situations” (Yong, 2007; 180-181).

Barth’s view of the image of God as relational being arguably leads to the related conclusion that knowledge of God is thus possible in relationship, albeit mediated by Christ. This suggestion will be the focus of the rest of the project, however it is interesting to note that Yong too recognizes this possibility.

Next Yong turns to addressing the doctrine of ecclesiology, “the nature of the new community of God shaped by the life of Christ and formed by the Spirit of Jesus” (Yong, 2007; 195). Yong begins by outlining more traditional approaches to ecclesiology, such as the view of the church as a “Charismatic fellowship”, and the more recent “post liberal ecclesiologies”, as developed by people such as Stanley Hauerwas, which is “characterized by its central conviction that theological liberalism is bankrupt precisely because it has capitulated to the norm of modernity- namely Enlightenment rationalism, scientism, positivism, and secularism- and privatized the sphere of religion” (Yong, 2007; 199). Yong goes on to suggest that l’Arche, communities of residential homes constituted by persons with disabilities and their assistants, “embodies and manifests the values and perspectives articulated by the more recent ecclesiologies...” (Yong, 2007; 201). Using l’Arche as a working model, Yong suggests a “pneumatological ecclesiology of inclusion: the church considered as a charismatic and inclusive fellowship of the Spirit” (Yong, 2007; 203). This church vision is “an inclusive community of hospitality wherein the disabled and non-disabled together welcome, befriend, and embrace the stranger, the marginalized, and the disenfranchised” (Yong, 2007; 225). This vision however is not merely theoretical, but very practical and Yong goes on to demonstrate how invitation, catechism, baptism, the Eucharist, liturgy and discipleship might all not just include people with disabilities, but rather that these experiences might communally transform the people

who engage in these practices. “This is the work of the Spirit: to renew the church, to transform lives, and to reconcile people to each other and to God” (Yong, 2007; 225).

As will be reviewed in the next chapter, Rev. Walter Kern argues that the life of the church and its sacraments are vital for the spiritual lives of persons with intellectual disabilities (Kern, 1985). The emphasis that Yong places on the church as a place of inclusion further validates our work in developing a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities as the church must ensure that inclusion exists in doctrinal and pastoral areas in regard to knowing God.

In chapter eight Yong engages the issue of soteriology, or the doctrine of salvation. Yong points out that this topic has already been partially addressed in terms of an emergentist theological anthropology, suggesting that a proper doctrine of salvation must also pay attention to the bodily aspect of being. Yong’s thesis statement in regards to salvation is that, “salvation is the transformative work of the Spirit of God that converts human hearts from lives of sin, estrangement and inauthenticity to lives of peace, wholeness and reconciliation between human beings and God” (Yong, 2007; 230). Yong engages this statement at three levels: 1. First in regard to the traditional, Christian understanding of the doctrine, 2. In regard to the Christian doctrine of healing of the body and mind and 3. In response to the social model of disability that seeks to marginalize and oppress the disabled. Yong explores each of these aspects of the doctrine, suggesting, “[a] reconsideration of the classical *ordo salutis* in disability perspective, we shall see, will not only be dynamic (thematized in terms of the *way* of salvation, or *via salutis*) but also multidimensional” (Yong, 2007; 230).

Yong points to the problems inherent in traditional “age of accountability” treatments as found in many Protestant accounts, in regard to persons with intellectual disabilities, which draw from a works-based faith (Yong, 2007; 234). This correlatively excludes persons with disabilities however, who are likely unable to respond to an epistemic call to faith. Alternatively agnosticism may be claimed, but Yong suggests that there are other, more beneficial ways forward, such as found in the theology of John Swinton. “Rather than asking whether people with intellectual disability are religiously conscious or responsible, he inquires into how they become religiously engaged” (Yong, 2007; 237). Yong quotes Swinton in this regard:

If human beings are multi-dimensional, dynamic and relational through and through, then with regard to persons with intellectual disabilities, relational

criteria come into play that are not exhaustively determined or constricted to the intellect (even if such criteria do not have to be independent of the intellect for those who are intellectually capable). There can be a genuine affective apprehension of and even conversion to God for those with profound cognitive disabilities whereby their existence in loving relationships mediates real saving experiences of God (as cited in Yong, 2007; 237).

Thus the sign for “conversion”, Yong argues, is not necessarily epistemic for persons with intellectual disabilities, but relational. At “the affective level they could experience a kind of moral conversion that sets them in right relationship to others, even if at the cognitive level they might not be able to understand what it means to stand justified before God in Christ” (Yong, 207; 238).

Similarly in terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities, I would like to suggest that we ask not whether people with intellectual disabilities theologically know God, but rather how they become theologically and spiritually engaged. I would suggest that knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities arises in “multi-dimensional, dynamic and relational” forms in community. Drawing from Swinton’s theology of soteriology in this instance, applying it to the situation of knowledge of God, it may be said similarly that, “There can be a genuine affective apprehension of and even conversion to God for those with profound cognitive disabilities whereby their existence in loving relationships mediates revelation of God.”

While Yong does not specifically address the doctrine of revelation, his development of the “pneumatological imagination” provides a theologically rich context for meaningful engagement with persons with intellectual disabilities, not least in terms of “imagining” ways in which knowledge of God may be possible beyond epistemic knowing. The pneumatological imagination is, he says, “able to embrace more fully the diversity of the knowledge of the divine encountered in world religious experiences”, and arguably the type of knowledge of God as demonstrated by persons with intellectual disabilities (Yong, 2007; 278). This is certainly the type of vision we are looking to engage in terms of a Christian theology of revelation. Additionally his suggestions regarding an “emergentist” framework that suggests a relationality of body mind and spirit in encounter with others, offers exciting possibilities in terms of a framework for understanding other forms of knowledge beyond the epistemic.

I would argue however while a pneumatological framework may broaden the theological horizons in terms of inclusion of persons with disabilities doctrinally, this expansion may inadvertently have a dogmatic downside. Scholars such as Dale Irvin point out that while this pneumatological framework is enlarging in many senses, it also has some drawbacks in its attempt to overcome the “christological cul-de-sac” (Irvin, 2004; 277). Irvin writes of Yong’s “pneumatological imagination” in terms of the inter-faith dialogue describing how Yong argues that a pneumatological framework may provide ways forward for dialogue between seemingly disparate religious faiths such as Buddhism and Christianity. Yong proposes “to bracket Christological categories for a time and to lift up the distinct economy of the Holy Spirit” (Irvin, 2004; 277-278). This bracketing however, Irvin argues, has significant theological drawbacks, including a certain theological vagueness or ambiguity. Yong continues this sort of bracketing work in terms of his thinking about theology and disability and one is left to wonder if at times this ambiguity does become problematic at times in terms of its application.

Irvin argues that at times the pneumatological framework potentially adheres to Western metaphysical commitments “that perceives the substance of God as something that is abstracted or abstractable from the persons of the Trinity” (Irvin, 2004; 279). In this framework the truth of God is not grounded in the acts and works of Christ, but in the human interpretation of this being, as present and mediated by the Holy Spirit. It is this re-grounding and bracketing of Christology that allows this sort of engagement to take place, separating the work of the Spirit from that of God or Jesus.

This is a tendency that has long been adhered to in the Latin theological tradition of the West, in contrast to the Eastern Orthodox tradition where the divine substance is understood to be a function of the personhood of the Father communicated to the Son and Spirit and thus not capable of being talked about apart from the personhood of God. Yong at times seems to me to be suggesting that the persons of Trinity illustrate something that can be said in more universal terms through metaphysics....A similar tendency toward abstraction hampers still the project of discernment that is his critical starting point for inter- religious dialogue, I think. Yong’s three criteria for discernment are divine presence, absence and activity. By his own admission they are ambiguous, and I would suggest too vague to carry the ethical weight that is eventually placed upon them

(Irving, 2004; 279).

In terms of utilizing an emergentist framework for developing theology in light of persons with intellectual disabilities, I would also suggest that the threat exists of Christological vagueness. Thus, many of Yong's pneumatological suggestions, such as the suggestion that soteriology and ecclesiology may be understood in a relational sense, demand further articulation and parameter in regard to the discernment of the Spirit. Is all relation for persons with disability indicative of divine salvic action? How are the ecclesial relationships of persons with intellectual disabilities significant? What is the marker of the work of the Holy Spirit versus that the work of the human spirit (if these two indeed need be separated)?

These few questions hint at the seeming confusion that arises when the Spirit is forced to act as the marker of the work of God, without Trinitarian boundaries. Additionally, as Irvin points out, the work of the Spirit should always points to the work of another- Christ. However the Spirit described by Yong repeatedly only points to itself in terms of its imaginative ability, and the Spirit is heightened to a level perhaps not formerly afforded in this regard.

If the danger that confronts foundational christology in the inter-religious dialogue is inherent religious imperialism, the danger that confronts foundational pneumatology is inherent religious vagueness. Augustine, in *De Trinitatis* XV.17, alludes to this problem when he points out that the Spirit is the only person in the Trinity who is common to the other two in such a manner that the other two can be called by the same term. The Father is properly called Spirit and the Son is properly called Spirit, in a manner in which the Spirit is never called Father and the Spirit is never called Son. The Spirit testifies not to the Spirit's own self, but always to another (Irving, 2004; 280).

The Spirit in this sense then, as highlighted by Augustine, loses its character of partnership. In a sense, the Spirit is forced to act in a more independent manner than is scriptural.

Yong's introduction of the "pneumatological imagination" is promising in terms of the inter-disciplinary dialogue for a theology of disability, however as an overreaching framework I would suggest it might be strengthened through more Christological engagement, not less. A theology of disability must proceed from a certain place that is secure in its identity, which should be rooted in Christ.

2.2.5 (c) Imagining a Christological Alternative

Alternatively a framework that is Christological, based in the acts and significance of Christ, through and by his Spirit, promises a more precise account of God's renewing and resurrecting work. This Christological framework would also provide the parameters of the church, or God's relational presence in self-giving love, in order to delimit equation of human experience with the divine. Centered in the acts and being of Christ this framework would certainly be inclusive of persons with intellectual disabilities. Eiesland, in particular, points to the particular ways in which Christ's being correlates with the being of the disabled in an embodied way- though the framework would only face the limits of Christ's experience on the cross, which were ultimately overcome. This Christological grounding would also certainly not preclude the possibility of the acts of the Holy Spirit, however, this Spirit would always be qualified by the being of Christ. The Spirit then would not only point to itself and its own works, but firstly to Christ. The ethical implications of this sort of "Christological imagination" I suggest might be found through dialogue with Karl Barth's understanding of "the true form of being"- a being like Christ. In chapter six I develop a thorough Christological analogy of being for pastoral care givers that I would argue resists the vagueness and weaknesses that is at times encountered in Yong's "pneumatological imagination."

Yong's work is significant and more doctrinally rich than much theology of disability. His pneumatological focus is also inclusive of persons with intellectual disabilities. Arguably, however, his pneumatological focus on the imaginatory possibilities of various doctrines of the Christian faith would benefit further from Christological considerations in order to avoid experiential pitfalls. Such work will engage us the rest of this project in terms of the doctrine of revelation, which Yong does not address, so as to imagine ways forward in terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. I shall draw from Yong's pneumatological understanding of the place of disability in the modern world albeit within a more explicitly Christological framework.

2.3 Contemporary World of Disability Studies & Theology: *Where to go from here?*

Despite its infancy, theology of disability – as it has developed in Western contexts over the last 30 years or so since the first work of Rev. Harold Wilke – includes many

diverse and constructive modes of theological reflection. Relatively little has been written specifically in terms of intellectual disability, although there are recent signs of interest, as seen in the work by Amos Yong regarding theology and Down syndrome.

Govig, and many others like him, encourage the church to be a place of healing for persons with disabilities. Govig's choice of language may be problematic at times, however his work demonstrates how far theological reflection regarding disability has come in a relatively short time and reminds readers of the promise that exists for persons with disabilities in knowing God through an inclusive church body. Hauerwas's work details an ethic of care for persons with disabilities, which challenges the church to draw back from notions of "freedom from pain and suffering", instead providing a place of care for persons with disabilities. Hauerwas writes specifically with the situation of persons with intellectual disabilities in mind and is also conscious of the power of the church in its ability to demonstrate God's care and acceptance.

The work of Kathy Black details scriptural positions that she argues lead to a proper social position for the church: one of interdependence. Within this framework there is room for persons of all abilities. A theology of knowledge of God may be derived from Black's interdependence for persons with intellectual disabilities as participation and inclusion in the church is not contingent upon ability, but rather relies only upon God's ability to intermeditate and be present in the midst of relationship in community. In the midst of such a relational space, God is arguably known in dynamic and relational ways.

Black and Eiesland develop "liberatory" theologies of disability, forming a potential ecclesiology of disability and an inclusive Christology sensitive to persons with disabilities respectively. They do not seek to change the condition of the person with the disability, but rather aim to form a theological position that is sensitive and compatible with the uniquely created body-selves of persons with disabilities. They allow their respective doctrines to be expanded by the embodiments of the disabled, without the doctrine losing its shape. This affirms the embodiments of persons with disabilities and restores them to community, theologically including them in the church. Regarding the development of the theology of disability Eiesland contributes the idea of an inclusive reconceptualized Christology. Eiesland insists that it is not the persons with the disability that is to be questioned, but the very methods and means of society and the church. This pioneering spirit opens the way

theoretically to begin to engage other doctrines, such as the doctrine of revelation, “reconceptualizing” the traditional doctrine in light of intellectual disability.

Yong’s work details in a very extensive manner how the reality of disability affects, impacts and widens traditional thinking regarding traditional Christian doctrines such as creation, providence, the *imago Dei*, Christology, theological anthropology, ecclesiology and eschatology. Yong’s “pneumatological framework” widens and indeed enlightens thinking in terms of the scope and natures of these doctrines, suggesting an “emergentist” scope that emphasizes the organic and relational nature of people in relationship. This framework however might arguably be strengthened through Christological engagement, where definite parameters are found in the acts and being of Christ. Yong’s work suggests that other Christian doctrines, such as the doctrine of revelation, might engage with the situation of intellectual disability, with fruitful and rich results.

This review of literature has demonstrated that knowledge of God is an area that has been encountered by several other scholars, but never engaged systematically in a doctrinal, systematic sense. Govig and Hauerwas bring to mind the possibility of knowledge of God in ecclesial, relational forms. Stanley Hauerwas is aware of knowledge of God that is demonstrated in and through self-giving care. Black demonstrates how scripture is inclusive of persons with disabilities, including the intellectually disabled, and suggests a scriptural way of relating grounded in interdependence. Eiesland’s work highlights embodied forms of knowledge of God that remind us of that we can know God through Christ in embodied identification. Finally Yong highlights that Christian doctrine greatly benefits from engagement with theology of disability and that a relational framework assists in better understanding how doctrine interplays and applies to persons with profound disabilities. In terms of knowledge of God, Yong develops an emergentist, relational thread throughout most of his work, reminding readers that God is known in diverse ways through the work of the Holy Spirit. Now that we have situated ourselves with the field of doctrinal theology of disability we are well prepared to consider the doctrine of revelation proper, and its significance and potential in the lives of persons with intellectual disabilities, as will begin in chapter four.

In terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities in the pastoral realm, the same situation exists in terms of doctrinal consideration of persons with intellectual disabilities in terms of knowledge of God; while certain theologians

have made significant suggestions in this direction, a significant amount of theological development remains to be done. In the next chapter we will engage this pastoral realm, considering how pastoral care has been approached and carried out in formal ways for persons with intellectual disabilities. This work will then fully prepare us for considering and engaging with the question of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities in an in-depth way throughout the rest of this project.

Chapter 3

Pastoral Frameworks for Persons with Disabilities: Intellectual Concerns and the Pastoral Relationship

3.1 Practical Theology and Pastoral Care and Counseling: Demarking the Differences

In the previous chapter we considered how theologians of disability have contributed to disability theology in practical, liberatory, ethical and “imaginary” ways, engaging major Christian doctrines. This exercise assisted us in seeing how the discipline has approached certain doctrines from the perspective of disability and what this work contributes to the issue of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. It demonstrated that further consideration is warranted in regard to the issue of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities, although there have been some significant moves in this direction by scholars such as Stanley Hauerwas and Amos Yong, who argue that relationship is a central and vital part of the spiritual lives of persons with intellectual disabilities. In this chapter we will continue this work of considering how disability theology has approached knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. At this juncture, however, we will consider this work with respect to *pastoral* theology. To this end, we will consider the work of disability theologians who have expounded upon the issue of pastoral care and

counseling for persons with disabilities, again paying particular attention to the situation of intellectual disability.

Our work in this chapter will be threefold: 1. Firstly we shall consider the current literature as it concerns the pastoral care of persons with disabilities and additionally examine if/how these suggestions apply to persons with intellectual disabilities. 2. Next we shall engage pastoral literature that provides particular guidance for the pastoral care of persons with intellectual disabilities. 3. Finally we shall look ahead, so to speak, and consider an approach, as evidenced in the work of Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, for engaging Barth's theology of "being in encounter." This approach will assist us in developing a framework for pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities in chapters four, five and six, respectively.

How does pastoral theology differ from the types of theology described in the previous chapter? Some scholars such as pastoral theologian Stephen Pattison use the terms practical and pastoral theology interchangeably. (Pattison and Woodward, 1994). Pattison describes pastoral and practical theology further:

For preliminary purposes, pastoral or practical theology can be defined as a prime place where contemporary experience and the resources of the religious tradition meet in a critical dialogue that is mutually and practically transforming (Pattison and Woodward, 1994).

Indeed the areas share many matters that overlap at times. Pastoral theology of disability in this work however will be differentiated from practical theology by its attention to the psychological, social and spiritual aspects of the person. In terms of the attention to the psychological, social and spiritual needs of the person, pastoral theology differs from other forms of theology of disability, such as liberatory theology of disability and practical theology of disability, in that it is not a theoretical exercise engaging doctrinal concerns, though it certainly includes theory. Pastoral theology is also distinguished in that it is not concerned with the logistical and practical matters of practical theology, though again, these aspects are certainly not ignored. It is neither concerned with ethical frameworks nor "pneumatological" possibilities, though again, these areas are not wholly excluded. The discipline of pastoral care as it is used in this project- and thus pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities- is marked by its theological commitments, in combination with its professional training, which seeks to address spiritual, psychological and emotional issues. This project develops a model of "being with persons in encounter through covenant relationship", which is

approached as the work of pastoral theology. This pastoral work however cannot and must not be separated from theological commitments, which also need be articulated. Thus while “being with others in encounter” need be expounded pastorally, theological tenets such as “covenant relationship” need also be clarified. Thus this project is both a pastoral and theological work.

Moreover, as mentioned in the last chapter, a pastorally-oriented theological consideration of knowledge of God has a unique orientation in that it potentially has both doctrinal (the doctrine of revelation) and pastoral (pastoral care) application. In the previous chapter we considered the practical and doctrinal areas regarding disability theology, addressing logistical, attitudinal, and dogmatic areas of concern. We now wish to attend to issues relating to pastoral care of persons with profound and complex needs, or areas that relate more to issues of holistic care. We will differentiate between the two.

This holistic understanding of pastoral care resembles closely the type of care described by the American Association of Pastoral Caregivers (AAPC) and used by pastoral theologians such as Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger. The AAPC describes the discipline of pastoral care and counseling as the “exploration, clarification and guidance of human life, both individual and corporate, at the experiential and behavioral levels, through a theological perspective.”²⁷ Similarly, in this chapter, we will be considering literature that concerns the “exploration, clarification and guidance” of the lives of persons with intellectual disabilities, with the aim of understanding how this task has been approached and what has been helpful. This work will then inform our own development of an approach to pastoral care and counseling for persons with intellectual disabilities throughout latter chapters.

Additionally, as suggested in chapter one, we will engage with the work of Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger in order to consider how to go about forming a framework of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities in dialogue with the theology of Karl Barth, in latter chapters. van Deusen Hunsinger attempts a similar engagement with her work in attempting to develop a framework for better understanding the relationship between theology and depth psychology in the discipline of pastoral care. The relationship between these two areas has long been a

²⁷ “The Constitution of the American Association of Pastoral Caregivers,” as cited in *AAPC Handbook*, 1986 revised edition (privately printed by the AAPC, Fairfax, Virginia) 1.

murky and unclear area in pastoral care. van Deusen Hunsinger argues however Barth's Chalcedonian pattern, which seeks to relate the divine and human natures of Christ, may offer an analogy for better understanding how theology and psychology relate to one another in the process of pastorally caring for another.

Similarly this project seeks to develop a framework for better understanding how the pastoral care giver might go about forming a pastoral relationship with persons with intellectual disabilities, derived from the theology of Karl Barth. Arguably confusion still exists as to if/how relationships might be formed with persons with intellectual disabilities. A framework for this relationship will be developed from Barth's development of how humans should be "with the other" and how Christ is "for the other" in the *Doctrine of Creation* III:2. Similarly van Deusen Hunsinger's work engages pastoral theology with a Barthian framework, albeit with certain qualifications. Considering her work will assist us in determining how to go about this task of developing a Barthian framework of relation for pastoral care givers for persons with intellectual disabilities.

3.2 Current Literature in Regard to Pastoral Care for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

A brief overview of the field of pastoral care and counseling for persons with disabilities reveals that a plethora of resources exist including Doris C. Clark, 2000; David L Coulter, 2001; Jean Vanier 1998; William Gaventa, Jr., 2003; Lindsay Gething, 1997; Sheila Hollins and Margaret Grimer, 1988; Walter Kern, 1985; Gene Nabi, 1985; Henri Nouwen, 1997; Dennis D. Schurter, 2003; and John Swinton, 1997, amongst many others. Similarly to theological reflection as it relates to persons with disabilities, pastoral reflection regarding persons with intellectual disabilities has grown and developed in the last thirty years, concurrently with reflection considering the theological implications of disability doctrinally, as evidenced in chapter two. In most cases, pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities is generally assumed and considered under the wider category of pastoral care for persons with disabilities. This chapter will review the work of five pastoral theologians of disability who are representative of the wider field of pastoral theology of disability. Additionally it will be argued that while the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities under the

wider category of persons with disabilities is at times obliging and effective, there are other times when this inclusion is ineffective and even, at times, futile.

The difficulty of this inclusion relates to the level of cognitive ability assumed in terms of the person with the intellectual disability. To clarify this point further: some theologians of disability write and make suggestions regarding pastoral care that requires both verbal and rational ability. This is problematic however for persons with intellectual disabilities, and essentially excludes them from these suggestions.²⁸

Arguably what is needed is reflection regarding pastoral care for the intellectually disabled that takes the unique communicative and cognitive abilities of this population into consideration. The works of Rev. Walter Kern and John Swinton are examples of pastoral theologians who write in this direction. This project adopts similarly an approach that intentionally considers care in light of the communicative and epistemic abilities available to persons with profound and complex needs. Swinton's relational suggestions regarding care for the intellectually disabled illuminate the ways forward for a theology of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities to be developed throughout the remainder of the project.

In the following we will first review the works of Lowell Colston and William Gaventa Jr., as represented in their two respective chapters of the *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Care and Counseling* Vols. 1-3 (Wicks and Parsons, Eds., 1985, 1993, 2003). Colston and Gaventa's writing is representative of works in this area that include the pastoral care of persons with intellectual disabilities under the wider umbrella of pastoral care for persons with disabilities. As it will be demonstrated, this is effective to a certain extent as issues of inclusion and definition are a concern for both care of the disabled and intellectually disabled alike. What will also become apparent however is that this sort of inclusion also, at times, seemingly overlooks the special needs of the intellectually disabled. In other words, some of the suggestions made by theologians like Colston and Gaventa seem to necessitate verbal and/or

²⁸ An example of such is found in the work of Lowell Colston, as will be further developed in the following review. Colston suggests that the guiding principle of "hope" being found for persons with the disabilities (Capps and Parsons, Eds., 1985; 320). This intervention however seems to require participation from the person with the disability that is verbal and/or rational. In order to conceive of such things as "advancements in technology", the abilities of abstract thought and comprehension of time are arguably needed. These abilities are not possible however for many people with profound intellectual disabilities due to reduced cortical functioning.

rational ability. Such problems will be explored in the review of their works, and suggestions will be made for ways to move forward with these seeming “epistemic” and “verbal” suggestions in regard to persons with intellectual disabilities.

Works that consider explicitly the pastoral care of persons with intellectual disabilities do in fact exist, though they are fewer in number than literature regarding the pastoral care of persons with disabilities in general (examples of these works include Gaventa, Ed., 2002; Coulter, 2001; Kern, 1985; Swinton, 1997; Nabi, 1985). Writers in this area, such as neurologist David L. Coulter, who writes about the spiritual lives of persons with intellectual disabilities, argues that “spirituality is not lessened because conscious expression is lessened (as for example following severe brain injury)” (Coulter, 2001). These works are differentiated from the wider area of care for persons with disabilities in that these works generally specifically address issues of communication and rational ability.²⁹

Work in the area of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities will be represented by the efforts of three theologians, Rev. Walter Kern, Jean Vanier and Professor John Swinton. Walter Kern’s book *Pastoral Ministry with Disabled Persons* is a Roman Catholic perspective that stresses sacramental access for persons with intellectual disabilities (Kern, 1985). Though the development of seven “Pastoral Sacramental Principles”, Kern argues for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, in the rights of baptism, confirmation, communion, penance, anointing of the sick, the sacrament of matrimony and holy orders (Kern, 1985; 39-46). These seven principles theologically affirm the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sacramental practices, and I would argue that these principles might similarly be extended and applied to the realm of pastoral care, justifying and validating pastoral care for those with intellectual disabilities.

²⁹ Coulter helpfully suggests in his book *Spirituality and Intellectual Disability* William C. Gaventa Jr., and David L. Coulter, Eds. (New York: Haworth Press, 2001) a method of care for the pastoral care of persons with intellectual disabilities. He calls this approach the “three looks”, arguing that the caregiver must first examine their own spirituality, before seeking to assist another in this area. The second look is to “see the person as a human being like myself” and the third look is to “see in the other the ground of all being and all existence, the transcendence or divinity that informs our spirituality” (4-7). With this premise, Coulter goes on to suggest that there are “universal implications” in terms of the way the three looks “transcend the boundaries that divide us” (9).

The notable work of Roman Catholic theologian Jean Vanier will be represented by a review of his book *Becoming Human* (Vanier, 2001).³⁰ In this work Vanier develops a model of friendship that is manifested and lived out daily in L'Arche communities throughout the world. This care engenders a sense of belonging and ultimately leads to new places of growth, healing and change. This sort of model will further be developed through out the rest of this project, considering how the Barthian model of “being with the other in covenant relationship” must not be a unilateral engagement, but rather must be a moment of encounter that is based in mutual friendship.

Pastoral care as it relates to persons with intellectual disabilities will be represented from a protestant point of view by the thinking of John Swinton.³¹ In a short, yet significant article entitled “Restoring the Image: Spirituality, Faith and Cognitive Disability”, Swinton emphasizes the importance of loving relationships in the spiritual lives of persons with intellectual disabilities. The argument is presented that ultimately the image of God is restored through the “quality of our relationships, rather than the quantity of our intellect,” mediated by the Holy Spirit (Swinton, 1997;

³⁰ Jean Vanier is the author of several significant works and is the founder of L'Arche, an international network of communities for people with intellectual disabilities. His numerous writings include *Man and Woman He Made Them*, 1986, *An Ark for the Poor*, 1995, *Be Not Afraid*, 1975, *Community and Growth*, 1979, *Door of Hope*, 1999, *Our Journey Home*, 1997, *Tears of Silence*, amongst others. *Becoming Human*, derived from a series of 5 talks given on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) Massey Lectures in 1998, remains one of his best known works however, succinctly encompassing the ideas of many other books. In regard to our project, *Becoming Human* is particularly applicable as it focuses on the healing power of relationships, which is the argument being developed in regard to knowledge of God in dogmatic and pastoral spheres. For this reason, it has been chosen for the review as representative of his wider works.

³¹ Swinton's work is included here under the category of “pastoral theology of disability” as he writes considering the spiritual lives of persons with intellectual disabilities. Arguably however, due to his theological engagement with the *imago Dei*, Swinton's work might also have been in the last chapter, which was more doctrinal in scope. I have chosen however to include Swinton's work in the “pastoral theology” chapter as I focus on the more pastoral suggestions of his work and would like to further develop Swinton's suggestions in an especially pastoral way in chapter six. My concern in this project is not the nuances and details of the theology of the *imago Dei* as it relates to persons with disabilities as such, but pastoral care and counseling for persons with intellectual disabilities. Thus though Swinton's work in this way is significant, I am choosing to focus on his pastoral suggestions, and therefore the review of his work is best properly located in the more pastoral chapter.

25). This relational suggestion hints at the direction we will take further in engaging the theology of Karl Barth in terms of developing a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

As has been reiterated continually, relationality is significant for persons with disabilities. Additionally I would argue, concurring with theologians and pastoral theologians of disability, that the relational realm is theologically significant for persons with intellectual disabilities; the two aspects of our work are interwoven inseparably. Barth's theology is helpful in further considering the nature of the pastoral relationship as Barth's theology of encounter, in particular, develops a theology of relation that is based not in words or epistemic response, but in the elemental acts of being and relating. For protestant pastoral care givers seeking to care for persons with intellectual disabilities, I argue that this Barthian relational framework provides a way of building relationship that is theologically significant and yet does not necessarily require rational or verbal ability. From a Barthian standpoint, how is one to understand the relationship between the pastoral caregiver and persons with disabilities? How might one go about forming a relational framework of pastoral care that encompasses the theologian tenets of Karl Barth and the relational praxis suggested by Jean Vanier and John Swinton. While this task may seem complex, there is direction in this regard.

Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, in her book *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach* attempts to navigate the historically murky relationship between theology and depth psychology by engaging the theology of Karl Barth (van Deusen Hunsinger, 1995). van Deusen Hunsinger uses Barth's theology in the context of pastoral care, utilizing the Chalcedonian formula to understand and relate the theological and psychological aspects of pastoral care. This is effectively accomplished and ultimately she argues that theology and psychology relate, similarly to Barth's understanding of the Chalcedonian pattern, in a "mutual ordering in freedom" through a relationship involving "indissoluble differentiation," "the inseparable unity," and "indestructible order" (van Deusen Hunsinger, 1995; 63, 65). Engaging Barth's theology, van Deusen Hunsinger successfully draws analogies between Barth's Chalcedonian pattern and the discipline of pastoral care as a theological and psychological task.

Similarly, we seek in this project to understand better the sort of relationship to be developed between the pastoral care giver and persons with intellectual disabilities.

As introduced in chapter one, I suggest that Barth's theology is extremely significant and helpful in this regard. Barth suggests in *The Doctrine of Creation* that the true form of being is a being for the other in encounter (CD III:2, 103ff). This form of being, Barth argues, is perfectly exemplified in the life of Christ and marked by a particular form of being, as well as certain embodied actions. This form of being, I would argue, may also potentially offer an analogy for pastoral care givers seeking to go about pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities. "Being for the other and with the other in covenant relationship" demonstrates potential ways for pastoral care givers to encounter, relate and effectively care for persons with intellectual disabilities. It is not merely a one-way dynamic. van Deusen Hunsinger suggests and achieves Barthian analogical work in another realm, and thus at the end of this chapter we will briefly engage with van Deusen Hunsinger's work in order to learn how to properly go about forming an account of pastoral care in dialogue with Karl Barth's theology.

The chapter will contain three major parts: 1. Firstly we will explore and detail the current approaches to pastoral care with persons with disabilities as found in the theology of William Gaventa and Lowell Colston, and the potential limits of these approaches for persons with intellectual disabilities. Additionally ways forward in applying these approaches to the situation of persons with intellectual disabilities will be suggested; 2. Secondly we will consider the pastoral theology of Walter Kern, Jean Vanier and John Swinton to the extent that each considers intentionally and explicitly the situation of persons with intellectual disabilities. 3. Finally we will consider how van Deusen Hunsinger engages the theology of Karl Barth, considering what qualifications and developments must be made in forming a Barthian framework for pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities. We will then consider how we might go about a similar formation, combining Vanier and Swinton's relational suggestions with Barth's covenantal being with and for the other, thereby developing a framework for pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities.

3.2.1 Inclusive Inclusion? Pastoral Counseling for Persons with Disabilities: *The Differences and Similarities in the works of Lowell Colston and William Gaventa, Jr.*

A primary reference in the area of pastoral care remains the *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Care and Counseling* Vols. 1-3 (Wicks and Parsons, Eds., 1985, 1993, 2003).

This three volume set addresses the area of pastoral care more widely and also in terms of specialized care, such as pastoral care for persons with disabilities. In this set two chapters in particular are devoted to the care of persons with disabilities and in the following we will consider these suggestions and the relevance for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Lowell G. Colston, a noted theologian of disability, effectively introduced the area of pastoral care and counseling for persons with disabilities in the *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Care and Counseling* Vol. 1, entitled “The Handicapped”- during a time when there were few publications in the area of theology and disability (Wicks and Parsons, Eds., 1985; 318). Similarly, and more recently, in a chapter both broad in scope and wide-ranging in praxis, William Gaventa further develops the idea of pastoral care and counseling for persons with disabilities, under the broader umbrella of “pastoral counseling with special populations” in the oft utilized *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Care and Counseling* Vol. 3 (Wicks and Parsons, Eds., 2003; 121ff). While the two theologians approach their task very differently, a common problem arises in terms of application of their suggestions to the situation of persons with *intellectual* disabilities; cognitive and verbal ability is at times assumed, and thus their respective suggestions are exclusive of persons with intellectual disabilities, who may lack these capacities. I would suggest however, drawing from the work and learning of the last chapter, that the pastoral counseling suggestions of Colston and Gaventa may be made more applicable to persons with intellectual disabilities when understood in a relational sense.

Lowell Colston begins his chapter by stating a “guiding principle” for all care with persons with disabilities: advocacy (Capps and Parsons, Eds., 1985; 318). He later indicates that a second, but related, guiding principle for care with “the handicapped” in “hope”: “The hope which adheres to technological advances; the hope which is inherent in interpersonal relationship; the hope which permeates all life...the hope of ontological acceptance” (Capps and Parsons, Eds., 1985; 320). Similarly, William Gaventa opens the chapter with three basic principles for pastoral care for the disabled: 1. Care must be considered alongside of issues of context, family and environment; 2. Pastoral counseling may not be different than any other form of pastoral counseling; and 3. The scope of the chapter is not wide enough to address all the issues, which might arise in the care and counseling of persons with disabilities (Capps and Parsons, Eds., 2003; 121). As is evident, both authors approach the issue

of counseling for persons with disabilities very differently. Colston tends not to focus on practical issues, such as definition, but rather takes great care to detail his philosophy for counseling of “the three hopes”. Alternatively Gaventa addresses many preliminary issues such as context, definition, theology, counseling styles and education for persons with disabilities, and spends less time on the nature and philosophy of the counseling relationship. In addressing these two chapters with the needs and care of the intellectually disabled in mind however, we encounter the problem of application in the work of both Colston and Gaventa; the chapters appear generally written with the intellectually *able* person in mind. Some of the suggestions of Colston and Gaventa seemingly require rational and/or verbal ability, and thus there are limitations in terms of using these suggestions for the care of persons with intellectual disabilities.

The approach and style of the writers is greatly different at times. In terms of the practical matters of definition, Gaventa references the World Health Organizations three-tiered definition of disability (impairment, disability, handicap), which he states is helpful in terms of the aims of pastoral care and counseling in terms of dealing with multi-dimensional issues of care. Colston does not define “handicapped” or “disabled.” Gaventa moves on to discuss new patterns and trends in disability classification, such as the turn away from terms such as *resident*, *patient* or *client*, towards a more consumer-based and political approach, whereby a person with a disability is known as a *consumer* or a *self-advocate* (Gaventa, 2003; 122). Similarly, Gaventa addresses the realm of the pastoral care giver, and certain theological biases or fears she may have in regard to disability. Gaventa points out that these issues must be addressed in order for proper care to happen. Again, Colston does not touch on these topics. Similarity is found between the two, however in their suggestions regarding the guidance the pastoral care giver is to give in the counseling relationship: both writers seem to assume verbal and rational ability in terms of the counselee. Briefly we will consider each writers suggestions here.

Unlike Gaventa, Colston does not engage the area of the pastoral caregiver, but instead develops a three-tiered framework of levels of hope that Colston argues might be helpful in the counseling relationship. Upon introducing the first suggestion that hope exist for persons with disabilities in technological advancements Colston describes the hope he found in kidney dialysis (Colston, 1985; 322). Using this example to illustrate his point, he encourages caregivers to be involved in assisting and

supporting persons with disabilities as they seek technological assistance. Additionally he suggests hope might be found in relationships and in ultimate ontological acceptance, which is rooted in the promise that “nothing can separate us from the love of God” (Colston, 1985; 331). These three “hopes”, Colston argues, may be referred to and advanced by the caregiver to the counselee.

