

Learning from the Learning Impaired How to Experience God

Ruth Lackenby
Deacon, Wirral Methodist Circuit

Abstract

This piece is an exploration of how the learning impaired experience God and how that experience is expressed. It also looks at how the church can learn from this – through a recognition of vulnerability and an acknowledgement of a dependence on those who appear utterly dependant, as a reflection of our dependence on God. It goes on to explore questions of what it truly means and costs to live in community, with reference to the paradigm offered by Jean Vanier. It concludes by challenging commonly held presuppositions as to the margins and the nucleus of inclusive community; a challenge which requires a further re-examination of presumptions regarding one's place at the hub of such community.

Key Words: learning impairment; vulnerability; community; Jean Vanier

Separation

THIS, O Best Beloved, is another story of the High and Far-Off Times. In the very middle of those times was a Sticky-Prickly Hedgehog, and he lived on the banks of the turbid Amazon, eating shelly snails and things. And he had a friend, a Slow-Solid Tortoise, who lived on the banks of the turbid Amazon, eating green lettuces and things. And so that was all right, Best Beloved. Do you see?¹

The names of our characters, Sticky-Prickly Hedgehog and Slow-Solid Tortoise, seemingly reveal much about them but recognised labels and diagnoses do not accurately represent people. Indeed, such labels can engender destructive and stigmatising assumptions that diminish and distress the recipient. How people with this life experience, particularly the intellectually disabled, view the world is significant. They see things differently and when listened to carefully, those labelled

¹ Rudyard Kipling, *Just So Stories: The Beginning of the Armadillos* (<http://www.online-literature.com/poe/161/>; accessed 15 March, 2013)

as different or disabled can afford perception of a different truth in a world where all is not what it seems.²

The support-assistant, Matthew,³ and I, arrived, two of us needing tetanus boosters. Matthew was prone to aggressive outbursts, particularly when distressed by the unfamiliar, and we expected a bumpy ride. Matthew and the situation needed much care. Employing 'the element of surprise', he received his injection first. It went smoothly and, relieved, I proffered my arm for the same treatment. Matthew, attentive to all within the room, rushed to my defence, clearly protecting me from the unpleasant experience. In that instant carer became cared for and I was deeply moved by this powerful communication of concern for me from a child labelled as non-communicative.

Inclusion is the belief that each is unique, important and sacred, and that through this belief we can bring each other to birth. We need others who will call forth what is most beautiful in us, and vice versa.⁴ The able and the disabled seemingly live in two different worlds. Negotiating the world of disability and that of people not considering themselves disabled can be simultaneously tragic, frustrating and deeply joyful. Yet such encounters carry the potential to transform.⁵ That day I was transformed as the intellectually disabled child I taught, taught me and called forth recognition of a new mutual care and communion.

Jean Vanier asserts a necessity of accepting continual movement and transformation as key to humanity and as the only road to becoming truly human. All of life is movement from order to disorder to new order.⁶ Returning to our friends living by the Amazon, in their peaceable, ordered world, perhaps too all is not what it seems.

Encounter

One beautiful night on the banks of the turbid Amazon, Painted Jaguar found Stickly-Prickly Hedgehog and Slow-Solid Tortoise sitting under the trunk of a fallen tree. They could not run away, and so Stickly-Prickly curled himself up into a ball, because he was a Hedgehog, and Slow-Solid Tortoise drew in his head and feet into his shell as far as they would go, because he was a Tortoise; and so that was all right, Best Beloved. Do you see?⁷

We human beings untroublingly live illusions, protecting our self-image with power and claiming God's favour as justification.⁸ The story of Dives and Lazarus explicates today's world, in describing the abyss between the 'haves' and 'have nots'.⁹ Both sides experience challenge apprehending the beauty of the person

² Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier, *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 10.

³ All names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

⁴ Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human* (London: DLT, 1999), 95.

⁵ Hauerwas and Vanier, *Living Gently*, 10.

⁶ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 12.

⁷ Kipling, *Armadillos*

⁸ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 48.

