

Calling a Thing What It Is

Disability as Ostrakon and *Schule Christi* in a Lutheran *Theologia Crucis*

David Patterson

Key Words

Luther; *theologia crucis*; disability theology; *Schule Christi*; ostrakon; ecclesial ethics; anthropology; ableism; *imago Dei*

Introduction: Naming Our Illusions

DISABILITY IS NOT A DEVIATION FROM AUTHENTIC humanity but a privileged arena of divine self-disclosure and ecclesial formation. Under the logic of the *theologia crucis*, human identity is not secured by autonomy, capability, or conformity to an imagined normate ideal; it is bestowed *extra nos* in the crucified and risen Christ. When disability is approached through this cruciform grammar, it becomes a site in which God reveals the truth of creaturely dependence and the givenness of grace, schooling the church in the receptive posture proper to faith. To speak truly—to *call a thing what it is*—requires naming disability not as deficit, tragedy, or anomaly but as a locus of divine pedagogy, a *Schule Christi*, where the Spirit forms Christ's body in patience, vulnerability, and mutual care.

Yet, the modern church persists in ableist illusions that obscure this gifted character of personhood. Two patterns dominate: sentimental pity that casts disabled persons as objects of benevolence and moral indictment that sees impairment as spiritual failure or burden. Both belong to the *theologia gloriae*, measuring persons by proximity to a fictive normalcy and masking the evangelical truth that humanity's dignity is received, not achieved. These illusions do not merely misrecognize disabled Christians; they misname the gospel. By confusing capacity with worth, they silence the witness of those whom God has placed within the church as teachers—*theologians of the cross* whose lives unveil the dependence and promise that constitute the body of Christ.

This article offers a constructive Lutheran proposal for rethinking disability through the cruciform grammar of promise, cross, and community. Methodologically, it engages Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation*, catechetical writings, and homiletical corpus to articulate a theological account of affliction as divine pedagogy. It then enters critical dialogue with major disability theologians—Nancy Eiesland, Amos Yong, and Thomas Reynolds—affirming their central insights while identifying the subtle ways liberationist frameworks can reinscribe normative metrics. Finally, it draws on select philosophical voices—Elizabeth Barnes, Alasdair MacIntyre, Eva Feder Kittay, and Martha Nussbaum—to clarify conceptual commitments around difference, dependence, and capabilities that support an ecclesial ethic rooted in the *theologia crucis*.

The argument unfolds in four movements. Section I develops the Lutheran *theologia crucis* and its implications for understanding disability as *Schule Christi*, reconfiguring anthropology around gift, passivity, and divine promise. Section II critically engages contemporary disability theology, receiving its liberative impulses while relocating them within a cruciform grammar that avoids the reappearance of ableist norms. Section III draws on philosophical accounts of difference, dependence, and justice to sharpen the church's conceptual tools while subordinating these frameworks to the sovereignty of gift. Section IV articulates an ecclesial ethic that dismantles the moral imagination of normalcy by reforming liturgy, catechesis, pastoral care, governance, and public witness around the crucified Christ. The conclusion gathers these threads into a vision of disabled Christians as indispensable guides for a church learning to live by grace rather than glory.

Archaeology bequeaths to us the *ostrakon*—a potsherd, not a prize. Once whole, then fired, used, and shattered, it is precisely as a fragment that it becomes useful: a flat, humble surface for lists, prayers, and records. Meaning is entrusted not to the intact jar but to the broken piece. In this fragment we discover a parable for Christian existence under the cross. The theologian of glory seeks God in wholeness and polish; the theologian of the cross finds Him where Christ has pledged Himself – in suffering, smallness, and dependence. The believer's life, like an *ostrakon*, becomes receptive through fracture; the church's life becomes legible in its scars.

To speak truly—*res dicere*, calling a thing what it is—we must name disability neither as tragedy to be pitied nor as anomaly to be normalized, but as a privileged arena of divine pedagogy wherein the Spirit writes promise upon the church. That confession dethrones the normative imagination and enthrones gift: identity bestowed *extra nos* in Christ rather than secured by autonomy, capacity, or conformity to a fiction of “the unbroken.”

I. The *Theologia Crucis* and the Cruciform School (*Schule Christi*)

1. *Res dicere*: Calling a Thing What It Is

MARTIN LUTHER'S *THEOLOGIA CRUCIS* EXPOSES the human will's compulsive drive to secure righteousness by performance and re-educates the church to speak truthfully about God and the self. In the *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), Luther insists that "the law says, 'Do this,' and it is never done," thereby collapsing every project of self-justification and pressing the sinner into a posture of receptivity to the divine gift.¹ The result is not mere moral pessimism but evangelical truth-telling—*res dicere*, calling a thing what it is. To speak truly of the human condition is to confess incapacity before God; to speak truly of God is to confess the paradox of the crucified Christ as the locus of divine wisdom and power.²

This cruciform epistemology does more than rearrange propositions; it reconfigures how the church recognizes persons. The *theologia crucis* judges as illusions those metrics that evaluate worth by autonomy, utility, or proximity to a fictional "normal."³ In their place, it enthrones promise over performance: the truth about the person is bestowed *extra nos* by the Word, not achieved *intra nos* by capacities. Within such a grammar, disability cannot be narrated as deficit without falsifying both anthropology and Christology; it must be spoken as difference that discloses the divine condescension and the creature's dependence.⁴

2. Formation through Affliction: *Schule Christi* as Divine Pedagogy

Because God is known "in suffering and the cross," affliction becomes a school—*Schule Christi*—wherein the human is formed to faith's receptive habit.⁵ Luther's catechetical and homiletical writings repeatedly portray the Christian life as one of being driven to the promises by trials (*Anfechtungen*), so that the believer learns the art of receiving rather than achieving.⁶ The pedagogy is not punitive but medicinal: it wounds *self-trust* to heal with *Christ-trust*. Affliction thus participates in God's fatherly care, relocating agency from the self's competencies to the Spirit's giving, and relocating identity from functional status to baptismal gift.

In this school, disabled suffering acquires a specific theological contour. Placed beneath the cross, it neither legitimates sentimental pity nor licenses moral indictment; both are variants of the *theologia gloriae* that misrecognize the person by measuring him or her against an imagined norm. Instead, disabled suffering tutors the church in passivity before grace—a disciplined receptivity that contradicts every ecclesial habit of ranking persons by ability.⁷ The point is not to romanticize pain but to re-situate it within Christ's pedagogy, where weakness is neither a moral stain nor an obstacle to communion, but an instrument by which God conforms the body of Christ to its Head.