In terms of most persons with intellectual disabilities, however, this suggestion is problematic. Most persons with intellectual disabilities are not able to conceive rationally of abstractions such as technological advancement or ontological acceptance as it requires the cognitive ability to conceive of entities such as time, the future and non-material beings. Interpersonal relationships imply an applied component that seems feasible for persons with intellectual disabilities. However the suggestion of technological hope and ontological acceptance is difficult for persons with intellectual disabilities who may not be able to conceive of abstract concepts such as technological progress or the hope there is in love. Thus it appears that in terms of persons with intellectual disabilities, Colston’s suggestions are very limited.

Similarly, Gaventa suggests various pastoral roles and gifts that the caregiver might bring to the relationship. It is pointed out that each pastoral caregiver will bring her own unique view on her role as a care giver, but Gaventa suggests that they might mostly fall under four basic roles: presence, guide, advocate (shepherd) and community builder (Gaventa, 2003: 128-136). Similar questions arise however about the usefulness of these suggestions for persons with intellectual disabilities. Presence is defined as, “offer[ing] a presence of hospitality and welcome” (Gaventa, 2003” 128). The most important aspect of this presence, Gaventa argues, is the “capacity to hear the questions and stories that an individual brings to you as minister or caregiver” (Gaventa, 2003: 129). But how does this listening take place for someone who is unable to speak? How might they share their story, if they have no ability to rationally recognize or recall it as such? Next Gaventa suggests the role of the pastoral care giver as the role of guide. This role involves, “us[ing] faith traditions and pastoral and professional skills to *guide* another in their journey” (Gaventa 2003: 129). It is then suggested that several guiding strategies may be employed in helping the person, including identifying key transition points in the narrative shared, assisting the person in gaining access to information that may be needed in terms of further support.

Again, however, we encounter the problem of verbal communication for persons with intellectual disabilities. How might a person with an intellectual

disability, with limited ability for speech, share their story? How might a pastoral care giver “guide” someone who is unable to follow or lead, as such? Similar questions might be raised about the applicability of the roles of advocate/shepherd or a community builder in terms of persons with intellectual disabilities. Thus it appears also that while Gaventa’s suggestions may be very helpful for the pastoral caregiver seeking to form relationships with disabilities who may have rational and verbal ability, the suggestions seem limited in terms of building relationships with persons with intellectual disabilities.

Drawing on insights from the previous chapter, I suggest that potential exists in engaging the suggestions of Colston and Gaventa in a more appropriately relational sense for persons with intellectual disabilities. The caregiver may not be able to discuss or reason through one of these suggestions with the person with the disability. They may however be realized in the relationship in living forms. It may not be possible for the caregiver to share with the counselee in an abstract, expectant sense, but that hope may be realized in concrete, lived ways. Technological hope may come when a person with an intellectual disability who is also hearing impaired in given hearing aids, for example. The person may not rationally comprehend what has happened in terms of partial restoration of their hearing, but this does not lessen the outcome of this experience. Similarly, ontological hope may be said to be realized through loving relationships that seek to reconcile, heal and restore a person to community and love of self and others. Again, epistemic, rational understanding of this reality may not exist, but this does not lessen the result. Similarly, the roles that Gaventa suggests may be invoked in relationship, though the caregiver must be especially attuned to the ways in which the person with the intellectual disability communicates. Thus non-verbal cues, body language must be intimately known and this would require an extended period of relationship before assumptions are made and roles invoked.

Additionally, as will be demonstrated in chapters five of this project, a biblical conception of knowledge allows for a variety of ways of knowing the other and God beyond the cognitive and verbal realm. This widened view of knowledge may assist in the application of Gaventa’s suggestions, extending the ways that communication might be possible for both the caregiver and the person with the intellectual disability. The imagination and the arts, for example, might allow a person with a disability to express what they are experiencing in art, drama and music- all forms that are “beyond

words.” Someone might be able to share their “story” with a pastoral care giver, with the pastoral caregiver acting as a “guide” in this experience, by coloring or drawing significant thoughts or feelings. Thus Gaventa’s suggestion of the “roles” of the pastoral care giver in care might have application when the employment and application of these roles is creative in scope.

The works of Colston and Gaventa are important and useful in terms of care for persons with disabilities. In terms of persons with intellectual disabilities they demonstrate that special consideration must be made in regard to the epistemic and verbal limitations of this population in considering pastoral care. The suggestions of these two theologians however may be of great use when understood in a relational sense, rather than a rational way. This understanding of these suggestions for care would then much more closely resemble the works of our next group of pastoral theologians, who write particularly with the state of intellectually disabled in mind, cognizant of the limited communicative ability of many persons with intellectual disabilities. The work of Rev. Walter Kern will be one representative of this group. He further suggests that sacramental access is vital for persons with intellectual disabilities and that loving relationships help enable this inclusion.

3.2.2 Rev. Walter Kern: Sacramental Considerations in Pastoral Care for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

Rev. Walter Kern, a Roman Catholic theologian with particular interests in ministry to persons with disabilities, argues in his book *Pastoral Ministry with Disabled Persons* that even the most “profoundly retarded person has dignity and value as a person” (Kern, 1985; 3-4). Kerns writes from a particular Roman Catholic perspective, and thus great care is taken to detail the theology of the seven sacraments as they relate to the *Code of Canon Law*. The present project concerns protestant theology and pastoral care, and thus the nuances and details of all the theology as it relates to the seven sacraments discussed is not immediately relevant to our work. Despite this difference, many of the theological and pastoral suggestions that Kern makes are useful in considering Protestant sacraments as understood in Protestant traditions, such as baptism and the taking of communion. Some broad theological suggestions that Kern makes are useful however, in considering protestant sacraments, such as baptism and the taking of communion. I would also argue that several of Kern’s suggestions

regarding sacramental access, might also be applied to the area of pastoral care for the intellectually disabled. Kern provides theological and practical direction in these areas, arguing that no disabled person should ever be deprived of a sacrament (or, arguably pastoral care) because of inability but rather that proper support should be given to the fullest extent possible, “scaling from the minimum upward” (Kern, 1985; 62).

Upon carefully arguing that all human life is of value and defining what he means by disability, Kern dedicates a chapter to the issue of educating persons with disabilities, and suggests “mainstreaming” persons with disabilities into the work and activities of the class as much as possible (Kern, 1985; 3-32). In terms of persons with intellectual disabilities, Kern rightfully points out that, “their mental capacity is not proportionate to their spiritual capacity” and thus it is important to support the pupils in all ways in order to “help them reach their full capacity” (Kern, 1985; 33). This support may be diverse and creative in form, depending on the disability, but Kern emphasizes that, “the most important thing is the message of God’s love for the handicapped child” (Kern, 1985; 34). This is certainly a principle that is transferable to the task of pastoral care for the intellectually disabled: the form of the care might vary, but the most important thing remains sharing God’s love with the other.

Next Kern describes “Pastoral Sacramental Principles” that apply to the inclusion of persons with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, in sacramental practice. Briefly, the seven “Pastoral Sacramental Principles” that Kern develops are as follows:

1. The value and dignity of a person flow from the fact that he/she is a person, endowed with an immortal soul;
2. Priority must be given to the initiative of God in matters spiritual, especially the sacraments, and not only to the readiness and response of the recipient;
3. Sacraments exist both for the glory of God and the spiritual good of the people;
4. Sacraments have an ecclesial dimension and what is lacking in the faith of the person through no fault of his/her own is augmented and supplied by the Church;
5. It is the positive right and need of everyone to receive religious instruction and formation appropriate to his/her age development;
6. Non-verbal communication can validly be used in judging sacramental readiness and this may be the only kind available for some people;
7. Ministers of the sacraments act in good faith when they follow the judgment of those who habitually deal with handicapped persons in judging sacramental readiness (Kern, 1985; 39-46).

These principles are then put into practice in terms of participation in the sacrament. Kern describes how persons with disabilities and intellectual disabilities might be included in the rights of baptism, confirmation, communion, penance, anointing the sick, the sacrament of matrimony and holy orders (Kern, 1985; 39-46).

Again, the Roman Catholic theology differs from Protestant beliefs in some places, such as the sacrament of penance and anointing of the sick, which are not normally practiced in many Protestant traditions. For the areas that are more pertinent to Protestant beliefs however, such as baptism, Kern's sacramental principles and theological reasoning is assistive in three main areas: 1. Kern reminds the church that the priority in the sacraments remains with divine and not human action; 2. Additionally Kern invites the church to respect and regard all persons based in their very being as persons; this ontological respect is vital for a theology of knowledge of God that upholds a variety of ways of being, facilitating sacramental access (and knowledge of God "access") in ways that are both accessible and meaningful for all persons; 3. Kern emphasizes the role of the family, the community, and the church in the lives of persons with intellectual disabilities. This involvement is for the sake of both the church and the person with the disability.

Additionally I would suggest that these seven principles might theologically assist and "validate" the discipline of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities. Kern writes with sacramental inclusion in mind, but I would also argue that his suggestions might be useful for pastoral inclusion. I would argue that this application is again especially helpful in three regards:

Firstly, in terms of the first two principles (1. The value and dignity of a person flow from the fact that he/she is a person, endowed with an immortal soul; 2. Priority must be given to the initiative of God in matters spiritual, especially the sacraments, and not only to the readiness and response of the recipient), Kern locates the possibility of divine initiative with divine and not human capacities. In other words, all humans are equally valuable as persons, and thus no ability or disability lessens or increases the possibility of knowledge of God. This point is vital to remember in terms of pastoral care; persons with intellectual disabilities are not excluded from the possibility of knowledge of God because of lower cognitive functioning. God's act in Christ enables revelation, and not human comprehension.

Secondly Kern emphasizes that a variety of ways of communicating, such as body language, must be taken into account as a sign of comprehension and willingness to receive a sacrament. This variety applies to the medium of the provision of the sacraments, and to the manner in which it is apprehended by the person. A willingness or desire of the person with the disability to be included in communion each Sunday, perhaps expressed by an eagerness to take the bread and wine like others, should not be denied based on an inability to verbally express this desire. Affective and emotional engagement is just as valid as rational and verbal forms of expression in such a circumstance.

So too must body language be a part of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities as people might “speak” with their eyes or a certain body movement. Kern states: “[n]on-verbal communication can validly be used in judging sacramental readiness and may be the only kind available to some people” (Kern, 1985; 61). Non-verbal communication is arguably equally legitimate as a way of communicating and pastorally caring for persons with intellectual disabilities, discerning what a person is feeling or experiencing through observation of the person’s body language and temperament. Some persons with intellectual disabilities who are non-verbal are known to communicate effectively with their eyes, hands and feet, and other non-verbal forms of expression. These forms of communication are also valid as a means of expression and response in pastoral care.

A third general principle that Kern emphasizes in regard to the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities in sacramental practices is the importance of the role of the caregivers, such as friends and family members of the individual with the disability. Kern argues that where rational ability is lacking, the parents or family of the individual with the disability may stand in the place of the other, acting in faith on their behalf. “This faith is proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents, who represent both the local Church and the whole society of saints and believers: ‘The Church is mother of all and mother of each ’” (St. Augustine, Epistle 98; Rite, n.3 as cited in Kern, 1985; 51). Similarly it may be helpful in the pastoral care of persons with intellectual disabilities to seek the guidance or assistance of family members who may be better acquainted with the communication styles of the individual. A family member might be able to tell the pastoral care giver what the person with the intellectual disability means to communicate when they stamp their foot or rock in their chair, for example. In terms of pastoral inclusion, similar to sacramental

inclusion, all persons with intellectual disabilities should be included through a tailored pastoral “program”, a variety of communicative forms and through familial support and guidance.

Closely related to the principle of family involvement are Kern’s principles relating to ecclesial participation in the spiritual lives of persons with disabilities (3. Sacraments exist both for the glory of God and the spiritual good of the people; 4. Sacraments have an ecclesial dimension and what is lacking in the faith of the person through no fault of his/her own is augmented and supplied by the Church; 5. It is the positive right and need of everyone to receive religious instruction and formation appropriate to his/her age development). Similar to family involvement, Kern emphasizes that the church has a responsibility to persons with disabilities in providing sacrament, acting in faith and providing religious education for persons with disabilities. This sacramental access is not to be assumed an autonomous experience but rather an experience of the whole community that unites and draws together the church. Similarly, pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities must be seen as an experience and responsibility of the whole community. The pastoral care is for the good of the pastoral caregiver and counselee, but also the wider community. Persons with disabilities amidst community encourage interdependence and a spirit of community; this is vital for the whole church. Additionally, the community might act on behalf of the person with the disability in faith, providing pastoral care when the person may not be able to ask for it as such. Finally, the pastoral care administered must be appropriate to the person’s development. This suggestion will be further developed in chapter six, but it will suffice now to say that the pastoral caregiver must seek to adopt the form of being and expression most familiar to the other person. This act at once affirms the other person’s humanity and offers a means of communing and encounter.

Two areas that Kern specially considers in chapter four that require special comment in regard to persons with intellectual disabilities, the areas marriage and a formal vocation of ministry for persons with intellectual disabilities. In terms of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities, guidance and direction in these areas might be sought from the individual with the disability or their family from the pastoral care giver in regard to these issues. Some persons with mild intellectual disabilities might be very high functioning and able to responsibly handle the demands of marriage and Holy Orders, and Kern points out that “the Church regularly witnesses

the Christian marriage of handicapped people who are qualified to exercise their natural right to marry” (Kern, 1985; 76). Kern appears to make these comments and suggestions with persons with disabilities in general in mind, however I would argue that the reasoning Kern applies to marriage and ordination of persons with disabilities generally might also apply to persons with intellectual disabilities more particularly.

In terms of marriage and ordination of persons with disabilities, Kern assumes a similar stance on both these issues. It is argued that persons with disabilities, like all other people, are welcome and able to engage in these practices, as long as they are able to assume the proper responsibilities and preparation that each area carries with it (Kern, 1985; 75-78). In terms of marriage, Kern emphasizes that persons with disabilities have sexual and loving desires that are naturally human, just as any other person might experience. It is emphasized that with the proper supports many people with disabilities are able to marry and stay in loving relationships, however proper planning and training in terms of marriage preparation courses and sexual education training should be undertaken. If the people with disabilities are able to fulfill the necessary preparations and the responsibilities that come with the matrimony, there is no reason to deny them this union. Similarly, Kern argues that persons with disabilities may seek a formal vocation with the church if they are able to carry out the necessary training and responsibilities associated with this position (Kern, 1985; 78).

Additionally, I would argue that if persons with *intellectual* disabilities are able to assume, undertake, and successfully complete the necessary demands and responsibilities of preparation, education and the fulfillment of the duties of marriage and ministry, there is no need to deny them this privilege. Due to intellectual limitations, however, very few persons with cognitive disabilities would realistically be able to fulfill such demands, as marriage and ministry require.

Kern closes the book by considering practical problems that may present themselves in the “Liturgy, Life and Ministry” of the church in terms of persons with disabilities, suggesting tasks and roles that persons with intellectual disabilities may be able to undertake and ways that they may be involved in the life of the church (Kern, 1985; 127-141). Kern stresses the importance of the social and relational aspect of the spiritual lives of persons with intellectual disabilities in enabling and assisting them to be involved in ministry. Attitudes of church members, involving persons with disabilities in the ministries of the church in appropriate ways for their abilities, and having inclusive liturgies and social activities, demonstrate that full participation in the

life of the church in inclusive, loving relationships enables all persons to fully participate and contribute to the life of the church.

In the final chapter Kern addresses the wider question of “Why Me/Us Lord?”, which concerns questions of theodicy and suffering that are asked by many families of persons with profound disabilities. Kern effectively handles this question by exploring common assumptions as to the reason for the suffering (punishment, is this “God’s will”?) and pointing out, as represented in the teachings of Pope John Paul II, that meaning can only be found in Jesus Christ and through the ministry of the Church on earth (Kern, 1985; 164ff). The theology has the expected Catholic commitments, and reminds the reader that all suffering is an oblation of the Spirit that is part of the ongoing redemption of all in time and space (Kern, 1985; 174-175).

In summary, Walter Kern’s work is significant in terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities as he also emphasizes the significance of sacramental inclusion for pastoral care givers. In the protestant realm, through intuitive and creative forms of communication, with support from family, persons with intellectual disabilities might come to knowledge of God that is made real by the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and partaking of the Eucharist. Similarly the framework and suggestions Kern uses for appropriating sacramental access to persons with disabilities might arguably apply to the realm of pastoral care. These acts embody the Spirit of Christ and knowledge of God, making real and tangible that which at its essence is beyond words.

Notable theologian and disability advocate Jean Vanier also emphasizes the importance of a tangible and real knowledge of God. His focus however is not sacramental, but relational. Vanier shares his profoundly human vision for creating a common good that radically changes communities, relationships, and the self, through friendship. He proposes that by opening ourselves to “outsiders”, ie. those whom we perceive as weak, different, or inferior, we can achieve true personal and societal freedom. Arguably as well, in opening ourselves to the other, the possibility exists for a relational knowledge of God to exist and grow, by the Spirit of Christ.

3.2.3 Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*

Widely known as a disability advocate, writer and theologian Jean Vanier writes in *Becoming Human* of the call to “change one heart at a time” (Vanier, 1998; 163). He discusses “the liberation of the human heart from the tentacles of chaos and loneliness,

and from those fears that provoke us to exclude and reject others. It is a liberation that opens us up and leads us to the discovery of our common humanity” (Vanier, 1998; 5). The journey from loneliness to a love that transforms, a love that grows in and through belonging, is the path to true freedom. The discovery of our common humanity liberates us from self-centered compulsions and inner hurts; it is the discovery that ultimately finds its fulfillment in forgiveness and in loving those who are our enemies. This is the process of truly becoming human; a process that I would argue, also involves a lived knowledge of God.

Vanier’s suggestions are significant and speak to the healing power that lies in human relationships, however Vanier only begins this work theologically. The suggestions regarding healing and relationship are at times implicit rather than explicit, although the suggestions oftentimes include their biblical roots. This biblical founding is helpful, and Vanier suggestions are derived from scripture.³² Theological development however of concepts such as healing, freedom and forgiveness, is not undertaken. The potential danger in this lack of development is that the *a priori* nature of God’s act and being is not readily distinguished from human act and being in Vanier’s description of these tenets and thus at times it seems as if the ball is in the court of human action. In other words, as the suggestions are made it may be possible to misconstrue some of Vanier’s suggestions, missing the important theological point that forgiveness, love, mercy, etc., being with God in Christ, and not human goodwill or action. Further theological exploration and development of Vanier’s suggestions should lead to the clarification however and this would strengthen and clarify his already significant suggestions.

Vanier begins arguing that loneliness is the common thread of humanity and that there is nothing that can completely fill the void of the human heart. He claims that all people have an element of loneliness, including persons with and without disabilities, but that many deny it by covering it up and ignoring the inside voice. In times however when “we can not perform or when imagination seems to fail us”, the loneliness resurfaces (Vanier, 1998; 7). A sense of belonging however allows all persons to break the shell of “individualism and self-centeredness that both protects

³² For example, on page 69, Vanier refers to the gospel of Luke, where Jesus tells the story of Lazarus to begin a point developing the importance of inclusion. This introduction leads to discussion on the reasons for exclusion (fear) and the healing that can be found in “opening the heart” (pg. 85).

and isolates us” (Vanier, 1998; 35). Vanier points out that “belonging is the fulcrum point for the individual between a sense of self and a sense of society” (Vanier, 1998; 57). Vanier concludes that the exclusions that humanity makes are rooted in fear: fear of failure, fear of loss and change, fear of confronting a demon all too familiar. Vanier argues that, “fear, ironically prevents us from being the most human, that is, it prevents us from growing and changing. Fear wants nothing to do with change; fear demands the status quo” (Vanier, 1998; 73). The movement from exclusion to inclusion takes place with a move from fear to trust, from closed-ness to openness, from judgment to understanding. Essentially it is a movement from the head to the heart.

Vanier’s work emphasizes the central and vital role of relationship in the process of healing. He emphasizes that as “we work...God works” (Vanier, 1998; 161). As human hearts open themselves up to the other, letting go of hatred and fear, likes and dislikes, “walking to freedom and compassion”, God works in us. In considering the question of knowledge of God and pastoral care for persons with disabilities, it is this relationship between persons, enabled by God, which is central. Vanier keenly demonstrates how this relationship can lead to freedom and healing, however reflection regarding the theological nature of this relationship- particularly as it centers around Christ- deserves further comment in terms of our project. How does God “work” in us, toward healing? What is the theological nature of the relationship between God and the two persons in relationship? What are the implications of covenant relationship between God and humanity for human relationships? Vanier’s novel conceptions regarding becoming human in healing relationships through God in Christ, deserve further theological consideration. We will undertake some of this work in chapter six, further considering the theological nature of the pastoral relationship.

Vanier concludes the book by emphasizing that the “path to freedom” is the “freedom of truth”, becoming free of the inner compulsions towards success, the drive to be admired and the fear of rejection (Vanier, 1998; 107). Truth that flows freely is not bound by circumstance, compulsion, or desire, but rather by the heart in harmony with humankind and God. The false self dies in true living and past hurts discover the road to forgiveness. Forgiveness is a final and necessary step for true openness and communication. The process of removing barriers is forgiveness. Barriers of abuse, hurt and neglect block the ability to be truly free and most human (Vanier, 1998; 137-143).

Again however, a more explicit theological parsing of this concept of forgiveness would be assistive and clarifying. What is intended by the word “forgiveness”? Is this a human act or an emotive posture or an act of God? What is the significance of God’s covenant with humankind in terms of forgiveness? Vanier’s suggestions at times hint of human capacities rather than divine initiative (for example, 87, 99, 101), but this confusion may be clarified by further theological locations. In terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities, Vanier’s work reminds the reader that, “[a]s the desire grows in us to be whole and to struggle for this wholeness in ourselves, in others, on our community, and in the world, and as we desire to be free in order to free others, a new energy is born within us, an energy that flows from God” (Vanier, 1998; 159). Thus as people, including people with intellectual disabilities and pastoral care givers, open themselves to one another, a knowledge comes of God that is born in friendship. Being together in loving, self-giving relationships enables the Holy Spirit to transform loneliness into acceptance and hurts into forgiveness. It is this model of being that should determine the posture of pastoral care for persons with disabilities; a form of care realized by both persons as they care for the other.

Similar to Vanier’s call to action and healing in friendship, John Swinton argues that inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities is necessary for the church, and, indeed, argues that the inherent dependency demonstrated and demanded by the disabled is a restoration of the picture of the image of God. Further to this he argues that knowledge of God comes in and through these temporal relationships. Swinton’s suggestions are theologically significant as well as pastorally significant as they suggest an overreaching framework for care that is based not in rational ability or verbal form, but in loving, human relationships. This form of care is arguably beyond words, though such a significant suggestion, I would argue, demands further development.

3.3 John Swinton: Considering a Relational Framework of Pastoral Care for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

As John Swinton notes at the start of his article, “Restoring the Image: Spirituality, Faith, and Cognitive Disability,” persons with cognitive disabilities in the church raise not just pastoral care questions, but serious theological questions as well (Swinton, 1997; 21). With this opening statement, Swinton goes on to outline some of these

queries, summing up the dilemma in one question: How do we offer the Word to those who have no words? Arguing against Peter's Burchenall's position that persons without the cognitive element are unable to develop faith, Swinton develops the position that within a relational framework, persons with intellectual disabilities might be theologically included in the *imago Dei*. By the word "relational" Swinton is referring to the relationships, connections and friendships, formed within the body of Christ; and he argues that these unions are of theological consequence. Similarly, this project suggests that a relational framework is imperative in considering the possibility of knowledge of God and pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Swinton develops a three-fold argument for his position that persons with cognitive disabilities can be theologically included in the life of the church. He begins with the notion that we are all dependent beings no matter what the ability, both physically and spiritually upon God, and that our dependency is the very essence of our spiritual existence (Swinton, 1997; 23). He bases this argument on the Tower of Babel account of Genesis 10:10-11:9, where God confuses the people with various languages, and makes them utterly dependant upon himself. Whereas Birchenall claims that this dependence results in no opportunity for spiritual growth of any sort, Swinton sees this dependence as positive and observes that those who seek autonomy from God have an "inability to enter His [God's] saving grace" (Swinton, 1997; 22). Swinton insists that the dependence, which Birchenall argues is a theological remit, ultimately permits and releases humanity to be in relationship with God. Dependence is certainly evident in the lives of many persons with intellectual disabilities, however Swinton's reconstrual of this reliance effectively changes this form of being from a detrimental state to a state of being that enables and facilitates a relationship with God. This dependence too (arguably) may also be seen as an opportunity for knowledge of God in a relationship of utter dependence.

Next Swinton suggests that apprehension of the divine goes far beyond the cognitive (Swinton, 1997; 23). Swinton argues that many people have knowledge of God, but this knowledge is not necessarily reflective of a personal relationship with God. He maintains that knowledge alone is not sufficient for a relationship with God as there are many people who know about God who do not personally know him. Moreover, he argues that awareness of the "transcendent love of God is mediated through, and experienced in, temporal love, offered in loving relationships" (Swinton, 1997; 24). Swinton argues that this reality stems from a God who reveals himself as a

primarily relational being. While cognitive knowledge of God exists, the ultimate form of knowing Him takes place as these loving relationships take place, which reflect the first two commandments to love God and love one another. The image of God in humanity at least includes these loving relationships that demonstrate God's self-giving love. As Swinton points out that persons with intellectual disabilities are certainly able to participate in this realm.

In terms of knowledge of God, Swinton effectively expands the issue of knowledge by emphasizing the relational aspect of divine apprehension. Moving the argument away from epistemic parameters, which effectively delimit and eliminate the possibility of knowledge of God for the intellectually disabled, Swinton reinterprets the requisite abilities needed for divine knowledge, duly reordering the relational dependence disdained by Birchenall earlier to a being of priority and necessity. In terms of revelation and pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities, Swinton effectively validates the "problematic" being of dependence and reliance, allotting this being a theological dignity of sorts. This allotting then not only enables us to conceive of the possibility of revelation and pastoral care for those with profound and complex needs but, in fact, distinguishes persons with intellectual disabilities in this regard as particularly *enabled* by the very nature of their incapacities.

Finally, it is argued that grasping the "meaning" of Christianity should not be the prerequisite for communing with God (Swinton, 1997; 23). Swinton rightly asserts that modernistic thinking demands an empirical knowledge, but points out that relationship with God is far beyond the empirical realm and that, "humanity has more ways than one of approaching transcendent truth" (Swinton, 1997; 25). He argues that this empirical, cognitive knowledge of Christ is much different than knowing him in personal encounter. Relationship in personal encounter resembles friendship and is just as legitimate as the former, empirical forms of knowledge. And within this friendship a reality exists which is redemptive and goes far beyond words. Swinton states: "For them [persons with intellectual disabilities] contact with us is contact with the divine" (Swinton, 1997; 26). Relationships are of theological consequence and significance.

In terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities, the meaning of Christianity is arguably simplified, so to speak, in living form. Because of their inability to "approach transcendent truth", considering the numerous philosophical and theological questions of God, truth, being, and the nature of human relations, persons with intellectual disabilities often encounter others in a certain,

uncomplicated form. Swinton's work is significant for our project in terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities as it theologically argues that relationship is a valid form of participating in the *imago Dei*. Closely related to the issue of the image of God is the theological question of knowledge of God; I would suggest that the two are so closely related that participation in relationship is at times synonymous with knowledge of God. In order to develop Swinton's significant work in this direction however, further work is required. What constitutes a relationship? Is God known in relationships outside the church? What is the church? Such questions continue when Swinton's suggestions are considered in depth. This project begins with Swinton's category of relationship, and proceeds to explore this category in an extended way in dialogue with the theology of Karl Barth, thereby furthering and filling in the theological landscape with potential answers to present questions.

3.4 A Relational Vision: Summary of Critiques

As we have seen, each of the pastoral theologians considered here approach the task of pastoral care and counseling for persons with intellectual disabilities from a different perspective. William Gaventa and Lowell Colston choose to include persons with disabilities under the wider area of disability theology in general. This, however, at times overlooks some of the unique needs of persons with intellectual disabilities rationally and in the communicative realm. Understood in a relational sense however, their suggestions have applicable possibility for pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Walter Kern approaches the pastoral care of persons with intellectual disabilities more explicitly than Gaventa and Colston, often pointing out their unique gifts and needs as compared to the wider area of persons with disabilities. Kern emphasizes the importance of including persons with disabilities and intellectual disabilities in sacramental practices, such as receiving the Eucharist, and argues that creativity and community have an important role to play in this regard. Unlike Kern we will not be exploring in depth the sacramental experiences and possibilities of persons with intellectual disabilities, but rather will be focusing on pastoral care in the relational sense, as described in our opening definition of pastoral care. We will however be considering the role of creativity, non-verbal communication and the role of familial and relations in pastoral care for the intellectually disabled. This will be

undertaken largely in chapter seven where we will consider what comprises encounter and relationship with a person with an intellectual disability.

The important work of Jean Vanier then brought to mind the important point that pastoral care for persons with disabilities must be based in a relationship of openness, forgiveness and care. This type of relationship is only possible when the caregiver, as well as the caree, exist and commune in friendship, whereby each is open to the other, willing to be changed by the other. It is in the midst of this space that the possibility of knowledge of God exists. Perhaps further consideration is warranted theologically however regarding the role of Christ in this friendship or relationship; to this question we will turn in chapter six.

John Swinton also considers the question of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities. Swinton suggests that relationship holds not only the possibility of the image of God, but also the possibility of a temporal love that mediates knowledge of God. This suggestion greatly deserves further development, especially theologically, which we will undertake throughout the rest of this project.

Next, in order to better understand how we will approach this work in dialogue with Barth, we will consider how Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger engages Barth's theology to better understand the discipline of pastoral care and counseling. This review will be done so as to now focus so much on the content of her work, but rather her framework for engagement. We will seek to do something similar in considering how Barth's "Christological analogy of being" might offer direction for pastoral care with persons with intellectual disabilities.

3.5 Toward a Barthian Framework for Pastoral Care for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities: The Approach of Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger

In her book, *Theology & Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*, Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger rightly points out that pastoral counseling is essentially interdisciplinary (van Deusen Hunsinger, 1995; 1). This statement hints at the development which is to come throughout the book in developing a framework for understanding the interdisciplinary relationship between theology and depth psychology in the practice of pastoral counseling. Following the theology of Karl Barth, van Deusen Hunsinger suggests that the two might find a way of relating, modeled after the inner-relations of the Trinity. This "Chalcedonian pattern", which suggests how best to relate the divine and human natures of Christ, van Deusen

Hunsinger suggests may also provide an analogy in how to relate theology and depth psychology in a “*mutual ordering in freedom*” (van Deusen Hunsinger, 1995; 63). Through a relationship involving “indissoluble differentiation,” “the inseparable unity,” and “indestructible order” (ibid., 65), theology and psychology may exist together, albeit with distinct qualifications. Similarly, I would suggest that the theology of Karl Barth might provide guidance to the pastoral care giver seeking to care for persons with intellectual disabilities. In particular, Barth’s understanding of the human person as elect in Christ (to be developed in chapter four) and Christ’s being for the other in encounter (expounded upon in chapter six), may provide an analogy or correspondence for the type of relationship possible for pastoral care givers and persons with profound and complex needs.

In this review we will consider how van Deusen Hunsinger goes about drawing from Barth’s theology in attempting to relate the disparate areas of theology and psychology in order to better understand as to how this project might develop a Barthian framework. Firstly van Deusen Hunsinger outlines the overall rationale for engaging Barth’s theology for the discipline of pastoral care. She describes three reasons why the theology of Karl Barth may be useful in this regard: 1. Barth’s noted stature as a theologian; 2. His relative neglect by professionals in the field of pastoral counseling, and 3. The promise his theology holds for pastoral counseling when conceived as a ministry of the church (van Deusen Hunsinger, 1995; 10).

Similarly, and for related reasons, Barth’s theology is appropriate in terms of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities. Although the “promise” of Barth’s theology lies not in Barth’s Chalcedonian pattern, but in his unique understanding of “being for the other in covenant relationship, in co-humanity”, in gaining knowledge of God. Certainly Barth’s stature as a theologian has not lessened since the publication of van Deusen Hunsinger’s book in 1995, and there still appears to be relatively little pastoral engagement with Barth’s theology. However, as theologian Daniel Price states in regard to Barth’s understanding of “being in encounter” that “the pastoral and practical implications of this section should not be overlooked” (Price, 2002; 146). This project aims to consider the practical and pastoral implications of Barth’s theology for the pastoral care for those with profound and complex needs.

Next, van Deusen Hunsinger goes about the task of engagement, dialoguing with other thinkers in this area, pointing out how these scholars address the theological

and psychological issues of pastoral care. She also considers how Barth's theology is being employed and where and how this work is helpful. Similarly in chapters two and three in this project, we have surveyed the works of disability theologians and considered what their works contribute to a theology of knowledge of God for the intellectually disabled person. In this exercise we have seen over again the importance of the relational category for facilitating and realizing knowledge of God in the lives of persons with intellectual disabilities.

In chapter three of van Deusen Hunsinger's work, she takes great care to develop and detail Barth's "Chalcedonian pattern", considering the pattern's three-fold content and ordering. She then goes on to apply this pattern in assessing the work of three other writers who seek to relate theology and psychology. Similarly I would propose that after developing and detailing a fully theological definition of intellectual disability based on Barth's theological anthropology, we move in chapter five to consider a understanding Barth's knowledge of God in co-humanity. This will be done so as to better understand and appreciate the form and content of Barth's view of revelation. This work will also consider the "pathologies" of revelation that have led to the view by some that revelation is not possible for persons with intellectual disabilities. van Deusen Hunsinger next applies the Chalcedonian method in analyzing the theoretical question of God representations in chapter four. The purpose of this exercise is to examine and demonstrate how the internal logic of the Barthian Chalcedonian pattern operates in practice in providing care. van Deusen Hunsinger closes her book with a clinical case, considering the account of "Eva and her Black Despairs." She thus demonstrates how the Chalcedonian pattern assists the pastoral care giver in differentiating between issues of care that are theological, and those that are psychological.

In chapters five, six and seven I suggest an approach similar to that of van Deusen Hunsinger's. After exploring in depth the major thinkers in the field of disability theology, the embodied situation of intellectual disability and the pertinent aspects of Barth's understanding of being for the other in covenant relationship, I suggest that Barth's reflections may better illuminate the nature and possibility that exist for the pastoral relationship. Arguably Christ's covenant relations with humanity have significant implications for the sort of relationships formed between pastoral care givers and person with profound disabilities. This triune, covenantal relationship will be explored, and similar to van Deusen Hunsinger's Chalcedonian framework, will

seek to give some clarity as to the pastoral relationship between persons with intellectual disabilities and pastoral caregivers.

These suggestions will then be “put to work”, as van Deusen Hunsinger does in regard to “Eva and her Black Despairs”. We attempt a similar form of application in chapter seven with the “account of Charlie” where we will consider how the Barthian understanding of covenant relationship might enable and assist the possibility of knowledge of God in and through pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities. With this vision in view we will next turn to the task of better understanding the state of intellectual disability itself. In chapter four we will develop a thoroughly theological definition of disability that takes care to note the pertinent ontological and biological aspects of persons with intellectual disabilities.

Chapter 4

What's in a Name?

Seeking a (thoroughly) Theological Definition of Intellectual Disability

4.1 On the Difficulty (and Significance) of Defining Disability Theologically

In the previous chapters we exposed the need for further consideration, both doctrinally and pastorally, of the possibility of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities. What has not yet been satisfactorily considered or developed is a definition of intellectual disability. How do we understand the phrase “persons with intellectual disabilities”? What is the ontological, theological and biological significance of the phrase “persons with intellectual disabilities”? In this chapter, intellectual disability is considered from a theological vantage point, while also taking into account and incorporating pertinent biological and sociological factors. We will, in a sense, be “naming” disability from a theological perspective, distinguishing what “persons with intellectual disabilities” describes in terms of the identity of the person involved.³³ This “naming” will be done so as to better understand and identify what

³³ Although not a “name” per se, the phrase “persons with intellectual disabilities” at times carries with it the significance of a name in that, as Rebecca S. Chopp observes, terminology can potentially “[grant] the namer power over the named” (Chopp in Eiesland, 1994; 25). Similarly, the phrase “persons with intellectual disabilities” at times, may be used in such a way by the “namer” to identify weakness and vulnerability in the other, so that the “namer” might exercise power, control and authority over “the named”, which in this case would be the person with the intellectual disability. In this way the phrase “persons with intellectual disabilities” may act as a name and not just as a medical or biological description. Additionally, as will be argued in this chapter, I would suggest that the phrase also carries with it ontological implications regarding the worth and value of the human person.

elements comprise this state, so that we might go about the task of forming a theology of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities with a holistic understanding of what this entails.

This task of defining and describing the experience of disability is notoriously difficult and complex. Scholars of disability such as Kathy Black, Nancy Eiesland and Susan Wendell all point out that defining embodied difference, its causes, influences and various factors, is a challenging and imprecise exercise at best (Black, 1996: 16; Eiesland, 1994: 23; Wendell, 1996:11). Jennie Weiss Block locates the difficulty of definition in what she terms disability's "radical pluralism", whereby diverse physical, emotional, social, intellectual or cognitive impairments are all somewhat awkwardly grouped under the umbrella of "disability" (Weiss Block, 2002: 29). The challenge in defining disability is accounting for the enormous variety that exists while also drawing out some clarity and consensus as to a common experience. We will attempt this task in terms of defining intellectual disability, from a theological perspective.

