


**Connecting with Hope,
Reconnecting with the Christian
Vision of the Human Person:**

Isn't it the case that...

Jamie Calder SJ MAPS

For Thomas Riemer

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Prayer and Reflection

I have a suspicion:
Vision of wanting to see the world differently to the way it currently appears


“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”
(Prov 29:18)

“Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.” (Hab 2:3-4)

God's Dream for Creation – Union with God – Intimacy with Love and Hope
Come Holy Spirit Come, and Renew the Face of the Earth

2 THSP521 Psychological Foundations | Faculty of Theology and Philosophy | School of Theology


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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the First Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways. We recognise their spiritual and ongoing cultural connection to Country.

We respectfully acknowledge Elders past and present and thank them for their wisdom and guidance as we walk in their footsteps.



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The Possible Plan (Seat of Hope):

1. Introductory Orientations
2. A Theological Anthropology: Revelation Affirming an Ontology of Relationality (Intimacy)
3. A Psychological Anthropology: Attachment Theory, Relational Safety, Co-Regulation, Mental Health
4. A Theology of Vulnerability: Attending to the other, the Other and the self
5. Briefly Drawing things together: Mattering, Mutuality, Reciprocity and Avoiding Abuse of Power


(Isn't it the case that...)


You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless, Lord, until they rest in you.

Confessions

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Limitations in time and space: Positioning and Intersectionality


- Age/Education
- Gender
- Country of Origin/Cultures of Origin
- Social background (class)
- Pastor – I keep watching people and communities being hurt – I keep ‘seeing’ the search for safety and wellbeing
- Trauma Informed Theology and Psychology
- Theological Anthropology (for pastoral care)
- My work focus: The edge of the (c)Church
- Apologetics and Communications

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Orientation of Hope

Isn't it the case that...

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- The only hope that we have ever had and will ever have: Jesus Christ
 - Fundamental phenomenon we all have in common?
 - “The time is fulfilled (at hand), and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news (Gospel).’ (Mk1:15)
 - *Metanoia* – the ongoing need of conversion, of ‘becoming’ of heart
- Of Religion: “Spirituality is prior to religion, and religion has as its purpose to reflect and support spirituality. When religion fails in this function, it loses its reason for being”. (Haight, 2016, p. 16)
- Theology: “Spirituality is also prior to theology, because it supplies the source and subject matter for theology.” (Haight, 2016, p. 16)
- Union: “That they may be one, Father, as you are in me and I in you” (Jn 17:21)

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Orientation of Hope



The Priority of Spirituality to Religion and Theology

On that premise, it is fairly obvious that the church began as a spirituality of following Jesus of Nazareth.” (Haight, 2016, p. 48)

- Our starting point is encounter with Love: the Zacchaeus Paradigm (Lk 19:1-10)
- In responding we become responsible (Horner building on Levinas) – we become human
- The essential proposition becomes: Our ongoing conversion is a contemplation and deepening of our interior and exterior life of *relationship* with Jesus Christ which enables our humanity in the agency of the Holy Spirit, drawing us to the Father (God)



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Isn't it the case that...
Where we find ourselves:
Context

Context of Hope



“In a world where nationalistic populism tears apart any global cooperation, where the abandonment of the Paris Climate Accord mirrors the abandonment of migrants and refugees, where civility is sacrificed by the arrogance of self-interest and the common good is trampled underfoot, we need to be globally connected and active, abandoning the domination models from the global north and looking beyond our own interests to other localities for other perspectives.” (Keenan, 2020, p. 133)

- The loss of social capital – religion, Catholicism, priesthood
- A failure of authenticity? To be who we say we are? (Are we any more accepting, welcoming, supportive, caring, seeking to provide a place of service than a local service or sporting club? - Rohr)
- The authenticity question – failure has resulted in...?
- Reformers (‘counter reformation’) - Ignatius Loyola, Charles Borromeo, Philip Neri – returned to the sources – so again, our fundamental hope lies in our relationship with Jesus Christ in the prayer of communal discernment in the Holy Spirit