The *ostrakon* is chosen after it breaks; its fracture makes a surface for inscription. Likewise, affliction does not ennoble by itself, but beneath the cross it becomes *Schule Christi*—the Spirit’s school that dislodges *self-trust* and enthrones *Christ-trust*. Disability thus refuses the abstraction of human need and makes our shared dependence visible and concrete. In a culture that worships autonomy, the disabled Christian’s life becomes a catechesis in receptivity—God’s Word written on a shard.

3. Anthropology Reconfigured: Gift, Passivity, and Personhood

From this cruciform school follows anthropological reconfiguration. The human person is not the sovereign curator of capacities but the recipient of a name and a future in Christ. Luther’s distinction between human righteousness (which never achieves its aim) and Christ’s alien righteousness (bestowed freely upon the ungodly) undercuts the ableist moral imagination at its root.⁸ Autonomy may serve prudential goods, but it cannot ground personhood; capacity may be stewarded, but it cannot secure identity. In the church, therefore, disability is not a deviation from authentic humanity. It is a privileged arena where the givenness of grace is unveiled—where dependence appears not as lack to be overcome but as the truth of creatureliness embraced by God in the Crucified.⁹

Accordingly, the theologian of the cross does not ask how disabled persons might be “made normal,” but how congregations might learn from disabled Christians how to receive life as gift. Disabled believers become teachers of *passivity in faith*, catechists of the promise, and visible sacraments of our shared brokenness turned toward Christ. Their presence is thus not an exception to ministry but a measure of ministry’s conversion to the gospel.

4. Brokenness as Surface for Inscription—and the Shard That Bears Christ

An *ostrakon* never writes itself; its value is received from the hand that inscribes. So, the believer is not the tablet presented to God, but the shard upon which God writes His promises. In this way, the disabled theologian—public or hidden—bears witness simply by living under the cross. The life “inscribed” by Christ becomes a durable text, often outlasting vessels prized for wholeness. God wastes nothing: not wounds, not weariness, not the jagged edges of a life that feels fractured. In His hands the broken piece bears the Word.

II. Critical Dialogue with Contemporary Disability Theology

1. Nancy Eiesland’s “Disabled God”: Iconic Protest and Its Limits

NANCY EIESLAND’S *THE DISABLED GOD* OFFERED a groundbreaking theological icon: the risen Christ who still bears disabled wounds, re-symbolizing divine life in a body

marked by impairment and thereby confronting ecclesial ableism.¹⁰ Her constructive move places disability at the center of Christian imagination, rejecting the trope of disabled people as objects of pity or charity and asserting their agency and full ecclesial belonging.¹¹ The strength of Eiesland's proposal is its iconoclastic protest against images of divine perfection that erase disabled bodies; it reorients worship, ethics, and pastoral care toward presence rather than cure.

Yet precisely as protest, the icon risks leaving normate metrics subtly intact. When divine identification is framed primarily in terms of empowering agency—a necessary and salutary corrector to passivity—ecclesial reception may default to performance-based inclusion (what disabled persons *can do*) rather than promise-grounded belonging (who disabled persons are in Christ). Moreover, the image of the “disabled God” can be recruited into romanticization or voluntarist triumphalism, where impairment is valorized as a unique spiritual capital rather than located beneath the cross as the arena of divine condescension and creaturely dependence.¹² A Lutheran *theologia crucis* affirms Eiesland's disruption of ableist imaginaries while relocating the meaning of disability from empowerment alone to gift received under promise—the identity bestowed *extra nos* by the Crucified, which neither demands performance nor sanctifies suffering in itself.

2. Amos Yong's Pneumatological Inclusion: Gifts, Capacities, and the Grammar of Promise

Amos Yong's work—across *Theology and Down Syndrome* and *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*—develops a rich pneumatology that discerns the Spirit's presence and gifting in disabled communities, pressing churches toward inclusive practices, mutual discernment, and the recognition of diverse charisms.¹³ Yong's account corrects ecclesial habits of exclusion by refusing the conflation of disability with sin or tragedy and by narrating the church as a communion animated by the Spirit who distributes gifts “as he wills.”¹⁴

The tension, however, lies in the register of gifts and capacities. Pneumatological inclusion often proceeds by showing that disabled persons *have* Spirit-given capacities the church needs—a powerful and necessary apologetic within ableist contexts. Yet without a corresponding grammar of promise, inclusion can drift back to capability-metrics (welcomed because useful) rather than baptismal belonging (welcomed because given). The Lutheran *theologia crucis* insists that identity precedes utility; we do not belong because we can perform Spirit-gifts for communal benefit, but because God in Christ names us and joins us to his body. Yong's vision is thus best received within a cruciform economy where gifts confirm belonging rather than constitute it.

3. Thomas E. Reynolds' *Vulnerable Communion: Hospitality under the Cross*

Thomas E. Reynolds reframes ecclesial life as “vulnerable communion,” replacing paternalistic charity with mutual hospitality and calling the church to receive disabled persons as indispensable members whose presence discloses the fragility common to all.¹⁵ He rightly diagnoses how ecclesial practices can normalize independence, productivity, and control, thereby marginalizing those whose bodies defy such expectations.

A Lutheran *Schule Christi* deepens Reynolds's insight by placing vulnerability under the cross. There, vulnerability is neither sentimentalized (as a spiritual aesthetic) nor instrumentalized (as a means to moral improvement) but acknowledged as the truthful condition of creaturely life that God assumes and redeems in Christ. Hospitality becomes evangelically ordered: we welcome not to repair difference but to confess that difference belongs within the body gathered by promise. Disabled Christians are thus not guests to be integrated; they are teachers whose embodied limits catechize congregations in receptive grace.

4. An Ostrakon Critique: Fracture, Inscription, and the Temptation to Smooth the Shard

The *ostrakon* offers more than an image; it is hermeneutic. The church's life, like a shard chosen after breaking, becomes useful precisely as a surface for divine inscription—not as a restored museum piece. This vantage reframes three influential projects in disability theology.