The claim in this chapter is that, amidst the ambiguous experience(s) of disability, scripture may yet offer a cue for how to proceed. In considering Christ's response to persons with disabilities, such as the parable of the paralytic man healed by Jesus in Mark 2:1ff., I would suggest we find ways of going about this difficult task of definition as exemplified by his approach to persons with disabilities. Moreover, a biblical model for understanding disability might help us to avoid several theological pitfalls found in popular disability models and paradigms, and in the theological appropriation of them. This chapter intends to sketch a theological account of the nature of persons living with a disability that neither diminishes the experience of disability, nor allows the theological significance of the category of being human to be overlooked. Maintaining this tension, it is hoped, will result in an understanding of persons with disabilities that is theologically and biologically responsible, as well as socially attuned.

The need for a theological definition of disability is derived from the same rationale that might be advanced more generally when developing a theological anthropology, or a theological understanding of the nature of the human person.³⁴ This

³⁴ R. Taylor notes that the question of theological anthropology appears a relatively straightforward question, however it is one with "the greatest philosophical [and theological] ramifications" (Taylor, 1983; 8). Similarly Stevenson and Haberman note, "So much depends on our conception of human

means that understanding the nature of persons with intellectual disabilities similar to understanding human persons generally, is a task that is necessarily theological, and one that carries with it great theological implications and significance.

Broader questions regarding “what is man?” (Hebrews 2:6 RSV), has received much reflection and attention from scholars and theologians alike.³⁵ Many theologians have approached and answered the question of theological anthropology by looking to Christ.³⁶ Barth notes that “The nature of the man Jesus alone is the key to the problem of human nature” (CD III:2, 136). Theologians in the Barthian tradition such as Ray Anderson argue that only, “the humanity if Christ...discloses the radical form of true humanity” (Anderson, 1992; 19). It is argued that in understanding Christ’s being and life- his form of existence- the true meaning of being human is found. Similarly, the answer to the question of the nature of a human person living with an intellectual disability, I would argue, must also be essentially Christological. The theological identity of the human as one in Christ at once frames and configures all other experiences, including, arguably, that of disability. We thus need to begin at the beginning, so to speak, and root our depiction of disability in the ontological property and identity of Christ.

4.1.1 A Biblical Model for Defining Disability: Ontological Reality and the State of Disability

In the familiar parable of the healing of the paralytic man lowered by his friends through the roof in Mark chapter 2, Jesus responds in what appears, at first, to be a peculiar manner. The friends of the man, so distressed by the situation of their friend yet encouraged by the rumors of a divine healer, climb upon the rooftop, and lower

nature: for individuals, the meaning and purpose of our lives, what we ought to do and strive for, what we ought to achieve and become...” (Stevenson and Haberman, 1998; 3).

³⁵ There have been numerous possibilities considered regarding the nature of the human as seen in the work of Crane and Patterson, 2000 and MacDonald, 2003. Several of these possibilities correlate human existence with certain traits and abilities, such as the faculty of reason and self-awareness.

³⁶ Many theologians however argue that the nature and purpose of the human persons cannot be understood apart from Christ. Stanley Grenz emphasizes the “Christological perspective” in developing a theological anthropology (Grenz, 2004; 626). See also Zizoulas, 1975; 433, Nellas, 1987; 33 and A. Torrance 2004; 208. Additionally, Karl Barth, as will be developed further in this chapter, in the *Church Dogmatics* III:2 argues that the question of “what is man?” can only be answered by looking to Jesus Christ.

their friend, placing him in front of Jesus. Jesus responds, but not by leaning over the man and saying, "Where does it hurt?" or "Can you feel this touch?" Rather Jesus says, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5, RSV). When faced with disability in the most acute and embodied form- a man totally paralyzed and lying on a mat- Jesus speaks of sin and forgiveness; he speaks first to the man's very self, the essence of his being, and only then to his disability.

Defining and describing disability is a difficult task. This parable however suggests in broad terms an approach that might provide a more thorough and purposeful approach for theologians than managed so far. Jesus begins not with the man's condition of paralysis, but instead engages the man at a more primary level, i.e. his state of forgiveness. The healing of the man takes place after his ontology is described; the disability is secondary to the primary point of who the man is as a person and the state of his relationship to God. It is this approach- first addressing the essence of personhood and subsequently the issue of disability itself- that I argue might provide guidelines for forming a more rigorous, theological definition and understanding of the human experience of disability. Some may argue that this approach seemingly minimizes or diminishes the experience of disability. I would argue, however, that this approach corresponds to the common claim in disability theology that persons with disabilities are *persons* before they are disabled.³⁷ Arguably a theological approach that begins with the person does not lessen or reduce the experience of disability, but rather places the experience within its proper anthropological context of being a human characteristic amongst a variety of qualities that are all rooted in the significance of being human. This seemingly simple designation has great implications for the ultimate accord and worth afforded to the individual, and especially perhaps the human person living with a disability.

4.1.2 Scholars of Disability and Traditional Forms of Definition and Description: Beginning with the "Problem"

³⁷ Paul K. Longmore expands on the rationale for such an approach in his article, "A Note on the Language and Social Identity of Disabled People," *American Behavioural Scientist* 28 (1985) 420.

How has disability been defined by scholars of disability in the last thirty years?³⁸ A brief review of the relevant literature reveals that many scholars of disability, such as Nancy Eiesland, Kathy Black and William Gaventa, reviewed in chapters two and three respectively, tend to refer to or borrow conceptions and views of disability from non-theological sources. This is done for various reasons, including the need for clarity, accurateness, and communicability.³⁹ Theological scholars of disability favor political paradigms, medical terminology and secular disability models, when defining and elucidating disability. So, for instance, theologians such as Jennie Weiss-Block (Weiss Block, 2002; 33) and Ginny Thornburgh (Thornburgh, 1995: 4) make reference to the oft-cited American with Disabilities Act. The United Nations and World Health Organization definitions of disability are also frequently referenced, such as evidenced in the extensive work of William Gaventa (Gaventa, 2003; 123). In addition to adopting secular definitions of disability, many disability theologians tend to adopt secular models for understanding disability, such as the minority model or socio-political model (Eiesland, 1994: 24, Black, 2004, Reinders, 2000; 81-83). These models, as explicated in chapter two, aim to understand and locate the experience of disability within wider contexts, such as social and political frameworks. Scholars who make use of these frameworks suggest that disability is not merely a biological or anatomical phenomenon, but rather reflective of societal predispositions and prejudice.

While disability scholars tend to borrow their terminology and language from secular sources, they also make use of internal, theological models in order to better understand and describe disability. Disability theologian Nancy Eiesland claims to be a liberatory theologian, ascribing to the school of liberation theology. Her book “The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability” is one of the most obvious examples of a liberatory theology of disability (Eiesland, 1994; 19). As

³⁸ As mentioned in Chapter 2, disability theology has grown and developed significantly since the work of Rev. Harold Wilke in 1980, the “grandfather” of theological literature regarding persons with disabilities (Blair, 2004; 76).

³⁹ Nancy Eiesland in the *The Disabled God* (1994) refers to the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 in her opening chapter, “Coming to Terms.” Kathy Black in her book *A Healing Homiletic* (1996) also refers to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as she argues it is “readily understood in societal and legal contexts” (57ff). William Gaventa (2003) in his chapter regarding “Pastoral Care and Counselling for Persons with Disabilities and their Families” makes reference to the United Nations’ definition of disability as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (121).

demonstrated in the review of Eiesland's book in Chapter two, Eiesland consciously works and writes within a "liberating praxis" (Eiesland, 1994; 9) in reconceptualizing a "liberating" Christology that aims to validate and recognize the experience of the disabled body in and through the crucifixion of Christ. Eiesland additionally refers to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 in explicating and justifying the rationale for her use of the phrase "persons with disabilities", again demonstrating this sort of secular engagement (Eiesland, 1994; 27).

Similarly, Amos Yong engages with the World Health Organization's two definitions of disability in seeking to define and delineate Down syndrome (Yong, 2007; 58). This is done to clarify how the definition and classification of "mental retardation" has developed and evolved in relation to the social model of disability and understandings of the "intelligence quotient", or IQ. Yong argues that "modern medicine has illuminated the phenomenon we call Down syndrome" [and similarly, intellectual disability] and that "this shows no signs of abating" (Yong, 2007; 77). In recent years, however as Yong points out, the social model of disability has risen up to confront this medical paradigm. What he asks is what "is or is not at stake in the new development of our understanding of Down syndrome?" [and arguably, intellectual disability] (Yong, 2007; 77). In other words, Yong defines and explicates disability making use of secular sources, but then goes on to question what is "at stake" in this confrontation, hinting that there may be problems in regard to development of an understanding of disability in a solely secular framework. He does not go on to consider a definition of disability from a theological perspective, but rather develops how disability discourse impacts and influences doctrinal theology. Arguably however, theological input may be assistive and helpful not just in dogmatic work, but also in the task of definition.

This method of first adopting definitions from disciplines and organizations from non-theological sources and then making use of complementary theological models has been helpful in nurturing solidarity with the wider disability movement, and has provided theologians with useful models, language and frameworks for better understanding the nature of disability. Furthermore, making use of internal, theological movements such as liberation theology and feminist theology has greatly increased the strength, depth and scope of the disability movement, uniting the disabled with other traditionally "oppressed" groups. Much has been learned, for instance, from observing

the growth and history of womanist theology and black theology, such as evidenced in the work of Susan Wendell.

Wendell writes from the perspective of feminist scholarship and uses this lens to consider the experience of disability (Wendell, 1996). In *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*, Wendell suggests that a feminist perspective informed by the human experience of disability, would emphasize human difference and encourage variety (Wendell, 1996; 79). Wendell points out that similar to the feminist effort for acceptance despite “difference” from the male “norm”, acceptance of persons with disabilities would also encourage difference and variety. Wendell states:

What would it mean, then, in practice to value disabilities as differences? It would certainly mean not assuming that every disability is a tragic loss or that everyone with a disability wants to be “cured.” It would mean seeking out and respecting the knowledge and perspective of people with disabilities. It would mean being willing to learn about and respect ways of being and forms of consciousness that are unfamiliar, and it would mean giving up the myths of control and the quest for perfection of the human body (Wendell, 1996; 84).

Womanist theology then inspires disability theologians, for example, to seek affirmative acceptance of difference and disparity from the “norm”, be it male or able-bodied.

Arguably, however, borrowing conceptions of disability from other disciplines, and drawing overly heavily from certain theological movements has become more than an aide to definition; it has become the primary focus or starting point of the discipline itself. This means, in some instances, that theologians of disability inadvertently adopt an agenda that begins with non-theological concerns when a secular definition is borrowed, ie., concerns that are firstly political, medical or diagnostic in nature rather than beginning with personhood in relationship to God. Or, as in the case of a meta-sized liberatory stance, the theological agenda inadvertently begins and develops solely from a place of injustice or oppression. Disability theologians who adopt this approach to definition and identification typically begin with the state of inability rather than theologically formulated conceptions of what it is to be human and to experience disability.

By contrast, an approach that begins with a theological agenda must be concerned primarily with the essence and significance of personhood as understood

from a theological perspective. Describing and defining the nature of a person's particular disability, and even the concept of disability, is still necessary but this is of secondary importance to the theological anthropological work of affirming that all persons are included in Christ's humanity and exist in the presence of God. The challenge is to relearn the discipline of disability theology from Jesus' example. In what follows, I argue that Jesus' encounter with the paralytic man provides a logic, or way of thinking, that can and should inform the discipline, and our definition of disability in this project.

4.1.3. Beginning with the Person

The account of the paralytic man in all the synoptic gospels opens with Jesus' upsetting of the Pharisees and teachers of the law by forgiving the sins of the disabled man. Jesus responds to them however in Luke by saying to the paralytic man, "...so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home." (Luke 5:24, RSV). Karl Barth points out that the common misconception of this passage is that the man's paralysis is due to his sin (CD IV:2, 223). The mention of sin however is not necessarily to explicate the man's disability, though this possibility exists (C.F. Evans, 1990; 301), but rather to speak to the man's wholeness as a person (Schweitzer, 1984; 109, L.T. Johnson, 1991; 96). Evangelical biblical scholars such as I. Howard Marshall point out that:

...the lesson is a deeper one here: instead of simply healing the man's body in response to his faith, Jesus pronounces the forgiveness of his sins (cf. 7:50), thereby demonstrating that the full salvation of men, both spiritual and physical, depends upon faith in the ability of Jesus to act with the authority and grace of God (Marshall, 1978; 213).

For our purposes, the key point is that Jesus does not first address the man's disability but rather responds to the man's identity as a *forgiven child*. The paralysis is addressed after the fact.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, the development of a theological approach to the definition of disability along these lines will be pursued, in three steps. Firstly, we shall consider certain problematic elements in two of the most popular disability theology frameworks: the minority model of disability and liberation theology. Both of these models, as it will be demonstrated, are used extensively by disability scholars such as Nancy Eiesland and Kathy Black, in theological reflection

regarding the situation of disability (Eiesland, 1994; Black, 1996). While these frameworks are useful in terms of reflection and issues of identification, it will be argued that these frameworks have limitations in terms of a comprehensive framework for developing a theology of disability.

Secondly, we shall begin to develop and attend to the issue that Jesus first addresses with the paralytic man - namely, the issue of identity. This involves asking what difference it makes to disability theology to begin from the position of the person with a disability in relation to God rather than with the problem of disability. Despite the seeming obviousness of this point, this is not, typically, where the discipline has begun. Too often, disability theology has begun with the “problem” and not the person.

The dialogue partner with whom I choose to engage for this wider project regarding knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities is Karl Barth. While Barth’s theology is very useful in considering the possibility of revelation for persons with disabilities, his theology is also helpful in developing a theological definition of disability. Despite his lack of extended consideration of the topic of disability, he is - as George Hunsinger points out - “[o]ften referred to as the greatest theologian of the twentieth century...” (Hunsinger, 1991; 27). And for good reason! His unique development of the doctrine of election against a Calvinist background perhaps earned him this title. Yet his theological anthropology is also extremely significant in late twentieth and early twenty-first century Western theology, and offers great potential for aiding our discussion. My claim is that Barth’s anthropology is inclusive of persons with disabilities because it does not begin from a definition of disability, nor from inherent traits or embodied abilities, but, rather, from an act of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is also useful to disability theology because its account of the human condition opens the way for richer and more dynamic understandings of what it means to be human. Disability theology is no different from any other kind of theology in terms of its need to be rooted in Christ; the discipline may thus benefit from engagement with Barth’s treatment of Christ the “real man” and the true example of what it means to be human.

Thirdly and finally, we turn to the matter of defining disability with reference to biological and other factors, i.e. with reference to interdisciplinary concerns. None of the above means that theology has no place for the interdisciplinary work of specifying what is entailed in the many experiences of disability. To the contrary.

Dialogue and interplay with an appropriate medical or sociological source is still vital for a theological definition of disability, although this work should be done with an appropriate theological basis. The secondary placement of the biological concerns is not indicative of inferiority per se of the embodied or practical realm, but rather of the holistic nature of the endeavor.

4.2 Within Limits: Problems with Existing Models of Disability

When definitions and conceptions of disability are derived from non-theological sources, assuming non-theological presuppositions and assumptions, problems arguably arise. The risk in this instance is inadvertently adopting mores and values that may be at odds with theological assumptions. An example of this is highlighted by the work of Stanley Hauerwas, as reviewed in chapter two, who suggests that the medical realm that seeks to “save” people from suffering and pain may be at odds with the church, if left unconsidered. The conclusion that suffering may be eliminated soon results in the conclusion that so too should the sufferer be eliminated; this is obviously at odds with a church who is called to care for the weak, poor and the sick (Hauerwas, 1986; 160). Cast in this light, the theological position is weakened if/when a position is adopted that inherently contradicts a theological stance. Conversely, problems also arguably arise when interdisciplinarity is ignored and a solely theological voice is extended. A definition or conception that ignores the biological and sociological experience of the person threatens to overturn the whole purpose of definition in distinguishing that one amongst all others. In this sense, interdisciplinarity is at the very essence and heart of definition in that it seeks to articulate the distinguishing factors, which arguably necessitate this sort of work from the start.

In addition to these problematic approaches to definition, I would also argue that problems also tend to arise when paradigms and models are borrowed and utilized in isolation from other theological models and doctrines. So, for instance, several disability theologians align themselves with the so-called minority model, or socio-political model of disability. This model however is most effective when considered in limited terms, and alongside other disability frameworks, such as the medical framework that recognizes the biological constraints that accompany some forms of disability. This secular model of disability argues that it is not embodied difference that ultimately disables people, but rather the oppressive and discriminatory attitudes

of society. Susan Wendell reflects this model in her article, “Towards a Feminist Theory of Disability”, stating that disability is “socially constructed from a biological reality” (Wendell, 1989; 75). Kathy Black, in her article, “Unbinding the Broken Hearted: Biblical and Theological Reflections”, makes use of the social model, arguing that an alternative to the moral model and the medical model is needed.⁴⁰ The moral model maintains that disability is the result of sin and the medical model argues that disability is a difficulty to solve or a problem to be fixed (Black, 2006). Alternatively the social model argues that it is society that disables people with disabilities because of discouraging attitudes and prejudices. Recent criticisms of this social model, however, in regard to the model’s overall reflection of reality, arguably give reason for caution.

Disability scholar Liz Crow argues that the minority model offers a somewhat distorted view of the many experiences of disability (Crow, 1996: 55-72). Crow claims that, at times, the minority view of disability “presents impairment as irrelevant, neutral, and sometimes, positive, but never, ever as the quandary it really is” (Crow, 1996: 57). While society does have a very real part to play in oppressing and disabling people because of the disability, the embodied impairment itself is also significant as day to day disability may cause pain and struggle. Disability is not an objective attribute, such as race, sexual orientation or gender that can be overcome through education, experience, understanding and renewed awareness. Rather disability exists in a more ambiguous form- a form that causes many persons with disabilities grief, frustration and pain in numerous forms. The minority model tends to overlook this reality and threatens to oversimplify and distort these experiences to be somehow mild or even benign.

Similarly, many theologians of disability who work with a minority model basis also assume a liberatory praxis. Proponents of this liberatory view of disability, aim to ally themselves with the work of Christ by “proclaim[ing] release to the captives” (Luke 4:18, RSV). These “captives”, such as persons with disabilities, it is argued, are oppressed and repressed by the hegemony of society, which rejects and denies the disabled in various psychological, social and economic ways, because of

⁴⁰ Kathy Black consciously works within the parameters of this model as she developed in a paper “Unbinding the Broken-Hearted: Biblical and Theological Reflections” presented at The Best of Us conference at Princeton University, October 29, 2004.

their respective disabilities. Liberatory theologians assume that the work of the church is that of releasing and freeing the disabled and others from forces of oppression and injustice, such as prejudice, discrimination and bigotry.

The work of Nancy Eiesland is perhaps a recent example of this liberatory ascription in disability theology. In her groundbreaking work *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, reviewed in chapter two, Eiesland argues that persons with disabilities have long been oppressed by language and images in the church which focus on ability and whole bodies, while equating disability with sin and punishment. She then argues that a reconceptualization of the crucifixion may result in the conclusion that Christ too was disabled on the cross. Eiesland argues that this new understanding of Christ as disabled may help in assisting persons with disabilities to identify with Christ and to feel validated and included in the church. The liberatory model of disability then serves as a framework for developing and justifying this reconceptualization.

Again however the “adoption” of the liberatory praxis into disability theology sets a certain theological agenda. In casting disability theology within the liberatory school, Eiesland assumes a stance that views the disabled as weak, poor and oppressed. In viewing Christ as disabled, as has been done at times in the wider theological tradition, identification with Christ and validation of persons with disabilities occurs simultaneously.⁴¹ I would suggest however, in agreement with other scholars such as Creamer and Hinkle, that this identification ultimately involves a longer-term theological cost in terms of the application of this praxis in reality (Creamer, 2004; 260; Hinkle, 2003). As will be recalled, it was argued in chapter two that, while liberation theology is useful for issues of identification, it poses problems when used as an overall framework. Scholars such as Deborah Creamer argue that this sort of recognition, such as Christ being disabled, may be useful for some people with disabilities, but for people who view their disabilities in more ambiguous ways, this identity may be more problematic (Creamer, 2004; 260). Ultimately, however, while this liberatory framework enables solidarity between persons with disabilities and

⁴¹ Amos Yong (2007) notes this tradition, noting that the medieval mystics such as Catherine de Siena “understood the wounds of Christ to be the site of healing for a broken world” (175). Additionally, Yong notes the renaissance painter Andrea Mantegna’s painting *Virgin and Child*, arguably depicts Christ as a child with Down syndrome due to physical markers such as the facial phenotype (175-176).

Jesus Christ, it also at times threatens to misrepresent or distort Christ's identity, if not delimited in some way.

To explicate this point further: the problem is analogous to that described by Oliver O'Donovan in his treatment of liberation theology in his book *The Desire of the Nations* – or, as he contentiously describes the liberation movement, the “Southern School” (O'Donovan, 1996). Without embroiling myself in the strengths and weaknesses of his project overall or his choice of this descriptor, he makes the valuable point that while liberation theology has its value and place theologically, it also has its limitations when functioning as an overall framework. O'Donovan lauds liberation theology for its rootedness in scripture but is concerned about the extent to which it “draw[s] on secondary currents within modernity itself” and ultimately fails to offer an adequately full conceptual theology (O'Donovan, 1996: 9). In terms of these secondary currents, O'Donovan more particularly points to the social sciences, whereby political and Marxist maxims have informed liberatory practices. The problem for O'Donovan is not the borrowing per se, but rather “how well its borrowings have been metabolized into the system of theological intelligibility” (O'Donovan, 1996: 16-17). Ultimately, O'Donovan maintains this adoption of political mores has “closed –off a fully theological political conceptuality” (O'Donovan, 1996: 12).

O'Donovan's criticisms are perhaps overstated - liberation theology has been a force for good in theology, redirecting attention and efforts to issues of injustice and discrimination in various parts of the world. Liberation theology has also been effectively used and metabolized by several Western theologians, such as Duncan Forrester (Forrester, 2005). Additionally, it is self-evident that the theme of liberation is central to scripture; the experience of the liberation of Exodus 12^{ff} is echoed throughout the bible in Jesus' teaching. In Luke 4:18, Jesus claims, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, *to set free those who are oppressed.*” The message of the bible and the teaching of Christ *are* freedom and liberation, by the Spirit. O'Donovan reminds us however to not over-employ the concept of liberation, but rather to conceive of liberation alongside other aspects of theological discourse and scripture itself.

In some similarity to this point made by O'Donovan, my claim is that a more fully developed theological conceptuality than one based merely on the concept of

liberation is vital for disability theology; and for this reason O'Donovan's words may be of special consequence. While it may be useful to consider Christ as disabled on the cross for matters of identification and inclusion – as Eiesland has done to great effect – this paradigm only goes so far. Ultimately what is needed is a framework that will allow for a liberatory stance, but also frameworks that go beyond liberation, such as suggested by the disability theologians in chapters two and three- practical theology, pastoral theology and the pneumatological imagination. Each of these frameworks engages the situation of disability in a different way- one that brings with it certain limitations, but also certain opportunities.

Arguably a theological view of disability, that is orthodox, scripturally based and rooted in Christ, must not be drawn solely from medical, political or sociological sources, but rather from scripture. Further to this, a thoroughly theological view of disability, modeled after the approach of Christ to the disabled man brought to Christ by his friends in Mark, must not begin with the state of disability (i.e. a description of the state of paralysis). Rather a theological definition of disability must begin with an adequate theological understanding of the human person (i.e. as in Mark 2:5, "Son, your sins are forgiven"). As mentioned this view will be drawn in this thesis from Karl Barth's unique understanding of the human person as evidenced throughout the *Church Dogmatics*, but specifically in Volume III:2., *The Doctrine of Creation*.

In the next section we will be engaging with Barth's anthropology and his unique view of revelation in more depth in terms of persons with intellectual disabilities. Our concern is not to consider in detail Barth's theology of revelation, or his theological view of the human person, but rather to touch on the seminal features of this work that are ontologically significant for forming a theological definition of disability. This will then inform the ontic section of our theological definition, which will conclude this chapter.

4.3 The Ontological Significance of the Person in the Theology of Karl Barth

In considering Barth's understanding of the human person, three things may be noted in regard to the nature of persons with intellectual disabilities. In Barth's theology: (1) Persons with disabilities are part of the elect of God through an act in Christ; (2) All persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, are part of the ongoing history

that is relational and redemptive in co-humanity, by the power of the Holy Spirit⁴² and; (3) For all persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities the “true form of being” is a being like Christ.⁴³ Each of these three areas will be considered in turn in the following, and their application as to how they relate to helping describe the ontological state of the human person living with an intellectual disability. Before looking at these themes in more detail, however, we will briefly situate this ontological work regarding the nature of humans within the wider *Church Dogmatics*.

4.3.1 Methodological Moves in Barth’s Anthropology

Located in the unfinished thirteen volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*, the third volume, Barth’s *Doctrine of Creation*, specifically addresses the relationship between God and humanity, and the nature and meaning of the human person. Barth divides this volume then into five smaller segments, addressing the method and content of how he will form his anthropology. In the first section, (§43) “Man as a Problem of Dogmatics”, Barth begins to develop the orientation which will help form and develop the rest of the work whereby he argues that humans are the proper object of creation.⁴⁴ The second section (§44) “Man as the Creature of God” develops the central premise that the history of Jesus Christ reveals that he is the “real man” (CD III:2, 58). Having

⁴² Barth has been oftentimes charged with a form of “Christomonism” or “radical Christocentrism”. Scholar Colin Brown claims, for example, that Barth’s theology is “more christocentric than the Bible” (Brown, 1978; 108). J. K. Riches points out that there is a certain vagueness that accompanies the term Christocentrism, and perhaps contributes to the prevalent misunderstanding of Barth’s work isn’t sufficiently Trinitarian (Riches, 1972). Scholars like Webster argue however that closer readings of Barth’s theology, and especially his later writings, reveal a fuller, more integrated and open pneumatology. As Hunsinger points out then, Barth’s “No” is understood within a larger “Yes” (Hunsinger, 2000; 280).

⁴³ This task of determining the nature and form of being human is often referred to as the task of “theological anthropology.” Indeed this is the very question posed by the biblical authors in Psalm 8:3 when they query, “What is man that you are mindful of him?” Even more significant perhaps than the question of theological anthropology itself is the significant Christological shift that this question undertakes in the theology of Karl Barth. The tremendous significance of this shift has been noted by commentators and scholars such as Zizoulas (1975), who argues that Christ Jesus is, “the mystery of man” (433). Similarly, Erickson notes that Jesus is the revelation of “what human nature is intended to be” (Erickson, 1998; 532).

⁴⁴ Barth most famously claims in CD III:1 that, “creation is the external basis of the covenant” (94) and that the covenant “the internal basis of the creation” (CD III:1, 95).

established the methodical/Christological orientation in the opening section of §43 and §44, discussing humanity's relation to God, in sections §45, §46 and §47 Barth outlines the content of this anthropology. This view of the human person focuses upon humanity's relation to others, self and time. Barth goes on to argue that one's humanity is recognized as she relates to God, others self and time, in a history of encounter.

In regard to persons with intellectual disabilities, immediate problems arise. It must be noted that conceptions such as God, self and time require advanced forms of thought, such as self-awareness and the ability to think abstractly. Persons with intellectual disabilities often lack these abilities due to reduced cortical functioning.⁴⁵ As a result of this limited epistemic ability, may similarly be concluded that most persons with profound intellectual abilities lack the inability to relate to conceptions such as God, self and time. It thus appears that Barth's anthropology is barring and delimiting of persons with profound impairments and that their inability to epistemically relate to these realities somehow makes them less human. I would argue however that this reasoning is flawed, as persons with intellectual disabilities are fully able to relate in these realms, even though they are not able to rationally describe this being. Persons with intellectual disabilities are able to exist and relate in relational forms, in many diverse ways. This relational dynamic essentially shifts the locus of anthropology from a cognitive or epistemic realm to a relational one. This shifting effectively grants persons with intellectual disabilities a hermeneutic of sorts for potential expression, participation and inclusion in these formerly more epistemic-based areas. In terms of personhood, Barth argues that the very act of relation constitutes being, thus validating a common, requisite medium of being for most persons with intellectual disabilities.

⁴⁵ Hughes et al note that abstract reasoning and thought normally develop with the onset of adolescence (Hughes et. al., 1988). Brain development in this area "allows [adolescents] to contemplate the meaning of their own lives, to question their social and moral values and of others, to analyze human relationships, to try to understand the symbolism that is in art and literature and to see beneath their own superficial behavior and that of other people" (Hughes et al., 1988; 182-183). It is also noted that abstract reasoning allows the adolescent to contemplate their own thought process, their own actions and existence in relation to other entities, as arguably is needed to conceive of the concept of time. These abilities are often never fully developed for persons with intellectual disabilities, and thus persons with intellectual disabilities most often lack the abilities of abstract reasoning, self-awareness and logical reasoning.

Additionally, Barth relocates the possibility of revelation to a relational realm, whereby knowledge of God is not contingent upon a certain objective characteristic or ability, such as rational thought. Rather personhood and the possibility of revelation are located in relationship with others. This area will be further explored and detailed in chapters five and six, but may it suffice to say here that Barth argues that knowledge of God is not realized in rational apprehension of His being, but in and through loving relationships in co-humanity. But Barth goes further than this, and does relationship to chance, so to speak, as Barth argues that Jesus is the perfect example of how to relate to others. Relation to all of these realities is perfectly exemplified by Jesus Christ, including a being in encounter with others.⁴⁶ Barth thus points out that “both noetically and ontically, anthropology rests on Christology” (CD III:2, 43). Barth then concludes his opening section by reiterating his central thesis: we can only know of real humanity, including human with intellectual disabilities, as we know of Jesus.

In order to better understand the ontological significance of the human category for persons with intellectual disabilities we will now consider the consequences of election in Christ, the significance of the category of co-humanity for persons with intellectual disabilities and Barth’s unique, dynamic (and inclusive) understanding of history.

4.3.2 Doctrine of Election

In CD II:2, *The Doctrine of God*, Barth develops the central thesis that “[t]he election of grace is the eternal beginning of all the ways and works of God in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, God in His free grace determines Himself for sinful man and sinful man for Himself. He takes upon Himself the rejection of man with all its consequences and elects man to participation in His own glory” (CD II:2, 94). This election is ontologically determinative for all of humanity- including persons with intellectual disabilities. Barth states, “To be a man is thus to be with the One who is the true and primary Elect of God” (CD III:2, 145). This theological insight is considered one of the most significant contributions of Barth, and it is certainly notable for our purposes in terms of its inherent inclusion of all people. Bruce McCormack, for

⁴⁶ Later, in chapter six it will be suggested that a Christological analogy of being that may be appropriate for pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities. This form of being is described as a “being for the other” (CD II:2, 208).

instance, argues that Barth's conception of election "provided his most valuable corrective to classical teaching; here too his dogmatics found both its ontic ground and its capstone" (McCormack, 2000; 92).

Christ's life, death and resurrection- God's coming to earth in meeting humanity- has constitutive results: namely, election for *all persons*.⁴⁷ Because of this universal election all persons, persons with intellectual disabilities are ensured of acceptance and redemption. This acceptance is of consequence in considering a definition and full understanding of this personhood, along with everyone else. Election is significant ontologically in terms of the nature of the human person living with an intellectual disability. It is also significant in terms of knowledge of God as it signals God's first move towards humans in the ultimate act in Christ. This act in a sense enables and makes possible the very possibility of knowledge of God.

How are all persons ontologically determined as elect in Christ? Barth argues that humanity is made elect in Christ, as He is not just the Elected, but also the *Elector*. Jesus Christ acts as both Subject and Object in election for humanity. Additionally however, what is the substance, essence and result of this election? Barth argues that the material of election is God's covenant grace. To be elected is to be in the sphere of grace. Thus for persons with intellectual disabilities, and for everyone else, Christ both elects and is elected for all of humanity. Human opposition, accordance or incomprehension of this reality is somewhat arbitrary as the Elector Christ works as Savior for the whole world. The result is that all persons of all ability, regardless of comprehension or assent to this reality, exist as elected in the realm of gracious reconciliation.

Briefly, in regard to each of these questions:

Election is not a human act, but an act of Christ both objectively and subjectively; he works to save and he responds to the saving work.⁴⁸ "His [Jesus's]

⁴⁷ Barth's doctrine of election in itself might easily constitute a whole project. We will merely engage the aspects of this work as they relate to his anthropology. And scholars such as Ebner (1952) rightly note that Barth's anthropological Christocentrism cannot be understood apart from his doctrine of election (11). Thus we will consider Barth's view of election as it relates to his theological anthropology as found in III:2. For additional considerations of Barth's doctrine of election see McCormack (1999; 470-493), Clark (1984; 229-245).

⁴⁸ For clarity's sake, following the theology of CD IV:1, 275, it should be clear that the "ontological connection" is incidental for all persons, and not just persons from the Christian church.

election includes ours within itself and because ours is grounded in His. We are elected together with Him in so far as we are elected ‘in Him’” (CD II:2, 120). As Christ is the basis for humanity and the height of humanity, human nature is found and perfected in him. Thus all disabilities are both found and perfected “in Christ”, as Eiesland argues in *The Disabled God*.⁴⁹ Additionally, all of humanity is ontologically determined by Him and through Him, whom “God puts at the head and in the place of all other men” (CD I:2, 58). This election is made perfect in Christ who is elected, but also this election is determined as “universally meaningful and efficacious because it is in the election of Him who Himself elects” (CD II:2, 117). Christ effects this election as the Object, the electing God who chooses all of humanity, and then also the Subject of election, the only one who might properly atone for the sin and fallen nature of humanity.⁵⁰ This fallenness is in all- regardless of apprehension of this reality.

Secondly, the substantive nature of Christ’s election is grace. Humanity is alone in its essence sinful and evil and “his nature corrupt” (CD II:2, 28). Human nature is at its core sinful and this nature influences all thoughts, words and deeds. The intellectually disabled, who are so often characterized (wrongly) as “sinless angels” are also implicated in this reality of sin. The human condition, demonstrated in the Garden of Eden, is wanting and selfish, eager to elevate the self, asserting power and control. By the very nature of being human, of being in encounter, persons with intellectual disabilities are sinful in the inability to turn from the I or the self.

This depraved self is not the end however. God’s gracious power and love overcomes sin and death. For Barth, grace is the primary sphere in which to understand and know humanity, the sinful nature always second. Jesus Christ is the culmination of this grace, and the fulfiller of the covenant. Similarly, just as Christ is the covenant partner of man, so humanity is the covenant partner of God. Barth writes, “God has created human beings for Himself, and so ‘real man’ is for God and not the reverse. He is the covenant-partner of God, and is determined by God for life with God” (CD III:2, 203). Barth establishes that the basis of his covenant is grace,

⁴⁹ This is perhaps most explicit in Eiesland’s description of *The Disabled God* (1994) who embodied “both impaired hands and feet and pierced side and the imago Dei” (99). Disability was thus perfected on the cross, in and through the resurrection of Christ.

⁵⁰ Christ is “the Divine Counterpart of every [hu]man” (III:2, 134). He is thus the promise again non-being. Humans are confronted by “the divine other” in this covenantal relationship; humanity encounters God and is thus properly understood in its right and original form and relationship (149).

forgiveness and acceptance in the claim that, “all men and all creatures should be delivered from evil, i.e., from that which God the Creator has rejected, and has preserved from its threat and power” (CD III:2, 143). Human existence is not a state, but a history of being in encounter with others and God, resting upon election and consisting in the hearing of God's Word.

4.3.3 The True form of Being for All Persons: A Being of Covenant Relationship

“The ontological determination of humanity is grounded in the fact that one man among all others is the man Jesus. So long as we select any other starting point for our study, we shall only reach the phenomena of the human” (CD III:2, 132). In seeking to define and understand the nature and form of being human for persons with intellectual disabilities, similar to all other persons, Barth maintains that we must begin by considering Jesus Christ. He argues throughout the *Doctrine of Creation* that God in Christ is the fullest meaning of the human person.⁵¹ “As the man Jesus is Himself the revealing Word of God, He is the source of our knowledge of the nature of man as created by God” (CD III:2, 41). What is the nature of this “fullest meaning”? What is the essence of Christ? Barth argues that Christ’s being is a working being in salvation history for all persons, including those with intellectual disabilities and that encounters the other.

Barth’s treatment of the nature and form of the human person lies amidst the four sections of volume III:2. In section §44, “Man as the Creature of God”, Barth insists that, “[i]f in the question of the nature of man we look to the man Jesus as directly or indirectly attested in Holy Scripture⁵², one answer which immediately

⁵¹ As Price highlights, McLean (1986) points out that, “Barth’s anthropology is buried in the doctrine of creation (CD III:2), and is, therefore, often skipped over by the reader’s eagerness to get to the more central doctrine of reconciliation (CD IV). Thus is overlooked one of the richest discussions of anthropology in the western theological and philosophical tradition and also, perhaps more importantly, one of Barth’s most detailed expositions of his content and method in relation to a subject available to our common experience and reflection” (115; as found in Price 2002; 6).