⁹ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 69.

blinded by the turbidity of fears and prejudices, and illusional superiority engenders oppressive need of demonstrable proof.¹⁰ We circumscribe our group and cultivate our certitudes.¹¹ People with intellectual disabilities manifest openness to God and an intimate, personal longing for closeness with him. Jesus' name is spoken with compelling intimacy within their communities in realisation of manifest holiness.¹² Listening and learning from the cry of people with disabilities is requisite but unattainable without encounter.¹³ The heart of Jesus' vision is to abrogate the walls separating people and groups.¹⁴ We live in a world where groups close up, thinking they and their traditions are elite but Jesus entered this world to love people as they are.¹⁵

Our friends by the Amazon close up idiosyncratically to protect themselves. Neither takes account of the other or seems concerned by their friend's vulnerability. So was that alright or do we envision a different perspective here?

We, arrogating power and social standing, subtly obscure our inner disabilities, eschewing acceptance of our limitations.¹⁶ Mutual conspiracy not to admit our need abounds and this withdrawal from the reality of that need suppresses feelings, hides the vulnerable self and denies the opportunity for acknowledgement that anything is amiss.¹⁷ Inclusion is risky business. Too often it serves the status quo, perpetuating convention and circumspecting the particular uniqueness of persons.¹⁸ People and the church experience difficulty accepting extreme differences.¹⁹ Seeking to maintain social control, the community imposes conformity through assimilation, remaking differences in its own image.²⁰ What is this circumscriptive order so anxiously protected? Examination reveals this is not all it seems and far from alright. Typifying the ideal human as powerful and capable disenfranchises the weak and disabled. Society must, definitively, include the gifts and needs of all its members and people with disabilities, most often excluded, can teach profound lessons.²¹

Mark's family, rich and influential, were unable to accept his intellectual disability resulting from contracting cerebral malaria in infancy. Abandoned to the school until 'cured' they excluded themselves from a profound sense of joyous approach to life which Mark embodied. I was afforded the privilege of being lifted by his spontaneous laughter and conspicuous desire to share his happiness. This gift was offered freely within our classroom without fear or favour.

Difference and disability are treated with indifference, suspicion or revulsion. Devices of assimilation and exclusion demarcate and police the borders of a normal

¹⁰ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 38.

¹¹ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 39.

¹² Hauerwas and Vanier, *Living Gently*, 32.

¹³ Hauerwas and Vanier, *Living Gently*, 60.

¹⁴ Hauerwas and Vanier, *Living Gently*, 63.

¹⁵ Hauerwas and Vanier, *Living Gently*, 63.

¹⁶ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 100.

¹⁷ Frances Young, *Face to Face. A Narrative Essay in the Theology of Suffering* (London: Epworth, 1985), 30.

¹⁸ Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 46.

¹⁹ Young, *Face to Face*, 75.

²⁰ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 47.

²¹ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 45.

way of being.²² The consequent stigmatisation highlights some differences as blemished features unworthy of social inclusion.²³ The resultant narrow concept of normality is an illusory image grounded in a phantom majority, pretending to represent a common condition that excludes virtually everyone.²⁴

In the society we inhabit we are oddly comfortable with deeply dissonant and disturbing truths. Policies and practices welcoming people with disabilities into our communities, offering rights and responsibilities, are developed alongside forms of genetic technology seemingly designed to prevent the incarnation of those with learning disabilities into society.²⁵ Expectant mothers of children with particular disabilities are considerably pressured to terminate pregnancy.²⁶ Clearly it is assumed that intellectual disability is essentially an aberration and a liability from society's general perspective.²⁷ Desire to alleviate perceived suffering in the name of compassion easily leads to the destruction of those whom God has created. It is questionable whose 'suffering' we are alleviating in terminating pregnancy where disability is indicated. Rarely does society take time to ask those with disabilities.²⁸ The assumption that suffering should always be prevented is doubtful, and we should question whether the suffering engendered by intellectual disability is imputed to rather than experienced by those affected.²⁹

The story of Dives and Lazarus evokes in the weak – those with disabilities – excitement as they identify with Lazarus, as found in the bosom of Abraham, but powerful and rich people are less excited.³⁰ The story broaches the question of who is truly powerful and who truly disabled. Something is awry when, instead of being radically available to one another, effecting welcome, human beings are aggressive and reject each other.³¹ As in the case of Dives and Lazarus, we find humanity separated by a seeming abyss.