A. EIESLAND'S ICON AND THE PRESSURE TO POLISH

Eiesland's “disabled God” is an essential iconoclastic strike against ecclesial imaginaries that erase disabled bodies from the scene of divine life. Yet without a cruciform grammar of fracture-as-election, the icon can slide toward an aesthetic of polished visibility: disability becomes an emblem displayed for empowerment rather than a shard on which God actually writes the promise. The *ostrakon* insists that the scandal is not merely that God can be depicted as disabled, but that He chooses the broken surface as His preferred place of address; the point is not the spectacle of the wound but the Word that is inscribed there. Where the icon is received without this pedagogy, communities may adopt the image while keeping the vessel intact—admiring scars without relinquishing the metrics of normalcy that demand smoothness. The theologian of the cross calls that move what it is: a subtle return to *theologia gloriae* under the sign of inclusion.

B. YONG'S PNEUMATOLOGY AND THE METRIC OF USEFULNESS

Yong's discernment of the Spirit's gifts in disabled communities corrects paternalism and expands ecclesial imagination. But the *ostrakon* exposes a persistent danger: when gifts function primarily as justifications for belonging, the shard is valued because it happens to serve as a convenient writing tablet—useful as long as it remains flat enough to write on. The Lutheran grammar insists that inscription precedes instrumentality, baptismal naming grounds identity before and beyond demonstrable capacity. Otherwise, pneumatological inclusion risks translating disabled presence into a ledger of charisms—belonging codified by utility, a refined capability-metric in ecclesial dress. The shard does not belong because it holds many words; it belongs because the Author chose it in its brokenness.

C. REYNOLDS' VULNERABLE COMMUNION AND THE SENTIMENTAL SMOOTHING OF EDGES

Reynolds reorders hospitality around mutual vulnerability, a necessary unlearning of paternalistic charity. The *ostrakon* deepens this by refusing to file down the shard's edges for communal comfort. Vulnerability, when sentimentalized, can become a spiritual aesthetic—soft light on cruciform themes—where communities admire fragility without letting it cut their habits of efficiency, platforming, and control. The broken piece, however, has edges that snag: it slows the liturgy's tempo, redistributes leadership, and changes the budget. If vulnerability is received apart from this concrete pedagogy, “welcome” becomes an ambiance rather than a school. Under the cross, the church lets the shard remain a shard, learning to be addressed by the very contours that inconvenience it.

From Shard to School

The *ostrakon* thus furnishes three guardrails: (1) Inscription over icon—the meaning of disability under the cross is what God writes upon it, not the spectacle it can furnish; (2) Election over utility—belonging flows from promise, not from a tally of gifts; (3) Edges over ambiance—vulnerability must retain its inconvenient contours lest it be absorbed into the church's existing aesthetics. These guardrails do not reject Eiesland, Yong, or Reynolds; they convert their best impulses to cruciform use, keeping the church from polishing the shard it is given to read.

5. Constructive Pivot: A Lutheran Grammar of Promise–Cross–Community

The prior dialogue suggested that contemporary disability theology's strongest impulses—iconic protest (Eiesland), pneumatological inclusion (Yong), and vulnerable communion (Reynolds)—require a grammar that prevents normate metrics from returning under new guises. The *theologia crucis* supplies that grammar, and the *ostrakon* clarifies its texture.

PROMISE (IDENTITY BESTOWED → INSCRIPTION, NOT PROJECTION)

Baptismal naming precedes capability, agency, and usefulness; identity is bestowed *extra nos* in the Crucified and Risen One. The *ostrakon* adds: promise arrives as inscription upon a broken surface. The church does not project meaning onto disability as a convenient icon; it receives the Word that God writes upon the shard. This conversion reframes Eiesland's gift: the disabled wounds of the Risen One are not merely an emblem to display, but the very grammar by which God addresses His people—truth spoken on scarred flesh, not polished symbol. In congregational life, that means visibility serves reception of promise, not the curation of images.

CROSS (MEANING INTERPRETED → BREAKAGE AS ELECTION, NOT ELIMINATION)

Affliction is *Schule Christi*: it dislodges self-trust and enthrones Christ-trust. The *ostrakon* clarifies that breakage is not a prelude to disposal but to choosing; the shard becomes the page. Against the utilitarian drift that can haunt pneumatological inclusion, the cross declares that God elects the broken as His medium prior to any demonstration of usefulness. Thus Yong's emphasis on gifts is best received when gifts confirm, rather than constitute, belonging—the writing recognizes the shard; it does not justify it. Practically, churches order roles and rhythms so that pace, pitch, and posture are set by those whose edges teach the community to be addressed, not by those most conveniently accommodated.

COMMUNITY (LIFE REORDERED → EDGES KEPT, NOT SANDED)

Belonging comes before contribution; hospitality sheds the asymmetry of “helpers/helped” and embraces mutual dependence. The *ostrakon* adds a concrete caution: do not sand the edges. Vulnerable communion must retain the snagging contours that actually reorder budgets, schedules, and authority. Reynolds' vision is thus secured under the cross when communities let the shard change the hand that holds it: liturgy slows, governance redistributes, and pastoral care is co-authored with disabled members. The test of communion is not how gently we display the shard, but how readily we are re-inscribed by it.

III. Philosophical Bridges: Dependence, Difference, and Capabilities

1. Elizabeth Barnes: Value-Neutral Difference and the Undoing of Deficit Narratives

ELIZABETH BARNES ARGUES THAT DISABILITY IS, in most cases, a value-neutral difference rather than an inherent harm, challenging the pervasive *deficit model* that reads impairment as diminishment of personhood or well-being.¹⁶ Barnes distinguishes

between local harms (contextual injustices, inaccessible environments, ableist stigma) and intrinsic harms (supposedly baked into impairment itself), contending that much of what we treat as disability’s “badness” is socially produced rather than metaphysically necessary.¹⁷ This distinction proves indispensable for a Lutheran *theologia crucis*: if the church narrates disability as intrinsic deficit, it commits a form of false speech—*res non dicere*—that misnames persons contrary to Christ’s promise. Barnes’s analysis thus buttresses cruciform truth-telling, allowing congregations to repent of deficit imaginaries while acknowledging the real suffering that contexts can impose.