⁵² Barth emphasizes this Scriptural source in the *Doctrine of God* Part I. Barth argues that Scripture most fully attests to this being of Christ. Barth states: “When Holy Scripture speaks of God, it concentrates our attention and thoughts upon one single point and what is to be known at that point...And if we look closer, and ask: who and what is this point upon which our attention is concentrated, which we are to recognize as God...then from its beginning to its end, the Bible directs us to the name of Jesus Christ (CD II:2, 52-53).

presents itself is that the nature of man is to be observed and established in its history as determined by Him...”(CD III:2, 55). For Barth, the real man Jesus is the working man (CD III:2, 58). Christ’s work in history however is not neutral human work, but the work of salvation. Barth then goes on to develop how Christ’s salvation history is made real (CD III:2, 68-70) and what criteria may be used in attempting to understand real persons (CD III:2, 73). This criterion is the revelation of Jesus, and is developed in six points, and then applied to evaluate the anthropologies of naturalism, idealism, existentialism, and finally, theistic anthropology. Barth demonstrates how all other anthropologies prove insufficient, and argues that in order to truly understand the real man we must begin with Jesus Christ (CD III:2, 132). Similarly Ray Anderson points out that, “Karl Barth, more than any other theologian of the Church, including the Reformers, has developed a comprehensive theological anthropology by beginning with the humanity of Jesus Christ as both crucified and resurrected” (Anderson, 1982; 18).

As was outlined above, Barth argues that humanity gains understanding of its being and essence by looking to Christ and in relation to God, self and others. Most importantly for Barth, “man must be understood as a being which from the very outset stands in some kind of relationship to God” (CD III:2, 344). Barth further develops this anthropological argument, maintaining that the true form of being, a being like Christ, is a being in *encounter*.⁵³ This being in encounter as the true form of being is also true for persons with intellectual disabilities. “That real man is determined by God for life with God has its inviolable correspondence in the fact that his creaturely being is a being in encounter- between I and Thou, man and woman. It is human in this encounter, and in this humanity it is a likeness of the being of its Creator and a being in hope of Him” (CD III:2, 103). Humanity’s creation as man and woman is the pre-eminent example of humanity’s relational nature (CD III:1, 288-310; CD III:2, 285ff),

⁵³ Several other significant studies note the importance of Barth’s understanding of relationality. Most recently, Daniel Price considers the relational aspects of Barth’s theology, such as being in encounter, in terms of modern object relations theory (Price, 2002). Gary Deddo (1994) considers Barth’s understanding of relations and encounter in terms of this being in terms of the *imago Dei*. He states: “There is a horizontal dimension to our self-transcendence as well in the Barthian thought. We are called to become in our relationships the covenant partners with God and with others, which is the *telos* of our existence. Part of this is imaging the Image of God Jesus Christ in our relations and communication with others” (194). Additionally, see McLean (1981) and Miell (1989; 541ff).

an example of the covenant made between God and humanity (III:2, 311-321). This is not to say that other relationships and forms of encounter are not significant, but rather that the relation between male and female is the perfect instance of relational being.⁵⁴ Quite the opposite, as Barth emphasizes the importance of these relationships, terming them relationships or *Mitmenschlichkeit*, literally “co-humanity” (222).

The importance and possibility of the category of co-humanity for persons with intellectual disabilities must not be overlooked or missed for herein lies an opportunity for a form of being and relating that does not require speech or the ability of rational awareness. This category of being is entirely relational and exists in and through relationship and fellowship. Pastoral theologian Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, as introduced in chapter three, points out the pastoral significance of Barth’s teachings regarding co-humanity stating:

...we are not human without the other. We become God’s covenant partners together in community. Only the whole church knit together in love can become what it is: the true marriage partner of Christ (Ephesians 5). Human beings need one another in order to be human. Isolation is a sign of human misery. To deny our need of others is a defense against the pain of isolation. Human flourishing requires community- people bonded together in mutual giving and receiving (van Deusen Hunsinger, 2006; 6).

This picture of humanity as relational, bound together in a mutual and reciprocal giving and receiving of love also includes the presence of persons with intellectual disabilities. This being in co-humanity needs and demands a form of being that is dependent and in need, as arguably many persons with intellectual disabilities are, in order for this form of mutual dependence to be realized. A community of independent, rational, autonomous individuals arguably will never be able to be “knit together” due to the inherent independent natures. In this way, persons with intellectual disabilities are especially equipped to assist in developing and supporting this sort of community by their very inability to be independent. We will return to this theme of co-humanity in our final chapter, further considering Barth’s practical suggestions in this regard and

⁵⁴ van Deusen Hunsinger too clarifies this point, maintaining that “there is an analogy between God’s differentiated being (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and humanity’s differentiated unity (human beings as male and female). This is not to say that one has to be married in order to reflect God’s image, only that to be human means to be in relationship” (van Deusen Hunsinger, 2006; 6).

the further possibilities this category holds for pastoral care givers seeking to facilitate knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

This relationship is accessible for the disabled because its form is not abstract or theoretical, but realized in dependant reciprocity. Similar to van Deusen Hunsinger's observations, systematic theologian Daniel Price, who seeks to relate Barth's theological anthropology to the realm of psychology and in particular object relations theory, points out the theological significance of the relational category (Price, 2002). Price writes, "Real humanity can be dynamically understood, because God's own being is dynamically revealed as an encounter, a primal history, proceeding from *ad intra* to *ad extra*, and finally creating the basic form of humanity that is a 'little history'" (Price, 2002; 145). Humanity was thus created so that persons might participate in the history of being with God and others. This being then has two realities: humans are the covenant partners of God and they are creaturely beings who exist and live within the cosmos. These two realities- the ontology of humans as covenant partner and the essence of humans as creaturely beings- both constitute the relational essence of what it means to be human.⁵⁵ This encounter is not a mere feature, attribute or ability of the human, but rather, this encounter *is* the essence of being human. To be human is to live with a history that encounters other histories and Barth argues that this encounter happens with God, others, self and time. It is this encounter with others that I believe is significant theologically in considering the possibility of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Given the enormous influence of Barth's theology in this last century, as well as his most notable and unique contribution to the study of the question of personhood, and the potential that the category of "being in encounter" holds for considering the possibility of a theological anthropology for persons with intellectual disabilities, Barth's discussion of the human person will be utilized here for developing a theological view of persons who lives with profound impairments. This theology of encounter will be further developed throughout the next two chapters, but for immediate purposes we note the ontological possibility in terms of participation in this realm of relation, based upon the being of Christ.

⁵⁵ Jüngel (2001) points out that this was God's "primal decision [which] constitutes the primal relationship of God to man and in this primal relationship there takes place the 'primal history' in which God *already has a relationship* to man *before* all creation" (88-89).

4.3.4 Barth's Dynamic View of History

For Barth, the theology of election links to the concept of "history", which is understood as an experience of encounter. Unlike common understandings of history, whereby an event or person is static and former, unchanged and uninfluenced by present conditions and events, history for Barth involves the encounter of one to another (CD III:2, 157-158). Barth discusses the difference between the states of a plant or animal and that of a person and argues:

History, therefore, does not occur when the being is involved in changes or different modes of behaviour intrinsic to itself, but when something takes place upon and to the being as it is. The history of a being begins, continues and is completed when something other than itself and transcending its own nature encounters it, approaches it and determines its being in the nature proper to it, so that it is compelled and enabled to transcend itself in response and in relation to this new factor (CD III:2, 158).

A state is thus not a history because it lacks the interpersonal dynamic, or encounter that is inherent in a history.

A history occurs when something is affected in mutual encounter that exists outside routine. In this, persons are able to receive and respond, one to another. It may include some of the attributes of a state, but then a history is more than this state alone. "The history of being occurs when it is caught up in this movement, change and relation, when its circular movement is broken from without by a movement towards it and the corresponding movement from it, when it is transcended from without so that it must and can transcend itself outwards" (CD III:2, 158). History then cannot take place between two inanimate objects, though they may influence and affect one another, for this change must include interaction between free objects, not bound to evolutionary drive or routine. Humanity is unique in this sense as it has the capacity for choice, decision and interaction beyond biological necessity.

The possibility of "history" is also true for persons with intellectual disabilities in this sense who, though perhaps limited in expression of these drives, certainly have the ability and freedom to interact with other persons, affecting change in interaction.

This organic concept of history is intimately linked to Barth's understanding of revelation in that participation and knowledge of the revelation of God may come through participation in the revelatory history of Christ which is dynamic and located in encounter, not epistemic understanding. To know the history of Christ is to participate in the ongoing pursuit of reconciliation in co-humanity and encounter. Humanity is thus elect and the true covenant partner with God, through an act of God in Christ, which has ontological implications for all humanity- regardless of ability. Barth's unique understanding of history thus allows for a relational mode of participation for persons with intellectual disabilities, even in their very dependence upon others, as this is a form of relation.

Returning to our overall goal in this chapter of developing a theological definition of disability, we affirm through the theology of Karl Barth, the theological significance of the human person, including people with intellectual disabilities. In terms of fully developing a theological definition of disability however, while ontological worth is vital to state and understand, the real, lived situation of the person with the disability is also crucial to know and appreciate. In other words, besides considering the person's innate human characteristics, it is also necessary to consider the attributes and being that are distinctive to that person. We will now turn to this interdisciplinary work, and in particular will consider what the diagnostic criteria are for intellectual disability. Interdisciplinary work is necessary and an aid to the work of definition, but it is also necessary theologically; respect and value of the human person- what Barth intimates is due to all persons because of being "in Christ"- demands acquaintance and appreciation of another's circumstances. Worth and regard are conveyed through informed appreciation of a person's lived situation. Knowledge, understanding and appreciation of one's condition demonstrate care, worth, value and respect and these are all certainly actions of theological significance.

4.4 The Importance of Interdisciplinarity

There is certainly the sense that persons with intellectual disability will never "know" God or "understand" the Eucharist in a rational, epistemic sense. But what is this sense? What should pastoral care givers know about the limitations and abilities of persons with intellectual disabilities rationally?

The role of the pastoral care giver is a multidisciplinary one; interdisciplinarity is necessary if theologians and pastoral care givers are to be intelligently aware of, and

responsive to, the complexity of contemporary life and of the interplay of cultural, biological and psychological influences that shape human experience. Interdisciplinarity is necessary if theologians and pastoral care givers are to contribute to public debate, “to recover the contribution of faith” or to “deepen its contribution” in the public arena and to engage with the forces that shape life in the world today.⁵⁶ Does this mean that theology will have a diminished sense of “the truth of God that is known in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit”? No, this does not follow. It is vital to recognize however the difficulties that confronts those engaging in multidisciplinary work. It is also sensible to be aware of the tension between, on one hand, preserving orthodoxy and not being overwhelmed or losing the distinctive witness of Christ. On the other hand, fear of opening up to new questions and of learning to ask theological and pastoral questions in intelligible ways to modern people is no way to move forward in faith. Thus, interdisciplinary work is integral for growth or deepening of reflection in any area, and this certainly includes the consideration of the question of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

In beginning this wider interdisciplinary work we will begin first with the task of definition. What is implied by the phrase “persons with intellectual disabilities”? For this answer and clarification we will look to the definition used by the World Health Organization, a definition often used by persons with disabilities and various advocating bodies due its reliance upon the social model of disability. We will also draw from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV*, the primary source used by the medical profession in diagnosing and treating various psychological and psychiatric conditions. All of this work will be done with the primary ontological and theological assumptions developed earlier about the importance of the human person who lives with these conditions. This work of definition is thus explicitly theological because the work begins and includes the theological significance of the human person. This is what enlivens the rest of the biological and sociological aspects of the definition, thus setting it apart from definitions of disability that only describe the latter being of disability.

4.4.1 World Health Organization Definition of Disability

⁵⁶ Daniel W. Hardy, ‘Theology and Interdisciplinarity’ (1995), unpublished paper for the Center of Theological Inquiry, Princeton.

In terms of our concerns regarding the nature of intellectual disability biologically, psychologically and socially, one world body of definition will be of particular assistance. In 1980 the World Health Organization (WHO) published the *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps* outlined in the following way:

- a) Impairment is described as any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function;
- (b) Disability is defined as a restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being
- (c) A Handicap is defined as a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal (depending on age, sex, and social and cultural factors) for that individual (WHO 1993; 27-29).

While relatively dated, this definition is still widely used by scholars and people with disabilities. It is often favored by persons with disabilities and their advocates due to its heavy reliance of the social model of disability. In review, proponents of this socio-political view of disability maintain that disability is a socially created condition and that it is not the physical or psychological impairment that disables an individual, but rather the oppressive, disabling effects of society, which favors the able-bodied person.⁵⁷

In terms of intellectual disability, in 1985 the WHO proceeded to publish *Mental Retardation: Meeting the Challenge*, which sought to further differentiate between different levels of intellectual disability. The WHO divided the experience of

⁵⁷ For further discussion of this model see Paul Abberley, "The Concept of Oppression and the Development of a Social Theory of Disability" *Disability, Handicap and Society* 2 (1:1987): 5-19; Simi Linton "Teaching Disability Studies" *Disability Studies Quarterly* 14 (2: 1994) 44-46. In terms of theologians of disability, Kathy Black, one of the author-theologians reviewed in the last chapter, works within the parameters of the social model of disability as exemplified in her paper "Unbinding the Broken-Hearted: Biblical and Theological Reflections" presented at *The Best of Us* conference at Princeton University, October 29, 2004.

mental retardation into four levels: mild, moderate, severe and profound. These four levels are determined by the administration of an IQ test, or intelligence quotient test. The WHO points out that between 75 and 90% of people identified as having some form of mental retardation fall into the first category of mild mental retardation (IQs between 50/55 to 7). The next biggest category is the moderate level of retardation (IQs between 35/40 to 50/55), whereby 5-15% of people fall. Thirdly, 3.5-5% of people generally fall under the category of severe mental retardation (IQs under 20/25 to 35/40) and only 1.5 to .5% of all cases are deemed to be cases of profound mental retardation (IQs falling below 20/25) (WHO 1985; 9).

Additionally the WHO stated two criteria that must be present in order to make a diagnosis of mental retardation:

- (a) Intellectual functioning that is significantly below average, and (b) marked impairment in the ability of the individual to adapt to the daily demands of the social environment. There is now widespread agreement that *both* intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour must be impaired before a person can be considered to be mentally retarded (WHO, 1985; 8).

The WHO definition is useful for definition of disability in a variety of political, social and educational forums, however many mental health care professionals refer to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, or the D.S.M. IV for diagnosing and treating persons with intellectual disability. Thus it is important for the pastoral care giver to also be familiar with this definition of intellectual disability.

4.4.2 The D.S.M. IV and Intellectual Disability

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, more commonly called “the D.S.M. IV” is a codified system of criteria, which is used by experts in diagnosing and treating various psychological and psychiatric conditions. The Manual is divided into a multi-axial system, whereby each axis is composed of a certain etiological criteria. The first axis is concerned with clinical psychological disorders, such as eating disorders (D.S.M. IV, pg. 67). The second axis broadly covers “disorders usually first evident in infancy, childhood or adolescence”, namely personality disorders and mental retardation⁵⁸ (DSM IV, pg. 15). The third and fourth

⁵⁸ Statistically, about 50 % of the time, no etiology can be identified at all in terms of mental retardation, and the brain appears anatomically “normal” and undisturbed (Beirne-Smith, Ittenbach and Patton,

axes cover general medical conditions and psychosocial/environmental problems (DSM IV, pg. 8). The category of mental retardation is divided into five sub-groups: mild, moderate, severe, profound and unspecified mental retardation. The essential features generally of mental retardation include, “(1) Significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, (2) resulting in, or associated with, deficits or impairments in adaptive behaviour, (3) with onset before the age of 18” (DSM IV, pg. 36).⁵⁹

Intellectual functioning is generally defined as an intelligent quotient (often known as IQ) obtained by assessment through one or more administrated intelligence tests. Adaptive behaviour generally refers to the effectiveness which an individual meets for “personal independence and social responsibility” for his or her age and cultural group (Ibid., pg. 37). The Manual estimates that roughly 1% of the population meets the criteria of mental retardation, with about 80% of this 1% falling into the first category of mild mental retardation (Ibid., 39).

2002; 152). To add to the complication, it is believed that mental retardation is rarely due to one specific cause, but rather has multiple etiological sources (Crome and Stern, 1967; 1).

⁵⁹ As a result of this potential confusion, a multi-axial system has been generally used in the diagnosis of the source of mental retardation. The American Association on Mental Retardation utilizes what it terms a “multifactorial” approach for categorizing the potential etiologies of mental retardation. The following is a description of the four categories used and identified in this classification system:

Biomedical Factors: are factors that relate to biological processes, such as genetic factors or nutrition;

Social Factors: are factors that relate to social and family interaction, stimulation and adult responsiveness;

Behavioral (sic) Factors: Factors that relate to potentially causal behaviours, such as dangerous (injurious) activities or maternal substance abuse;

Educational Factors: Factors that relate to the availability of educational supports that promote mental development and the development of adaptive skills (Luckasson et al, 2002; 126).

The cause of mental retardation is also directly linked in the scale to the time within the development that the disruption occurs. The development of the brain is divided into three main time frames: prenatal development (development before birth), perinatal development (development during and around the time of the birth of the child) and postnatal development (development after birth) (Ibid., 2002; 127). The scale notes that disruption may occur in one of four categorical areas, in one of the three major time period of development. The factors and influences that influence brain development are numerous and varied, however clarity can be brought by referring to the Classification System and through the use of Luckasson’s time frame scale. For further discussion of the numerous etiological factors of intellectual disability and mental retardation, see Grossman’s *Manual on Terminology and Classification in Mental Retardation*, Sprren et al’s *Human Developmental Neuropsychology*, and Steadman’s *Medical Dictionary* 24th Ed.

No matter the degree, severity or scope of the retardation however, the intrinsic worth and value of the person is the same. This does not vary according to the factors that influence retardation or the resulting level of functioning. Again, a theological definition of disability that first recognizes the value of the human person will always remain rooted in worth; intellectual disability can never overturn the essential, primary anthropological significance of the person “in Christ.”

4.4.3 Widening the Scope

For the broad purposes of this work, we are concerned with the area of disability and a large amount of the work concerning disability and theology, which was addressed in the literature review in chapter two. However, our specific purpose and concern is the experience of intellectual disability. This area includes those affected by some aspect of mental retardation, namely those who experience a severe restriction or lack in their ability to reason, deduce and think abstractly. There are many other organic brain conditions that impair the ability to abstractly think and reason, such as Autism, Down syndrome and Cornelia de Lange syndrome.⁶⁰ This work is inclusive of these conditions and any other condition that affects the ability to think logically and deduce. In sum, it is not the specific diagnosis that is of concern, but the lived experience of that person, who is limited in their epistemic abilities in the cognitive realm. Mental retardation is an example of this experience, but in reality the incidence of this is much more widespread. This may include persons living with a variety of conditions, and it is this specific experience of living and functioning day to day with limited cognitive ability, which interests this study theologically.

4.5 Toward a Theological Definition of Intellectual Disability

Defining and describing the experience of disability is a notoriously difficult and complex task. However by utilizing a biblical model for approaching disability, a theological framework and an appropriate defining source, developing a thoroughly theological definition and understanding of disability is possible. Based on our work of this chapter we may say that intellectual disability may theologically defined as thus:

⁶⁰ See James Hogg and Judy Sebba, *Profound Retardation and Multiple Impairment* Vol.1 (London: Croom Helm, 1986) 175, 219 for discussion around the mental capacities of these conditions.

Persons with intellectual disabilities are first persons, and thus are ontologically elect and significant “in Christ.” In encounter with others in co-humanity true personhood is realized, mediated by the Spirit. Persons with intellectual disabilities are also persons who experience significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, (2) resulting in, or associated with, deficits or impairments in adaptive behaviour, (3) with onset before the age of 18.

Holding together the ontological and biological significance of the person it is possible to form a thoroughly theological definition of disability. Informed with this knowledge pastoral care givers can go about providing care based upon an equal ethic of personhood that is grounded in Christ and not in human ability. This work of definition however is only the starting point for engaging theologically with the significance of Christian theology, such as the doctrine of knowledge of God, for persons with intellectual disabilities. To these issues we will now turn.

Chapter 5

Pathologies and Potentialities of Revelation:

The Doctrinal Possibility of Knowledge of God for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

5.1 Introducing the Problems and the Possibilities of Revelation for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

It was suggested in chapter one that the embodied situation of persons with intellectual disabilities raises unique and challenging questions for the church regarding the nature and form of knowledge of God. Now that we have more fully elucidated the character of intellectual disability ontologically and biologically, and have formed a fuller theological definition of intellectual disability, we are ready to consider the particular queries regarding if/how knowledge of God is possible persons with profound and complex intellectual disabilities. Our task in this chapter will be to form a Christian doctrine of revelation for those with limited cognitive ability.⁶¹

⁶¹ The doctrine of revelation often refers to the Christian doctrine that addresses the issue and possibility of knowledge of God (Migliore, 1991; 19, McGrath, 1997; 183ff, MacQuarrie, 1977; 85-86, and from a Roman Catholic perspective see *The Rahner Reader* Gerald A. McCool, Ed., 1975; 2, 74ff). A simple understanding of revelation as “knowledge of God” however has limits as it implies that doctrine can exist in isolation, apart from the Spirit in the life of the church. Webster defines doctrine as “...one of the activities of reason transfigured by the renewal of human life and history which the holy God effects in his works and makes manifest in the world” (Webster, 2003; 1). This definition, while it includes a social element, is exclusive of those persons who do not possess the faculty of reason, such as persons with intellectual disabilities. Serene Jones, in the book *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Bass, Dorothy C. and Mirsolav Volf, Ed., 2002; 51ff.) invites readers to think about doctrine in a new way, beyond the parameters of reason. She writes: “...doctrines ‘practice’ us: Practices are not just things we do in light of doctrine; practices are what we become as we are set in motion in the space of doctrine.” In this project, I suggest we approach and define doctrine similar to that suggested by Jones, so that doctrine be defined in emergentist ways, such as suggested by Amos Yong in chapter two. In this sense, the doctrine of revelation may be viewed as the practice of the church in acts of worship, communion and service, towards knowing God. As John Baille points out,

The aim of this chapter is to develop a theological account of revelation that is not reductionistically cognitive but reflective of the broader, more inclusive biblical witness, which includes relational forms of knowing God. In the last chapter, in terms of Barth's theology and persons with intellectual disabilities, it was argued that: (1) all persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, are part of the elect of God through an act in Christ and; (2) all persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, are part of the ongoing history that is relational and redemptive in co-humanity, by the power of the Holy Spirit and that; (3) for all persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, the "true form of being" is a being like Christ. In chapter four it was argued that the election and nature of all persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, "in Christ" is determinative ontologically. A thoroughly theological definition and understanding of disability was then formed, reflecting this significant ontic character.

In this chapter we will consider the second point regarding all persons being part of the ongoing covenant history that is relational and redemptive in form, in co-humanity, by the Spirit. This work will be done again through dialogue with the theology of Karl Barth. The third suggestion regarding the possibility of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities from a Barthian perspective in terms of the "true form of being" will be considered next in chapter six. The suggestion will be made that this form of being may assist pastoral care givers in going about pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities.

This chapter in addressing the ongoing history of reconciliation and redemption in co-humanity will be divided into three major parts. Firstly, before considering in a more constructive sense how co-humanity may facilitate revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities, we must consider why and how revelation has come to be viewed as problematic at times for persons with intellectual disabilities- ("She obviously doesn't know what is going on here anyways..."). In view of this aim we will consider the "pathologies" of revelation for the intellectually disabled. Scholars such as Colin Gunton and John Webster argue that modern ideas of revelation and knowledge of God have been influenced by Enlightenment and

knowledge given in revelation is not simply knowledge *that*, or knowledge *about*, but knowledge *of* (Baille, 1956; 47). Thus revelation is not a static entity to be grasped, but rather a form of being in which to participate.

philosophic notions of knowledge (Gunton, 1998; ix; Webster, 2003; 11ff). If there is some validity to this claim, as I will argue that there is, the subsequent bias towards the rational may explain why many popular understandings of revelation have come to be delimiting and exclusive of persons with intellectual disabilities. The consequence of such a bias is that much talk about knowledge of God for the intellectually disabled presents itself as a paradox of sorts to many modern ears.

Upon considering the “problem” or “pathologies” of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities, we will consider the possible ways forward in this regard. We will begin by returning to the opening question of chapter one: is knowledge of God for the intellectually disabled an impossible oxymoron? Some might argue that revelation is not a possibility for those who cannot comprehend it as such.⁶² My response is to argue that Holy Scripture witnesses to broader understandings of knowledge of God that are not reducible to the cognitive but which include diverse forms of knowledge that are realized in living ways, by the Spirit (Genesis 17, Exodus 3:14, Exodus 33: 12-23, 1 Kings 19:11ff, Hebrews 1:1-2, John 1:14, Luke 4:18ff, 1 Corinthians 1:22-23, to name a few). God’s prevenient grace acts and wills to make himself known through covenant, through disclosure of the divine name, through his Son, in the life of the church and by the Spirit. These are forms that far exceed rational

⁶² Such a view, John Swinton points out, is held by such scholars as Peter Burchenall (Birchenall as cited in Swinton, 1997; 22). Birchenall argues This appears to be the position taken by Peter Birchenall, who argues that:

“...people with a profound mental handicap possess a limited ability to reason at the complex level, and are therefore not able to work through any doubts and develop any sort of faith” (Birchenall as cited in Swinton, 1997; 22),

In a later article, Birchenhall states:

“...severely mentally handicapped people are denied the very substance of a rational productive existence, and are confined to a life of almost total dependence on others for even their most basic needs. Such an existence gives no real opportunity for inner spiritual growth, or the nourishment of the human spirit, both of which are important when coming to terms with the meaning of Christianity. It gives no real opportunity to experience the joy of seeking a lifetime relationship with the Almighty, because the concepts involved are complicated and require a level of awareness which the profoundly mentally handicapped do not have” (Birchenall as cited in Swinton, 1997; 22).

Such statements reflect the belief that knowledge of God is impossible for persons with intellectual disabilities due to epistemic inability.

comprehension. The argument of this chapter- namely that revelation is possible for persons with intellectual disabilities- springs from the realization that revelation is not an idea to be grasped or a conception to be realized, but rather is a relational form of being in which God makes himself known in human forms. Theologian John Webster describes this further:

And, on the other hand, knowledge of God in his revelation is no mere cognitive affair: it is to know *God* and therefore to love and fear the God who appoints us to fellowship with himself, and not merely to maintain God as a mental object, however exalted. Revelation is not merely the bridging of a noetic divide (though it includes that), but is reconciliation, salvation and therefore fellowship. The idiom of revelation is as much moral and relational as it is cognitional. Revelation is the self-giving presence of God which overthrows opposition to God, and, in reconciling, brings us into the light of the knowledge of God (Webster, 2003b; 16).

Revelation implies a form of relating. Significantly for our purposes, this “idiom” is possible for persons with intellectual disabilities as it is not reliant upon cognitive ability, but upon the ability to be in self-giving, loving relationships.

Secondly, we will consider a wider, more inclusive account of knowledge of God as mediated through Jesus Christ himself by the church; this will be an account of how knowledge of God is *theologically possible for all people*, as found in the theology of Karl Barth. The second overreaching Barthian point regarding the ongoing history of co-humanity will be developed in terms of the situation of persons with intellectual disabilities. We shall consider how Barth’s unique understanding of analogy and the role of the Trinity and the presence of co-humanity, allow for the possibility of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

This further work with Barth’s theology will then prepare us to dialogue in the third section with the work of Christoph Schwöbel, a noted systematic theologian of revelation. Murray A. Rae in *The Practice of Theology: A Reader* in his essay entitled, “How do we know what we know?” notes that Schwöbel’s account of revelation is described in relational terms, framed in a Trinitarian understanding (Gunton, Holmes and Rae, Eds., 2001; 257). This relational understanding of revelation, it will be argued, reflects a scriptural account of knowledge that is potentially inclusive of persons with intellectual disabilities. In his noted book *God, Action and Revelation*, Schwöbel “attempt[s] to clarify the concept of revelation and the character of the

disclosure event it signifies by taking a closer look at the formal structure of the concept” (Schwöbel 1992, 86). He continues the theological conversation surrounding issues of agency and the revelation of God by considering the five distinct aspects of revelation: the author of revelation, the situation of revelation, the content of revelation, the recipient and the result of revelation. Schwöbel’s “five moments of revelation” will be considered in the last section of this chapter in-depth, in an “expository” fashion, detailing how the areas of the author of revelation, the situation of revelation, the content of revelation, the recipient and the result of revelation, apply to revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities. This expository work will constitute the task of forming a theology of revelation, in dialogue with Barth’s view of revelation, and as it applies to persons with intellectual disabilities.

5.2 Pathologies of Revelation

5.2.1 Neglect of the Doctrine after Immanuel Kant

Why has knowledge of God come to be seen as a problem of sorts for the intellectually disabled? Two major influences in this area are arguably of note: the influence of the epistemology of Immanuel Kant and dominant Enlightenment presuppositions regarding knowledge that, arguably, continue to influence and shape certain aspects of theology, which have had detrimental consequences for persons with intellectual disabilities. Briefly, Kant’s argument regarding the unknowability of God based on *a priori* existence outside the human realm of knowledge contributed to a significant reduction of theological accounts of knowledge of God.⁶³ Systematic theologian Colin

⁶³ In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that the only basis for knowledge is the *phenomena*, or experience (Kant, 1964). According to Kant, it is vital always to distinguish between the distinct realms of phenomena and noumena. Phenomena are things that are given to us sensibly which constitute our experience; it is phenomena alone to which we may validly apply the methods of understanding. Noumena, on the other hand, are the presumed things that constitute reality. All of our synthetic *a priori* judgments or judgments are based upon reason alone, independently of all sensory experience, apply with strict universality, and therefore apply only to the phenomenal realm, not the noumenal. *A posteriori* judgments, on the other hand, must be grounded upon experience and are consequently limited and uncertain in their application to specific cases.

It is only at this level, with respect to what we can experience, that we are justified in imposing the structure of our concepts onto the objects of our knowledge. Since the thing in itself would by definition be entirely independent of our experience of it, we are utterly ignorant of the noumenal realm. Kant maintains that God remains in this noumenal realm. In Kantian thinking this concept of God as an

Gunton maintains that the doctrine was neglected for a period due to lack of appropriate theological rejoinder; when an appropriate response to Kantian claims was not found, retreat and silence resulted (Gunton, 1999; ix). In the place of an appropriate, theological response arose Christian polemics that made use of more philosophical tools and sought a supposedly “neutral” basis, such as nature and the faculty of reason.⁶⁴ Gunton demonstrates that knowledge of God talk became confused and tended toward a haphazard account informed by humanistic notions of knowledge rather than divine accounts of God’s being in the world.

Theologians such as Gunton and Webster thus argue that such philosophic notions and Enlightenment thoughts have resulted in the reduced account of revelation that presently exists (Webster, 2003; 12). It is my claim is that this reduced account has contributed to the theological tendency or conclusion by some that revelation poses a difficulty for persons with intellectual disabilities.

absolutely perfect and most real being is called “the Theological Idea.” Again it is natural to move from our recognition of dependence within the phenomenal realm to the notion of a perfectly independent noumenal being, the “Transcendental Ideal.” But traditional attempts to prove that god really exists, founded as they are on what we experience, cannot establish the reality of a being necessarily beyond all experience. And since “God is not a kind.” and cannot be experienced as such by humans in the earthly realm, the result is that God is not a suitable subject for epistemology or knowledge. Kant thus relegated knowledge of God to the ethical realm and the arena of faith. This is thus a brief summary of the Kantian claims that arguably sent theology into retreat for a period.

⁶⁴ The retreat and neglect from the doctrine of revelation was not to remain forever. Various forms of knowledge of God theories arose in the period following Kant, though none reflected a particularly Orthodox position. Trevor Hart sums up the situation thus:

By the late nineteenth century the most significant streams of Christian theology had either quietly pushed this doctrine [revelation] aside and substituted it for some other (more “natural”) basis for their endeavour, or else had refashioned the concept in ways which served effectively (if not intentionally) to relocate it within the sphere of human (natural) rather than divine (supernatural) possibilities” (Hart, 1999;7).

Thus a very delimited account of knowledge of God remained for a period following, but this chasm was soon replaced by another god: humans. Utilizing more “neutral” criteria for accounts of God, various “humanist” theories arose as to how one might know God. Feuerbach’s conclusion about God’s revelation reflected an acute form of this period in theological terms in his conclusion that: “Theology is anthropology- that is to say, in the object of religion, in what we call ‘God’ nothing is specified except the essence of man” (Feuerbach, 1967; 17).

5.2.2 Other Enlightenment Influences: Individual Self-Awareness, Spatial Distance, Foundationalism

Other factors that have contributed to this exclusion have been hinted at by Gunton when he further maintains that many Enlightenment themes or humanistic notions regarding knowledge have gone almost unchallenged until recently in mainstream doctrine (Gunton, 1998; 61-64). He writes:

In sum, it can be concluded that according to what was until very recently the almost unquestioned in mainstream doctrine, knowledge is something (1) possessed by an *individual*, who (2) stands over against something which is conceived to be spatially distant. The spatial distance is bridged by either bringing the mind into conformity with the world ('realism') or the world into conformity with the mind ('idealism'). In either case (3), the intellectual bridge between the two is provided by the foundational axioms, which are conceived to link the mind with the world (Gunton, 1998; 63-64).

Gunton does not write with respect to persons with intellectual disabilities specifically but his account of how modern emphases on individual self-awareness, spatial distance and foundationalism have come to be seen as requisite for knowledge bear upon our concerns as these unquestioned presuppositions have contributed to the exclusion of the intellectually disabled from many modern accounts of knowledge of God. Gunton challenges these beliefs regarding knowledge on the basis of the work of Michael Polanyi who argues that knowledge is not a mere epistemic exercise but that which comes in tacit forms, by the senses, and often in relationship (Gunton, 1988; 63-64).

In his highly esteemed works *Personal Knowledge* and *The Tacit Dimension* Michel Polanyi suggests, "[w]e know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1958; Polanyi, 1966; 4). Polanyi, a Hungarian scientist with particular interest in theories of knowledge, argues that "naïve objectivism", or knowledge that can only be tested by objective and impersonal methods, is untenable. Rather Polanyi argues that an adequate account of knowledge includes a pre-logical phase, which he identifies as the "tacit dimension" which is comprised of a range of conceptual and sensory information and images. He insists that this form of knowledge may not always be

articulated in propositional forms. Polanyi writes and comments with scientific knowledge in mind, but I would like to suggest here that perhaps his thought with regard to tacit knowledge is also useful in considering how persons with intellectual disabilities might also come to know.⁶⁵ Polanyi argues that knowledge is a dynamic, creative act, (particularly acts of discovery) and is a dual process- comprised of a tacit, more embodied and learned dimension, and a focal knowledge, which is the form of knowledge generally expressed rationally. Persons with intellectual disabilities lack this latter form as a result of reduced cortical functioning. But there is no reason to assume that they lack the ability of the former, more conceptual and sensual form of knowledge, which carries with it what Polanyi terms exploratory acts or ‘passions’ aimed at discovering ‘truths’.

Briefly, returning to each of Gunton’s points: individual self-awareness and apprehension of knowledge is generally not possible for the profoundly intellectually disabled; intellectual disability generally necessitates the aid of another. Intellectual disability is the result of biological and psychological disruption in the cortical regions. This results in reduced cortical operations, which affects the ability for more complex brain functioning, such as the ability to rationalize or conceive of abstract concepts. It is inconceivable then that a person who is unable to articulate or perceive of an intangible concept, such as God, will be able to know it as such without the aid or facilitation of another to make this reality more concrete. Thus the insistence that knowledge must come through autonomous reflection is delimiting of those who require another person to aid and facilitate this knowledge. Assistance by the other is a means for communicating what may be there tacitly, and in less apparent forms, into a manner which is more apprehensible and meaningful for the person with the intellectual disability.

Secondly, with respect to spatial distance, and the idea that knowledge requires awareness of self over and against objects which are separate from one’s self, we again encounter the problem of the rational for the intellectually disabled. As will be recalled from chapter four, persons with intellectual disabilities normally lack the abilities of

⁶⁵ In an article in the *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health* 11(4:2007) 5-22 entitled “Tacit and Tactile Knowledge of God: Toward a Theology of Revelation for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities” I previously argued that Polanyi’s conception of tacit knowledge, combined with tactile forms of communication, such as provided by the imagination and the arts, may assist theologians in conceiving of ways forward in terms of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

higher brain functioning. Persons with intellectual disability most often never reach this stage of contemplation, existential questioning or abstract thought, as there is some disruption or mis-development. Thus, a view of knowledge that requires the ability of conception of another object as separate from one's self, seems to require a more formal ability of contemplation and self-recognition, which many persons with intellectual disabilities lack, and thus this is obviously problematic.