What is this abyss that separates us? Why are we unable to look the Lazarus's of this world in the eye and listen to them?³² Lazarus needs friendship and needs to discover a human identity, but it is dangerous for someone to enter this relationship as we risk our lives being changed. To become a friend of the beggar, or those in intellectual poverty, is to rock the boat. Fear can be a terrible motivating force and as such is the root of exclusion.³³ To identify with the marginalised and excluded we risk marginalisation and exclusion ourselves. We fear anything that reveals our own failure and pain.³⁴ Our fears are often groundless: those fearing people with

²² Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 60.

²³ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 63.

²⁴ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 65.

²⁵ Hauerwas and Vanier, *Living Gently*, 11.

²⁶ Timothy J. Woods, 'A Tendency to Unaffected Cheerfulness: Theological Reflections on Down's Syndrome', *Contact* 127 (1998), 20.

²⁷ Woods makes this point specifically about Down's Syndrome, 'Unaffected Cheerfulness', 19.

²⁸ Hauerwas and Vanier, *Living Gently*, 12.

²⁹ See M.A. Volpe, 'Irresponsible Love: rethinking intellectual disability, humanity and church', *Modern Theology* 25:3 (2009), 491-501, here 493.

³⁰ Hauerwas and Vanier, *Living Gently*, 60.

³¹ Volpe, 'Irresponsible Love', 499.

³² Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 70.

³³ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 71.

³⁴ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 80.

intellectual disabilities are often devoid of relevant encounter, yet experience dissipates both fear and prejudice.³⁵ The problem is not the person with disabilities, rather it is a constructed normality which creates the problem of the disabled person.³⁶ Let us return then to the riverbank to see if our friends remain closed up or whether they have fearlessly opened to and embraced change.

Co-operation

'Can't curl, but can swim – Slow-Solid, that's him! Curls up, but can't swim – Stickly-Prickly, that's him!'

'He'll never forget that this month of Sundays,' said Stickly-Prickly. 'Hold up my chin, Slow-and-Solid. I'm going to try to learn to swim. It may be useful.'

'Excellent!' said Slow-and-Solid; and he held up Stickly-Prickly's chin, while Stickly-Prickly kicked in the waters of the turbid Amazon.

'You'll make a fine swimmer yet,' said Slow-and-Solid. Now, if you can unlace my back-plates a little, I'll see what I can do towards curling up. It may be useful.'

Stickly-Prickly helped to unlace Tortoise's back-plates, so that by twisting and straining Slow-and-Solid actually managed to curl up a tiddy wee bit.³⁷

Our friends have embarked on a journey towards transformation but what makes this possible? The gospel vision of unity, peace and acceptance will come about through the transformation of the heart, beginning at the bottom of the pyramid of our society among those Jesus spent time with, those excluded from society. His vision demonstrates division healed by dialogue and encounter.³⁸ Being born of the Spirit the possibility of transformation affords confidence to embark on the journey.³⁹ So let us venture into the disordered world of the learning disabled, willing to be changed by the encounter.

The l'Arche communities, founded by Jean Vanier, are truly different in their rejecting conformity to societal normality. Challenging presuppositions and offering a new paradigm of community living, they model inclusiveness in which fellow human beings share care and need, providing a powerful exemplar of God's redemptive community: the church.⁴⁰ Fundamental for l'Arche is 1 Corinthians 12, where the weakest, least presentable parts of body of Christ are deemed most necessary and accordingly honoured. The body of society fails to reflect this model and, though integration of the intellectually disabled is increasing, fully inclusive acceptance is far-off.⁴¹ The demonstration of flourishing as a possibility within weakness and chaos is exigent, but only attainable through acceptance of our own

³⁵ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 116.

³⁶ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 73.

³⁷ Kipling, *Armadillos*.

³⁸ Hauerwas, *Living Gently*, 29.

³⁹ Hauerwas, *Living Gently*, 27.

⁴⁰ Hauerwas, *Living Gently*, 17.