Yet Barnes’s value-neutral thesis must be theologically located. For Lutherans, difference finds its final meaning not in metaphysical neutrality but in gift and promise. The point is not to deny difficulty or pain; it is to prevent the moralization of difference. Under the cross, the church confesses that God meets creaturely limits with mercy, and that any “badness” attached to disability is more truthfully diagnosed in the world’s disordered loves and arrangements than in the disabled body per se.¹⁸ Thus, Barnes supplies a conceptual lens that disrupts deficit narratives and synchronizes with cruciform epistemology: we call disability what it *is*—difference intertwined with contextual hardship—rather than what illusion presumes—deviation from authentic humanity.

2. Alasdair MacIntyre and Eva Feder Kittay: Dependence as the Texture of Human Flourishing

Alasdair MacIntyre’s *Dependent Rational Animals* contends that human flourishing is essentially dependent, woven through networks of care, vulnerability, and the cultivation of virtues suited to our animal condition.¹⁹ It should be noted that MacIntyre maintains that the *common good* that he asserts as the end of dependent rationality is rooted purely in the human’s animality and the result of evolutionary processes and nurturing that is natural to the human animal. This view stands in opposition to any understanding of *the good* or *the common good* that depends upon any transcendent authority and is therefore fundamentally relativistic—just as able to rationally justify the elimination of the vulnerable and dependent for the sake of *a common good*. Furthermore, MacIntyre’s assertion that human flourishing is the goal and end of dependent rationality, itself, stands in stark contrast to the *theologia crucis*. For, to care for the dependent with an expectation of some good the dependent may contribute or some broader flourishing that may result—rather than caring for the dependent simply because they are dependent as we all are equally dependent upon Christ who died for us²⁰—is itself a move to *theologia gloriae*. Despite this, MacIntyre maintains that far from compromising dignity, dependence illuminates the practices (e.g., attention, just generosity, truthful speech) by which communities sustain persons whose capacities vary across the life course.

Eva Feder Kittay complements this thesis, in her work *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependence*, by refusing the invisibilization of care labor and the moral marginalization of those who require or provide intensive care.²¹ Her work exposes the false autonomy cherished by liberal imaginaries and argues that equality must be reframed around nested dependencies and relational justice. However, her arguments on behalf of the *dependent* are undermined by the primary agenda of her argument. Kittay's argument is not primarily on behalf of the disabled—or as she describes them—the *dependent*. Rather, her primary agenda is for social justice on behalf of women, who she describes that those to whom society relegates the care of the dependent (as she terms it, *Dependency Work*). As the dependent are disenfranchised in society due to their dependency, so the women in whose *charge* these dependent are placed, are by extension are also disenfranchised. Her argument is for increased visibility in society for the dependency worker as a necessary element of the relational justice of the dependent. Unfortunately, Kittay's argument undermines her own premise by making the infant/child, disabled, and elderly a means by which to elevate the position of women in society. This argument—as with MacIntyre's—is itself a move to *theologia gloriae*. Rather, the true expression of *theologia crucis* is to be found in the very circumstances that Kittay seeks to reject.

The point of the dependency critique is to show that, as long as the bounds of justice are drawn within reciprocal relations among free and equal persons, dependents will continue to remain disenfranchised, and dependency workers who are otherwise fully capable and cooperating members of society will continue to share varying degrees of the dependents' disenfranchisement.²²

Kittay rightly identifies the invisibilization of care labor and the moral marginalization of those who require or provide intensive care. However, the answer for the Body of Christ is not to raise up the disabled and those who care for them to glory. Rather, it is to gladly become invisible themselves for the sake of those who are themselves invisible, as Christ made himself nothing for us.²³

In spite of their limitations, these accounts resonate with the Lutheran *Schule Christi*. The cross breaks the enchantment of self-sufficiency and educates the church to receive dependence as truth, not failure. This does not romanticize dependence; it normalizes it. Congregations who learn from disabled Christians discover that the “ordinary means” of grace—preaching, sacraments, prayer—are already structured to sustain the dependent through promise, while declaring the basic dependence of us all. MacIntyre's virtues of acknowledged dependence and Kittay's ethics of care therefore function as philosophical allies to ecclesial formation: they commend practices that a cruciform people will recognize as evangelical habits—patience, fidelity, truthful speech, shared burdens—ordered not to autonomy but to communion.²⁴

3. Martha C. Nussbaum: Capabilities Under the Sovereignty of Gift

Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach seeks to secure political arrangements that enable persons to pursue central human functions—life, bodily health, practical reason, affiliation—challenging structures that truncate real opportunity.²⁵ In disability contexts, the approach provides a policy grammar for accessibility, education, employment, and civic participation. It is therefore a vital tool for congregations advocating just infrastructures in the wider polis.

Yet capabilities must be subordinated to the Lutheran grammar of gift. When capabilities become the primary measure of personhood, ecclesial reception risks re-inscribing the ableist imagination: we welcome because someone meets thresholds of capacity or contributes functionally to communal goods. A cruciform church welcomes because Christ has welcomed; capabilities are pursued as neighbor-serving goods, not identity-granting metrics.²⁶ Reordered this way, Nussbaum's approach functions instrumentally: congregations advocate for capabilities for the sake of the neighbor, while confessing that belonging rests in promise, not performance.²⁷ In practice, this means churches can argue for ramps, interpreters, assistive technology, and inclusive employment policies using capabilities language in public environments, even as they catechize internally that no capability—present or absent—confers personhood.

4. An Ostrakon Appraisal: Difference Named, Dependence Kept, Capabilities Subordinated

The *ostrakon* is more than a metaphor; it is cruciform hermeneutic. The shard, chosen after breaking, becomes a surface for inscription, not an object for museum restoration. This vantage both honors and corrects our four philosophical interlocutors: it receives their clarifications while refusing any move that polishes the shard back into a manageable vessel.

A. ELIZABETH BARNES: VALUING DIFFERENCE WITHOUT FLATTENING INSCRIPTION

Barnes's insistence that disability is (in many cases) a value-neutral difference untethers personhood from deficit narratives and disarms the reflex that equates impairment with diminished humanity. This is a salutary clearing of the stage. Yet neutrality, left to itself, can become a kind of antiseptic smoothness—difference acknowledged but the shard's inscribed significance left unread. The *ostrakon* presses further: disability is not only “not less,” it is a *place where* God writes the promise; its meaning is cruciformly *received*, not metaphysically neutral. To say merely “difference” risks neglecting the election of the broken surface as God's preferred medium of address. Under the cross, we do not hover above impairment with neutral metaphysics; we kneel to read the Word written on scarred flesh.