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‘change of era’ Francis, 2015



Volatility
Uncertainty
Complexity
Ambiguity

Bennis & Nanus, 1997

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Context: Isn't it the case that we find ourselves in a time of:

- Cultural Flux (Contestation and bifurcations?)
- Religion and the authenticity question
- Faith and faith: The crisis of meaning in the Australian context and beyond?
- Continuing damages from the sexual and other abuse in the church?
- Safeguarding and safety? Where is culture and what it makes possible?
- Inclusivity, transparency and accountability (agendas)?
- Culture wars of villains and goodies in disguised theologies which are really ideologies?
- Catholic Church culture: hierarchies, secrecy and competition - as places of bullying and violence – cultures of fear and hiding

Assumptions, Frames and Working Definitions:


- That the pathway itself is of God:
 - No way to peace: Peace is the way
 - No way to God: God is the way

Culture(s):

“Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language... mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several... disciplines, and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought.”
 (Raymond Williams in Arbuckle (2010), p.1.)

McEvoy (2022, p. 1) reminds us:

“For the Roman Catholic tradition, the Second Vatican Council’s document *Gaudium et Spes* acknowledged the integral role of culture in human existence and valued the plurality of culture”. In doing so, it embraced the 20th-century ethnological concept of culture.”



Assumptions and Working Definitions:
 Why the culture question remains central (and unanswered):


From an anthropological perspective:
 Created by individuals and subdivisions, as they struggle to respond to the competitive pressures of power and limited resources in a rapidly globalizing and fragmenting world
 And instructing its adherents about what is considered to be the correct way to feel, think and behave. (Arbuckle, 2010, p. 17)

From a narrative-anthropological perspective:
The stories an individual, group or community tell itself/themselves and others, (discourse communities) about what is real, true and good. Values narratives.
 (Calder)

“External social structures produce in individuals a ‘habitus’, or a system of lasting dispositions and practices. Habitus is a culturally defined but located in the mind of the individual.” (Arbuckle, 2010, p. 11)

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Assumptions, Frames and Working Definitions:

Culture(s) Provide:

- Interpretive Repertoires – we internalise culture


“The term interpretative repertoire is an attempt to capture the ‘doxic’ (Barthes, 1977) nature of discourse. An interpretative repertoire is a culturally familiar and habitual line of argument comprised of recognisable themes, common places and tropes (doxa)...These interpretative repertoires comprize members’ methods for making sense in this context – they are the common sense which organizes accountability and serves as a back-cloth for realisation of locally managed positions in actual interaction.”
 (Weatherall, 1998, p. 400 – 2007/2006)

- Identity Positions and Identity Politics –

Positioning theory is based on the way in which cultural discourses, for instance stories in a given culture about what it means to be a man, provide men and women with positions from which they can interpret the world. Discourses do so by being “taken up” by a person through being internalised as an intentional state. (Davies and Harre, 1990)