⁴¹ Hauerwas, *Living Gently*, 36.

vulnerability and chaotic aspects of our life. The intellectually disabled invest primarily in relationship, and l'Arche communities contrast with our competitive prejudiced world, which accentuates intolerance and an insufficiency of love.⁴² The intellectually disabled, positioned in weakness, possess a power to touch hearts, and most often respond to love.⁴³ L'Arche is where God offers opportunity for learning to embody hope in a world seeking unattainable solutions. This is hard learning.⁴⁴ People with intellectual disabilities, while less capable on intellectual or practical levels, are gifted in relationships.⁴⁵ Their capability forming loving relationships poses a challenge to our world where relatedness appertains to positions of strength rather than vulnerability.⁴⁶ In their vulnerability, they call forth a loving, tender response that affords a robust critique of our preoccupations.⁴⁷

Luke stood amidst the chaos: a classroom awash with water and all the water-play equipment imaginable. This lovingly constructed scene was designed for sheer pleasure and delight, though the still gushing tap was an oversight – perhaps. As others, concerned for the submerged floor and ‘paddling’ furniture, moved to admonish Luke and restore order, I was moved to laughter, embracing his enjoyment. Recognising within him a determined engagement with what he loved, but mindful of the needs of others, I accepted the gift. I had the previous day, encountering a similar scene, admonished him not to do this in our classroom. He hadn't – this was next door.

Life is precious in its own right, determined by creation in the image of a loving God, not by any cult of normality. This opens a new way of community and exposes our own vulnerable humanity as a creature also loved by God.⁴⁸ Being human means receiving our quintessence from God. Our friendship with God is non-reciprocal; rather it is his gift, and we intrinsically have nothing to proffer. Friendship between the intellectually ‘able’ and intellectually disabled embodies God's movement towards humanity. Moreover, those who are wontedly independent need to learn to receive and profoundly realise that all we offer is gifted to us. We reflect God's image through both receiving and demonstrating God's love in relationship.⁴⁹ God chooses the weak and disabled to shame the clever and powerful (1 Cor. 1:27). Through this teaching a vision unfolds where, beginning at the bottom of society, the hierarchical pyramid transforms into a body. People with disabilities long for authentic, loving relationships more than power. God hears their cry for pre-eminent love because they respond to God's cry to accord love.⁵⁰

Fearful of confronting norms, we conform to expectations, but for people with disabilities circumvention is a way of being that emanates from an inner freedom.⁵¹ Some with disabilities possess astounding freedom and, free of prejudices, manifest

⁴² Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 94.

⁴³ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 37.

⁴⁴ Hauerwas, *Living Gently*, 55.

⁴⁵ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 2.

⁴⁶ Woods, ‘Unaffected Cheerfulness’, 21.

⁴⁷ Woods, ‘Unaffected Cheerfulness’, 22.

⁴⁸ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 76.

⁴⁹ Volpe, ‘Irresponsible Love’, 498.

⁵⁰ Hauerwas and Vanier, *Living Gently*, 30.

⁵¹ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 93.

an abiding presence of God and humble openness to others. This freedom is inclusive but demands greater resolve where stronger defences and barriers persist.⁵² We are called to exercise our freedom through vulnerable availability to one another in love. 'Freedom is a relationship of availability for the other wherein we bind ourselves to [them] by offering the gift of ourselves. This is what God does for humanity.'⁵³ Faith attempts a coherent view of life in all aspects. Where life does not maintain coherence, the ability to discern a modification of one's perspective is imperative. This critical process procures deeper awareness of essential truths of the Christian faith enabling rediscovery of intrinsic insights.⁵⁴

Inclusion

'Excellent!' said Stickly-Prickly, all wet from the turbid Amazon. 'I declare, I shouldn't know you from one of my own family.'

They went on with their exercises, each helping the other, till morning came; and when the sun was high they rested and dried themselves. Then they saw that they were both of them quite different from what they had been.

*'Stickly-Prickly,' said Tortoise after breakfast, 'I am not what I was yesterday; but I think that I may yet amuse Painted Jaguar.'*⁵⁵

Our ostensible order and normality are illusory. Disorder and chaos are not what they seem; strength lies in weakness, power rests in vulnerability and those with intellectual disabilities teach us much. Perhaps we too are not what we were but the story has yet to conclude. We are compelled to journey into the new order, continuing towards transformation with the certitude that here also things will not be as they seem. Will these waters too be turbid as the Amazon?