B. ALASDAIR MACINTYRE: ACKNOWLEDGED DEPENDENCE
WITHOUT EUDAIMONIST CAPTURE

MacIntyre's portrait of "dependent rational animals" rehabilitates the virtues that sustain lives laced with vulnerability—attention, just generosity, truthful speech—thereby puncturing the myth of sovereign autonomy. Yet his teleology can tilt dependence toward functional flourishing—care justified by the common good to which it contributes—making dependence instrumentally tolerable rather than truthfully constitutive. The *ostrakon* refuses this capture. The shard's edges do not earn their keep by smoothing communal performance; they *reform* it. Breakage is not an obstacle to be overcome by virtuous technique; it is a site of election, where the community's tempo, budget, and authority are re-inscribed by the Crucified. In other words, the shard is not valuable because it still "serves the project of flourishing," but because the Divine Author has chosen to write there.

C. EVA FEDER KITTAY: VISIBILITY OF CARE
WITHOUT INSTRUMENTALIZING THE DEPENDENT

Kittay's exposure of the invisibilized labor of care and the moral marginalization of those who require it is indispensable for any truthful account of communal life. But when the argument's center of gravity shifts toward elevating the *status* of caregivers, the dependent can become the means by which recognition is secured—the shard pressed into service for someone else's advancement. The *ostrakon* won't permit that exchange. The broken surface is not a prop for vindicating the carer; it is the locus of divine inscription that commands the church's reorderings—liturgical, pastoral, and economic—*for the sake of the one on whom the Word has been written*. To call things what they are is to say that care is not a ladder up the social order but a school of cruciform passivity wherein the body of Christ learns to receive from the least.

D. MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM:
PUBLIC REASON WITHOUT ECCLESIAL METRIC

Nussbaum's capabilities approach is a faithful tool for public advocacy—ramps, interpreters, transportation, employment, education—goods a just polis should secure. But capabilities must remain index, not identity. When imported uncritically into the church, they can become threshold metrics by which belonging is tacitly assessed and pace is silently set. The *ostrakon* protects against this colonization: the church is not assembled by capability thresholds but by baptismal inscription on broken lives. Capabilities thus become diaconal instruments the church seeks *for the neighbor in the world*, even as the congregation confesses *within its worship* that the shard belongs before any proof of usefulness and that the shard's edges—its inconvenient tempos and geometries—are part of the community's conversion to promise.

Interim Summary (Ostrakon Guardrails for Philosophy)

- Inscription over Neutrality (Barnes): difference is not only “not bad”; it is a site of divine address.
- Election over Eudaimonism (MacIntyre): dependence is not justified by its contribution to flourishing; it is embraced as truth under the cross.
- Person over Platform (Kittay): care does not instrumentalize the dependent for caregiver recognition; it centers the one upon whom God writes.
- Promise over Threshold (Nussbaum): capabilities serve the neighbor; they do not adjudicate ecclesial belonging.

Each guardrail preserves what is most helpful while disallowing the subtle sanding of the shard’s edges.

5. Synthesis: Philosophical Clarifications Serving a Cruciform Ecclesiology

The philosophers help the church unlearn the moral imagination of normalcy—*if* their insights are received under the grammar of the cross and the hermeneutic of the shard.

A. DECENTER CAPACITY AS THE GROUND OF IDENTITY—NOW NAMED AS INSCRIPTION

Barnes resists deficit and thereby clears room for truthful speech, but the church must not stop at neutrality; it must confess inscription—that God writes promise on disabled bodies and lives. Thus, congregational practices (catechesis, preaching, pastoral care) do more than avoid harm; they teach the assembly to read what God has written on the shard, receiving disabled Christians as theologians of the cross rather than as neutral variants of humanity.

B. HONOR DEPENDENCE AS ORDINARY—NOW PROTECTED FROM EUDAIMONIST CAPTURE

MacIntyre’s virtues of acknowledged dependence are catechetically useful, but the telos is not communal efficiency; it is conformity to Christ under the cross. Therefore, the “edges” of the shard—slower liturgies, redistributed leadership, budgetary reallocation—are not tolerated for the sake of a future payoff; they are embraced as the present shape of fidelity to the Crucified.

C. RENDER CARE VISIBLE—NOW WITHOUT INSTRUMENTALIZING THE DEPENDENT

Kittay helps communities name the labor and justice of care. Yet in the church, the person upon whom God has written remains at the center. Recognition is not purchased by showcasing care; recognition is bestowed by promise. Therefore, care plans are co-authored, testimony is led by disabled members, and governance seats are re-served—not to stage care, but to confess who the church is when it receives its teachers.

D. USE CAPABILITIES PUBLICLY—NOW SUBORDINATED TO PROMISE ECCLESIAALLY

Nussbaum gives congregations a public language for accessibility and justice; keep it in the polis. Inside the assembly, promise outranks threshold. Capabilities are pursued as diaconal goods for neighbors; they do not adjudicate who belongs or how the body gathers. The practical test is whether capabilities talk *changes the church's pace* or whether the shard's edges still do. The latter is the cruciform sign that the community has not been re-captured by performance metrics.

These four, held within the established Lutheran grammar of Promise–Cross–Community, prevent philosophy from becoming a new law while allowing it to serve the gospel's own pedagogy: the Spirit schooling the church on a broken surface upon which God Himself has chosen to write.

IV. Ecclesial Ethic: Dismantling the Moral Imagination of “Normalcy”

THE *THEOLOGIA CRUCIS* RENDERS THE CHURCH a people gathered by promise, not curated by capacity. If Sections I–III established the theological grammar (promise), pedagogical location (cross), and clarifying concepts (difference, dependence, capabilities), this section specifies practices by which congregations unlearn ableist habits and embody cruciform hospitality. The aim is not a program layered atop existing ministries but an evangelical reordering—liturgy, catechesis, care, governance, and public witness reshaped by Christ's welcome. In other words, the congregation learns to live as a field of shard—*ostraca* chosen after breaking—upon which God Himself inscribes the Word that gathers and sends.