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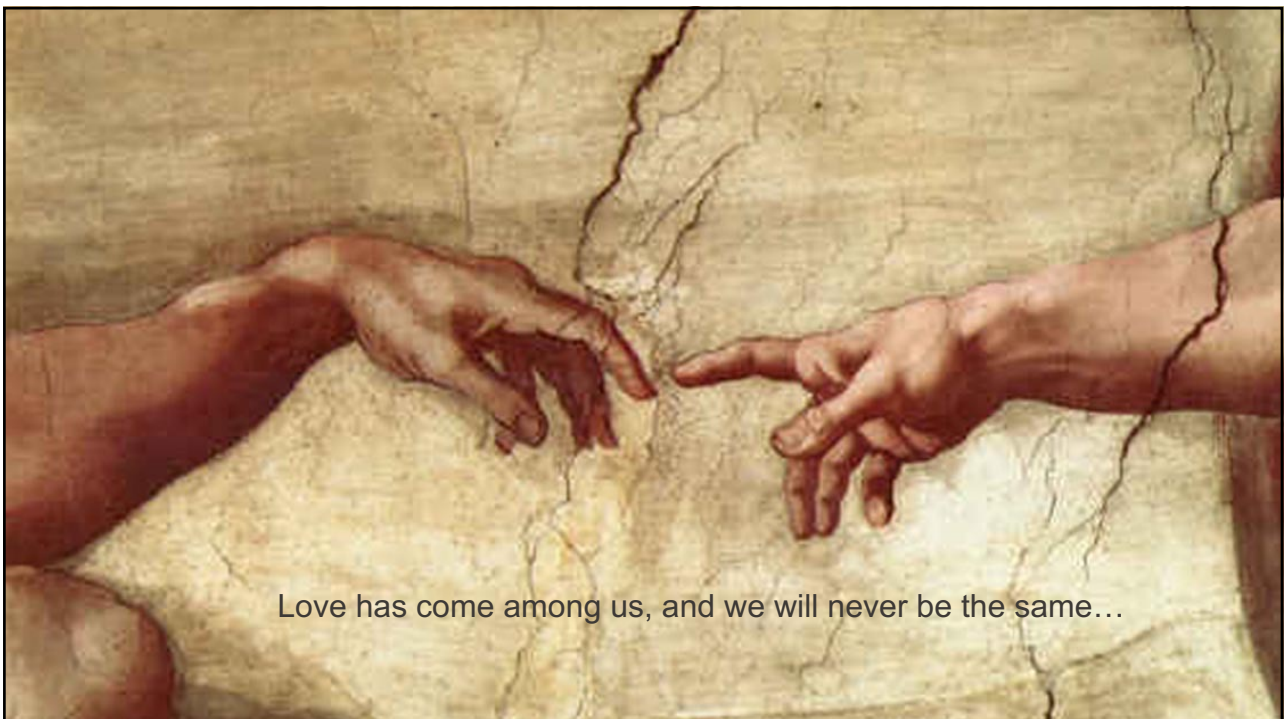
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Isn't it the case that...
We have always had what we
needed in terms of hope in the
Christian vision of the human
person

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A Theology of Relational Intimacy: Anthropocentrism/Stewardship of Creation *Laudato Si* 2015



116. Modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism which today, under another guise, continues to stand in the way of shared understanding and of any effort to strengthen social bonds. The time has come to pay renewed attention to reality and the limits it imposes; this in turn is the condition for a more sound and fruitful development of individuals and society. An inadequate presentation of Christian anthropology gave rise to a wrong understanding of the relationship between human beings and the world. Often, what was handed on was a Promethean vision of mastery over the world, which gave the impression that the protection of nature was something that only the faint-hearted cared about. Instead, our “dominion” over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship.

- The dialogical space (sharing rivers of meaning) – faith as conversation between hearts, the theological tradition, the call of the Spirit...

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A Theology of Relational Intimacy:



Three things brought into dialogue:

1. Trinitarian Dynamism of Theological Anthropology
2. The Divine/Human Dynamism of the Incarnation
3. A social ecological understanding of creation

A Theology of Relational Intimacy:



1. Trinitarian Dynamism of Theological Anthropology

God's revelation is Triune:

- The Father is so (the Father) because there is a son, because there is a *relationship* with the Son.
- This means that in trying to identify a particular thing, we have to make it part of a relationship and not an isolated individual.
- This means that identity (God's, yours and mine) is something always in relationship to something else.

"God *is* the relations that God has. I am someone who is a father. In God, fathering is what God, who we call Father, *is*" (Lash, 1992).