The mature heart, permitting vulnerability with others, is a compassionate heart that sees God in others and embraces the journey into uncharted land to grow, flourish and become more fully human.⁵⁶ Particular individuals have learned this lesson as parents of a child with intellectual disabilities, as the following two examples indicate:

The presence of our infuriating, loving, disabled and exhausting child speaks to us of God as Trinity, a God of persons bound together in loving relationship who have not mapped out the future, but are in the thick of it with us. Such a Trinity embraces creation: that which God has brought into being entirely through acts of love. Nothing is then lost, nothing is aberrant; all that is has its being in relationship with everyone else. Down's syndrome is not a problem to be overcome or avoided, but a gift in creation through which other human beings are challenged to reflect and to find their reflection.⁵⁷

⁵² Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 124.

⁵³ Volpe, 'Irresponsible Love', 498.

⁵⁴ Young, *Face to Face*, 42.

⁵⁵ Kipling, *Armadillos*.

⁵⁶ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 88.

⁵⁷ Woods, 'Unaffected Cheerfulness', 22.

Life as the parents of someone with an intellectual disability will always be marked by struggle, but through it I have seen God. I have demanded the blessing and received it. ... My afflicted son belongs to Christ, not because he can profess faith in him but because Christ has accepted him. ... My child may also become a catalyst for deeper commitment to one another and growing together through shared burden.⁵⁸

I sat in my classroom at the end of a long, hot day, thinking ahead to my departure for the UK. I had worked with my students for three years and, reflecting on their progress, wondered what the future had in store for them as they, and their families, continued to face the challenges of the mission field. John tidied away his homework and rose to leave. As he passed he hugged me from behind saying, 'Thank you Miss Lackenby, I'll miss you.' Kind and thoughtful, certainly, but remarkable? John had autism and never initiated physical contact with anyone. His gesture and words were a gift of acceptance and love, all the more profound for their rare expression. This young man's ability to face the impending change enabled me to set aside my anxieties for the coming transition and rest securely in God. I was transformed to a deeper level of trust and faith in God's care and provision.

We attend to the wider world, yet on our doorsteps are transformative communities. With eyes and hearts open, we will encounter the extraordinary miracle of grace. A voyage of exploration to unlikely places, to unlikely people, to the marginalised and afflicted will teach us what true values are.⁵⁹ Flowing from God, each is called forth into communion with him and each other, through the infinite yearnings of our heart. We belong to something greater than ourselves and each must be free to follow the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:13, 22-23).⁶⁰ We hope for a society whose governing metaphor is not pyramidal, but a body where each is vital to the harmony and function of the whole.⁶¹ Every human being, small and weak, strong or large, brings something to humanity just as every part of creation has a unique role to play (as described by Paul in 1 Cor. 12). Encountering those with intellectual disabilities and uncovering their stories precipitates movement from exclusion to inclusion, fear to trust, closed to open, and judgement and prejudice to understanding.⁶² Before God, all are equally vulnerable, but vulnerability shared in God's name effects real human fellowship.⁶³

This is paradoxical and subversive to our presumptions of order and power but, if we understand the gospel story, unsurprising. Jesus, the light of the world, was not extinguished. Yet, paradoxically, everything in the gospel intimates the cross as his hour of glory. Darkness was not dispersed, but Jesus, entering in, embraced it and transformed it into glory.⁶⁴ Jesus' humanity was real. He

⁵⁸ Young, *Face to Face*, 52, 75, 27.

⁵⁹ Young, *Face to Face*, 85.

⁶⁰ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 118.

⁶¹ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 123.

⁶² Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 83.

⁶³ Young, *Face to Face*, 79.

⁶⁴ Young, *Face to Face*, 58.

experienced vulnerability, suffered ridicule and torture and felt a final sense of abandonment. To dismiss Jesus' humanity is to abrogate the story. There on the cross, in the utter absence of God, was the presence of God. For the story to attest to salvation it needs to embody the real presence of God incarnate in the human situation: fully God and fully human.⁶⁵ To speak of God suffering and dying seems incongruous, yet Christians affirm the cross of Jesus as the story of God appropriating all the sin and suffering which afflicts creation, by entering it so that by his presence the situation is transformed and re-creation is actualised.⁶⁶

Transformation

'Son, son!' said Mother Jaguar ever so many times, graciously waving her tail, 'a Hedgehog is a Hedgehog, and can't be anything but a Hedgehog; and a Tortoise is a Tortoise, and can never be anything else.'