1. Liturgical Reordering: Belonging Before Contribution

A. ORDINARY RITES AS SITES OF ACCESS

Worship services should presume disability as part of the congregation's ordinary life. Architectural access (ramps, seating, clear aisles), auditory/visual supports (hearing loops, Communication Access Real-Time Translation or American Sign Language, large-print or braille resources), and Sensory-friendly spaces designed to accommodate individuals with sensory processing challenges are not adjunct “accommodations,” but liturgical instruments that confess belonging prior to contribution.²⁸ In a cruciform register, these are not favors to the few; they are diaconal enactments of baptismal equality. They are also the scribe's desk and good ink for the church-as-ostrakon: practical means by which the Author's inscription can be seen and heard on broken surfaces without forcing those surfaces to be remade into pristine vessels.

B. ROLES THAT CATECHIZE RECEPTION

Disabled members should visibly serve—as lectors, assisting ministers, cantors, ushers, catechists, and yes as pastors—so the congregation learns to receive the gospel from broken voices and bodies.²⁹ When mobility or speech limits shape how a role is exercised, the congregation adjusts the form without questioning the person’s call. Such visibility undermines the subtle metric that equates leadership with normative bodies. It also teaches the assembly how to “read the shard”: the reading may follow a slower line, the chant may break and resume, the procession may bend around an edge—yet the inscription is clearer for having honored the surface upon which God chose to write.

C. THE PRAYERS AND THE TABLE

Intercessions must name disabled persons not as objects of cure alone but as teachers and co-bearers of Christ’s body. Eucharistic practice should normalize variable pacing and positioning (e.g., distributing from multiple levels, bringing the sacrament to those who cannot approach easily). What is at stake is not mere inclusion but the sacramental confession that Christ’s body is given for you—addressed to bodies that differ.³⁰ The table therefore becomes the place where the church dares to handle the shard without sanding its edges: the fraction rite does not conceal but proclaims that grace is distributed along the contours of our shared, fractured humanity.

Liturgical reordering embodies the *res dicere* of Section I: the congregation calls things what they are—creatures dependent upon a crucified Giver—so that architecture and ritual form agree with the gospel.³¹ And because the gospel is God’s writing upon broken clay, liturgy that tells the truth is liturgy that lets the shard remain a shard, even as it bears Christ.

2. Catechesis and Formation: Learning Passivity and Promise

A. BAPTISMAL ANTHROPOLOGY

A sustained catechesis should teach that identity is bestowed *extra nos* in baptism, not achieved by autonomy or capacity. The catechism’s Creedal pedagogy—“I believe that God has made me ... and all that exists ... and daily provides...”—renders dependence a gift rather than a failure.³² Baptism is, in this sense, the first inscription: the Triune Name written upon a life whose worth is not the intactness of the vessel but the faithfulness of the Author.

B. ANFECHTUNG AS PEDAGOGY

Schedule regular opportunities for testimony in which disabled members interpret their lives beneath the cross—neither romanticizing pain nor receiving pity, but

narrating how promise holds amid affliction.³³ This practice resists both sentimentalization and moralization by letting the community learn the grammar of grace from those schooled in it. These testimonies are not exhibitions but readings—public acts of “tracing the letters” God has set upon a shard, so the assembly learns to discern inscription rather than to demand smoothness.

C. TEACHING THE VIRTUES OF ACKNOWLEDGED DEPENDENCE

Adult forums and youth catechesis should engage the virtues MacIntyre describes (just generosity, misericordia, truthful speech) and Kittay’s ethics of care, explicitly connecting them to the church’s diaconal life.³⁴ The point is to render care that is neither heroism nor afterthought, but ordinary discipleship. Practically, these virtues are the community’s trained hands: they hold the shard carefully, they refuse to file its edges for convenience, and they read slowly enough that nothing God has written is lost to haste.

3. Pastoral Care and Mutuality: Ministry *with*, not *to*

A. REFUSAL OF ASYMMETRY

Pastoral care must dismantle the “helper/helped” binary. Care plans should be co-authored with disabled members, starting from their articulated desires and boundaries, not from an assumed agenda of normalization or cure.³⁵ Co-authorship recognizes that the shard already bears writing; the task is not to overwrite the surface with our plans, but to attend to the words the Author has placed there and to act accordingly.

B. MUTUAL AID TEAMS

Establish small “care commons” in which disabled members, caregivers, and non-disabled members practice shared burdens: transportation, meals, respite, accompaniment to medical visits, and prayer. Rotate facilitation to avoid paternalism. Mutual aid converts charity into communion.³⁶ In ostrakon terms, mutual aid redistributes the weight so no shard must carry stress at its most fragile edge; the community adjusts its grip rather than demanding the fragment become a jar again.

C. CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Create space in pastoral offices and congregational liturgies for explicit confession of ableist sins—eye-rolling at slow speech, avoiding awkward bodies, prioritizing efficiency over persons—and announce absolution that sends the congregation back to neighbors with reformed habits.³⁷ We confess not only our contempt but our constant urge to polish; in absolution, Christ re-inscribes us, teaching us to prefer truth on a broken surface to beauty on a counterfeit one.

4. Governance and Accountability: Structures That Tell the Truth

A. ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT AND BUDGET

Adopt an annual audit (physical, liturgical, digital) co-led by disabled members. Publish results and budget to address gaps—ramps, doors, restrooms, lighting, sound, website accessibility, document formats.³⁸ Treat line items not as optional enhancements but as truthful spending consistent with baptismal promise. Think of the audit as an examination of the shard's contours: budgets purchase not prestige but legibility, ensuring that what God writes on broken lives can be publicly read in this place.

B. POLICY CONVERSION

Draft a congregational statement naming disability within your doctrine of creation, sin, redemption, and church, repudiating deficit language and committing to reception under the cross. Include grievance pathways and timelines for response so that “belonging” is legally and pastorally actionable.³⁹ Policies, then, become a canonical register for inscriptions—procedural ways of saying that the shard will not be shelved, that when the writing is obscured, the community has a practiced path to bring it back to the scribe's light.

C. LEADERSHIP REPRESENTATION

Reserve seats for disabled members on council/vestry and key committees (worship, property, education). Representation changes deliberation: budgets, timelines, and priorities begin to mirror the real body gathered by Christ. Put simply: place the shard at the table. Let its edges touch the agenda until the agenda acquires the shape of the body God has actually assembled here.