- Ontology of relationality

A Theology of Relational Intimacy:



This ontology (perhaps even phenomenology of love in God) is expressed by the theologian Klaus Hemmerle writing in honour of Hans Urs von Balthasar. Dr Teresa Brown in her recent paper examining Trinitarian ontologies and critical consciousness captures Hemmerle's ontology of relationality point for anthropology:

"For Hemmerle, a new trinitarian ontology discloses a new order of things: 'out of love, all Being, all thinking, everything that happens is disclosed in its own structure', a structure that is predicated on relationality. Even thinking thinks anew in light of a trinitarian ontology: it is transformed by the process of self-giving love'... Hemmerle notes that God gives Godself away as Trinity, and the human answer as *imago Trinitas* is to 'enter into and repeat the moments in which [the unity of] the Trinity happens'; that is, to enter into the event of the Trinity. In this way, Being becomes being-towards, -in and -from an other.

- This points to the specific nature of Christian relationality – union or intimacy

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A Theology of Relational Intimacy:



2. The Divine/Human Dynamism of the Incarnation

God's special revelation in the Incarnation is Human

- The Second Person of the Trinity reveals what is fully human to humanity in the deepest relationality possible between the divine and the creature.
- Therefore, what is most deeply human is what is most deeply holy. What is most deeply Holy is then, what is most deeply human. "Who do you say that I am?"
- Practice your Christianity? Then practice your humanity... (To live into our deepest humanity)
- God's journey of kenosis is *Missio Christi* – Our Kerygma Claim: Intimate relationality with God in Jesus Christ is salvific – it sets us free
- Limited understanding about who God is in God's self revealed in Christ: Reflections of which we are...
- Atonement: Not changing God's mind about us but our mind about God

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A Theology of Relational Intimacy:

Three things brought into dialogue:

3. An Ecological Understanding of Divine Revelation and Human Connectivity (relational intimacy) – an ecological sociality

- “*LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore*” – “*Praise be to you, my Lord*”.

240. The divine Persons are subsistent relations, and the world, created according to the divine model, **is a web of relationships**. Creatures tend towards God, and **in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things**, so that throughout the universe we can find any number of **constant and secretly interwoven relationships**.

This leads us not only to marvel at the manifold connections existing among creatures, **but also to discover a key to our own fulfilment. The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures**. In this way, they make their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. **Everything is interconnected**, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity.

3

Isn't it the case that...


A Fundamental
Psychological
Anthropology

A Psychology of Relational Intimacy

Examining 3 related things against the backdrop of mission:


Human Attachment
Emotional Regulation
Resilience

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Still Face Experiment (Professor Ed Tronic)



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A Psychology of Relational Intimacy



Attachment/Intimacy as a site for co-regulation

Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space. (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969)

Adult Attachment is found in such phenomena as the depth of connection in romantic relationships, community/social relationships and also relationships to meaning, value and purpose (identities).

Secure attachment provides the foundation for appropriate adult self-regulation (wellbeing)

Self Regulation/Co-regulation is a system of conscious personal management that involves the process of *guiding* one's own thoughts, behaviours, and feelings to reach goals. ... impulse control, the management of short-term desires (toward longer term desires).

Human Agency – the ability to influence one's life and actions according to values and purposes

Resilience is the process of *adapting well* in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. ... Being **resilient** does not mean that a person doesn't experience difficulty or distress.

A Psychology of Relational Intimacy



Adults regulate their lives and emotions through attachments


- Primary attachments vary and with different vulnerabilities and attachment styles
- Adult attachment is also to a higher purpose, value and the relationships generated therein... (identities)
- Crucial here is the point that human attachment is a psychological way of describing human intimacy although they are not same thing but rather overlapping
- Intimacy is generated through trusting human relationships of mutuality and reciprocity, of interpersonal power sharing – a type of attachment
- Attachment is also an identity proposition and is the corner stone of well being
- So, purpose and value move the discussion back towards cultures and mission
- Basic human agency is closely related to intimacy in the form of attachment



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A Theology of Vulnerability:
Attending to the other, the Other
and the self

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Drawing things together: Vulnerability

Responding to the authenticity question:

- Can there be a hermeneutic of theological anthropology?
- If so, what might it look like?