And thirdly, the idea that foundationalism (a theory of knowledge or form of epistemology which assumes that all knowledge is built upon certain, basic principles) is requisite for bridging the gap between the mind and the world is also problematic for intellectually disabled. Proponents of foundationalism maintain that there are certain propositional truths or basic beliefs, which are the basis for all other truths, such as the idea that "God exists."⁶⁶ But again this is problematic for the intellectually disabled because of their reliance upon the ability to conceive of certain cognitive ideas. Again, disruption in the development of the cerebral cortex results in the inability to participate in more advanced modes of thought, such as is requisite for participation in conceiving of various abstract concepts and cognitive rationales characteristic of this form of epistemology. Thus, if Gunton is correct that Enlightenment influences remain in theology- as I think he is – then we begin to see how and why certain, modern conceptions of the doctrine of revelation have come to be seen as problematic for the intellectually disabled.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Ronald Thiemann in *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985) offers a critique of epistemological foundationism, which he argues is present in many modern accounts of revelation. He suggests that this is problematic, particularly as evidenced in the theology of Thomas F. Torrance. Thiemann instead argues that revelation should be instead considered as an extension of the doctrine of God.

⁶⁷ An example of such a cognitive, modern view of revelation is found in the work of systematic theologian John MacQuarrie. In his chapter regarding revelation in *Principles of Christian Theology* Revised Ed. (London: S.C.M. Press, 1977) 84ff, MacQuarrie approaches revelation from an especially rational perspective. In particular he states, "The word 'revelation' points therefore especially to the cognitive element of experience." Macquarie goes on to temper this statement, suggesting, "revelation is to be scrutinized by reason...[and]...tested by conscience" (102). By conscience Macquarie refers to "[humanity's] synoptic awareness of his being, in its authentic possibility and its actual disorder. Revelation is confirmed by conscience if, in ourselves or in the community, faith in the revelation overcomes the disorder, so that, in the words of St. Thomas, we 'perceive within ourselves the fruits of redemption.'...Revelation is then subjected to the scrutiny of reason and conscience, and presumably

5.3 Two Pathological Extremes: Cognition vs. the “Matrix” of Experience

A cognitive understanding of knowledge of God that emphasizes epistemic answers is one perilous extreme for persons with intellectual disabilities. Similarly, an experiential view of revelation that heavily emphasizes the human role in revelation also is perilous theologically because it can tip easily into subjectivism.⁶⁸

Theological reflection that tends toward this experiential extreme is arguably evidenced in the works of theologians and philosophers Frederick Schleiermacher (1768- 1834) and G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831). In his effort to reconcile the criticisms of the Enlightenment with traditional Protestant orthodoxy, Schleiermacher emphasizes the category and theological significance of the realm of feeling and experience. In *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultural Despisers*, Schleiermacher presents his novel conception of religion as feeling: “Religion is to seek this and find it in all that lives and moves, in all growth and change, in all doing and suffering. It is to have life and to know life in immediate feeling, only as such an existence in the Infinite and Eternal.” (Schleiermacher, 1996; 36) He goes on to say: “...true religion is sense and taste for the Infinite.” (Schleiermacher, 1996; 39) Schleiermacher is arguing against religion as a “knowing”, understood in the rationalist, Enlightenment sense. Instead he argues that religion is to be found in the realm of feelings, and an interior, personal experience.

In *The Christian Faith* Schleiermacher argues that: “The feeling of absolute dependence, accordingly, is not to be explained as an awareness of the world’s existence, but only as an awareness of the existence of God, as the absolute undivided unity.” (Schleiermacher, 1999; 132). Allying with Immanuel Kant, Schleiermacher argues that knowledge is necessarily bound to experience. Schleiermacher however views experience:

many reports of revelations or alleged revelations need to be profoundly modified or even rejected in light of such scrutiny.” (Macquarie, 1977; 103). Thus, Macquarie suggests that revelation requires epistemic abilities of reason, perception, scrutiny and reason.

⁶⁸ Time and space is limited for an in-depth discussion of Hegel and Schleiermacher’s works, as representative of the wider “pathology” of an experiential revelatory extreme in terms of persons with intellectual disabilities. For further reading however on the nature of Hegel’s phenomenology of spirit see Kain, 2005, Henrich, 2002 and Barnett 1998. For further study of Schleiermacher’s experiential understanding of revelation see Kelsey, 2003 and Sykes, 1971.

...as the matrix for a new approach to theology. Our experience, analysed in depth, demonstrates an awareness, given within that experience but not identical to it, of God understood as one on whom we are absolutely dependent. Theology's task is to explicate that experience as it takes shape at any given time. In the Christian church, theology is therefore the articulation of the experience of God mediated by Jesus of Nazareth. According to Schleiermacher's famous characterization, "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections as set forth in speech." They therefore express the doctrine of God as essentially a function of human experience of the divine (Gunton, Ed., 1997; 17).

The human experience of God, including the experience of persons with intellectual disabilities serves in this "matrix" to inform the respective doctrine, such as revelation. Similarly, G.W.F. Hegel closely allies knowledge of God with immediate human experience. Indeed in *The Phenomenology of the Mind*, (1949; 758), Hegel states, "this concrete God is beheld sensuously and immediately as a self, as a real individual human being..." Thus both these thinkers argue that the being of God may be directly gleaned from with human being and experience.

The "flipside" of a view of revelation that is overly epistemic is a view of revelation that is too heavily based in experience has significant drawbacks. A theology of revelation that is overly experiential can only be seen as relating human consciousness as interpreted through religious experience. This tendency lurks in 20th century theology because of the reliance on a non-theological epistemology (experience), which claims a wide reaching application and justification. Christoph Schwöbel expounds upon the difficulty with an overly experiential view of revelation:

The problems which are raised by such a conception are intimately connected to the interpretation of the concept of experience which is seen as the foundation and testing ground of theological statements. Where experience is interpreted as exclusively constituted by human subjectivity, the contents of theological discourse can only be seen as descriptions of attitudes and dispositions of human consciousness...In such a framework the prevenient character of God's self-disclosure can no longer be maintained (Schwöbel, 1992; 86).

The primacy and sovereignty of God must be maintained in a responsible account of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities; God's being must not be directly equated with human being.

Whereas a too-cognitive view of knowledge of God threatens to delimit and exclude those who are less able in this way, knowledge of God that is overly experiential threatens to describe every experience as revelation, to the point where the significance of the category of revelation is lost. A knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities that relies too heavily on the realm of experience threatens to lose the distinctive and orthodox marks of Christ. The result of this extreme for persons with intellectual disabilities is a view of knowledge of God that is relative, relying too heavily on an experiential basis, whereby all experiences are viewed as revelatory.

5.4 Barth's Theology of Knowledge of God

5.4.1 Barth's View of Revelation as per Persons with Intellectual Disabilities: Analogous, Trinitarian and Mediated in Community

How might theologians go about forming a theology of knowledge of God that is neither overly cognitive nor especially relative? I would argue that scripture again might offer a cue for how to proceed in this task. Holy Scripture witnesses to a form of knowledge that is not merely cognitive, nor relatively nondiscursive, but rather an occasion of the whole person that occurs through the senses, in obedience and through relationship.⁶⁹ In other words, knowledge, in a scriptural sense, is understood in a variety of different ways- many of them non-cognitive. In the Hebrew Scriptures, knowledge is understood as being represented by the word *yāda'*, a term which implies knowledge that is "personal, experiential, emotional and relational" (Martin

⁶⁹ Bauer notes that the term indicates that this personal knowledge of a person or an acquaintance, a friend or an intimate partner (Bauer, 1979: 164). Kittel describes this instance further:

..the concept of knowledge in the OT is not determined by the idea that the reality of what is known is most purely grasped when personal elements are obliterated between the subject and object of knowledge, and knowledge is reduced to contemplation from without. On the contrary, the OT both perceives and asserts the significance and claim of the knowing subject...we do not find in Israel any knowledge which objectively investigates and describes reality...knowledge is not thought of in terms of the possession of information. It [knowledge of God] is possessed only in its exercise or actualization (Kittel, 1983: 698).

and Davids, Ed., 1997: 638). Knowledge in this sense is viewed as a personal relationship between subject and object, with an emphasis on obedience, rather than propositional knowledge of facts and information about the other person.⁷⁰ Kittel notes that in Greek culture γνώσις points to things that already are in essence and that “knowing is understood as a form of seeing” (Kittel, 1983; 691). This knowledge is also realized in meaningful, personal ways. Bornkamm states: “In Romans 1:28 the knowledge of God as a question and accessible possibility does not concern him. What concerns him, rather, is the question whether this knowledge is personal, whether the truth of God remains truth and its power acknowledged” (G. Bornkamm, “Early Christian Experience”, 1969: 56). Thus scripture accounts for diverse ways of knowing, living forms of knowledge of God that are certainly possible for persons with intellectual disabilities.⁷¹

Karl Barth’s view of knowledge is also broadly derived from scripture. He describes how God may be known in ethical (CD II, 1: 26ff., 35ff., 201ff., 214, 342; II, 2:25), emotional (CD II, 1:32ff, 219) and relational ways (CD II:1, 5f). The Word made itself known in various forms, and Barth takes great care to clarify these differences. Additionally, in an interesting turn, Barth argues, “A knowing becomes knowledge when the man becomes a responsible witness to its content” (CD I:1, 214). Evident here is Barth’s development of what is known as “crisis theology” as Barth insists that God brings humans to a place of decision, or crisis (Dorrien, 2000; 47).⁷² In

⁷⁰ F. Gerald Downing in *Has Christianity a Revelation?* (1967) similarly notes that in the primary meaning of knowledge in scripture is obedience, and in the New Testament eschatological (38, 42, 123, 75).

⁷¹ John Swinton rightly points out in his paper “Hermeneutics and Pastoral Theology of Disability” that knowledge in a scriptural sense is not knowledge for cognitive apprehension. But rather “the focus of Scriptural interpretation is thus not simply knowledge for the sake of *understanding*, but knowledge for the sake of *action*; the shape of that action relates to the practice of faithfulness which are discipleship...At the heart of this perspective in the assumption that Scripture has an intention which requires but cannot be fully encapsulated through the process of complex linguistic investigation. The primary intention of scripture is to reveal Jesus, to enable people to learn what it means to inhabit the strange world of the bible and to learn the practice of faithfulness which are discipleship” (Swinton, 2007).

⁷² Crisis theology, also known as dialectical theology, maintains that God’s encounter with humanity puts modern Christians into a crisis that “denies all human thought” (Barth, 1978; 80). Barth was also concluded, in agreement with Kant, that humanity is in an impossible predicament in that God is,

other words, Barth is conveying a sense of obedience and responsibility to the object of knowledge. Thus the subject only truly knows the content of that object when obedience is evident in living forms.

Karl Barth's theology of knowledge of God manages to avoid the pitfalls of more cognitive and more experiential pathological extremes of revelation⁷³ by developing his theology out of a scriptural conception of knowledge.⁷⁴ God acts in Christ the Word, so that humans might know Him, albeit on His terms and at His initiative, in the living Word. This Word is not merely vernacular or epistemic, but the living Word- it is the Spirit of Christ, that is present in relational, sensory, and obedient forms. Thus the pathology of "epistemology", or an overly cognitive understanding of knowledge of God, is avoided through the embodied and living

humanly speaking, a thoroughly non-cognitive entity, and therefore, *noumena*. Diverging from Kantian metaphysics, Barth insists that while there is an absolute distinction between God and humanity, that God reveals of himself in the Word, and that this revelation is all-sufficient for reconciliation with God (CD I;2, 257; Hart, 2000; 42). The Kingdom of God is over and against this world, or "God is God" (Busch, 1976; 101-113). Again, even in Barth's affirmation of God's reconciliation with humans in Jesus Christ there is still a sharp contrast between God and humanity to be noted and his programme of safeguarding the distinction between God's act of revelation and humanity's conscious apprehending of that reality, remains evident. Barth's engagement with crisis or dialectical theology was two fold: he aimed at preserving the objectivity of God from the subjectivism of humanity however, his secondary purpose, and no less important, was to proclaim the Good News of Immanuel- God is with us.

⁷³ Simon Fisher points to Marquardt, a recent commentator who calls for radical reassessment of Barth's earliest writings, arguing that even at an early stage they reflect the programme which would soon follow, challenging anthropocentric thinking and being. Fisher states how this first aim developed:

...Barth created a scientific-theoretical, religious-philosophical, framework which overcame the old Kantian-Schleiermacherian opposition between 'religion' and 'science' and...this framework was to govern his entire theological work to come....one even went so far as to suggest that his theology resembled an inverted neo-Kantianism (Fisher, 1988; 2).

⁷⁴ This view of preserving God's divinity is most articulated in his work *The Epistle to the Romans* (Barth, 1968). Barth describes his departure from liberal theology to Reformation theology as follows:

In [those] years I had to rid myself of the last remnants of a philosophical, i.e. anthropological (in America one says "humanistic") foundation and exposition of Christian doctrine...I had to learn that Christian doctrine, if it is to merit its name and if it is to build up the Christian church in the world as she needs to be built up, has to be exclusively and conclusively the doctrine of Jesus Christ- of Jesus Christ as the living Word of God spoken to us [human beings]...My new task was to take all that has been said before and to think it through once more and freshly to articulate it anew as a theology of the grace of God in Jesus Christ (Barth, 1966; 42-43).

And Barth set out to do exactly thus: rearticulate all of theology through the new lens of Jesus Christ on earth, whereby God is the center of theology and not humans.

Word. Similarly, Barth's theology avoids an overly experiential extreme, whereby revelation is a projection of human experience, by locating the source and possibility of revelation in God, through Christ, in the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the church.⁷⁵ Barth thus maintains a theological distinctiveness that remains at once scriptural and theologically viable for developing a theology of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Barth's theology of revelation is developed throughout the *Church Dogmatics*, in dialogue with the doctrines of God, Creation, and Reconciliation (CD Volumes I, II, III and IV). In forming a theology of revelation for intellectual disabilities we must avoid reading the various parts of Barth's theology of revelation in isolation, but rather we must read Barth's theology as a whole. Webster rightly points out at the outset of the *Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, that Barth's theology cannot be neatly summarized, and his view of certain issues can rarely be summed up in one sentence; only in the "interplay of a range of articulations" can Barth's view on a topic be truly divined (Webster as cited in Webster, Ed., 2000; 9). Barth develops his views of revelation throughout the *Church Dogmatics*, and not simply in Volume I, where he

⁷⁵ Barth's commentary *The Epistle to the Romans*, published in 1919, propelled him into the international scene where he became the symbol and leader of a new theological movement staunchly opposed to the liberalism of the nineteenth century. In *Romans* Barth focuses his criticism on the problem of individualism, or the problem of the human as the creative, central subject.

Barth's new theology was fundamentally anti-bourgeois in this sense: in stressing (as he did in *Romans I*) that God and the knowledge of God are never the secure possession of human beings (but must be received anew each moment), Barth was at the same time attacking a religion which had assimilated itself to the needs of idealistically construed cultural development...He was attacking a religion which provided bourgeois culture with perhaps its most crucial ideological support (McCormack, 1999, 141).

These criticisms spearheaded and typified the Barthian theological movement, a movement insistent upon the all sufficiency of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Thus, Barth's starting point succinctly became, "God is" (CD II:1, 257).

Barth's second main aim, establishing that there is a revelation of God, or knowledge of God by the Word, is evident throughout Barth's works, throughout various theological ideas. Hans Frei comments on Barth's style as such, "Barth leaves absolutely no doubt that for him, unlike Schleiermacher, fundamental theology- or, as he calls it, Prolegomena- is internal to, or part of, the dogmatic enterprise. It is not a procedure for correlating theology to other disciplines in the academic spectrum" (Frei, 1992; 39). Thus, Barth saw his task in light of the theological climate, as turning the dialogue inwards, claiming it as the practice of the Church. The medium and language for discussion became theology, and the message of that medium, God through Jesus Christ by the Spirit.

devotes the entire second chapter to “The Revelation of God.” David W. Hardy reiterates this point:

Here we begin to see the pattern of the *Church Dogmatics* ...is a chain of dialectical unities: if it is to be more than human practice or concept, the “lower” in each case must rest on the *operative condition* of the “higher” without which it falls out of its relation to God into the kind of “distance” of which Barth spoke so passionately in his commentaries on the *Epistle to the Romans*. But if it does indeed rest on the operative condition thus identified, if indeed it is the speaking of God, the God who is free to be- and to reveal himself in- Jesus Christ. With this in mind, we need to trace the chain of connections in the subject matter of the different volumes of the *Church Dogmatics* (Hardy, 2005; 28-29).

Barth’s view of revelation is developed throughout the *Dogmatics*, however, it is done in this dialectical form, continually brought into contact with spheres vital to revelation: the Trinitarian person of God, the place of humans in creation and the continuing work of the Church by the Spirit. Barth maintains the same position regarding the centrality of God in revelation throughout the development of the *Dogmatics*. Thus, as we go about understanding how Barth’s view of revelation as it is developed throughout the *Church Dogmatics*, applies to persons with intellectual disabilities, our place of engagement within the Volumes will vary, however the theme of God’s primacy will remain unchanged.

In review, it has been argued that Barth’s view of revelation applies to persons with intellectual disabilities particularly at three significant junctures: 1. The election of all persons “in Christ”; 2. The ongoing history that is relational and redemptive in co-humanity, by the power of the Holy Spirit and; 3. For all persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, the “true form of being” is a being like Christ. In this last section we will consider the second of these points, namely that all persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, are part of the ongoing history that is relational and redemptive in co-humanity, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this last section is to further unpack and explore this statement as it relates to revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities.

The above statement will be expanded slightly in order to further illuminate the implications of the category of co-humanity for persons with intellectual disabilities in terms of the possibility of revelation. The following will be argued thus: All persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, are part of the ongoing revelatory history that is salvic and redemptive, disclosing the being of God in relational being in

co-humanity, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus the possibility and potential of revelation lies in *being with the other in covenant relationship*; God is known in the human, finite realm of persons with intellectual disabilities as one encounters loving relationships.⁷⁶ As persons with intellectual disabilities know this self-giving love, the being of God is known in a mediated form. Three points need expansion and further comment in regard to the theological basis of this statement: the theological justification for revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities namely is derived from Barth's treatment of analogy, the Trinitarian nature of revelation, and the role of co-humanity in revelation. We will consider each of these areas briefly in terms of how they make way and allow for the possibility of revelation for even the most disabled of individuals.

Firstly, Barth's unique understanding and reworking of the category of *analogia* is especially significant to our task. Barth's reconceptualization of a theology of analogy from an analogy of being (*analogia entis*) to an analogy of relationship (*analogia relationis*) effectively relocates the participatory possibility of knowledge of God to a relational realm. This is especially significant for persons with intellectual disabilities as this is an area in which they are able to participate, unlike more rational categories of knowledge. Briefly in the following we will consider Barth's reformulation of this category, and the particular significance this holds for the possibility of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities.⁷⁷ Secondly, Barth's emphasis on the Trinitarian nature of revelation is important in terms of the enabling, relational stance this being assumes. Barth's emphasis on the Trinitarian nature of knowledge of God as a prevenient act of God in Christ, assures that the possibility of revelation lies with God and not human capacity. This Trinitarian nature locates the act, mediation and response to revelation with God, and not human capability. Thus

⁷⁶ This again harkens back to the suggestion of John Swinton in chapter 3 that, "For them [persons with intellectual disabilities- TAD], contact with us is contact with the divine, as God continues to work the wonder of His incarnation through His Spirit in the lives of His people." (Swinton, 1997; 26).

⁷⁷ For clarity's sake then, we are seeking to form two essential analogies in this project: Similar to the work of van Deusen Hunsinger in seeking to find a correspondence between Barth's Chalcedonian pattern and theology and depth psychology, we are attempting to find an analogy for use in the pastoral care of persons with intellectual disabilities. This is the first area of correspondence. Secondly this project argues that direction may be garnered in terms of the type of relationship to be formed with persons with intellectual disabilities by looking to Christ. Thus the second area of correspondence relates to a Christological analogy of being.

Barth reformulates the conception of analogy, or the possibility of knowledge, into the relational realm, and then fulfills and accomplishes knowledge in the Trinitarian form and being of God. Persons with intellectual disabilities are then not excluded from participation in the Trinitarian revelation of God.

Thirdly, Barth emphasizes the role of being in encounter with the other in co-humanity (CD III:2, 177).⁷⁸ Barth insists that knowledge of God is realized in a

⁷⁸ Scholars such as Andreas Pangritz note that Barth is noticeably influenced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's sociality, as developed in Bonhoeffer's doctoral work *Sanctorum Communio* (Bonhoeffer, 1963; Pangritz, 2000; 7ff). In particular, Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology arguably is evident throughout much of Barth's theology of co-humanity in III:2. It is also worth noting however that Bonhoeffer is also responsible for some of the most disparaging comments about Barth's view of revelation. A contemporary with Barth, though twenty years his junior, Godsey maintains that although in many ways Barth and Bonhoeffer were alike but that...

...[they] diverged because they perceived different dangers for the church. One involves the church's relationship to the world...Another difference is Christological in nature. One might say that their deepest theological differences come at the point where they are most closely bound together, Both accepted the general guidelines of the Chalcedon that in Jesus Christ there is united both true divinity and true humanity. But Barth tended to emphasize the divinity...Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, stressed the hiddenness of the divinity in the humiliated One (Godsey, 1987; 26).

Bonhoeffer's charge of "revelational positivism", developed in the *Prison Letters*, must be understood in this context of indebtedness and respect (Pangritz, 2000;5). Charles Marsh points out that, "In effect Barth says to the believer, here is the virgin birth, the Trinity, the Resurrection, and all the rest- 'Like it or Lump it' ('*Friss Vogel, oder stirb*')") (Marsh, 1994; 20). Bonhoeffer however points out that this "positivism of revelation makes faith all too easy for itself, by in fact setting up a 'law of faith' which 'mutilates what is- by Christ's incarnation!- a gift for us'" (March, 1994; 20). Bonhoeffer's charge of "revelational positivism" seems especially appropriate to mention here in light of our questions regarding the intellectually disabled. It should be noted however that Bonhoeffer retracted many of the positivist charges later in life, though the basic difference between the two men remained their perspectives regarding the ways in which they engage worldliness (Godsey, 1987). An extended discussion of these differences is beyond the scope of this work but for a more in depth discussion see Godsey, 1987; March 1994; Pangritz, 2000 and Green 1999. It should be noted however that while some differences remain between the theology of the two men, Bonhoeffer owed much to Barth in terms of the development of his theology and general worldview. Dialectical theology, the renewal of reformation themes and an insistence upon grounding theology in God rather than humanity, tenets characteristic of Barthian theology, all were adopted in large by the young Bonhoeffer. The two men were united in the insistence on the revelation of God in and through Jesus Christ. These similarities and heritage of faith should not be overlooked, for as Eberhard Bethge points out: "Bonhoeffer's 'early and later criticisms of Barth' in all phases of this phase-change filled relationship are to be understood as a 'movement within rather than outside the Barthian movement itself'" (As cited in Pangritz, 2000; 11).

relational way, by an act of God in Christ, in co-humanity, or self-giving, loving relationships. This relational encounter in co-humanity promises to illuminate a concrete way in which persons with intellectual disabilities might acquire knowledge of God. Briefly now we will turn to consider each of these significant theological moves particularly and how they enable a theology of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

5.4.2 Reconceptualizing *Analogia*: Analogies of Relationship

The first aspect of Barth's theology of revelation that is assistive in terms of persons with intellectual disabilities in terms of his understanding of co-humanity is Barth's understanding of analogy.

In terms of revelation, Barth insists that knowledge of God is never a direct knowledge, but always mediated (CD II:1, 59).⁷⁹ Analogy is the decisive category by which Barth expounds upon the possibility of human knowledge of God: only through similarities or correspondence may humanity know of the divine being. Hunsinger explains further what Barth intends by this analogy of being:

The *analogia entis* is conceived as embracing two matters at once: a constitutive state of affairs and an epistemic procedure based on it. (Where I have said "constitutive" and "epistemic," Barth would tend to say "ontic" and "noetic."- GH) The state of affairs is one in which human beings are in some sense inherently open to and capable of knowing God. The procedure is then one in which this inherent openness and capacity are exercised such that God becomes known, regardless of how provisionally (Hunsinger, 1991; 283).

For Barth however, an analogy of being assumes a likeness between divine and human form that is always inappropriate as it assumes some natural capacity or ability in human nature for God.⁸⁰

For Barth the only way that he might "accept the inevitability of analogical language in theology" is if it can be accomplished in such way that it avoids all natural theology (Come, 1963; 145). Thus an analogy of *entis*, Barth argues, is never

⁷⁹ Barth astutely reminds his readers, "we have no organ or capacity for God" (CD I:1, 168). Because of this human inability, all knowledge of God must be mediated by God and viewed as a miracle (CD I:1, 238).

⁸⁰ The degree to which Barth disregarded *analogia entis* is evidenced in his statement: "I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of the Antichrist" (CD I:1, xiii).

appropriate. Barth insists that any analogies that are made between divine being and human beings must be an analogy of relationship, or *analogia relationis* (CD I:1, 166). This form of analogy assumes some sort of correspondence between the nature of divine relationships and the nature of human relationships. Barth's conception of *analogia relationis*, became known to some as "the most distinctive trait of his theological method" (Lee, 1969; 129-130). Similarly, Thomas F. Torrance argues that Barth's reformulation of Thomas Aquinas's conception of *analogia entis* is arguably one of his most lasting and significant contributions to theology.⁸¹

Arguably the type of analogy suggested by Barth, an analogy of relationship, is the form that most assists our work in terms of persons with intellectual disabilities. In terms of knowledge of God it has thus been argued that universal election applies to all persons, assuring that persons with intellectual disabilities are "in Christ", despite of the inability to conceive of such an abstract concept. Further to this it may be argued that as persons with intellectual disabilities experience and know loving relationships, they experience something of God. In other words, an analogy of relation provides a way for including persons with intellectual disabilities in the ongoing revelatory work of God in the world in renewal and reconciliation. In forming a theology of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities we must begin with an analogy of relationship, noting that the realm in which God is known is necessarily analogical, and that this analogy is correlatively relational. Persons with intellectual disabilities thus know God, like everyone else, through an analogy of relationship whereby God's being is mediated and demonstrated by human being that corresponds and represents God.

5.4.3 Trinitarian in Ground

A second aspect of Barth's theology as it relates to his understanding of the ongoing history of God in the Spirit in the world relates to Barth's Trinitarian understanding of this work. This Trinitarian understanding of revelation emphasizes divine action in revelation, and not human response or ability. Barth states:

⁸¹ Hunsinger argues in *Disruptive Grace* that while Barth sought to reformulate Aquinas's original conception of analogy, some subtle differences are present in terms of their "respective assessments of God's incomprehensibility" (Hunsinger, 2000; 220-221). Whereas Aquinas seems to stress the "performative" aspects of analogy, Barth emphasizes what Hunsinger calls the more "realistic" aspects of analogy, i.e., those aspects that are inherently soteriological.

The doctrine of the Trinity is what basically distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian, and therefore what already distinguishes the Christian concept of revelation as Christian, in contrast to all other possible doctrines of God or concepts of revelation (CD I:1, 301).

Barth argues that revelation is essentially Trinitarian in nature. God's oneness and yet threeness, and the reverse, are both the nature, possibility and form of knowledge of God. Barth describes the unity of God as composite of the "threeness of the persons" (CD I:1, 350). The inner relation of the Trinity is thus marked by its distinction and yet its unity. Hunsinger describes this function and relation of the Trinity further:

The *perichoresis* presupposes God's self-differentiation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, even as three *hypostases* in turn presuppose God's self-identity as the Lord. To oversimplify for a moment, we may say that the one divine being correlates with God's freedom, that the three divine modes of being correlate with God's love, and that their perpetual unification correlates with God's eternal life. The trinitarian God is thus the living God who loves in freedom, or more technically, the trinity is the *perichoresis* of the three *hypostases* in the one *ousia* (Hunsinger, 2000; 190).

The Trinity's being in unified differentiation, acts in particular ways and forms in order to realize knowledge of God. For persons with intellectual disabilities the three natures of the Trinity, and its one act, is both the objective and subjective possibility of revelation.⁸²

God is prevenient in revelation. In this event God identifies himself within a created reality, and is "an event of self-predication in which God communicates himself as creator, reconciler and perfecter of the world" (Schwöbel: 1992, 90). In these three roles God wills and acts to bring all persons (including the most profoundly handicapped) to himself in reconciliation. The first mark of knowledge of God is "to hear a word as such, and to receive what it declares...[t]o be [hu]man, in responsibility before God is to know God" (CD III:2, 176). But this is not an act based on human effort or merit, but rather, [hu]mans might know God because God first knew [hu]mans. This knowledge however must not be interpreted as "idle knowledge,

⁸² For a comprehensive discussion of Barth's Trinitarian theology see Alan J. Torrance's work *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Torrance, 1996). In addition Jüngel, 1976; Williams, 1979; and Gunton, 1978 also consider Barth's particular and extensive view of the Trinity.

survey, examination, and understanding of God” but rather “[t]he knowledge of God consists in the fact that that the man for whom God has decided and whom He has opened to Himself now on His part decides for God and opens himself to Him, thus passing out from himself as through an open door and moving to God as God comes to him. In this movement he is the subject which knows God...” (CD III:2, 176). Thus the creator enables the creation to be open and to know Him- God enables persons with intellectual disabilities to become subject, as He is the first and only object.

This reconciliation occurs through Christ. Revelation is Trinitarian in shape whereby “God’s self-disclosure in Jesus Christ...creates the condition for the possibility of faith in which the Christ event is acknowledged as the foundation of the true relationship of human beings to God, to the world and to themselves” (Schwöbel, 1992; 86). For persons with intellectual disabilities God acts in saving fellowship through Jesus Christ in order to fulfill the situation of revelation (Schwöbel, 1992; 88). Jesus Christ’s life and death is the condition that makes possible any knowledge of God for all persons, including the most disabled.

Schwöbel views the being of Christ in three ways, similar to Barth.⁸³ The significance of Christ amidst the Trinity is understood to contain three constitutive elements: (1) the historical aspect of Jesus’ life as a demonstration of God’s will and grace; (2) the interpretation and witness to Christ’s life, death and resurrection by his followers, and; (3) this historical and interpretive witness account as validated by the Spirit (Schwöbel: 1992, 88). These three events together compose what Schwöbel calls “the Gospel of Christ” or the word of proclamation for believers who were not immediately privy to the life and death of Christ. Schwöbel rightly points out however that while these elements may be the medium of the word of revelation, they themselves are not the revelation. This is important in terms of persons with intellectual disabilities as at times, especially in the Reformed tradition as Swinton notes (Swinton, 1997; 21-22), the written and spoken word are often closely associated or identified with the direct revelation of God.

Barth also insists upon the vital roles of God and Christ in the Trinity in the work of revelation, though he also insists that the Holy Spirit has a vital part to play.

⁸³ It should be noted that Barth accepts and affirms the historical aspects of Christ’s life and death, though he places particular emphasis on the resurrection’s importance in terms of reconciliation, rather than its “historicity.” Hunsinger notes, “He [Barth] does not allow the question of historicity (a peculiar modern obsession) to obscure the resurrection’s chief theological significance (Hunsinger, 2000; 145).

The Spirit is not merely neutral, but the Spirit of God in Christ. The Holy Spirit is “a mode of being of the one essence of God” (CD I:1, 473). Scholars note how the work of the Spirit in “revelation”, “reconciliation” and “redemption” are interrelated concepts in Barth’s theology of the Holy Spirit (Hunsinger, 2000; 149).

Barth also points to the universal and yet particular nature of revelation by the Spirit, emphasizing that the Holy Spirit is responsible for all acts of communion and fellowship; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of *koinonia* (CD II:1, 275). “He receives us through his Son into his fellowship with himself” (CD II:1, 275). Communion in the Spirit means fellowship and love, through mutual self-giving and encounter with another. Barth writes: “His innermost self is his self-communication; and loving the world, he gives it a share of his completeness” (CD II:1, 277). Additionally, knowledge of God is found in fellowship, through the Spirit. Barth writes that by the Spirit humans come to know and enjoy “the communion with God which is realized in the revelation of God” (CD I:2, 257). Fellowship then, or *koinonia*, must be present for knowledge of God to be a reality, and by the Spirit this fellowship and knowledge occur for all persons, including those persons with intellectual disabilities.

5.5 Relationally Communal in Mediation: Reconciliation in Co-humanity

It has been argued up until now that revelation is possible for persons with intellectual disabilities in analogical ways, enabled by the uniqueness of the Trinity. Additionally I would also argue that for persons with intellectual disabilities, where communicative and rational capacities may be lacking, following the work of previous disability theologians such as Hauerwas and Yong, that the category of the church holds particular significance for persons with intellectual disabilities in terms of the possibility of revelation.

The term “church” here is not a reference to formal religion, but to a way of being together in *mitmenschlichkeit*, or co-humanity (CD III:2). This being is distinct, modeled and mediated by Jesus Christ, who is the true form of being (CD III:2; 223). Reconciliation, or “being for others in co-humanity” is the activity of “renewing of the Body, [Jesus Christ’s] own earthly-historical form of existence” (CD IV:1; 643). This reconciliation is not the work of humans, but an act of God in Christ, through the Spirit- this reconciliation is a “living knowledge” of God, by the Holy Spirit (CD IV:1; 646). This reconciliation or “being for others”, the living knowledge of God by the

Spirit, comes in many forms, and there is an “infinite range of colours and contours”, [and perhaps ability-TAD] to express this being (CD III:2; 231).

In my work, this co-humanity dimension of knowledge of God is a starting point for reflection on what knowledge of God might mean for persons with intellectual disabilities. In meeting the other and in being for the other as Church by the Spirit, persons of any ability begin to know of the revelation of God as they come to know the person of Christ. Barth argues that the true form of being for humanity is “co-humanity” or “fellow humanity”. “Every supposed humanity which is not radically and from the very first fellow-humanity is inhumanity” (CD III:2, 228). Barth writes:

It must be pointed out in conclusion that if the being of man in encounter is a being in correspondence to his determination as the covenant-partner of God, the statement is unavoidable that it is a being in correspondence to God Himself, to the being of His Creator...If man is ordained to be God’s partner in this covenant, and if his nature is a likeness corresponding to this ordination, necessarily it corresponds in this respect to the nature of God Himself...Quite obviously we do not have here more than an analogy, i.e., similarity in dissimilarity. We merely repeat that there can be no question of analogy of being, but of relationship. God is in relationship, and so too is the man created by Him. This is the divine likeness (III:2, 323-324).

The true form of being for the recipient of revelation is in co-humanity. This universally corresponds to God’s relational being; to know God’s way of being is to know God. The address of revelation is to all of humanity who is then called to be in co-humanity. Revelation however also has a particular character component, which as Schwöbel points out is, “closely connected to the personal character of God’s self-communication...As the personal self-communication of God it addresses the recipients in their personal being in the relational constitution of human existence as a relationship to God, to the world as self-relationship” (Schwöbel:1992, 93). Human beings are personally addressed in the interrelationships of human existence.

So just as true humanity and address is realized in co-humanity, the personal self-communication of God is also realized through relation to God, the world and self. The difference however, is that the personal self-communication of God carries with it the personal responsibility of maintaining and staying in relation to others (Schwöbel, 1992: 92). This responsibility is in a sense inherently a part of persons with intellectual

disabilities who, due to embodied inability, need the assistance and support of others day to day; in short, this relation is unavoidable for the intellectually disabled, and thus the responsibility is duly fulfilled through a certain embodiment.

Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger also notes the significance of co-humanity in her work *Praying without Ceasing* (van Deusen Hunsinger, 2006; 6). Here she comments, “we are not human without each other. We become God’s covenant partners in community. Only the whole church knit together in love can become what it is: the true marriage partner of Christ (Ephesians 5)” (van Deusen Hunsinger, 2006; 6). Isolation is inhumane and stunts “human flourishing”, but as people come together in a “mutual giving and receiving”, community and humanity is restored. The four aspects of being in encounter are developed, with particular attention paid to how this being for the other correlatively reflects the *imago Dei* and how pastoral care follows this relational pattern.

Similarly in terms of knowledge of God doctrinally and in terms of pastoral care, I would like to suggest that being in encounter in co-humanity is particularly significant for persons with intellectual disabilities. In the next chapter this suggestion will be considered, as will its implications for the possibility of pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities. But first we will turn to the task of putting these three Barthian points- *analogia relationis*, the Trinitarian nature of revelation and the role of co-humanity in revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities- into a fully developed theology of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities. As mentioned, this will be done in dialogue with the theological framework of Christoph Schwöbel.