5. Public Witness: Capabilities for the Neighbor, Promise for the Church

A. ADVOCATE CAPABILITIES; CONFESS PROMISE

In civic life, congregations should argue for policies that expand capabilities—transportation, education, housing, employment protections—using public reasons intelligible to all.⁴⁰ Inside the church, preach and teach that belonging rests not on those capabilities but on God's promise in Christ. This twofold posture prevents ecclesial identity from being colonized by performance metrics while mobilizing the church as the Body of Christ for all in the community. Capabilities here are lamps and ramps to the scribe's desk; promise is the inscription itself. We seek the former for our neighbors; we confess the latter as our life.

B. PARTNERSHIPS BEYOND THE PARISH

Collaborate with local disability organizations, schools, and care networks without outsourcing your vocation. Partnerships extend practical competence; the church's

distinct gift is to name persons according to the gospel and to sustain them with Word and Sacrament.⁴¹ Borrow tools, not the pen: the Author of our life writes with Word and water and bread and wine, and this inscription is the singular gift the church brings to every partnership.

C. PROPHETIC SIGN AND SACRAMENTAL VISIBILITY

Ordinary practices—an ASL interpreter at the font, a wheelchair at the lectern, a stutter from the pulpit—become public signs that contradict the fiction of an unfractured *imago Dei*. The church's visibility is its argument: a people gathered not by sameness or strength, but by the Crucified.⁴² These are not stage props but readable texts—shards held up to the light so that the world may see that God's mercy prefers broken surfaces to polished idols.

6. Guardrails: What This Ethic Does Not Do

- It does not romanticize suffering. The cross interprets affliction; it does not sanctify pain per se.⁴³ Fracture is neither fetish nor fate; its significance is that God elects the broken as His medium, not that brokenness is good in itself.
- It does not deny medical care or therapeutic supports. It refuses only the conversion of cure into a moral necessity for belonging. Healing may smooth certain edges; belonging does not await the sanding.
- It does not reduce disabled Christians to “illustrations.” Visibility serves catechesis and truth, not spectacle. We read inscriptions; we do not exhibit artifacts.
- It does not replace the gospel with activism. Public advocacy flows from promise; it cannot establish it. Activism furnishes better lighting; the gospel is the writing.

7. Practicum: A One-Year Parish Rule of Life (Illustrative)

QUARTER 1: Conduct the accessibility audit; budget quick wins (ushers trained in sighted-guide, print alternatives; website alt-text). Begin a sermon series on baptismal identity and dependence (i.e., Lk 14; 1 Cor 12). Name this quarter “Setting the Scribe's Desk”: learn the contours of the shard and ensure the community can actually read what God writes.

QUARTER 2: Install assistive listening; pilot sensory-friendly seating; schedule two worship-testimony events. Launch two mutual-aid teams. Call this “Learning the Lines”: adjust pace and posture to the inscription's flow, and let testimonies teach the congregation to trace the letters of grace.

QUARTER 3: Revise volunteer/leadership policies; add a disabled seat to the worship committee; craft congregational disability statement. This is “Putting the Shard at the Table”: governance adopts the geometry of the body it serves.

QUARTER 4: Host a public forum with local partners on transportation and employment; write letters supporting city accessibility initiatives; embed an annual confession of ableist sins into All Saints or Christ the King liturgies. Think of this as “Holding the Shard to the Light”: witness in the *polis* and repentance in the sanctuary so that what God has written remains legible within and beyond the parish.

Each step is small, concrete, and evangelical: the congregation does what it says about promise, cross, and community—and does it on the broken surface God has chosen for His inscription.

Conclusion: Theologians of the Cross for the Sake of the Church

DISABILITY, SITUATED BENEATH THE CROSS, becomes *Schule Christi*—a school of formation and proclamation wherein the Spirit trains the church to receive life as gift rather than achievement. In this cruciform pedagogy, disabled Christians are not marginal participants in ecclesial life but indispensable witnesses whose lives expose the truth of creaturely dependence and unveil the mercy by which God meets human frailty. Read through the ostrakon: the church learns that God elects the broken surface as His page; the shard, chosen after breaking, becomes the very site of inscription where promise is legible to the whole assembly. Their presence resists the moral imagination of normalcy and calls the church to inhabit its own baptismal identity: a people shaped not by prowess or performance, but by the promise spoken from the Crucified—a people who do not discard the fragment but treasure it as the medium of divine writing.

Such formation requires *res dicere*, truthful speech that unmasks the illusions by which congregations have long measured worth. The church’s willingness to call a thing what it is—to recognize ableism as a theological error rather than merely a social injustice—marks its conversion from a *theologia gloriae* to a *theologia crucis*. Truthful speech here is not an abstract correction but a practiced reading of the shard: refusing to sand its edges for liturgical convenience or polish its surface for ecclesial aesthetics, the church learns to sound out the letters of grace exactly where the Author has set them. In this truthful speech, gift is enthroned over capacity, and belonging is confessed as bestowed rather than earned. By learning to speak thus, the church is drawn ever deeper into the economy of grace, where persons are not curated according to their competencies but welcomed according to Christ’s embrace—the Word inscribed upon broken clay for our salvation.

This article has traced the outlines of such a cruciform vision, integrating Luther's grammar of promise, contemporary disability theology, and philosophical accounts of difference and dependence. Yet much work remains. Future research must include empirical case studies of congregations undergoing this cruciform reorientation—parish-level narratives that illuminate how liturgical access, pastoral care practices, governance structures, and communal life are transformed when disability is received as *Schule Christi*. These studies should ask not only *what changed* but *what became legible*: where, in the parish's life, did the shard's inscription reshape the pace of worship, the distribution of authority, or the lines of the budget? Homiletical resources are likewise needed to guide preachers in proclaiming the gospel without reinscribing deficit imaginaries, crafting sermons that invite the whole assembly to confess the truth of dependence under the cross—sermons that teach the church how to “read the shard” rather than to repair it. Finally, liturgical revision—architectural, textual, and ritual—must continue to develop in ways consistent with this anthropology, forming communities whose practices embody belonging before contribution—or, to keep the image, communities that provide the scribe's desk, the clear light, and the patient tempo by which God's inscription on broken lives can be publicly read. If the church is to be a people gathered by promise, not performance, then disabled Christians will continue to stand at its center as theologians of the cross—teaching the body of Christ how to live by grace, speak truthfully, and welcome one another as those whose lives are hidden with Christ in God.