The ongoing humanisation of the human person through a social ecology - relationality leading to intimacy or union

In her book, *Even the Devil Quotes Scripture: Reading the Bible on its Own Terms*, biblical theologian Dr Robyn Whitaker, tells the following of a discussion she had with the head of a Christian lobby group:

“He explained to me that one of their projects was fighting for the rights of Christian parents and foster parents to be able to insist their children go through gay-conversion therapy.† When I asked him if he was worried about what such practices would do to the children given the evidence that they cause harm and that it didn’t seem very loving, he seemed genuinely surprised. “What is more loving than stopping someone going to hell?” he asked.” (p. 140)

- Arguments that come to biblical interpretation – What is peripheral and what is central to the Faith

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Drawing things together: Vulnerability



- In response she proposed that the earliest interpreters of Scripture – Jesus himself and the authors of the New Testament – did have an ethic that guided their interpretation: It is one that transcends any particular context or time and exemplifies the very nature of the God of Christian worship. This ethic is love: love of God and love of neighbor. It is deceptively simple and surprisingly difficult to enact.” (p. 141-142)
- Such is my proposition to you here tonight – we are called now, more than ever, to embody and engage a hermeneutic (a theory and method of interpreting and understanding) of theological anthropology which is to say the primary category of interpretation and meaning is relational intimacy

Let me illustrate this using the notion of vulnerability as a way of describing the concrete shape of this call

Drawing things together: Vulnerability



- In her Chapter “Vulnerability: An Ethic for a Divided World,” Irish ethicists and ecumenist Linda Hogan has proposed an ethics of vulnerability for a divided world, describing vulnerability “as a way of being, as the ground of our relationality, and as mode of social engagement”. (p. 216 of Keenan et al., eds., Building Bridges in Sarajevo. The Plenary Papers from CTEWC 2018)

“Mutual dependence, shared vulnerability, these are the elements of human experience that have rarely featured in the ways in which politics is constructed or ethical theories are framed. Indeed, much of our politics and ethics seems to be intent on foreclosing this recognition. And yet share vulnerability and mutual dependence may be precisely the qualities that have a resonance with the individuals and communities world-wide who are struggling to find the grounds for hope of shared future in a world divided.” (Hogan, 219-220)

- Here we need to understand vulnerability not as a negative condition to be escaped for invulnerability – this is just a return to the fictitious autonomous sovereign self
- Vulnerability here is not to be understood as the condition that raises alarm, concern, or the need to protect.

Drawing things together: Vulnerability



- Rather, vulnerability is understood as the condition of being available, of attending to the other, the Other and self
- For: “When vulnerability is regarded as weakness and concomitantly, invulnerability is prized, attentiveness to one’s own vulnerability and ethical response to vulnerable others remain out of reach goals.” (Erin Gilson in Keenan, *The World at Risk: Vulnerability, Precarity and Connectedness*, p 138).

“When we recognize that the word vulnerable does not mean being or having been wounded, but rather means being able to be wounded, then it means being exposed to the other; in this sense vulnerability is the human condition that allows me to encounter, receive, or respond to the other”. Keenan, *The World at Risk, Theological Studies 2020*, 81(1), 138)

- So, the proposition is that in returning to the foundations of theological anthropology we find a pathway in an ethics of vulnerability: Vulnerability is our nature; it is the condition for the possibility of our responding, or our being ethical (Levinas). It precedes our decision, even what we once called the fundamental option:

“You call upon me, and I answer. But if I answer, it was only because I was already answerable; that is, this susceptibility and vulnerability constitutes me at the most fundamental level and is there, we might say, prior to any deliberate decision to answer the call. (Butler in Keenan, 2020, 140)

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Drawing things together: Vulnerability



- So, what I am now describing is the condition of being that allows us to love.
- Note the connections between relationality of intimacy in the theological anthropology and this outflow into ethics. We could say that attachment then, is lived out in vulnerability as the condition of intimacy
- The north-American Jesuit ethicist Jim Keenan unpacks this understanding of vulnerability with two scripture texts: Luke 10: 25-37 “The Good Samaritan” and Luke 15: 11-32, the “Prodigal Son”