'But it isn't a Hedgehog, and it isn't a Tortoise. It's a little bit of both, and I don't know its proper name.'

'Nonsense!' said Mother Jaguar. 'Everything has its proper name. I should call it "Armadillo" till I found out the real one. And I should leave it alone.'

So Painted Jaguar did as he was told, especially about leaving them alone; but the curious thing is that from that day to this, O Best Beloved, no one on the banks of the turbid Amazon has ever called Stickly-Prickly and Slow-Solid anything except Armadillo. There are Hedgehogs and Tortoises in other places, of course (there are some in my garden); but the real old and clever kind, with their scales lying lippety-lappety one over the other, like pine-cone scales, that lived on the banks of the turbid Amazon in the High and Far-Off Days, are always called Armadillos, because they were so clever. So that's all right, Best Beloved. Do you see?⁶⁷

Being human entails accepting our mix of strengths and weaknesses, loving others just as they and we are, and a coming together through recognising our need of each other.⁶⁸ No two people have the same capabilities and personality. In those with disabilities we can discern the human condition: none are perfect and all share the same basic needs and instinctive desire for life, having the same frailty and vulnerability.⁶⁹ Taking seriously the 'world of the disabled' and allowing our perspective to be shaped and changed by listening carefully to those who see things differently is a prophetic ministry of transformation and hope that all of us need to engage in if we are to live as faithful disciples and be fully human.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Young, *Face to Face*, 61.

⁶⁶ Young, *Face to Face*, 62.

⁶⁷ Kipling, *Armadillos*.

⁶⁸ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 40.

⁶⁹ Young, *Face to Face*, 85.

⁷⁰ Hauerwas, *Living Gently*, 10

The caretaker struggled to clear the snow from the school steps as the children ran around keeping warm. Pat, noticing Chris sat shivering in his wheelchair, approached the caretaker.

‘Excuse me; can you clear the ramp please? Chris is very cold.’

‘He’ll have to wait,’ he replied tersely. ‘I need to do the steps for everyone else first.’

‘But if you clear the ramp, we can all get inside quicker – even you.’

The agony and travail of the world is the birth pangs of a new world, a new creation anticipated in Christ. We cannot force it in or bring this about but we need to allow ourselves to be caught up in the working of God’s Spirit.⁷¹ We are in the hands of a paradoxical God, who is transcendent and immanent, personal yet not limited as all persons we know are, incomprehensible because he is both in and not in – like and not like – the beings he has created, and nothing else matters.⁷² We are fully dependent on God but that’s all right, Best Beloved. Do you see?

I sense as I have written that, like the Amazon, I have meandered through the issues this piece raises. This has been an exploration of encounter precipitating change and transformation and as I have explored I have been led down an unanticipated path ... or should that be a water course? This has revealed new insights and maybe I even look a little more ‘armadillo-like’ than before. But that’s all right, Best Beloved. Do you see?

www.theologyandministry.org

⁷¹ Young, *Face to Face*, 71.

⁷² Young, *Face to Face*, 62.

References

- Hauerwas, Stanley, and Jean Vanier, *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008)
- Reynolds, Thomas E., *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008)
- Vanier, Jean, *Becoming Human* (London: DLT, 1999)
- Volpe, M.A., 'Irresponsible Love: rethinking intellectual disability, humanity and church', *Modern Theology* 25:3 (2009), 491-501
- Woods, Timothy J., 'A Tendency to Unaffected Cheerfulness: Theological Reflections on Down's Syndrome', *Contact* 127 (1998), 17-23
- Young, Frances, *Face to Face. A Narrative Essay in the Theology of Suffering* (London: Epworth, 1985)

Websites

- Kipling, Rudyard, *Just So Stories: The Beginning of the Armadillos* (<http://www.online-literature.com/poe/161/>) (15 March 2013)