5.6 An Expository look at Christoph Schwöbel’s View of the Elements of Revelation

Now that we have considered three aspects to Barth’s theology that allows for the possibility of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities in co-humanity as an act of God, we are well prepared to draw together all the learning from the last chapter and this chapter. The aim is to sketch a succinct yet comprehensive theology of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities, in dialogue with the work of Barth and Schwöbel. This dialogue will develop the primary thesis that knowledge of God is made real for persons with intellectual disabilities in an analogy of relationship whereby God’s love is demonstrated in encounter. Development of this statement will

be done in an “expository” fashion, considering the five moments of revelation as developed in and through this statement and as it applies to persons with intellectual disabilities. To further unpack what Schwöbel intends by the concept of revelation, we will briefly here consider the five basic elements that Schwöbel argues comprise the event of revelation. Schwöbel suggests that:

“we analyze ‘revelation’ as a relational concept in which the following terms are set in relation: the author of revelation (A), the situation of revelation (B), the content of revelation (C), the recipient of revelation (D), and the result of revelation E). The concept of revelation can consequently be constructed in the following formula: *A discloses in the situation B the content of C for the recipient D with the result E*” (Schwöbel, 1992; 87).

In other words, the five moments of revelation relate to one another sequentially and culminate in one result. Schwöbel describes revelation as the “event of God’s self-disclosure in Jesus Christ for humanity which creates the condition for the possibility of faith in which the Christ event is acknowledged as the foundation of the true relationship of human beings to God, to the world and to themselves” (Schwöbel, 1992; 86). The relation of the various terms and elements of revelation fall under the wider understanding of how this self-disclosure of God through Jesus Christ is set about. In other words, similarly to our opening concern with the *form* of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities, Schwöbel is concerned with the form of how revelation is brought about in Christ. Briefly then we will consider how Schwöbel understands each of the five terms describe.

Like Barth, Schwöbel understands (A) the *author of revelation* to be, “the triune God who relates in the disclosure event actively, directly and efficaciously to particular persons” (Schwöbel 1992, 87). This action is an intentional act of God, who in this disclosure, reveals his will and being and is an exercise of His asymmetrical freedom (Schwöbel: 1992 87). This corresponds to the work we just detailed in terms of the Trinity, and God’s primacy in acting in revelation. The (B) *situation of revelation* is interpreted in a traditional way by Schwöbel i.e., in a Christological sense. This means that “[t]he Christ event is seen as the paradigmatic disclosure situation in which God communicates himself to particular persons” (Schwöbel: 1992, 88). The situation of revelation may also be understood as the medium of revelation which involves the historical dimension of Jesus’ life, the interpretation of Jesus’ life as attested to by his followers, and the action of God’s Spirit in validating the message

of Jesus' resurrection. These ideas were briefly touched upon in the Trinitarian section above, however this area will be further detailed here, as it applies to persons with intellectual disabilities.

The (C) *content of revelation* is God's own reality. This is not to suggest that humanity has direct access to God, but rather that certain truth claims about God can be made that represent his proper reality (Schwöbel: 1992, 90). The content of revelation as God's own reality must also be understood in a relational sense. The *recipient of revelation* (D) is the particular person to whom this revelation is addressed. While the universal soteriological content of God's revelation for all of humanity is general for all, God's particular revelation is directed to persons by the activity and power of the Holy Spirit (Schwöbel: 1992, 93). Finally, for Schwöbel the *result of revelation* (E) is faith that is "to be described partly as a divine act and partly as a human disposition" (Schwöbel: 199, 96). Certain noetic questions remain in terms of persons with intellectual disabilities, and these will be discussed and addressed in detail in the following. We will now turn to understanding how these categories and moments of revelation apply to persons with intellectual disabilities, in dialogue with the theology of Karl Barth.

5.7 The Elements of Revelation for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities: Barth and Schwöbel in Dialogue

5.7.1 The Author of Revelation: All unable as humans, all enabled by an act of God

Emphasizing the act of God in revelation, Barth argues that "God's self-revelation meant that God's being had made itself perspicuous" (Hunsinger, 2000; 217). The author of revelation is God, and it is upon His act and initiative that knowledge of God comes to all persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities. Schwöbel argues that the author and situation of revelation is properly God, in Christ.

Barth's view of God as the author of revelation in this instance is very similar. Barth's view of God confronts the reader with a seeming paradox: God, the unknowable Object, in Christ is known. According to Barth, the human mind can never know God of its own merit, as God is of a different kind, which Barth describes as "wholly other." Yet Barth goes on, arguing that God's capacity to be known overrides human inability, albeit without nullifying the former reality. In an act of *a posteriori* grace, so to speak, humans are affirmed in faith and obedience, given by God in the person of Jesus Christ. God affirms and accomplishes that which *a priori*

humans could never know in the creaturely realm by the Spirit, but without becoming subject.

Barth emphasizes that ultimately this knowledge must be viewed as a divine gift and should only be met with praise, thanksgiving and gladness (CD II:1, 195). He leaves little room for epistemic arrogance, as ultimately it is God who accomplishes the knowing; we are all theologically disabled when faced with the realities of conceiving of God in both content and form. In this sense Barth's view of God is radically equalizing for all persons. He maintains that knowledge of God is possible and mightily present through God's awesome and prodigious ability- and *never* through human ability, effort or endeavor; persons of any ability can thus be potentially gifted with knowledge of God because this knowledge is not the work of humans, but the work of God.

In terms of persons with intellectual disabilities there is little cause for concern at this point regarding the possibility of revelation. God's ability and act in Christ are readily available and accomplished for all. This gives ontological confidence to our questions as it may then be assumed that the inabilities and disabilities of the intellectually disabled in no way exclude them from knowing God, the author of revelation.

5.7.2 The Situation of Revelation: The "Real Man" Jesus Christ

The situation of revelation that Schwöbel describes as the Christ event is sometimes also called the medium of revelation. As mentioned, Schwöbel argues that this Christological situation has three constitutive elements: (1) the historical aspect of Jesus' life as a demonstration of God's will and grace; (2) the interpretation and witness to Christ's life, death and resurrection by his followers, and; (3) this historical and interpretive witness account as validated by the Spirit (Schwöbel: 1992, 88). These three events together compose what Schwöbel calls "the Gospel of Christ" or the word of proclamation for believers who were not immediately privy to the life and death of Christ. Schwöbel rightly points out however that while these elements may be the medium of the word of revelation, they themselves are not the revelation.

In terms of persons with intellectual disabilities, this understanding of the situation of revelation as the "Gospel of Christ" is at first sight seemingly problematic as it potentially may be linked closely to more verbal and/or epistemic forms of interpretation of Christ's life. Persons with intellectual disabilities lack the capacity to

read scripture or hear of the accounts of Jesus's life, death and resurrection. How then might the situation of revelation, as understood in a Christological sense, be applied to the intellectually disabled?

I would argue that Barth's understanding of the Holy Spirit is vital to a full understanding of what is meant by "the situation of revelation" which is Jesus Christ. Barth argues that the Holy Spirit is the agent for the continuing work of Christ. Schwöbel argues that the Spirit participates in the "historical and interpretive witness" to Christ's life. This Christocentric focus also is emphasized by Barth who argues that the work of the Spirit and the person of Christ are synonymous (CD IV:2, 323). This means essentially that the work of the Spirit might also be identified as the work of Christ in the world. The reality of the situation of revelation, of Christ's continuing work in the world, is thus experienced and known as it is practiced. The practicing of Christ's work and reality, through and by the Holy Spirit of Christ, occurs in encounter, the "true form of being" (CD III:2, 250ff). Barth argues that the Holy Spirit is responsible for all acts of communion and fellowship; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of *koinonia*. Communion in the Spirit means fellowship and love, through mutual self-giving and encounter with another. Additionally knowledge of God is found in fellowship by the Spirit. Barth writes that by the Spirit humans come to know and enjoy "the communion with God which is realized in the revelation of God" (CD I:2, 257). Fellowship then, or *koinonia*, must be present for knowledge of God to be a reality. Fellowship and knowledge occur by this same Spirit.

Fellowship and communion are certainly possible for persons with intellectual disabilities. Conventional communication may prove difficult for persons with various impairments. It will be suggested and further developed in the next chapter that the imagination and the arts offer many potential ways to establish and maintain communication, communion and fellowship led by the Spirit. The situation of revelation, the reality of Christ's life, death, resurrection and reconciling acts, is made real, actual and accessible to all through the Holy Spirit of Christ in fellowship. This reconciling work in the body points to Christ's ultimate reconciliation of God and humanity is ontologically possible for persons with intellectual disabilities.

5.7.3 The Content of Revelation: God Himself

Schwöbel next identifies God as the proper content of revelation. He points out that "God does not reveal propositions about God, God reveals himself" (Schwöbel: 1992,

90). In this event God identifies himself within a created reality, and is “an event of self-predication in which God communicates himself as creator, reconciler and perfecter of the world” (Schwöbel: 1992, 90). This revelation of God is mediated by Christ, through the Spirit. Schwöbel’s suggests “[t]he self-identification of God in Jesus becomes God’s self-identification for us when we are convinced of the truth of the Gospel of Christ. This happens where the Holy Spirit re-presents the history of God’s self-identification in Jesus to the believer...and by being granted insight into the truth...believers are thus enabled to identify God as Father, Son and Spirit” (Schwöbel: 1992, 91). In terms of persons with intellectual disabilities, “insight” and “identif[ication]” might be problematic in terms of apprehending and understanding the content of revelation. There is, however, a second aspect to the content of revelation that is assistive in terms of the content of revelation: namely, action. Schwöbel develops this action-based element of revelation to some degree⁸⁴ however this more active form is much more prevalent when we engage directly with Barth himself. Barth argues that revelation inherently involves action and movement, i.e. forms of being possible for the intellectually disabled.

For Barth, the marks of knowledge of God may be described as a procession of interrelated events. The first mark of knowledge of God is “to hear a word as such, and to receive what it declares...[t]o be [hu]man, in responsibility before God is to know God” (CD III:2, 176). But this is not an act based on human effort or merit, but rather, [hu]mans might know God because God first knew [hu]mans. This knowledge must not be interpreted as “idle knowledge, survey, examination, and understanding of God” but rather “[t]he knowledge of God consists in the fact that that the man for whom God has decided and whom He has opened to Himself now on His part decides for God and opens himself to Him, thus passing out from himself as through an open door and moving to God as God comes to him. In this movement he is the subject which knows God...” (CD III:2, 176). This movement then enables an encounter whereby God and humanity meet, and in this place reconciliation and healing occur.

⁸⁴ Schwöbel argues that, “The formal structure of God’s self-identification as Father, Son and Spirit is closely connected to the content of God’s action by which God shows himself to be the creator, reconciler and saviour of the world. The content of the Gospel of Christ is the reconciliation of the fallen creation through God’s grace...[is] his action in creation, reconciliation and salvation...” (Schwöbel, 1992; 92). Thus the content of revelation involves an active, lived reality, in which persons with intellectual disabilities might certainly take part.

5.7.4 The Recipient of Revelation

Revelation, Schwöbel argues, is “addressed to particular persons” (Schwöbel: 1992, 92). Although God’s truth-claim has universal implications for all, this claim does not discount the particular, subjective aspect of revelation, which is actualized by the Holy Spirit. God relates to the recipients of revelation personally in a Trinitarian form as Father, redeemer and reconciler, in freedom. Schwöbel notes:

Human beings are personal relational beings in that their existence is passively constituted by its relatedness to God the creator, reconciler and saviour as the ground of their existence, its truth and its freedom, by its relatedness to the world as a part of creation and by their relatedness to themselves and other persons in the reflexivity and sociality of human existence as the medium of its personal constitution...Human personhood is realized in the mode of actively relating to God, to the world, to itself and to other human persons and is therefore recognized by finite freedom. Human beings therefore are the creatures who can correspond to their creator or contradict their creator (Schwöbel: 1992, 93).

The recipient of revelation is a personal, relational being, who is actively relating with others socially, and in freedom. This includes persons with intellectual disabilities: God relates to them in ways and forms that are meaningful and apprehendable.

Barth too points to the universal and yet particular nature of revelation, though he expounds in greater detail upon this social and relational aspect of the recipient of revelation. He argues that the true form of being for humanity is “co-humanity” or “fellow humanity”: “[e]very supposed humanity which is not radically and from the very first fellow-humanity is inhumanity” (CD III:2, 228). Barth writes:

It must be pointed out in conclusion that if the being of man in encounter is a being in correspondence to his determination as the covenant-partner of God, the statement is unavoidable that it is a being in correspondence to God Himself, to the being of His Creator...If man is ordained to be God’s partner in this covenant, and if his nature is a likeness corresponding to this ordination, necessarily it corresponds in this respect to the nature of God Himself...Quite obviously we do not have here more than an analogy, i.e., similarity in dissimilarity. We merely repeat that there can be no question of analogy of

being, but of relationship. God is in relationship, and so too is the man created by Him. This is the divine likeness (CD III:2, 323-324).

The true form of being for the recipient of revelation is in co-humanity. This universally corresponds to God's relational being; to know God's way of being is to know God.

The address of revelation is to all of humanity, every one of whom is called to be in co-humanity. This relational understanding of revelation has implications for a discussion of character and characteristics, for as Schwöbel points out, "closely connected to the personal character of God's self-communication...As the personal self-communication of God it addresses the recipients in their personal being in the relational constitution of human existence as a relationship to God, to the world as self-relationship" (Schwöbel:1992, 93). Human beings are personally addressed in the interrelationships of human existence, according to their personal character. So just as true humanity and address is realized in co-humanity, the personal self-communication of God is also realized through relation to God, the world and self. The difference however, is that the personal self-communication of God carries with it the personal responsibility of maintaining and staying in relation to others (Schwöbel, 1992: 92). This responsibility is in a sense inherently a part of persons with intellectual disabilities who, due to embodied inability, necessitate the assistance and support of others day to day; in short, this relation is unavoidable for the intellectually disabled, and thus the responsibility is duly fulfilled through a certain embodiment.

5.7.5 The Response to Revelation: Noetic Questions of Faith

While Barth's view of the Word in co-humanity opens the way for a more inclusive account of revelation, certain noetic questions remain in terms of Barth's emphasis on the human intellectual response. If co-humanity and encounter help to make God known, how is this received and made real and personal for the intellectually disabled personally? How does knowledge of God transmute, so to speak, from the reality of being in encounter to confronting the "I" of the person with intellectual disability? Scholars such as Marc Cortez argue that Barth's Christological ontology necessitates and demands a sense of selfhood, consciousness, and the ability for continuous personal identity, agency, mutual causation, the notion and ability of freedom, some form of embodiment and a contingent form of personhood (Cortez, 2006; 114-120).

Schwöbel maintains that faith is an appropriate response to revelation, and takes care to detail that there are various components of faith to note. He writes:

Faith is therefore the active acknowledgement of its passive constitution in God's revelatory action. Faith is this acknowledgement as unconditional existential trust in God, Father, Son and Spirit as the creator, reconciler, and perfecter of the world, that is, trust in God as God gives himself in his self-communication as the ground and 'object' of faith (Schwöbel:1992, 96).

Faith that requires "existential trust" however is seemingly problematic for persons with intellectual disabilities who may lack the ability for conceiving of an abstract object and existentially responding in faith.

Does faith, as a response to revelation, demand some intellectual capacity? What is the degree and nature of Barth's noetic emphasis? Similar to the Christological ontology, are the abilities of agency, consciousness, etc., required in order for faith to occur and revelation to take place? Even in a relational ontology of knowledge of God, is there some degree of subjective capacity that is requisite for participation?

The answer to these questions must be considered in stages. We must first better understand Barth's conception of selfhood. Key to this understanding is appreciating both the internal and external parts of this being. Secondly, we must consider Barth's unique view of faith, the priority and emphasis Barth places on faith being an act of God and not humans, and its close alliance with obedience. Both of these qualifications demonstrate that while Barth does indeed emphasize intellectual response, this is done in terms drastically different from many of his modern contemporaries.⁸⁵

Firstly, while Barth emphasizes the importance of the human intellect, he carefully qualifies this being with an external basis for this internal dimension. "Barth's understanding of human selfhood manifests as awareness of its external as well as internal dimensions and, therefore, presents a sharp criticism of the rational, self-constituting self of post-Enlightenment modernism" (Fischer, 1988; 192, Mangina, 2001; 14 and Kerr 2002; 27). A more nuanced and careful consideration

⁸⁵ E.J. Lowe may be considered one example of such a contemporary. He thus defines self as "a subject of consciousness, a being capable of thought and experience and able to engage in deliberate action. More crucially, a self must have a capacity for self-consciousness...a self is a being that is able to entertain first person thoughts (Lowe, 1995; 817).

however of Barth's view of the human intellectual response reveals that while Barth does at times seem to emphasize internal selfhood and certain conscious capabilities (CD III:2; 335, 352, 371, 374), this is ultimately accompanied by an external manifestation of this being. In §46 Barth emphasizes these internal capacities, however this being is primarily grounded in a purposive relationship with God. While the experience of self-hood and subjectivism demand certain epistemic and cognitional capacities and responses, this being is constituted and realized in a determinative relationship with God.⁸⁶ In other words, while Barth emphasizes intellectual capacities, the demonstration and use of these capacities primarily takes place through God and in relationship to him; intelligent acts correspondingly take place through the Spirit of Christ.

Secondly, in terms of Barth's understanding of faith, it must be clarified that Barth does not view existential trust as an epistemic, rational, autonomous experience, but rather the work of God, experienced as an "indwelling" (GD, 1990; 197). According to Barth, sin is a contradiction of true humanity, however God overcomes this being by becoming subject and "by creating faith and obedience in us by the Spirit" (GD, 1990; 78). Faith is an act of God. A shift in framework is required in order to conceive of Barth's suggestion: from an anthropomorphic framework of responsibility and ability, to a theocentric framework that recognizes the primacy of God in creating, instilling and fulfilling the conditions of faith. Barth describes this instance further:

I confess what Stephan calls the Catholic and older Protestant curtailment of the concept of faith. Paul, so far as I can tell, was guilty of it too. It makes faith an expectancy...a medium, a puzzle, a transparency, a concealment, a condition of revelation which in itself is not even subjectively the same as the knowability of God...The certainty and truth of faith is not grounded in faith itself but in the act of revelation to which it relates, in God himself, the Holy Spirit, who creates it (GD, 1990; 336).

In terms of persons with intellectual disabilities, faith is an equal possibility, similarly to persons with no cognitive ability, as it is not based on the human ability to reason,

⁸⁶ Cortez points to Freyer, who indicates that the kind of subjectivity that Barth has in mind is not the "subjectivity of the human person understood in abstraction from God, but the human person who is a subject specifically because he has been drawn into covenantal relation through the call of God (Freyer, 1991; 195).

trust or believe. Rather, faith is the result of God's act in and through Christ that creates the conditions for faith. But what is the result of this faith? What is the content of this state?

Barth describes faith as an "indwelling" from and of God that is an act of God, not based upon the epistemic ability of humans to grasp of Him, but rather "links the soul to God's invisible, ineffable, unnameable [sic], eternal and incomprehensible Word" (Luther, *E. Op. lat.*, XIV 81, WA, 5, 69, 29-31. As cited in GD, 1991; 197). This Word is of the Holy Spirit, and is the subjective possibility of faith. "The Word", Barth writes, "creates the fact that we hear the Word...Up there with Him it is possible for it to be possible down here with us". God is the one who (as a personal rather than an inanimate object) opens himself to others in order to be known as only persons can and must. He is also (as the Creator God who wholly transcends this world) the one who adopts and adapts both the recipients and the media of revelation, establishing the analogy through which faith is enabled to participate in this knowing relation" (CD 1:2, 247). Thus for persons with intellectual disabilities an appropriate response is instilled by God in an appropriate "media" of faith.

This does not mean that humans are to be passive subjects, waiting for God's act to instill faith in their internal realm. Intimately tied up with Barth's view of faith is also his fundamental belief in the unity of faith and obedience. In *Freedom to Believe* Barth succinctly sums up his belief in this regard:

Knowledge of God according to the teaching of the Reformation does not...permit the man who knows to withdraw himself from God, so to speak, and to maintain an independent and secure position over against God so that from this he may form thoughts about God, which are in varying degrees true, beautiful and good. This latter procedure is that of all natural theology. One can only choose between this and the procedure of Reformed theology, one cannot reconcile them. Knowledge of God according to the teaching of the Reformation is *obedience* to God and therefore itself already service to God (Barth, 1949; 103-104).

A practical, real and lived response must follow knowledge of God in order for it to be real knowledge and faith.

What does Barth mean by obedience? Most obviously we can point to the ethical teaching of scriptures (GD, 1990; 193), however the epistemic element of obedience again may prove murky for persons unable to conceive of actions as

existentially right or wrong. Obedience for Barth means to respond to the call of Christ (CD I:2, 106). This is true obedience. And to follow the call of Christ is to be like Christ. As will be demonstrated further in the next chapter, this is a being with and for others, or a being in co-humanity in encounter (CD III:2, 235ff). This being and obedience is certainly possible for persons with intellectual disabilities, especially in light of their fundamental need for others in order to live day to day. Disability necessitates co-humanity intrinsically and I would suggest that this category of being not be overlooked as subsidiary, but especially considered as vital for the possibility of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities. This suggestion readily draws together the suggestions regarding a scriptural view of knowledge and of Barth's suggestion regarding revelation in co-humanity: revelation is possible for persons with intellectual disabilities, and loving relationships mediate this knowledge.

5.8 Conclusion: Revelation for All Persons

Persons with intellectual disabilities are doctrinally accounted for when knowledge is understood from a biblical perspective as a relational, emotive, affective and embodied experience. Additionally the theology of Karl Barth affirms the possibility of knowledge of God occurring beyond the more epistemic, rational realm. Despite, or perhaps because of his embroilment in post-Kantian questions about the possibility of human reason attaining to knowledge of God, Barth's theology validates the possibility of revelation being viable for the intellectually disabled as: All persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, are part of the ongoing revelatory history that is salvic and redemptive, disclosing the being of the Trinitarian God in relational analogy in co-humanity, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is in this space, I would suggest that the possibility of meaningful pastoral care exists, and we will now consider a Christological analogy for this form of care.

Chapter 6:

Being With the Other: The Pastoral Covenant- Relationship

6.1 Considering the pastoral relationship

If knowledge of God is possible for persons with intellectual disabilities, how might this knowledge be facilitated and supported in practical ways? As will become apparent throughout this chapter, engaging a relational, Barthian framework, in dialogue with Barth's understanding of Christ's relations with others, offers concrete, practical guidance in this area. As seen in chapter five in particular, the presence of persons with intellectual disabilities challenges theology to talk in more inclusive ways about the meaning of knowledge of God; tacit knowledge and knowledge of God in co-humanity emerge as two such examples. Arguably persons with intellectual disabilities experience a quality of relationship with God less accessible to persons with particular kinds of cognitive function, thereby illuminating and expanding the more familiar, so-called intellectually able modes of knowledge of God. Barthian theology however is exceptional in that it expands upon these less-cognitive forms of knowledge theologically. Our task in this chapter is to consider how these broader and more inclusive modes of knowledge, as expounded by Barth, might be facilitated and supported in pastoral care.

So far, I have broadly adopted Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger's method of thinking with Barth's Chalcedonian pattern to better describe the enigmatic relationship between theology and depth psychology. That is, I have used a Barthian framework for understanding the human person and revelation in considering the question of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.⁸⁷ In the last

⁸⁷ In considering interdisciplinary dialogue, such as the relation between psychology and theology, theologian Daniel Price also points to the promise of the theology of Karl Barth. Price seeks to draw an analogy that is aware, so to speak, between theology and other disciplines, such as pastoral care, with the proper theological boundaries in place. In this regard he argues that Barth is especially useful:

chapter I further utilized Barthian theology in dialogue with Christoph Schwöbel's categories of revelation, in order to better identify and describe knowledge of God found in co-humanity or relationship. In this chapter I continue to engage Barth's theology but now will draw from his more practical writings. In particular, I will be drawing from §45, sections I and II: "Jesus, the Man for Other Men" and "The Basic Form of Humanity." These works will then be utilized in considering how knowledge of God might take place in the pastoral relationship.⁸⁸ More specifically, I consider what impact Christ's covenant relations with others have on theological construals of the pastoral relationship. In addition we will consider what are perhaps some of Barth's most practical writings regarding how embodied encounter takes place between two people and the implications of these reflections for pastoral care.

The chapter will be structured in three parts. In the first section we will discuss what Barth intends when he utilizes the phrase "being for the other" in regard to Christ and for humans, "being with the other" (CD III:2, 203ff, 443). Briefly, in this first section discussing the significance of being "with the other", we will consider the three distinctions that Barth notes regarding humanity's "being with the other" relating to covenant-partnership, being with other persons, and human beings existing in relation (CD III:2, 243). This change from being "for" the other to being "with" the other is a small, and yet significant point to note, especially in terms of pastoral care.

When it comes to carefully delineating the respective roles of theology and the natural sciences [such as Pastoral counseling], Barth is particularly helpful. This is because of his insistence that theology must stand its own ground, remaining faithful to its own particular object of inquiry, which is the self-disclosure of the triune God. At the same time, Barth also realized that theology could not be done in isolation from modern thought. Barth believed theology could best serve the other sciences by engaging in dialogue- a dialogue, which respected, and sometime *defended* the establishment of clear boundaries between the disciplines (Price, 2002;7-8) .

Price seeks to develop an analogy between psychology and theology with respect to the essence of human personhood in relation to the "other." He seeks to explain and explore how Fairbairn's mother-child relationship found in object relations psychology correlates with Barth's understanding of the inner-Trinitarian relations. What results, despite differing language, methods and purposes, is a rich interplay that come to conclusions that in striking ways are closely analogous (Price, 2002; 12-13).

⁸⁸ The phrase "pastoral relationship" refers in this chapter to the relations between the person with disabilities and the pastoral caregiver. It does not imply a hierarchy of power, but rather is descriptive of a relationship that is based in equal value and participation. In this way, both persons give and receive in the relationship.

“Being with the other” will hitherto become our framework and model for pastoral care with persons with intellectual disabilities.

A brief note regarding the first of these distinctions. Covenant relationship is a familiar topic to scholars of Karl Barth’s writings and I shall especially draw upon the writings of John Webster and Bruce McCormack, who write extensively in regard to Barth’s view of the covenant, from differing perspectives (Webster, 1995; McCormack, 1995). Briefly we will consider these two differing interpretations of Barth’s understanding of the covenant, considering the ethical and dialectical interpretations of the covenantal relationship. And although distinctly diverse interpretations exist, it will be noted that they share a common interpretation of the form of the covenant relationship, which is triadic in shape, involving two persons and the Spirit of Christ. In terms of our work, it is arguably *this* shape that is significant to remember, and that it is the Holy Spirit that enables relationship, and not the communicative skills of the parties or the interventions/frameworks/interpretations utilized.

Secondly, after considering the significance and possibility of being “with” the other, we will consider Barth’s writings in regard to Christ’s “being for the other” in encounter. While certain qualifications must be made regarding the type of direction to take place (again, no *analogia entis*, but, instead, *relationis*), Barth’s observations into Christ’s relations with others might further illuminate the nature of the relationships possible between two persons, facilitated by the Spirit. While only Christ can be ultimately “for others, this section may offer some additional insights into emotive and physical postures that may assist being “with” others in relationship. Finally, in the third section, we will engage Barth’s practical suggestions regarding “the true form of being.” This section develops embodied suggestions regarding relationship and encounter that have tremendous potential for assisting the pastoral relationship.

6.2 Humanity as Being *with* the other in Covenant Relationship

6.2.1 Covenant Relationship “in Christ”

Barth clearly states that the true form of being for humans is a being with the other (CD III:3, 243). He further develops this point by clarifying and describing three areas: 1. The nature of the human is as the covenant partner with God; 2. The being of man is being with others; 3. The being of man as a being in duality in encounter (CD III:3, 243). For pastoral care this means that care is not to be given or administered to

someone for another, but rather, care is being with the other, in relationship. This care is always mutual. This framework resembles the model of friendship suggested by John Swinton and Jean Vanier in chapters 2 and 3, however this form of relationship is deepened by the covenant.

6.2.2 The Meaning of Covenant Relationship

What is the meaning and basis of the covenant? This is the first and primary points of Barth's distinctions regarding the true form of being for humanity, and thus it is vital to understand and fully grasp the meaning and context of this concept. While space is limited regarding Barth's enormous contribution to the area of the covenant, it is vital to have a basic understanding of this concept, as it is the basis, genesis and foundation of the pastoral relationship.⁸⁹

Barth argues in the pithy little book *Humanity of God* that a covenant partnership exists between humanity and God. This leads Barth to suggest that a more appropriate term for theology is "theanthropology", or the covenant relationship between God and humankind (Barth, 1967; 9). Barth writes: "For an abstract doctrine of God has no place in the Christian realm, only a 'doctrine of God and [hu]mans', a doctrine of the commerce and communion between God and [hu]mans" (Barth, 1967; 9). Theology, Barth argues, is not properly the study of God in isolation but rather denotes a particular relationship between humanity and God. It is this covenant relationship that gives meaning to all human relationships, and I would argue is of particular importance for the pastoral relationship. The covenant relationship increases the call of all humans to be engaged in the world, through *active* engagement. For our work this translates into the call that both persons with and without disabilities have a call to be together in relationship, both giving and receiving care. What does the term covenant imply in Barthian terms?

As with many significant Barthian theological tenets, scholars and theologians interpret Barth's view of the covenant in a differing ways. Theologian John Webster is known and noted for his ethical interpretation of the *Church Dogmatics*, whereby he

⁸⁹ For further reading on Barth's view of the covenant see: Green, 1987; 187ff, Busch, 2004; 82ff, and Magina, 2001; 57-68.

argues that Barth's theology is at its firstly a *moral theology* (Webster, 1998). Webster is first and foremost concerned with human action, however emphasizing that the source and possibility for meaningful human activity (such as relationship) are found in the triune God. Webster's interpretation of Barth's view of the covenant is also correlatively ethical: he argues that all persons (with or without disabilities) have an ethical call to human action because of the covenant.

Alternatively, theologian Bruce McCormack offers a different paradigm for understanding Barth's *Dogmatics*, focusing on the dialectical nature of Barth's writings (McCormack, 1995). Contrary to many Barthian scholars, such as Hans Urs von Balthasar, McCormack's claim is that Barth did not undergo a profound change in his writings, from dialectic to analogical thought, but rather remained a dialectic theologian all of his life.

The first dialectics are 'real dialectics'; each describes a dialectical relationship between two magnitudes or states of affairs, which are objectively real prior to human knowledge of them. Barth's conviction however, is that human knowledge of dialectical relations will also be dialectical in character. Knowledge of God consists for human beings in a following-after and a thinking-after the movement of God in His self-revelation (McCormack, 1995; 270).

McCormack argues that "participation" and "thinking-after" the text of Scripture, which only become realized through the interplay between the text and God's gracious action in human lives (McCormack, 1995; 271). As a result of this stance, McCormack understands Barth's view of covenant in dialectical terms: thus the covenant is in fact realized through the interplay between God and humanity.

The differing interpretations aside of Barth's theology as a whole, common ground may be found amidst this debate of in regard to the area of the shape of the covenant relationship. Whether Barth's view of the covenant is viewed ethically or dialectically, or in an alternate way altogether, all emphasize the triadic nature of the relationship, which is based in Christ. This is especially important to remember in terms of the pastoral relationship.

All persons are covenant partners with God, persons with intellectual disabilities and those without disabilities, and thus have a call for engagement with all people. As it will be recalled from the previous chapter, Barth argues that Jesus is the man elected solely by God and that this has enormous ontological implications for

humanity. One of these remnants of sin is the desire human individualism and autonomy; for humans wish to escape the address of the Word, seeking to place themselves as God (CD III:2, 147). Barth describes this sin as the “dreadful possibility” and the “ontological impossibility” (CD III:2, 205). For persons with and without disabilities, the reality of a sinful, human nature strains to break free from human relationship, seeking isolation and autonomy. But at an ontic level Christ overcomes this rejection through election of all humanity. God, in Christ, chose persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, first and all are “determined by God for life with God. This is the distinctive feature of...being in the cosmos” (CD III:2, 203). No other being is chosen for such a relationship. This ontological fact however does not cancel or annul the need for meaningful human action- far from it. Rather Barth maintains that in this moral space exists the possibility for meaningful human activity that takes place as covenant partners with God (Webster, 1995; 105ff).

Similarly, all persons are called to correspond to this being in seeking to establish encounter and relationship with others, just as God sought relationship and being with humanity in Christ.⁹⁰ This point is also Barth’s second point in regard to

⁹⁰ Barth emphasizes how covenant is first demonstrated in the relations between male and female, and the relationship between Yahweh and Israel (CD III:2, 296). In the other, fulfillment of hope and promise is found:

Behind the relationship of man and woman as we meet it in the picture of Genesis 2 and the Song of Songs there stands the controlling original of the relationship between God Yahweh-Elohim and His people Israel. Behind these passages there stands Old Testament prophecy. And according to the insight which continually breaks through, the sum of all truth and actuality, which is thus also the beginning and end of all things, the secret of creation and its consummation, is the very different duality merely reflected in the nature of man- that of God and man in their co-existence in the concrete form of the covenant established by God Himself and His people Israel. This duality, this covenant, is the centre of the Old Testament. And it is the original of which the essence of the human as the being of man and woman can only be the reflection and copy (CD III:2, 297).

Covenant is promise of partnership and duality. But it is not just a promise: covenant is *the* promise reflected of likeness and fulfillment.

This fulfillment culminates in Christ. Barth begins §45 with a simple and yet far-reaching statement: “Real man lives with God as his covenant-partner” (CD III:2, 203). Christ is the Real man, and the perfect example and realization of the promise. He is the salvation promised and the life everlasting, the new Adam, who overcomes death, reconciling humanity to God. This covenant

the three distinction for the true form of being for humanity: humanity must be with the other (CD III:2, 243). Barth maintains that this relationship of being with the other is the corresponding feature of humanity's being as a cosmic creature and as the covenant partner of God. Similarly then, humanity has a responsibility to participate in the history that God has established in and through humanity. "The creation of God, and therefore His positing of a reality distinct from Himself, is the external basis and possibility of the covenant. And the covenant itself is the internal basis and possibility of the creation, and therefore of the existence of a reality distinct from God." (CD III:2, 204). A person can still reject this relationship, but it is nonetheless to be offered, just as Christ offered and sacrificed himself for all. Why should all persons be in encounter and relationship? No less than because Christ first sought relationship with humanity; so all persons, including pastoral caregivers and persons with disabilities, are equally called to do the same.

6.2.3 Covenant relationship and pastoral care: Being with others

What does this covenant partnership imply for the pastoral relationship? Covenant-partnership implies a sharing in the history of God's acts and works, wherein humanity has a role and calling to fulfill. As covenant partners of God in Christ, all persons are called to participate in loving acts of forgiveness, kindness, faithfulness and hope, enabled through Christ's Spirit of love.

partnership however does not end with Christ. Rather, it is extended to all humanity, Barth points out. He states:

The New Testament answers that the covenant between Jesus Christ and His community was in the beginning, the first and proper object of the divine will and plan and election, and internal basis of creation (CD III:2, 300).

As Christ is the helpmeet of God, Christ's covenant partner is His community, or the Church. "The New Testament answers that it is in the covenant between Jesus Christ and His community it takes place that man's apostasy from God is finally cancelled and made good, that fidelity and love between God and man are made reciprocal by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that the accusation against man, and therefore the Law which accuses, drop away" (CD III:2, 300). [It is though this; The covenant partnership between Christ and humanity [which] ultimately overcame [overcomes] sin and death

As the covenant demonstrates, Christ's life, the life of the Church and all of humanity can not be self-contained and fully realized alone, but rather, fulfillment is only found in and through the other. Pastoral care givers and persons with disabilities too share in covenant relationship, fulfilling promise by the Spirit of Christ. Thus encounters and relationships that take place between two people (such as persons with disabilities and pastoral caregivers) are not dyadic, two-way relationships, but rather covenant, *triadic* relationships, enabled in Christ and between persons with disabilities, the pastoral caregiver and the Holy Spirit.⁹¹ Thus it is not fitting to talk about a framework or analogy of care, reflecting and imitating Christ in terms of pastoral care for persons with disabilities, but rather, care must be understood in its original form- covenant relationship between three parties. Pastoral caregivers and persons with disabilities, in and through Christ, encounter one another, enabled by Christ, growing in relationship by the acts and love of His spirit.

In an interesting development, Barth goes further, describing how Christ is "for others" in this covenant relationship. This being has a three-part reality which Geoffrey Bromiley terms Jesus's "comprehensive and radical identification" with humanity (Bromiley, 1979; 128). Barth argues that: 1. Jesus is determined by the other and identifies with the "state and fate of man" (CD III: 2, 210); 2. Jesus is determined by his office and calling. Jesus Christ is the working Jesus; and 3. Jesus is determined by the nature of the inner Trinitarian relationship (CD III:2, 214-219). Thus Christ is in his true form as he is with and for others; isolation and abstraction from others is inhuman and un-Christ like.⁹² As mentioned, we will briefly consider this development

⁹¹ In light of the recognition that both pastoral care givers and persons with disabilities have a calling to fulfill in covenant relationship, the phrase "pastoral caregiver" could arguably be applied to both parties. Indeed, both are involved in the care of the other. For clarity however, the terms "pastoral care giver" and "persons with disabilities" will be employed, as some distinction must be given for the clarity of the points made. This is largely the work of semantics however as the call of both parties is that of pastoral caregiver.