“This inversion about vulnerability mirrors the inversion in the same parable about the question of the neighbor itself: in answering the question, Who is my neighbor?, we think at the beginning of the parable that the wounded man is the neighbor, but by the end we agree with the scribe that the neighbor is the one who shows mercy. In a similar way the neighbor has gone from being object of concern to being responsive agent. The concept of vulnerability in contemporary literature has moved similarly from the wounded to the responsive one” (Keenan, p. 138)

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Drawing things together: Vulnerability



- Going further with Luke 15: 11-32, the “Prodigal Son”, Keenan points out the difference between vulnerability and precarity or instability:
- “In the beginning of that parable, we encounter the younger brother’s rapid decline into precarity...”
- Yet the centre of the parable focuses on the vulnerable one, the one is attending and available, who is the father
- It is the father who recognizes his son in the distance, embraces him, reincorporates him, and begins the process of restoring all that was unstable, threatened, exposed, and jeopardized in the younger son.
- The same father remains vulnerable to his older son who does not suffer from precarity but from resentment.
- Keenan notes that the father sees his younger son in the distance he knows that his movement toward the younger son will trigger the older son’s own insecurities.
- It is the father’s vulnerability frees him to anchor both sons in his household. The stability in the story is the vulnerable father, as the precarious son returns and the resentful one tries to leave; the centrality of the story is the enduringly vigilant, attentive, and responsive father who is so because he is vulnerable and is capable not only of embracing them but of entering into one’s precarity and the other’s dominance.

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Summary Connections:




I have been proposing an ethics of vulnerability as a practical way of engaging seriously and living out the Christian vision of the human person:

- It takes seriously the fragility of the human person but also the relational quest for union, for communion that lies at the heart of human belonging
- In this I am pointing to the theological basis of human wellbeing and mental health
- When as a community we are able to become present to each other, truly attending to the other, being vulnerability to their needs we engage the conditions of human becoming
- This is another way of saying we become the *Imago Trinitas* – living the relationality by showing up as our fully human self for availability, and participating in God’s life

Modeling our limited understanding of trinitarian relationality and in doing so, participating

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Briefly Drawing things together:
Mattering, Mutuality, Reciprocity
and Avoiding Abuse of Power

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Drawing Propositions Together



- In God's revelation in Jesus Christ, Christians experience a God whose very being is pure relational intimate loving movement in communion
- This God reaches out to the creation inviting humanity to come to know their participation in the movement of communal inter-relational intimate love
- It is this very movement of intimate love expressed in the creation that constitutes human beings as human-in-becoming
- This is evident in a 'natural theology' of psychological anthropology
- We are invited to express this through a hermeneutics of theological anthropology manifest in an ethics of vulnerability
- Finally, such an ethics, because it is anthropological in origin, has the capacity to neutralise our endless cycles of violence
- When I dispose myself to truly attend to other and the creation, I enter into a foundational reality of mutuality and reciprocity. I become kin to the other...

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Theological Anthropology Hermeneutic



The Safeguarding Issue:

- This is what it begins to mean to create a safe church:

Emphasising the responsibility of all Catholics to ensure the Church is a safe place, the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (and vulnerable adults) is inviting public comment on a proposed set of principles that Church bodies must reflect in their safeguarding guidelines. *Source: NCR Online.*

“Cultural competence” in safeguarding efforts is also a stipulation, as well as “publicly accessible procedures, a stated commitment to safeguarding and accountable mechanisms for church leadership, risk prevention measures, and pastoral conversion towards a culture of safeguarding based on ongoing formation and training for all ministers in the church.” (Elise Anne Allen reporting on the new framework document from Tutela Minorum The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. June 24th, 2023).

- Hope then, is about authenticity – culturally moving towards kinship

“This I know: that my Redeemer lives, and he, the Last, will take his stand on earth.”