“Disability,” in its earliest sense, did not speak of bodies or minds at all. The word simply meant a *lack*—a limitation of capacity in some general or legal sense. When English speakers in the mid-1500s combined *dis-* (“not, without”) with *ability* (“capacity, aptitude”), they were naming a condition common to every human being: the reality that no one can do all things in all circumstances. The term carried no inherent moral judgment, no implication of defect, and none of the cultural baggage that later centuries would load upon it.

The tragic stigmas that cling to the word today—ideas of curse, sinfulness, burden, or deficiency—long predate the term itself. These were never part of the word's original fabric; they were cultural assumptions woven in afterward, as societies began applying the term to real human lives and bodies. Ancient and medieval imaginations often linked bodily impairment with divine punishment or moral failing, but that was the culture speaking, not the language. Linguistically, disability was simply one more way of saying that humans have limits.

It is only in the 19th and 20th centuries, as the term narrowed to refer more explicitly to physical and mental impairments, that “disability” became entangled with the prejudices already present in the social imagination. But those associations are

later additions. They are not native to the word. At its root, disability is a reminder of something universally true: each of us stands “unable” in one way or another, depending on the circumstance. No body—quite literally—can do everything. Disability is not an anomaly; it is a dimension of our shared humanity. And when we place this reality beneath the cross, the picture sharpens. The *ostrakon* in the church’s hand—the broken shard—bears witness not only to the wounded individual but to the condition of us all. Within the Body of Christ, the disabled Christian becomes a living testimony to the truth we would rather avoid; not one of us is the unbroken *Imago Dei*. Only Christ is whole in the way we are not.

We are not broken alike, but we are all, every one of us, alike broken. And in those fractures—precisely there—the living God inscribes His grace.

Rev. David Patterson is the Librarian and Dean at the Institute of Lutheran Theology and the Editor-in-Chief of ILT Press in Brookings, SD. He completed a Master of Library and Information Science at the University of Washington in 2002, and a Master of Religion at the Christ School of Theology in 2015. Rev. Patterson served as a parish pastor in rural South Dakota from 2011 to 2020.

Notes

1. Martin Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), esp. Theses 18–21: Vol. 31, pp. 39–41, in *Luther’s Works*, American Edition, 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg Press/Fortress Press, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), 39–41, hereafter LW.
2. Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, Theses 19–21; see also the contrast of *theologia gloriae* and *theologia crucis* in Thesis 21.
3. For the critique of moralism and performative righteousness in Luther, see *Heidelberg Disputation*, Theses 1–6, 25.
4. On narrating disability as difference rather than deficit, this article engages the Lutheran grammar first, then converses with Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
5. Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 20: “He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.”
6. See Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, “The Creed,” in LW, vol. 51, *Sermons I*, and his sermons on *Anfechtungen* (e.g., LW 42–46).
7. Cf. Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), for an ecclesial turn to vulnerability; here re-situated explicitly under the cruciform pedagogy.

8. Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, Theses 25–26; and *Two Kinds of Righteousness* (1519), in LW 31, 297–306.
9. On dependence as intrinsic to human flourishing, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago/La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1999); Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
10. Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).
11. *Ibid.*; see also the pastoral and liturgical implications Eiesland draws for ecclesial participation and leadership.
12. For cautions about romanticizing impairment and the need to avoid voluntarist triumphalism, see the critique developed here in conversation with the Lutheran *theologia crucis* (cf. Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 21).
13. Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007); Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011).
14. Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*, esp. chs. 2–3 (on gifts and inclusion).
15. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*.
16. Barnes, *The Minority Body*.
17. *Ibid.*, esp. chs. 1–2 (on value-neutrality) and ch.6 (social construction of disability's perceived badness).
18. The theological relocation of "badness" aligns with the Lutheran diagnosis of the world's disordered loves under the cross; cf. Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 21 (LW 31).
19. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*.
20. Matthew 25:40
21. Kittay, *Love's Labor*.
22. *Ibid.*, 85
23. Philippians 2:1-10.
24. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, esp. chs. 7–10; Kittay, *Love's Labor*, esp. chs. 1–3.
25. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, MA/London, UK: The Belknap Press, 2006), esp. chs. 1–2.
26. 1 John 4:7-21.
27. Nussbaum.; read through the Lutheran distinction of promise and performance to guard against capabilities becoming identity metrics.
28. Treat access as integral to worship, not add-on: this flows from baptismal belonging and the cruciform priority of the least; cf. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 180–202; Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, 96–120.

29. Visibility forms desire and doctrine; see Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 152–79; Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*, 91–114.
30. On Eucharistic participation as belonging enacted, see Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*, 115–36; and the *theologia crucis* grounding in Martin Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), in LW 31, Theses 20–21.
31. Luther’s contrast between theologies of glory and cross clarifies why liturgical form must agree with the gospel’s address; *Heidelberg Disputation*, Theses 19–21.
32. Luther, *Large Catechism*, “The Creed,” in LW, passim; the anthropology of givenness complements Elizabeth Barnes’s critique of deficit narratives in *The Minority Body*, chs. 1–2.
33. Testimony as anti-sentimental catechesis: Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 205–12; Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*, 69–90.
34. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, chs. 7–10; Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, chs. 1–3.
35. Care plans and refusal of asymmetry: Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 29–54; Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 137–51.
36. Mutual aid as communion: MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 127–42; Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 180–202.
37. Confession/absolution applied to ableism aligns with cruciform truth-telling (*res dicere*): Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, Theses 1–6, 25; cf. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 210–12.
38. Accessibility audits operationalize Nussbaum’s civic goods while locating belonging in promise: Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, 96–160; Barnes, *The Minority Body*, 131–58.
39. Policy conversion ensures practices match doctrine; cf. Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*, 137–58; Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 193–202.
40. Capabilities as public grammar, promise as ecclesial ground: Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, 70–120; Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, Theses 25–26.
41. Partnership without outsourcing vocation: Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*, 159–78; Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 203–12.
42. Public signs contradict the fiction of an unfractured *imago Dei*: Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 1–24; Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 20.
43. Guarding against romanticization: Barnes, *The Minority Body*, 159–86; Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 21.

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