⁹² Barth argues that humanity acts against its true form of being when it exists in isolation. This point is developed by considering the "unequalled logic and perspicacity" of Friedrich Nietzsche (CD III:2, 231-242). In an excurses of Nietzsche's work in *Ecce homo* (published in 1908), Barth points out that Nietzsche seeks "the development of humanity without the fellow-man." Nietzsche's statement, "I am" serves to illustrate the ultimate portrait of humanity, the "superman", "the supreme and mature fruit of the whole development of true humanity" - a person who is strong and powerful- the antithesis of the "...Jesus, [and] a whole host of others who re wholly and utterly ignoble and despised in the eyes of the

here and consider if/how Barth's observations about Christ's relations with others might offer direction for the pastoral relationship.

6.3 Direction from Christ: Jesus Christ, the Man for Other People

In considering the pastoral relationship, we now turn to considering the acts and relationships of Christ. It is important to remember that, when dealing with the theology of Karl Barth, analogies may be made between divine being and human beings must be analogies of relationship, and not of *entis* or being, and that they correspond only indirectly (CD I:1, 166). This point is especially important to reiterate and emphasize now that in this chapter we seek to garner direction from Christ's being in terms of pastoral care; the analogy supposed is only in the realm of relationships, and it is not being suggested that an essential quality or trait be sought in ways analogous to the divine being. Thus suggestions will be made as per how pastoral relationships might be developed, however this relationship will correspond only to Christ's form of relations with humanity.

Firstly, in regard to Christ's being towards others, Barth argues that the *esse* (or being) of Jesus as the working Jesus is also a "being for the other." Christ's being for others in his humanity is exhibited in his alliance with the "state and fate of man." This is demonstrated both physically and emotionally. My claim is that tremendous potential for direction for pastoral relationship. Secondly, Jesus is the working-man as savior. Out of this being he acts and works to redeem fellow humanity. Pastoral caregivers and persons with disabilities too have a calling as covenant partners with God to create and facilitate loving community with others.⁹³ The covenant in Christ results in the reality that caregivers are already caring with persons with intellectual disabilities because of their prior relationship in Christ. Thirdly, Christ is determined by the nature of his relations within the Godhead. When properly contextualized this form of relation has several useful implications for better understanding the nature of

world...the hungry and thirsty and sick and captive, a whole ocean of human meanness and painfulness" (CD III:2, 240-241). In terms of persons with intellectual disabilities, Nietzsche's work may be applied in such ways as to conclude that a life of weakness and suffering, as is experienced by man persons with disabilities, is inhuman. Barth however, brilliantly argues the exact opposite "in Christ", as will be demonstrated.

care that is based in mutual love and care.⁹⁴ The being of Jesus within the Trinity, Barth argues, is a being of “co-existence, co-inherence and reciprocity” (CD III:2, 218). This form of relation and existence is enigmatic in terms of Trinitarian being, however when viewed and understood in relation to Christ’s being, it may be understood as a form of relation that seeks not to just do for the other, but a form of being that learns from the other and is assisted by the other. There is an exchange of gifting and being, a mutual correspondence, where position, pride and hierarchy have no place. The caregiver both gives and receives care, as does the person with the disability. In the following section each of these areas will be explored further theologically and pastorally, and considerations for the pastoral relationship will be highlighted.

6.3.1 Identification with the “state and fate” of others: *Physical and Emotive Postures of Identification*

That Christ is determined by the other in his cosmic form means that Jesus actively identifies with the “state and fate of man” physically and also emotively in mercy and “σπλαγχνίζεσθαι” and in love (CD III:2, 210). This involves both a physical and emotive posture of identification.

Firstly in terms of physical identification, Christ’s Chalcedonian nature results in his being for others in his life and in his death. Christ is for the other in his humanity and divinity:

If we see Him alone, we do not see Him at all. If we see Him, we see with and around Him in ever-widening circles His disciples, the people, His enemies and the countless millions who have not yet heard His name. We see Him as theirs,

⁹⁴ In *Praying without Ceasing: Revitalizing Pastoral Care*, Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger makes the important point that while similarities exist between the Trinitarian relations and Christ, and human relations, major differences exist too. She points out that “[t]he mutual indwelling that characterizes the Holy Trinity becomes a template for our understanding to Jesus Christ...Our fellowship with Christ is similar in intimacy to the eternal communion of the Trinity, but different in the following respect. In ourselves and apart from Christ we remain sinners who are unable to enter God’s holy presence. But in and through Christ, we are made righteous before God and given access to the Father as adopted children...Our being *in Christ* (*koinonia*) allows us to claim God as our Father (van Deusen Hunsinger, 2006:5). Thus Christ is the enabler of “indwelling”, and the Spirit of Christ enables *koinonia* in co-humanity. This Spirit is prior and prevenient to any human action or response because of the covenant.

determined by them and for them, belonging to each and every one of them. It is thus that He is Master, Messiah, King and Lord. “Selfless” is hardly the word to describe this humanity. Jesus is not “selfless” For in this way He is supremely Himself. The theme of the New Testament witness is a kind of incomparable picture of human life and character. What emerges in it is a supreme I wholly determined by and to the Thou. With this twofold dimension Jesus is human (CD III:2, 216).

In both his humanity and his divinity Christ is determined by the other and subject to the other, but without losing his objective reality.

Barth first turns to scripture in describing the human being of Christ, who identifies with other men. This identification is the “concrete correlative of his divinity” (CD III:2, 210). This form is a being of sympathy, help, deliverance, mercy and active solidarity. Barth divines this being from scriptures such as Philippians 2:6: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not a prey to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.” Or again, Barth argues that this identification with humanity is described in Hebrew 2:14: “Forasmuch then as the children (of Abraham) are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through the power of death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death who were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (CD III:2, 209). Barth continues to develop the being of Jesus as a being that is allied with the being of humans through scriptural references to Hebrews 4:15, Acts 10:38 and through the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:39, whereby compassion is shown to the man who fell to thieves. In this, the Samaritan made the plight and suffering of the victim his own, choosing not to pass by, but identifying with the man, caring for him and taking responsibility for the man’s hurts and wants.

George Hunsinger points out that the being of God is a being that is not merely objective, but rather, is “self-involving” (Hunsinger, 1991; 152). He states:

The mediation of Truth in Jesus Christ- the truth of God’s identity and also of humanity’s identity on him- does not remain merely objective (though it never ceases to be objective). It encounters men and women at the core of their beings, Barth argues, liberating them from being closed in upon themselves. They thereby come to recognize the truth of their being in Jesus Christ, to

participate actively in that truth, and to serve it as witness here and now (Hunsinger, 1991; 152).

Jesus actively pursues and engages with individuals; he does not sit back and wait for their initiative or interest, but he is self-involving in co-humanity.⁹⁵ Jesus involved himself in the life and plight of the people around him and he displayed the ultimate self-involvement in terms of his act of mercy and intercession, demonstrated concretely in the event of the cross.

Similarly, pastoral caregivers and persons with disabilities must be engaged with the other.⁹⁶ But this engagement must not be unilateral and independent, but rather, a mutual process of sharing. This knowledge and being for persons with intellectual disabilities that is self-involved must develop in correspondence to what that person already knows and experiences.

This form of relationship involves at a first level, I would suggest, assuming a form of “being” that is possible for both persons. Involvement means becoming involved in another world, no matter how different from one’s own. In considering the way of being involved in the other person’s world, pastoral caregivers must be

⁹⁵ Barth actually warns that traditional forms of relating in fact may serve as inhibitors for authentic being in co-humanity as they may at times serve to hide and disguise our true selves. Barth states, “Words are not genuine self-expression when I represent myself in another guise than that in which I know myself to the best of my information and conscience. Nor are they genuine self expression when they are perhaps a mask...by means of which I try to prevent the other from understanding me, and thus do not really intend to express myself at all” (CD III:2, 254).

⁹⁶ Barth’s description of Christ’s “being with the other”, is in some ways similar to the fundamental psychological concept first suggested by theologian turned psychologist Karl Rogers (James McConnell and Ronald Philipchalk, 1992; 442). Rogers argues for a client-centered model whereby “the therapist must accept the patient as she or he is, as being a *genuine person* with his or her own set of values and goals.” Rogers believes that in order to accomplish such a stance, three aspects must be maintained. The person must: 1. Learn to accept the other’s feelings and goals; 2. Learn to accept one’s own feelings about what the person does without trying to force their own values on the person and; 3. The therapist must find ways to let the person know that they accept the person as they are (James McConnell and Ronald Philipchalk, 1992; 444). Similarly, Barth’s suggestion that Christ is for the other in identification, mercy and love, correlates at times in terms of the essential message of worth and regard. Pastoral theologian Thomas Oden also makes an observation of this similarity in his book, *Kerygma and Counseling*, however he draws out the similarities and differences of this concept in relation to psychotherapy and the proclamation of the church, and not psychotherapy and pastoral care (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966).

creatively attuned to the leading of the Spirit. For a person who is non-verbal but who enjoys coloring or rolling clay balls, this may be a way for the caregiver to “identify” with the other person’s state of being. To emphasize the point further, I am suggesting that in developing relationships and “being for the other” in Christ, that the relationship may not be primarily verbal or rational in nature, as may be native to one person. Rather, “being with” may involve more creative and imaginative means of being and communicating.⁹⁷ People who are limited in language capacities (and also those who are not limited in language capabilities) often use a wide range of tools for expression and communication. People utilize art, music and dance as forms of expression, and meaningful friendships may develop through mutual participation and expression in these shared activities. This suggestion of “being with the other” will be further explored in chapter seven, where this suggestion will be applied to a clinical case, “the account of Charlie.” These ways of being and communicating may offer ways forward for both parties in developing meaningful relationships. Words and hearing, as may be known to the pastoral caregiver, may also be utilized a way of developing friendship, however if these faculties are not available to both parties, there are other forms of relating that may be engaging.

Secondly, while the identification of Jesus with the “being of another” has practical implications for establishing a mutually viable form of encounter, such as assuming the mode of being of the other, Barth argues this identification goes deeper than action. Jesus’ being for other men also has emotional and sentient implications. Barth points to the “remarkable verb “σπλαγχνίζεσθαι” (CD III:2, 211).

The word denotes a movement in the “bowels” (in the sense of the innermost or basic parts). “To have mercy”, or “to have pity”, or “to have compassion” are only approximate translations as this movement is ascribed to the magnanimous king in relation to the hopeless debtor in Matthew 18:27, or the Samaritan on the way to Jericho to Jerusalem in Luke 10:33, or the father of

⁹⁷ Rosalind Bates, in her chapter “Psychotherapy with People with Learning Difficulties” in *Psychotherapy and Mental Handicap* Alexis Waitman and Suzanne Conboy-Hill, Eds. (1992) points out that, “[o]ne has to try to develop a language for use with each person. This can be formulated over time, depending on the level of understanding of the individual, their use of language and maturity of thinking. Concreteness of thinking means that the use of analogy, parable or role reversal has to be taught painstakingly, in order for work to continue” (85). Similarly, the “language” for the relationship shared between two persons may be verbal, non-verbal, creative or artistic in form.

the prodigal son in Luke 15:20, but especially as ascribed to Jesus in the face of the leper (Mark 1:41), the two blind men at Jericho (Matthew 20:34), the dead man at Nain and his mother (Luke 7:13), the hungry crowd in the wilderness (Mark 8:2 and *par.*) and especially the needs of the Galilean masses: “because they fainted, they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd (Matthew 9:36). The term obviously defies adequate translation. What it means is that the suffering and sin and abandonment and peril of these men went not merely right to the heart of Jesus, but right into his heart, into Himself, so that their whole plight was now their own, and as such he saw and suffered it far more keenly than they did (CD III:2, 211).

The verb is not passive Barth points out, but implies the “immediate consequence of practical assistance” as he makes the cause his own (CD III:2, 211). The verb is synonymous with action and with a biological and then physical and active response, but it is also a disposition and an emotive space of identification.⁹⁸ In terms of bodiliness the verb means feeling and experiencing what the other person does, or “knowing” the other person’s state and experiences in the biblical sense, as explicated in chapter five.

Both parties must then be involved in a deeper task: a spiritual journey of identification with the other. They must seek to appreciate and know the person’s lived and felt reality. This may come though experiencing the things in life that the other experiences, valuing what they value, seeing, hearing and feeling what they experience. Again, this act of identification is not a one-way action, but rather an interchange.

⁹⁸ The suggestion that the arts and the imagination may assist the development of relationships with persons with intellectual disabilities is not new. Several significant works exist regarding such work. In particular Brett Webb-Mitchell (*God Plays Piano Too: The Spiritual Lives of Disabled Children*, 1994 and *Unexpected Guests at God’s Banquet Table: Welcoming People with Disabilities Into the Church*, 1995) focus on the use of inclusive practices through the arts in worship and religious education. Similarly, my suggestion is that the arts might also provide a means for persons of various abilities to commune and grow in covenant friendship. Additionally see Bob Perske *Perske Portraits: The Drawings of Martha Perske* (1988) and Cindy Caprio-Orsini, *Thousand Words: Healing Through Art for People with Developmental Disabilities* (1996).

This being of emotionally identifying with another, Barth maintains is primarily informed by Jesus's being and nature as love, as given by the Spirit. Hunsinger points out that with respect to the personal essence and center of God, "heart" is a term that "Barth characteristically reserves for signifying the depth of divine mercy, especially as manifest in the event of the cross" (Hunsinger, 1991; 158). The cross is the ultimate expression of God's mercy, which frees and saves those who are in peril apart from him. In mercy, God freely responds and acts on humanity's behalf. "God's very being is mercy. The mercy of God lies in his readiness to share the distress of another, a readiness which springs from his innermost nature and stamps all his being and doing" (CD II:1, 369). God, as a personal God with heart, is moved in love and mercy to act on behalf of others. He feels the pain and distress of others, and experiences the distress, hopelessness and bleakness of human suffering and has a "movement of the heart" (CD II:1, 370). This love of the heart is not the native work of humans, but rather of the Spirit. Barth emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the *doctos veritatis*: "He is the finger of God which opens blind eyes and deaf ears for the truth, which quickens hearts by and for truth, which causes human reason, so concerned about its limitations and so proud within those limitations, to receive the truth notwithstanding those limitations" (CD IV:2, 126). The Spirit of Christ thus works in and through the pastoral caregiver, who is also the covenant partner of God, to awaken the heart in a new way and form to the other.

Encounters and relationships developed between pastoral caregivers and persons with disabilities must be similar- they must be from the heart. The engagement requires us to use our, "senses, intelligence and imagination" and our "will, action and 'heart'" (CD IV: 3, 183). It must engage the whole person and become aware of it "in such a compelling way" that we can no longer remain neutral towards it but find mercy the only way of response. This work is primarily the work of the Spirit however, and it is the love of God through the Spirit that enables the "radical identification" with the other. Thus both parties are brought together through the direction and intervention in all ways from the Spirit, a state and being of love, which is the work of God.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Resources addressing issues of love and inclusion of persons with disabilities, such as Joni Erickson Tada's book *All God's Children: Ministry with Disabled Persons* (1993) emphasize that it is important to focus on the "Tremendous Possibilities" that exist for the individual, and not the areas of "despair"

6.3.2 His Office as Savior and the Office of all Persons as Covenant Partners

Secondly Barth points out that Christ is for the other by the nature of his being as Saviour. His role is redemptive in nature and his cosmic and divine being is thus directed and constituted by this call. Christ responds and acts out of his call and office: this being determines his acts and responsibilities. Similarly, pastoral care givers and persons with disabilities must respond out of their being and nature as covenant partners with God. Eberhard Jüngel argues in his essay “Living Out Righteousness” that as covenant partners of God, humans are made righteous:

The crucified guarantees that injustice is pushed out of the world. On the cross it is sentenced. And that is grace indeed. Yet *this putting to an end* of human injustice and guilt is finally directed to a *new beginning*. The righteousness of God is... the essence of a well-ordered richness of relations, which God does not reserve for himself, but rather shares with his people by electing them as covenant partners. The extra-biblical idea of justice has the task of guaranteeing *equality among equals*. By contrast, the righteousness of God is shared with those who are wholly unequal to him. The righteousness of God is not a divine metaphysical attribute reserved for God, but a communicable attribute: *God is righteous in that he makes others righteous* (Jüngel, 1995: 252).

Similarly because persons with disabilities and pastoral care givers have an office and calling as the covenant partners of God, because they are “made righteous”, they correlatively must work in such a way that reflects this being.

The office of Christ is Savior, and his work is thus salvic in nature. The office of pastoral care givers and persons with disabilities is as a covenant partner of God, and thus their role is to seek and establish encounter and relationship with others, just as God sought relationship and being with humanity in Christ. The movement in this

(Erickson Tada, 1993; 22). In focusing on the more positive aspects of the person’s life, or on what is possible, affords the church “a wonderful opportunity to display God’s magnificent, unconditional and impartial love” (22). Similarly Kathleen Deyer, in her book *A Place Called Acceptance: Ministry with Families of Children with Disabilities* emphasizes the importance of reaching out to support families with loved ones who are disabled as this too demonstrates God’s love (Deyer, 1993).

direction is the result of a being that was established by Christ; the work does not ensure this being, but vice versa. The office and calling of covenantal partnership demands this work in co-humanity of seeking reconciliation, justice and freedom, similar to the acts and being of Christ. Again however, in terms of the limits of the analogies between Christ and pastoral care givers, it must never be assumed that pastoral care givers or persons with disabilities have an ultimate salvic role; this is unique the role of Christ.

6.3.3 The Trinitarian Form of “Being for the Other”

Thirdly, in terms of direction that may be drawn between Christ’s form of being for others and the pastoral relationship, there also remains much to be learned from Christ’s relation to the other persons of the Trinity.¹⁰⁰ Jesus’s relation to God and the Spirit also demonstrate the ways in which Christ’s form of being is the archetype of relationship. Here we will briefly consider two Trinitarian points in this regard, in light of the being and relation of Christ, and the pastoral implications for analogy in terms of the “co-existence, co-inherence and reciprocity” of the inner-Trinitarian relations: being for the other as “participation in the other” and “being in reciprocity” (CD III:2, 218)

Barth maintains that Jesus is determined by the acts and being of the inner-Godhead; Christ has a place and a role to fulfill and he does this in relation to the other active parties. In the relations between the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit a rich and detailed account of “being for the other” exists whereby Barth describes how within the Trinity exists “co-existence, co-inherence and reciprocity” (CD III:2, 218). The content and substance of “being for the other” is realized and described in the actions of participating in one another (*perichorēsis*) and in fellowship (*koinonia*). Barth argues, in terms of love, that humans are not only to be covenant partners of God, but that humans are also to love one another as God loves humanity. This love is not

¹⁰⁰ This work in considering the relations of the Trinity differs from the inner-Trinitarian work suggested at the opening by scholars such as Mowry LaCugna (1991) and Pembroke (2006) as the point for departure for this work is the covenant, and not the Trinity proper. Thus as we consider how Christ relates to within and to God and the Spirit in the Godhead, this is based on his relations with other humans as a person. The difference is that the point of engagement is Christological starting point, rather than a Trinitarian.

abstract, but based upon the inner-Trinitarian love *ad-intra* between the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Barth describes this love further:

There is in Him a co-existence, co-inherence and reciprocity. God in Himself is not just simple, but in the simplicity of His essence He is threefold- the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. He posits Himself, is posited by Himself, and confirms Himself in both respects, as His own origin and also as His own goal. He is in Himself the one who loves eternally, the One who is eternally loved, and eternal love...(CD III:2, 218).

The relationship of the Trinity to itself and to others is unique and is the archetype of all relationships, and as Collins points out “[t]he divine self-knowledge is an expression of the ‘first and original relationship’” (Collins, 2001; 113).

The existence of the Trinity and the relation of Christ in terms of the Trinity offers a unique way to consider the pastoral relationship that open the possibility of a symmetrical form of relationship that allows the caregiver to learn and be impacted by the person for whom they care, and vice-versa. An existence and relationship that is grounded in a mutual “indwelling” in “co-existence, co-inherence and reciprocity” would arguably look very different than a relationship based in the role of the pastoral caregiver.¹⁰¹ This relationship rather would only be sustained and fulfilled through the interchange of one to another, through the mutuality and affinity that would arise in the space of co-humanity in friendship. Symmetry would be inherent in such relations, as the very existence of the relationship would be derived from the interchange and shared meaning between the two persons.

Hunsinger explains: “This inward illumination of the human subject is itself conceived as the great transformation” (Collins, 1991; 158). The manifestation of the Spirit of Christ comes through illumination of other ways of being as active relation takes place with the other. It occurs “not with new and special organs, but with the same organs of appreciation with which we know other things, yet not in virtue of our own capacity to use them, but in virtue of the missing capacity which we are now

¹⁰¹ As touched on in chapter five, Michael Polanyi’s concept of tacit knowledge as the subconscious and preconscious dimensions of “indwelling” in one’s environment better help explain how knowledge may be interpreted and understood by persons with intellectual disabilities. Thus there is no reason to assume that the reciprocity, as suggested by Barth, is not possible for persons with intellectual disabilities. See Andy F. Sanders, *Michael Polanyi’s Post Critical Epistemology. A Reconstruction of Some Aspects of ‘Tacit Knowing’* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988).

given by God's revelation" (CD IV:3, 509). As God allots this illumination or this "missing capacity" God's grace becomes tangible and "subjectively strong and effective" (CD IV:1, 88) through the acts and being of another.

For the pastoral caregiver and persons with disabilities this means acting in love and mercy by the Spirit, using the same "organs" that are available to that person—their very being and the being of others. Through the Holy Spirit these organs take on a new life and meaning. God is involved from the "heart" and so should all persons in relationship, by the Spirit, co-inhering with fellow humanity. God's disposition and being is love in and through others and so should these also be the inner dispositions and nature of the persons toward one another.

Perhaps the most practical of the inner-Trinitarian form of being, however, is Barth's suggestion of reciprocity. This implies that Christ is with and for the other through his degree and form of relation, which is categorically derived from the other person themselves. Thus, for Christ, he took on the form and being of the other ontologically and cosmically, but also hermeneutically, so to speak, acting, relating and being as most appropriate to that person. Again, we may find the ultimate example for this reciprocity is Christ, who both gave and received in relationship. Jesus knelt with children, touching them as they might have touched him (Matthew 19:14). He became like a child, came down to their level, so to speak, in order to truly be with and for them. In Luke 20, Jesus tells the parable of the tenants, speaking of vineyards and servants and fruit, or in other words, speaking in the language and mediums most familiar to his pastoral crowd. And Christ famously used analogies of bread, lilies and lambs to convey to people the essence and meaning of his message to people who baked bread, saw the lilies and put the lambs to pasture everyday. In other words, he reciprocated to others what they expressed, knew and believed using their "organs" and he then used these mediums to convey his revelation.

A Trinitarian form of encounter that would seek "co-existence, co-inherence and reciprocity" would begin not with the world and being of the pastoral caregiver or the person with a disability, but with finding a mutual form being, which would allow mutual relationship and friendship to develop. What mutual forms of being are shared? Is language possible for both? Hearing? Or perhaps dance or listening to music? Again, it must be emphasized in terms of co-inherence, which indicates a mutual indwelling in one another, that the pastoral caregiver is not just there to "help" the other, but that she too had much to teach and show the caregiver about new ways of

being and engaging the world. Engagement with another should never be unilateral or symmetrical, one “helping” the other, but rather mutual participation should be traded back and forth in reciprocal ways. Both parties have a mutual calling to fulfill of covenant partnership. As humans indwell in and through each other in the spirit of Christ, imagination and engagement takes place in new and illuminating ways. So too must pastoral caregivers seek to know the language and being of the other they seek to assist, and then take on this form in some way. This should then be reflected back to the individual in a reconceptualized manner and form.

Arguably this form of care, a being for others in covenant relationship, has significant potential pastoral implications. Perhaps this form of being holds potential for caregivers in “being for the other”, mediated in and through Christ. Thus being for the other involves not simply doing and being as the other requires, but then also recognizing that Christ is in the other. “Being for the other in encounter” thus involves a mutual encounter that recognizes that just as the caregiver is “Christ for the other”, so is the other person “Christ for the caregiver.” In this way, through encounter and friendship through struggles and joys, a deep knowledge of God is found.

A covenant relationship that is rooted in the ontic worth of humans in Christ and then based upon the needs, gifts, abilities and disabilities of another, as suggested by Christ’s relations to others, would never be the same. The situation and circumstances of the care would continually be changing as the needs and wants of the individual developed. No longer based in the caregiver’s training, plans or abilities, such a form of care would be directed by the mutual capacities of both parties- be they activist or *bricoleur* in nature.¹⁰² Both persons would determine the form of

¹⁰² The term *bricoleur* implies a form of relating that “collects” rather than “acts”, as may be more suitable for some persons. Ethicist and theologian Hans Reinders expound upon the term in his book *The Future of the Disabled in Liberal Society*. In dialogue with recent debates regarding genetic testing, Reinders points out that within a society that practices a liberal morality, such notions as value-free norms of equal respect and autonomy, consequences abound for the disabled. This morality has brought about much positive legislation, such as the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, ensuring persons with disabilities equal rights and freedoms.

Reinders points out however that this liberal morality is contradictory when extended to certain areas: genetic testing which identifies birth defects and disability, offering the right to parents to abort their “less than perfect” child, is just one example. In this instance the “rights” of the parents to end the life of their unborn child because of their disability overrides the “right” of the unborn to life. Moral liberalism leads to such contradictions and difficulties, which have significant implications for persons

communication for care, the content and direction of the caring relationship and the

with disabilities, but Reinders suggests a different way forward. It is suggested that to understand disability society should draw from moral resources that are wider than liberalism's praxis of free choice, instead drawing direction from our social ties. In this sense, humans are defined by relationships *a priori*, claimed by other persons (including persons with disabilities) before they are born. In sum, Reinders states, "Sociability constitutes morality, not the other way around" (Reinders, 2001;).

Returning to Barth and his theology of "being for the other in encounter", Reinder's argument must be considered. Reinders argues that liberal society, which operates by principles of freedom and autonomy, is guided by "activist" tendencies. Briefly, Reinders argues that, "the modern quest for meaning is characterized by activist notions such as 'giving', 'constructing', and 'inventing'...." (Reinders, 2001; 193). It is pointed out that society supports and values active ways of engagement, which attain, gain and actively engage the other. The problem with this framework however is the consequential displacement of previous notions such as 'giving', 'finding', and 'discovering' (Reinders, 2000; 193), which are often present in the lives of persons with disabilities. In a liberal context, whereby activist notions are valued over other forms of engagement, persons who are unable or limited in their abilities to act in such self-directed ways have the potential to be viewed as not valuable- or as problems to be eliminated.

In relation to Reinders's argument, Barth's view of the true form of being is his emphasis on being or caring *for* the other, which engages an activist praxis. In this sense, it may be reasoned that because persons with disabilities may not be able to engage another in this active form, they are unable to participate in the "true form of being." In fact, when Barth's framework of being is considered in the case of persons with disabilities, the conclusion is soon reached that people with disabilities most of lack the ability to engage at all, as their form of engagement is not recognized in a liberal framework. This is undoubtedly problematic for a pastoral framework that seeks to be both theologically sound and practically effective.

Reinders suggests that this activist praxis may be done through moving toward a social praxis of engagement. In this sense, meaning and engagement may come in a variety of forms, including that of what Reinders borrows from Clude Lévi-Strauss: *bricoleur* (Reinders, 201; 197). "The *bricoleur* is not a constructor, but a collector. He does not work from blueprint, but sorts out whatever materials he is able to find and puts his objects together from bits and pieces (as cited in Reinders, 2001; 197). This latter form of engagement is often utilized by persons with disabilities. Arguably, framework of being for pastoral care that is a "being for the other" is potentially problematic because of its activist tendencies. A triadic, covenant form of being however, including the pastoral care giver, the persons with disabilities and Christ, as covenant partners of God, are enabled in Christ, and a variety of ways of being are made possible. The Spirit enables communion and discovery between two people that is not dependant upon human faculties or abilities, but on the power of the Spirit to mediate in encounter.

parameters and duration of the mutual care, with the entirety of the relationship being enabled by the Spirit of Christ. It is impossible to describe the individual parameters of care for a number of people because the form of that care will vary greatly. It is possible however to describe how Christ is with others, and then make some correspondences for pastoral care to this effect.

Barth's third distinction relates to how this "being with the other" should take place in actuality (CD III:2, 243). This being should be a being in encounter, in covenant relationship. In the third section of this chapter we will consider Barth's practical suggestions as to how this encounter should take place, but first we must consider the implications of the covenant relationship for pastoral care.

6.4 Embodied Encounter

With this covenant clarification in hand regarding the triadic nature of the pastoral relationship, and direction garnered from Christ's relations to other, we are now prepared to engage Barth's more practical suggestions. As mentioned, this third point regarding the importance of encounter for humanity also constitutes the third distinction, which differentiates the being of humans from the being of Christ (CD III:2, 243). After clarifying this point, Barth goes on to develop how encounter might best take place between two persons. In other words, Barth suggests how humans might be with each other in the best ways possible. Consideration of his embodied suggestion will be done and practical implications that may be drawn for pastoral care, will also be considered.

First however, one point clarification is necessary: a non-literal reading of Barth's suggestions regarding encounter is necessary. In the last section we will consider Barth's practical suggestions for establishing encounter with the other. Barth suggests that embodied moves such as eye contact and mutual hearing and speech are necessary for the moment of encounter. As will be developed, a literal reading of these suggestions results in a framework for encountering the other that is actually *delimiting* for persons with profound and complex needs. Persons with disabilities might be blind, mute or deaf, and thus such suggestions are not helpful, but barring. A non-literal reading however opens up a wider and more rich array of helpful suggestions, as will be expanded upon. An example of such a reading regarding the suggestion of eye contact would be the interpretation that eye contact is not just about maintaining a gaze, but about demonstrating awareness and recognition of the other.

Arguably this consciousness may be demonstrated in other ways to a person who is blind, such as the touch of a hand.

6.4.1 Eye Contact with the Blind? *Reconsidering Barth's Suggestions*

The true form of being, Barth argues, is a being in encounter for the other, like Christ. Barth however takes this a step further. True encounter, Barth argues, has four distinct embodied elements. He suggests that eye contact, mutual hearing and speech, mutual assistance and responding in gladness constitute true being for the other (CD III:2, 250ff). In these embodied actions Barth maintains a form of being is communicated that is pastoral significance. In this last section of considering the Christological analogy of being for the other we will consider these four suggestions. Immediately however, as mentioned, it will become apparent that difficulty arises when applying Barth's suggestions to the situations of persons with physical and intellectual disabilities. How might a pastoral caregiver make eye contact with a person who is blind? How might mutual hearing and speech occur between a pastoral caregiver and a person who is deaf and mute? These problems at first seem unsolvable and impossible in light of the embodied situation of profound and complex disabilities. As introduced earlier however, that while these four acts at first appear to be delimiting of the experience of persons with intellectual disabilities, when considered at a more symbolic level, they are inclusive of a much wider experience.

It is my contention that Barth's suggestions may be pushed a bit further, so to speak, to a deeper, emotional-human level of understanding. Arguably Barth's suggestions for encounter are essentially symbolic of deeper, human needs and responses, which seek to overcome a common human condition of "loneliness", as identified by Jean Vanier.¹⁰³ Vanier suggests that loneliness is a common human

¹⁰³ In *Becoming Human*, theologian and disability advocate Jean Vanier argues that loneliness is the common human condition and that when "we can not perform or when imagination seems to fail us" the loneliness resurfaces" (Vanier, 1998; 7). He goes on to suggest that in these times that we are forced to ask the question of hopelessness: What is left? Seven aspects of love are articulated by Vanier that he says have the ability to change and transform the lonely heart. They are revelation, understanding, communication, celebration, empowerment, communion, and finally, forgiveness (Vanier, 1998; 9, 22). Similarly, my claim in this chapter is that Barth's suggestions regarding embodied encounter represent deeper messages of love and worth, similar to the categories described by Vanier. Thus while Barth's

experience, but that caring, loving relationships overcomes this isolation. I would suggest that Vanier's suggestions help illuminate and clarify Barth's proposals regarding embodied encounter, suggesting what lies beneath each of these embodied acts. The motivation, arguably, for such actions is to communicate love and care, and not to simply act out certain embodied moves. The spiritual and emotional experiences of loneliness and isolation discussed by Vanier are no less true for persons with intellectual disabilities; the inability to articulate the fears, anxieties and hopes does not preclude their possibility. These experiences are at the very heart of care and constitute the reason why pastoral care is needed or required at all.

Thus, in this last section we will take an introductory look at these issues of the "human condition" and, in dialogue with Barth's view of encounter as found in CD III:2, and suggest ways for overcoming these states, beyond words, so to speak. We will consider how "eye contact", "mutual speech and hearing", "mutual assistance" and "responding in gladness" might take place without vision, speech, hearing, rational ability or self-awareness.

6.4.2. "Looking the other in the eye"

i. Theological Exposition

Barth begins with what may seem like a rudimentary or obvious point: any true encounter must begin by looking the other in the eye. But Barth argues while this act may seem primary, it is of great importance. Looking the other in the eye is the way in which we see other persons, and not other things (CD III:2, 250). In looking the other person in the eye with intention communicates that the other is seen in all their humanity. This seeing involves a certain degree of vulnerability, for "[t]o see the other thus means directly to let oneself be seen by him" (CD III:2, 250). The viewing of both persons of the other must be held together, however, in order for "the full human significance of the eye and its seeing" to be realized (CD III:2, 250). This viewing must be accompanied by an openness to the other; "I am as Thou art" (CD III:2, 251). Looking another in the eye does not always guarantee openness, Barth warns. This seeing must also be accompanied by openness from either party to the other in order for real humanity to occur.

embodied encounter may seem to exclude persons with disabilities, it in fact is inclusive when considered in tandem with these deeper, emotional and spiritual conditions and experiences.

I understand Barth to mean that the one is not closed to the other, but fulfilled by the fact that “[both] give each other something in our duality, and this is that I and Thou are men” (CD III:2, 252). In this openness “we give each other insight into our being” (CD III:2, 251). Barth warns that danger exists in areas of planning, philanthropy, politics (especially socialism) and bureaucracy as the person is never viewed in the eye; their humanity is not seen. Looking the other in the eye- a mutual seeing- is thus the “root formation of all humanity without which the rest would be impossible” (CD III:2, 252).

ii. Further pastoral and practical reflection

Underlying the act or gesture of eye contact lie deeper, human needs and concerns. Why do we seek to establish eye contact? What is the pastoral care giver trying to communicate to the other? Arguably eye contact is not for the sake of the eye contact, but is symbolic of recognition and regard for the other. In looking the other in the eye, one is communicating that the other is distinguished among others as significant and considerable in some way. It communicates a primary message of worth and importance. Thus, it is not the eye contact in itself that is central, but the message of awareness of the other.

How is this eye contact to be established and maintained practically? In terms of “eye contact” with a person who is blind, awareness and regard for the other may be communicated in terms of how the person is most comfortable greeting others and visiting. Perhaps a touch of the hand or sitting in close proximity to the other might communicate the message that the pastoral care giver is attentive and aware of the other. The important thing to remember for the pastoral care giver is not the literal act, but the underlying motivation for the act- this is the important pastoral message to be communicated that the person is valued and of worth and regard.

6.4.3. “Mutual Speech and Hearing”

i. Theological Exposition

The next element of “the true form of being”, Barth argues is “mutual speech and hearing.” Barth states: “The matter sounds simple, and yet it again consists of a complex action: I and Thou must both speak and hear, and speak with one another and hear one another” (CD III:2, 252). Barth argues that while seeing the other is

important, a higher level of being human is “the event of speech” (CD III:2, 253). By speech Barth has a four-fold idea in mind; speech is, “reciprocal expression and its reciprocal reception, reciprocal address and its reciprocal reception” (CD III:2, 253). This event then helps the person to cross over the “barrier of invisibility” (CD III:2, 253). It also assists the Thou in self-interpretation. Barth writes: “My word as self-declaration is human only when, in seizing the opportunity of making myself clear and understandable, I have before me the necessary concern of the other not only to see but also to understand me, to escape the uncertainty of the view he has of me, and the embarrassment caused by this uncertainty” (CD III:2, 254).

To be human is to speak, but more than that, it is to be understood and to assist in that comprehension, but not for one’s own sake, but for the sake of the other. Barth then takes time to detail what words and speech are *not*; words are not genuine self expression when they are a guise or a mask, or false in any way (CD III:2, 254-255). The action of speech must not stand alone but be accompanied by the correlative action of hearing and listening. “To take the Thou seriously and therefore to have a human ear is to move towards the self-declaration of the other and to welcome it as an event which for my own sake must take place between him and me” (CD III:2, 255). Hearing is not just hearing the words or expression of the other, but hearing the other’s humanity, the “self-expression of the fellow man” (CD III:2, 255). In listening, the person is concerned with herself and with the humanity of the other. What is the basis for this care? Barth points to the vicarious action of Christ who lived out a vicarious life on behalf of humanity. Our fellow humanity in Christ, the essence of being in the image of God, is the basis for mutual speech and hearing that cares for the other.

ii. Further pastoral and practical reflections

In terms of mutual speech and hearing for persons with intellectual disabilities it seems that the practical aspects of this form of being human might prove difficult. How might one speak if they do not possess the capacity for words? How might a person hear if they are deaf or hard of hearing? Garcia and DeHaven point out that around 80% of persons with intellectual disabilities are handicapped in terms of communication (Garcia and DeHaven, 1974). Again however, similar to eye contact, the act of hearing or speech is arguably not the significant pastoral issue, but rather the message it communicates. Mutual hearing and speech is thus arguably more about self-expression and address, or about being able to convey one’s self and being to

another, and in turn grasping the being of the other. In this way humans escape the isolation and loneliness of the human condition.

Communication is much more than words. Emotion, gestures and alternative forms of expression provide numerous ways for sharing with another.¹⁰⁴ It is important for the caregiver in these situations to be especially attentive to the signs, motions, and facial movements of the other, as well as intentionally and perhaps even deliberately mirroring the form of expression used by the other person.

Additionally I would like to suggest that other forms of relating and communicating offered by the imagination and the arts may prove helpful. Some clients who I knew “spoke” through art and creating; one woman, when feeling distressed or upset would roll balls out of clay. Though she lacked the ability of any advanced forms of self-insight or self-expression, she clearly communicated her feelings of confusion, upset, anger and turmoil by rolling balls- sometimes hundreds of them. It seemed that the task focused her energy and anxiety, and when the situation passed she would simply lump the clay back together and put it back on the shelf. In this action of rolling she conveyed and expressed her anxiety, tension and distress, though never had the ability to formally express these feelings.

Sight, speech and hearing can be made possible for those with disabilities, made possible through other hermeneutics of communication such as found in the imagination and the arts. Art may allow a non-verbal person to properly express herself. Music may allow a visually impaired person “see” another’s personality and being in a song, and it turn be seen. Dance may allow a person who is nonverbal to express the joy and gladness they may be experiencing. Words are merely one form of expression or one form of being; the arts however represent a multitudinous variety of options for engaging in encounter. The most important point remains not the words in themselves, however communicated, but the mutual message one to another that the other is able to be understood, overcoming their isolation, existing in a reciprocal encounter of co-humanity.

6.4.4 “Rendering Mutual Assistance”

¹⁰⁴ Forms of alternative communication for children are further described by Kaiser and Gray, such as considering what role a parent can play in establishing effective communication (1993). Reichle and York (1991) suggest assistive augmentative devices for enhancing communication.

i. Theological Exposition

The third element of Barth's "true form of being" is "the fact that we render mutual assistance in the act of being" (CD III:2, 260). Again, Barth marks this point as more significant than the others. Barth states: "If the I and the Thou really see each other and speak with one another and listen to one another, inevitably they mutually summon each other to action" (CD III:2, 260-261). What is central in understanding Barth's point here is his understanding of the mutual relationship between the I and the Thou. In order for mutual assistance to be realized it must be *mutual* and not unilateral. Barth warns that altruism can be inhuman if it does not take place within reciprocal encounter; "[humanity] is actualised concretely in the fact that we render mutual assistance in the act of our being" (CD III:2, 261). It is not the act of assistance itself which realizes humanity, but the fellowship that exists when the assistance is offered and received. Arguably, this point is especially important for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Barth makes the theological point that while assistance may be offered to a person, the I cannot act on behalf of the Thou. Again, in review, this is an especially important point for pastoral care givers; no human can ultimately "save" another person. While assistance may and should be offered, the work of Christ is unique and beyond the scope of human assistance (CD III:2, 262). Barth lastly establishes that to be human is to need and call out for help. He states, "[m]y humanity depends upon the fact that I am always aware, and my action is determined by this awareness, that I need the assistance of others as a fish needs water" (CD III:2, 263). Thus the human must call out for help and offer it as it is called for by others. The reason for this assistance is not ethical or lawful, but rather an emulation of the acts and nature of Christ.

ii. Further pastoral and practical reflections

The deeper human need to assist is a complex need indeed. Why should we offer assistance to the other? Barth reminds his readers that it is not the assistance that is of the most importance, but rather the fellowship established and enjoyed in the midst of assisting another. And it is this fellowship points to the deeper, pastoral concern of recognizing and assisting one another in the common human experience of vulnerability. In this sense, offering assistance and accepting assistance demonstrates a human camaraderie or solidarity that demonstrates whether strong or weak, all humans

are interdependent upon one another. This recognition tears down walls of pride and superiority, emphasizing common humanity. Practically, in regard to mutual assistance, the pastoral caregiver should remain open-minded about how assistance might be given or received. The act may be just that, an act, rather than a word or a spoken encouragement. Recognition and appreciation of even the smallest assistance is also important as it gives a mutual feeling of vulnerability, appreciation and trust. Again, this action and assistance is both given and received by both persons.

6.4.5 Responding in “Gladness”

i. Theological Exposition

The last form of humanity in encounter detailed by Barth is a form of being that must be present in all forms mentioned previously- all forms of being must be done in “gladness” (CD III:2, 265). A human may be seen, heard, and assisted. Even while assisting another, however, and these acts can still all be inhuman, unless done with gladness. “It [lacks] a decisive, all-animating and motivating dynamic, and therefore the real substance or soul of the human without which all the humanity of our being, however perfect externally is only external, but internally and properly is essentially inhuman” (CD III:2, 265). The term “gladness” denotes much more than the emotive response. It is first based in the knowledge that s/he is God’s covenant partner and this knowledge then in turn is realized in freedom through action. Barth writes, “[h]umanity lives and moves and has its being in this freedom to be oneself with the other, and oneself to be with the other” (CD III:2, 272). And this freedom and being is true gladness in being with the other.¹⁰⁵

ii. Further pastoral and practical reflections

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Price makes the important point that, “the basic form of humanity that Barth ascribes to human nature is not limited to the Christian community (CD III:2, 276). What further surprises us here is that Barth’s description of the basic form of humanity is not a description of *agape* but of *eros*. Barth discloses this when he mentions the freedom and gladness contained in the Greek concept of *eros*. It is surprising because *eros* is usually presumed to its origin outside revelation, and apart from *agape*...The “gladly” of *eros* may be, and often is, outside the sphere of the church and of special revelation of Christ. However this ‘gladly’ is not outside the sphere of grace. It is important to see that Barth casts the net of grace widely when he discusses the humanity of Christ” (Price, 2002; 154-155).

Responding in gladness is perhaps one of the most explicit forms of embodied encounter in terms of its pastoral underpinnings. Gladness is the underlying principle of all other acts and communicates the central message that the other person is special and of value. Affective engagement, communicating this message must accompany all other acts of encounter in pastoral care.

As with the previous point of rendering mutual assistance, pastoral care givers must heed the call to respond in gladness with an open mind. This gladness may be expressed formally, or it may be experienced and given in less obvious ways- a smile in response to a familiar face, contentedness in the midst of routine and regiment, or even fascination and interest in the most mundane tasks, on either the part of the pastoral care giver or the client. Gladness, unlike happiness, is not derived from surrounding, environmental factors, but rather from a personal sense of self-worth, value and purpose. It is this worth and value that elicits and exhibits the gladness.

Facial expression, tone and temperament are important for the pastoral care giver to note. Interest in a person and what they are saying or doing is vital and gives the message “I am glad I am with you.” The gladness is not so much about an action or a phrase, but about the essence of the person and the relationship at hand- these realities deserve a response of joy. And finally, what lies at the heart of responding in gladness. Ultimately gladness is not about a smile or gesture, but rather about positive affective engagement that responds to the worth of another person.

As has been argued throughout this project, Barth’s theology of encounter, as illustrated by Christ’s relation to others, is beneficial in many pastoral and practical realms. Highlighted briefly in this chapter however have been certain limitations of this analogy when applying this Christological theory to practice. These were then overcome through minor but significant modifications to Barth’s original framework of encounter.

6.5 Conclusion: Covenant Relationship through Christ

Revelation and knowledge of God is possible through a relational understanding of the Word made flesh. In this place of co-humanity all persons might come to know God as they encounter others with a spirit of love and care. The perfect example of encounter and human relationship may be found in the life and being of Christ, who is the ultimate “man for others.” Being for the other involves a radical identification with the other that identifies with the “state and fate of man” (CD III:2, 210) and acts in a

compassionate disposition of “σπλαγχνίζεσθαι”. This being is a being of self-involvement and is highly practical, involving a disposition and emotive identification with the other. Similar to the *perchosis* of the relational Trinity, this relationship must exist with the other, in a way that is defined by the other and their form of being. The other person’s being must be reciprocated in a Spirit of illumination and renewal in light of the acts and being of Christ. This form of being of Christ- a “being for the other in encounter in covenant relationship” arguably describes the nature of relationship shared by persons with disabilities and pastoral caregivers.

Additionally, the embodied posture in encounter communicates essential, human messages that go far beyond sight, speech and hearing. Through looking the other in the eye, mutual hearing, speech and assistance and responding in gladness, humans are enabled to be aware of self and others, experience reciprocity, engage in the human experience of vulnerability, in order to overcome the human experience of isolation and loneliness. It is within this encounter that an essential message of worth and hope is communicated which helps facilitate and restore spiritual health and wellbeing. Through embodied encounter, facilitated by the imagination and the arts in order to facilitate “sight, hearing and speech”, the chains of alienation and loneliness might be loosed and persons with intellectual disabilities can be freed to live and move and have their being in the body of Christ.

In the next chapter we will apply this covenant understanding of the pastoral relationship in our consideration of the account of Charlie. While this talk of “being for the other in encounter in covenant relationship” is effective and assistive theoretically in facilitating knowledge of God for persons with profound and complex needs, this tridaic covenant relationship is also obliging in practice.

Chapter 7

Being With the Other in Covenant Encounter: The Account of Charlie¹⁰⁶

7.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to apply the pastoral covenant relationship to a real life clinical case, in order to demonstrate how this relationship might operate in the practice of pastoral care. The case is drawn from my own work as a pastoral care giver and represents several of the challenges discussed throughout this project in terms of developing relationship: issues of limited communicative abilities and reduced cognitive functioning, reduced rational apprehension and a short attention span, all initially presented as challenges to forming meaningful a relationship.

The chapter will fall into three parts. To begin, an account of the case will be given as I encountered it, while gathering help from the medical team in “rounds” each week, through reading the client’s medical chart and by discussing the case with the nurse who most often cared for the client. In this first section the case itself will be presented, and the primary presenting pastoral issues to be addressed will be detailed (self-worth, love and loneliness). The second section offers a theological account of the client, whom I shall Charlie, as developed in the Barthian framework for understanding intellectual disability, considered in chapter four. Additionally I will detail the theological basis for the possibility of revelation or knowledge of God for Charlie, as developed in chapter five. In this third section we will consider Barth’s theological suggestions assisted in addressing Charlie’s pastoral needs in three

¹⁰⁶ Again, all names have been changed to ensure privacy.

respects: 1. we will consider Barth's view of ontic worth "in Christ"; 2. Barth's conception of mediated love in co-humanity; and 3. Barth's understanding of being with the other in covenant relationship. By examining these three themes we will see how Barth's theology illuminates both the pertinent pastoral issues and the potential approaches to addressing pastoral care for Charlie. Barth's suggestions for embodied encounter will also be referenced, with descriptions given as to how these suggestions were utilized in Charlie's care.

The chapter thus displays what it means to approach pastoral care for persons with intellectual disabilities in a Barthian framework in a covenant relationship, and how this form of care makes possible pastoral care for persons with profound and complex needs that is at once theologically grounded and pastorally effective.

7.2 The Account of Charlie

On the unit where I worked as a pastoral care giver there was a small man in his mid fifties with a variety of physical and intellectual disabilities. He was non-verbal and diagnosed by the staff psychiatrist as "profoundly mentally retarded" as per the criteria found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV*.¹⁰⁷ In rounds, the staff shared the

¹⁰⁷ In review, as developed in chapter four, the criteria for "profound mental retardation" as per the D.S.M. IV include the following: "(1) Significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, (2) resulting in, or associated with, deficits or impairments in adaptive behaviour, (3) with onset before the age of 18" (Ibid., pg. 36). In addition, Hughes et al. (1996; 219-220) notes that I.Q. (intelligence quotient) scores tend to fall in between the range of 20-25 to 35-40. For a diagnosis of mental retardation to be made, the criterion of low I.Q. score must also be accompanied by the criterion of poor adaptive behavior. Adaptation problems are defined differently by the A.A.M.D. (American Association on Mental Deficiency), depending on the age of the child in question, as indicated below (Grossman, 1983):

Infancy and Early Childhood:

- Problems in sensory and motor skill development;
- Problems in the development of communication skills;
- Difficulty in taking care of self needs in the secondary year of life and beyond;
- Inability to interact socially with other children or adults.

Later Childhood and Adolescence:

- Problems in sensory and motor skills development;
- Inability to interact socially with other individuals or to participate in group activities;
- Inability to apply basic academic skills to everyday life;
- Inability to use appropriate judgment in everyday activities.

Charlie displayed problems in sensory and motor skills development and he certainly presented difficulties interacting socially with other individuals. Additionally, Charlie lacked basic life skills and lacked judgment in personal matters.

account of this man's history that further helped me to understand the nature of some of his "unusual" behaviors. Charlie was raised in rural area, by parents who also lived with intellectual disabilities. Unable to cope with Charlie's extensive needs, they often locked him up in a small closet in order to "control" his behavior. When the authorities found him at twelve years of age and removed him from the home, Charlie was overwhelmed by the natural light of outside and fascinated with even the most mundane objects in his surroundings; they concluded he had rarely been outside in his young life.

Following his removal from the home, Charlie had lived at the psychiatric hospital in the unit for persons with disabilities. He generally presented as a self-contented man who spent most of his days by himself in a corner, turning in circles in one direction. He would spin for hours and never seem dizzy, bored or worn out by the repetitious act. He would also pat his head and pull his pants up and down as he turned; the doctors concluded that this was likely behavior picked up at a young age as a form of self-stimulation to combat boredom. For hours at a time Charlie would spin in the corner, patting his head, every so often venturing out to other parts of the room to tap or hit another person. This was thought to be "for attention" as he normally acted this way only with staff; this behavior was most often discouraged and routinely punished. I was asked to "attend" to Charlie as it was thought that some extra attention might succor his need for attention, thus reducing his "mischievous" acts on the unit day to day.

7.3 Theological Analysis: Is Revelation Possible for Charlie?

In chapter four a theological definition of intellectual disability was developed, based in Barth's theological anthropology:

Persons with intellectual disabilities are first persons, and thus are ontologically elect and significant "in Christ." In encounter with others in co-humanity true personhood is realized, mediated by the Spirit. Persons with intellectual disabilities are also persons who experience significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, (2) resulting in, or associated with, deficits or impairments in adaptive behaviour, (3) with onset before the age of 18.

On the basis of this definition, it may be affirmed that Charlie is first a person before he is disabled, and that this being has significant ontological implications. Charlie is elect of God “in Christ”, and his humanity realized through encounter with God, others, self and time. While Charlie presented as unable to encounter such abstract entities as self, God and time due to significant sub-average intellectual functioning, with deficits or impairments in adaptive behavior (which occurred before the age of 18), he is entirely able to encounter others.

Herein lies a possibility of revelation for Charlie: covenant relationship with others in co-humanity. Charlie is part of the ongoing revelatory history that is salvic and redemptive, “in Christ”, disclosing the being of God in relational analogy in co-humanity, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The possibility and potential of revelation for Charlie lies in a *covenant relationship* between Charlie, Christ and myself; God is known in the human, finite realm as Charlie encounters loving relationships of reconciliation. As Charlie knows this self-giving love, the biblical promise is that God’s grace will mediate his presence through *koinonia*, or fellowship.

In terms of Schwöbel’s framework for understanding revelation in terms of Charlie it may be thus said that:

Revelation is a relational concept for Charlie, in which the following terms are set in relation: the *author* of revelation is God. He is prevenient in the act of revelation for Charlie (A). The *situation* of revelation is Jesus Christ, historically demonstrating God’s will and grace. The interpretation of this being and witness to Christ’s life, death and resurrection by his followers and the ongoing witness of Christ’s life in the church by the Spirit is the ongoing situation of revelation, of which Charlie is a part (B). The *content* of revelation is God Himself, as revealed in Jesus Christ. Through a mediated, relational being in encounter, Charlie knows the content of revelation- God in Christ (C). The *recipient* of revelation is Charlie and myself, in a form that is meaningful for both parties. This address is the subjective side of revelation (D). And the *result* of revelation is a response of faith. Faith is instilled by God, through an “indwelling” of the Spirit, which enables an appropriate, obedient response, in encounter in co-humanity (E). The concept of revelation can consequently be constructed in the following formula: *A discloses in the situation B the content of C for the recipient D with the result E*” (Schwöbel, 1992; 87).

Revelation is thus a possibility for Charlie and myself, though not because of mine or Charlie's sensory or rational abilities, but because of an act of God, in Jesus Christ, though encounter and relationships in co-humanity in the church, by the Holy Spirit. We are able to speak of the possibility of revelation or knowledge of God for Charlie and thus we are able to consider the possibility of pastoral care for Charlie, or how to facilitate this knowledge. It is to this issue we will now turn.

7.4 Pastoral Analysis: *What are Charlie's Pastoral Needs? How shall I be "with" Him?*

I approached the issue of pastoral care for Charlie tentatively and slowly, as I was quite uncertain about how to go about the care. My counseling training had taught me to engage my theological heritage through prayer, scripture and liturgical support. In addition to the psychological framework I had developed as an acute care chaplain.¹⁰⁸ Both of these approaches however were seemingly useless in developing a relationship with Charlie; he spun in the corner, appearing completely oblivious to my presence. Every so often he would venture out of his corner to hit or slap someone, quickly returning to his corner for more furious spinning.

Initially I sat there for long periods watching him spin, trying to exhibit "unconditional positive regard" by smiling at Charlie. I quickly understood that neither spoken prayer, nor reading scripture or the liturgy would be meaningful for Charlie, as he appeared to have little comprehension of even the simplest directions. I felt that if I did read the scripture or prayer prayers out loud that it would be more for my sake than his. I was more or less soon at a loss of what to do next: if I approached him, Charlie

¹⁰⁸ Briefly, in terms of a psychological framework, and similarly to theologian Daniel Price, I employ an eclectic form of Object Relations theory, based on Carl Rogers "client centered therapy" (see Price, 2002; 165ff; Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983, Fairburn, 1952,). This approach is non-directive, involving active listening, with reflective feedback, and mirroring. It is not drive based, but relationally based, whereby relationships are the most formative object to a person's personality and life, providing building blocks for all behavior and motivations. I also attempt to understand how one's spiritual or religious ideations operate as a formative object. Again, this is a relational understanding, in terms of one's view of how they are perceived by religious figures, what one may view as their God or gods, etc. and how these come together to form the person's worldview and personality.

either responded by slapping me, or running away. Alternatively, if I didn't approach him, he would remain in his corner and ignore me, turning even faster, as if to emphasize that his world was especially distinct and separate from my own.

One day as I sat watching Charlie spin, another client, whom I knew quite well, approached me. She had also lived at the hospital for a number of years. We sat watching Charlie and I casually asked the woman what she thought Charlie pondered about all day long as he spun. Quickly she turned to me and responded, "Charlie thinks he is a ballerina!! Charlie likes to dance!" Pondering this suggestion I began to think about the significance of this spinning for Charlie: perhaps it is sensory, but this sensory movement is probably also for comfort and for reassurance. I began to notice that Charlie spun when he seemed anxious or when the unit was busy and chaotic. The spinning seemed to relieve this anxiety, with the familiarity of the spinning acting to soothe and calm him. In a sense, Charlie's spinning acts for him in a way similar that which talking to a friend, prayer, eating or smoking a cigarette might function to calm another person who had matured in more varied and conducive environment, and without intellectual disability.

7.4.1 Charlie's Ontic Worth "In Christ"

While I was unsure about how to go about care, I did know that as a child Charlie received the message that he was worthless and a nuisance. His parents, through no fault of their own, due to their own intellectual disabilities were unable to handle and cope with the responsibilities of raising a child. They handled the situation the best that they could and locked him away from sight. Charlie no doubt experienced feelings of confusion, isolation, loneliness, anger, sadness and fright during this time, though was unable to express these feelings and experiences. Coming to the hospital may have improved his situation somewhat- his diet was much improved and he was allowed to roam as able. Probably however this new environment also brought an immense amount of anxiety and dis-ease as he would, for the first time, be experiencing extended human contact, new smells, sights, foods, medications. Charlie would have lost all his reference points for normalcy and comfort, in addition to losing contact with his parents, and encountering new people and experiences. One thing that particularly seemed to upset Charlie were the outbursts of other clients; this noise often caused Charlie to self-harm, perhaps as a form of succor and release of anxiety.

My first and primary consideration regarding Charlie was the need to restore some sense of self-worth. From a Barthian perspective I could affirm Charlie as a loved child of God, elect “in Christ”, and thus due a sense of ontological value. At first I attempted to attend to this by spending significant periods of time with Charlie, smiling and giving him my undivided attention. This, I hoped, would demonstrate that even though he had been ignored and rejected frequently throughout his life, that now he was accepted and valuable to someone. I see this aspect of care as perhaps the most important and vital for persons with intellectual disabilities: communicating an ontic worth that overcomes all worldly disdain and rejection.

I attempted to communicate this message of worth by catching Charlie’s eye, letting him know I was watching him, valuing his time and his choice of expression. Oftentimes, due to the business of the unit, Charlie’s hitting and “outbursts” were punished and discouraged, rather than engaged. When Charlie did approach me on several occasions, slapping my leg, I did not discourage him, but reciprocated the action, so as to communicate that I recognized him. My hope in this was that he too might experience that this was not a pleasant form of engagement, and alter his behavior. Ignoring him or punishing him would, I decided, only decrease his sense of self-worth, thus further encouraging this “attention-getting” behavior. I hoped to establish a more positive means of attention and engagement.

7.4.2 Love in co-humanity

My “medium” for care for Charlie was encounter in co-humanity. Similar to the *koinonia* experienced in the church, I sought to establish fellowship with Charlie. In other words, I tried to be “with” Charlie, in encounter. I attempted conversation, I brought music in for him to “dance” to and I clapped my hands when he did something engaging- however, all to no avail in terms of establishing relationship. Generally Charlie continued to ignore me, and at times (to my embarrassment), he even ran away from me when I sat near him. I was thus forced to further reflect on my approach to Charlie’s care. Conveying ontic regard and value seemed key to me, I could just not figure out how to realize this value in a way to him that was meaningful. Fellowship seemed impossible as Charlie refused to be my fellow-human! He denied and rejected all my attempts to establish encounter.

A few days after my encounter with the woman who saw Charlie as a ballerina I sat watching Charlie and it occurred to me: what if I was to be a “ballerina” too,

with Charlie? If dancing is *his* form of being, then why should I assume that he must adapt to my way of being- visiting and talking? Again, knowledge of God is objective, but there is also a subjective side to revelation, which Schwöbel points out is, “closely connected to the personal character of God’s self-communication...As the personal self-communication of God it addresses the recipients in their personal being in the relational constitution of human existence...” (Schwöbel:1992, 93). Thus human beings are personally addressed in the interrelationships of human existence. God, in his act and divine being, works and acts to bring about persona interrelationships that are personal and meaningful for that individual.

As God’s covenant partners Charlie and I have the corresponding call to encounter one other. I am thus required to respond to Charlie as Christ would respond to Charlie: being for the other that allies with the “state and fate” of that person. Charlie too is called to encounter me. Charlie’s state was one of isolation and spinning; I was thus called to join him in this state and adopt his form of being. As will be recalled from chapter 6, a Christological analogy of being has both an emotive and a physical posture. These postures involve being like Christ, which involves a “comprehensive and radical identification” with Charlie (Bromiley, 1979; 128). This identification requires nothing less than encountering and being with the other in the form familiar and native to *both persons*.

In this act, Charlie and I would, in a sense, be “mutually hearing and seeing” each other, through the act of dancing. This being as a “ballerina” is Charlie’s form of self-expression, one in which I could easily participate. Barth argues that mutual hearing and speech is about “reciprocal expression and its reciprocal reception, reciprocal address and its reciprocal reception” (CD III:2, 253). Charlie’s expression was his dance, and my reciprocation of this being would be indicative of reception of this being. Additionally a recognition of this being might assist Charlie in crossing over the “barrier of invisibility” he had no doubt felt for much of his life, while locked away or avoided by others (CD III:2, 253).

7.4.3 A (Radical) Christological Analogy of Being for Charlie

I began this form of care of “being for the other in radical identification” with the other slowly and gradually; I first turned a few times about ten feet from him, imitating him movements, trying to catch his eye. He seemed to ignore me, but after a few minutes of this action, he ventured out and slapped another client on the knee. It

seemed Charlie was somewhat unsure of my actions and proximity, and thus was “acting out”, so I ceased to spin and sat down and continued watching him.

I continued this routine for the next few days, and gradually spun longer and longer. The behavior of “acting out” continued, though Charlie seemed more and more comfortable with my proximity, and watched me from the corner of his eye as he spun too. Gradually he allowed me to spin right next to him, and we continued to do this a few times a week. I brought in music for our “dance times” and his hitting slowly stopped. Eventually, after about six months or so of such visiting, Charlie would find me on the unit and sit with me, allowing me to read to him (though he probably had a very limited sense of what the story was about). Additionally we watched television together and a few times colored in the “imagination room”, though Charlie continued to dislike enclosed spaces, preferring the open common room.

Barth argues that the next process in encounter is mutual assistance. Again, Barth states: “If the I and the Thou really see each other and speak with one another and listen to one another, inevitably they mutually summon each other to action” (CD III:2, 260-261). What is central in understanding Barth’s point here is his understanding of the mutual relationship between the I and the Thou, or between Charlie and I, and the mutual understanding to exist in fellowship and regard, assisting each other in encountering the other. Charlie assisted me in understanding how best to relate to and encounter him by persistently demonstrating this being. In this he “summoned me to action” to respond in similar manner, or in a similar form of being.

All of this care was done in “gladness”, illuminated by the recognition that Charlie is a loved child of God. Barth writes, “[h]umanity lives and moves and has its being in this freedom to be oneself with the other, and oneself to be with the other” (CD III:2, 272). Charlie thus was free in this relationship to be himself most fully, as was I, and in this place God, in an analogy of love in relationship, encountered him in gladness.

Pastorally I believe this “radical identification” with Charlie’s “state and fate” enabled us to being to form a sort of friendship that began to restore his sense of self-worth, in addition to providing encounter in a meaningful form that enabled him to begin to overcome the loneliness and isolation he had no doubt experienced for much of his life. In co-humanity knowledge of love and acceptance, analogous to the love and acceptance that Charlie has “in Christ” was experienced and received. Creating fellowship, adopting and radically identifying with Charlie’s form of being, a dancing

being, Charlie was cared for pastorally, addressing issues of self-worth, love and loneliness and isolation. I too was cared for as I shared in laughter and acceptance, feeling a sense of relief, hope and joy that such a relationship was possible, despite the doubts expressed.

7.5 Looking Ahead: Continuing Care in Encounter with Charlie

Charlie and I continued to meet for the duration of my time at the hospital. Sometimes we would twice a week, sometimes more, but I always held my two standard “appointments” with Charlie, that would usually begin in his corner. During this time we developed a significant relationship, and the staff took notice. When I left the unit, a nurse took up in my spot as Charlie’s new “dance partner.” His interaction with the staff and the other clients continually increased through this time, and as far as I know, he is still dancing there today.

7.6 Conclusion: *The Reality of Knowledge of God*

Disability and theology are not new topics for the Christian church. The writers of the New and Old Testaments were keenly aware of the calamity and rejection that often befell and accompanied persons with disability. Jesus frequently spoke in disability language, referring to disability in parables and, at times healing persons with disabilities from their conditions. Today, as we have seen, significant contributions have been made to the area of disability theology; practical theology of disability, as represented by the work of Stewart Govig, ethical reflection regarding the situation of disability as evidenced by Stanley Hauerwas and liberatory theology of disability, as represented by the writings of Kathy Black and Stephen Pattison, in addition to recent pneumatological reflection by Amos Yong, all demonstrate that Christian doctrines gain new and fresh perspectives when understood from the perspective of disability.

In terms of the present work, it has been noted how a relational ontology of being, as opposed to a cognitive or epistemic form of engagement, takes on new significance in understanding the doctrines of ecclesiology, Christology, creation, providence, the *imago Dei*, and the doctrine of eschatology, amongst others. Additionally it was noted that this relational paradigm perhaps offers potential ways forward in considering the possibility of knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities.

A particular look at the issue of pastoral care was undertaken exclusively in chapter three and it was pointed out that the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities under the wider category of persons with disabilities in terms of pastoral care can, at times, be problematic. It was noted that this inclusion at times assumes a level of rational or sensory functioning that many persons with intellectual disabilities do not have, and thus many of the suggestions that necessitate such faculties are barring of those with profound and complex needs. The relational suggestions of Rev. Walter Kern from a Roman Catholic perspective however, and the suggestions of Jean Vanier and John Swinton from a Protestant point of view illuminated ways forward, through this impasse, and it was indicated that the relational category may offer a less cognitively-based form of knowledge, located in the “quality of our relationships, rather than the quantity of our intellect” (Swinton, 1997; 25).

7.7 The Word in Various Forms: *A Barthian Revelatory Framework*

Before engaging this relational understanding of knowledge of God in depth however, it was necessary in chapter four to further detail was that phrase “persons with intellectual disabilities” implies and to form a working definition of intellectual disability. To this end, we considered how theologians of disability have previously approached the task of definition, indicating that many scholars choose to make use of secular definitions and frameworks of disability for clarity. It was noted that at times this borrowing is problematic as in addition to the grafted definition, the corresponding presuppositions and agenda of the respective defining body are also included in the definition. Instead it was proposed that this project develop a thoroughly *theological*, biblically based definition of intellectual disability. This scriptural definition of intellectual disability, similar to the approach of Christ, began not with the “problem” of disability, but with one’s ontology, so to speak, or their fundamental nature as a human person.

By engaging with Karl Barth’s theological anthropology it became apparent that persons with intellectual disabilities are equally elect “in Christ”, with true humanity realized in encounter with God, others, self and time. In particular, and in agreement with theologians of disability, it was noted that encounter with others is arguably especially significant for persons with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, in terms of the ontic definition of persons with profound and complex needs, it was noted that Barth’s dynamic and relational view of history is inclusive of persons with

intellectual disabilities in that it entails a participation that is also dynamic and, affords the intellectually disabled the status of covenant partners of God. This ontological understanding of the human person was then augmented with a biological definition of disability, as derived from the D.S.M. IV, the most common diagnostic tool of mental health professionals. Together this ontological and biological understanding of the human person combined to create a thoroughly theological understanding of the human person living with an intellectual disability, as understood from a scriptural vantage point, informed by theological maxims.

Barth's work and theological anthropology is significant in this project in terms of enabling and forming a theological definition of disability, however the substance of his understanding of knowledge of God is also significant for our questions. In chapter five the particular question of revelation for persons with intellectual disabilities was undertaken, and initially it was suggested that the influence of the epistemology of Immanuel Kant continues to pervade modern theological discussions regarding revelation. More specifically it was suggested, concurring with theologians John Webster and Colin Gunton, that the neglect of the doctrine after Kant gave rise to other Enlightenment influences including individual self-awareness, spatial distance, foundationalism, all of which presuppose rational and cognitive abilities. It is my premise that such influences have inadvertently led to views of revelation that are implicitly exclusive of persons with intellectual disabilities. In contrast to an overly cognitive view of revelation, it was suggested that another pathological extreme exists: revelation as experience. This extreme is arguably evidenced in the works of Frederick Schleiermacher and G.W.F. Hegel. This experiential approach to knowledge of God however threatens to collapse all experiences into the category of revelation, thus making relative the distinct acts and works of Christ.

A scriptural view of knowledge of God helpfully clarifies the sort of "personal, experiential, emotional and relational" type of knowledge of God, which avoids both pathological extremes (Martin and Davids, Ed., 1997:638). Such a view of knowledge is clearly evidenced in the theology of Karl Barth, who argues: All persons, (including, arguably persons with intellectual disabilities- TAD), are part of the ongoing revelatory history that is salvic and redemptive, disclosing the being of God in relational analogy in co-humanity, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus the possibility and potential of revelation lies in covenant relationship; God is known in the human, finite realm of persons with intellectual disabilities as one encounters

loving relationship, in Christ. As persons with intellectual disabilities know this self-giving love, the being of God is known in a mediated form. This statement was then expanded in three directions, considering Barth's unique reconceptualization of analogy, his emphasis on the Trinitarian nature of revelation whereby God is prevenient in the act of revelation and finally, Barth's emphasis on the role of encounter in co-humanity in self-giving, loving relationships. These three aspects of Barth's theology in these three respects, it was argued, effectively creates the possibility of considering the question of revelation for persons with profound and complex needs.

An expository look at the five moments of revelation, as guided by the framework of theologian Christoph Schwöbel, in dialogue with Barth's theology, further detailed the possibility of revelation in respect to persons with intellectual disabilities. In this work we considered: (a) God's primacy as the *author of revelation*, (b) the historical life of Christ, its interpretation by his followers and the historical and interpretive work of the Holy Spirit in the church as the *situation of revelation*, (c) God Himself was identified as the *content of revelation*, and (d) the *recipient of revelation* was identified as particular persons whom God, as a personal, relational being, is actively relating with socially, and in freedom and finally it was pointed out that (d) the *response of revelation* is faith and this faith is instilled and made possible by God through an "indwelling", by the Holy Spirit and a response of obedience in a call to encounter the other is required. It was concluded that in this relational ontology of being, understood as an act of God in Christ, that revelation is a veritable possibility for persons with even the most profound intellectual impairments.

7.8 Pastoral Possibilities being With the Other

In chapter six we continued engagement with Barth's theology of encounter in co-humanity, further developing the position that knowledge of God is possible for persons with intellectual disabilities not just theoretically, but also practically in terms of pastoral care.

We first considered the significance of the covenant relationship for pastoral care, whereby Christ and both persons all equally assume relationship. We then considered Barth's suggestion that the true form of being for humans is a being with others, then considering this in pastoral terms. Consideration of how exactly to be with others was then undertaken, with direction garnered from the being of Christ for

others. Barth argues that Christ is the “man for other men” in that: 1. Jesus is determined by the other and identifies with the “state and fate of man” (CD III: 2, 210); 2. Jesus is determined by his office and calling. Jesus Christ is the working Jesus; and 3. Jesus is determined by the nature of the inner Trinitarian relationship (CD III:2, 214-219). This being, it was argued, has implications for pastoral care. In particular Jesus’s form of being suggests a physical and emotive posture that allies with the “state and fate of man”, in an emotive state of “σπλαγχνίζεσθαι”, or empathy or pity (CD III:2, 211). Similarly it was suggested that pastoral care givers assume a physical and emotive stance similar to Christ in terms of relating to others, identifying with their state, and additionally take on the form of being most familiar and comfortable for the person with the intellectual disability, be it verbal, or more artistic and creative in form.

These suggestions for the physical and emotive postures for being with the other in relationship were then further developed with Barth’s suggestions for embodied encounter. In this way it was observed that Barth’s proposals regarding encounter in terms of eye contact, mutual hearing and speech, mutual assistance and responding in gladness, are seemingly barring in terms of the situation of many persons with intellectual disabilities, who, at times, lack the sensory abilities of sight, speech and hearing. A non-literal reading of these suggestions was instead undertaken, with Barth’s insights instead pointing to deeper, human needs and responses such as the need for recognition. Additionally, it was proposed that the imagination and the arts may provide a “hermeneutic” of sorts for “sight”, “speech” and “hearing” that goes beyond words. In this way it was argued that Barth’s work regarding embodied encounter might not just be applied to the state of persons with intellectual disabilities, but that it may illuminate and describe a most useful praxis for pastoral engagement.

7.9 Putting Analogy to Work: *The Account of Charlie*

The dogmatic and pastoral theology and theory has been directly applied to the practice of pastoral care in this chapter, engaging with “the account of Charlie.” This application began with a description of Charlie’s history and medical diagnosis, along with a brief account of the challenges, as I viewed them, which presented in terms of his pastoral care (communication, limited rational ability, a short attention span, etc.).

In terms of Charlie’s being, a theological analysis and description of Charlie’s state was first given, in dialogue with the five moments of revelation of Christoph

Schwöbel. This demonstrated systematically how revelation, from a Barthian perspective, is possible for persons such as Charlie. Next a pastoral analysis was undertaken, identifying areas of pastoral concern, in dialogue with the work of Jean Vanier. A “being with the other in encounter” framework was then applied to the situation, and I described how Charlie and I grew in relationship by physically assuming a similar “state and fate” (ie. dancing as a “ballerina”), while also being aware of an emotive state (ie. loneliness). It was demonstrated that a being with the other in covenant relationship offers a pastoral framework that is both theologically sound and pastorally effective direction for the care of even the most disabled of persons.

We began this study by asking if knowledge of God for persons with intellectual disabilities is an impossible oxymoron. We have concluded by demonstrating, through the account of Charlie, that when considered from a Barthian theological framework, such knowledge is not only possible but also that it may come in unexpected, colorful, dancing and living forms. With this vision, knowledge of God may be considered doctrinally and pastorally and all persons may be encouraged to draw near.

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