

The Kenarchy Journal Volume 4

Editorial

Roger Haydon Mitchell

As lead editor, this is my first editorial. It has been an inspiration and encouragement to work with such a great group of collaborators and contributors for the first three volumes of what is becoming a serious applied academic journal for all interested in plumbing the depths of the politics of love. I am now delighted to let you know that from this volume onwards our collaboration extends into a partnership with the Institute for Religion, Peace and Justice, at St Stephen's University, New Brunswick, who approached us with the idea of making *The Kenarchy Journal* their academic journal. After fruitful discussion together we concluded that it was a great idea, and Bradley Jersak and Andrew Klager <https://www.irpj.org/people> have joined Sue Mitchell and myself on our editorial team.

The first three volumes were all entitled Starting Points, as we began to unpack the seven foci of kenarchy that are listed on our Home page. While these practical outworkings of the politics of love will remain central to our further volumes, these next two editions will attempt to begin the process of digging down into the kind of kenotic thinking that culminates in this particular expression of loving activism. While, as is clear in the introduction to the journal, this is not a confessional or dogmatic Christian endeavour – indeed if you are reading this as a person of non-religious or agnostic leanings you are most welcome – it recognises the impetus of the two foundational myths of trinity and incarnation.

In August I gave a paper at the Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies that explored the role of myth in what Timothy Stacey in his recent excellent book *Saving Liberalism from Itself*¹ describes as “spirited political participation.” Based in his research among grass roots community transformation initiatives related to the Industrial Areas Foundation,² he investigates the way in which shared stories function as hopeful solidarities on the basis of which social action and change takes place. This correlates strongly to the similar but different work of the Poverty Truth Commission which Sue Mitchell and I help facilitate in Morecambe Bay. While Stacey's book

¹ Timothy Stacey, *Saving Liberalism from Itself* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022).

² Begun by Saul Alinsky in Chicago in the middle of the last century it was behind the London based Citizens UK which succeeded in getting major recognition for the Living Wage during David Cameron's coalition government and the work of the Metro Vancouver Alliance over the last few years.

engaged with the positive function of myths in general, it also exposed for me just how the myths of trinity and incarnation motivated and shaped our engagement with the Poverty Truth Commission.

Given that we understand trinity as the egalitarian source of humanity in creation, and see incarnation as the trinity's full identification with humanity in creation, especially the poor and the marginalised, it is not hard to see why we were moved to cultivate space in which people with lived experience of poverty and the trauma associated with it could tell their stories in egalitarian space first to each other and then in relationship with those of socio-political power and influence. Drawing on Tim Stacey's book, Sue Mitchell's research on transformational listening³ and Julie Tomlin's articles on the reinstatement of feminine myths in previous volumes of this journal I attempted to explain how true myths function as shared stories with quite extraordinary socially transformative effect.⁴

But obviously there is more to it than that. Those of us collaborating in this journal are exposing a dynamic beyond the content of the story or myth, something embodied in the telling of it, that moves in the shared space between the tellers and listeners as they lean into one another. It is the dynamic movement of love which this journal configures as kenarchy, and this fourth volume attempts to explore. It is what Anna Mercedes advocates with crystal clarity as she revisits the challenges of kenosis from a feminist perspective and advocates so convincingly for, despite the risks of doing so for those in marginalized and oppressed social positions, even and especially in the catastrophic conditions that have characterized the 2020s thus far in so much of the world: pandemic, climate collapse, political turmoil and violence.

It is this process that Mark Corner explicates as God's relationship with creation and Her passionate commitment to its welfare and which as David Blower argues lies at the heart of relationships we can trust through which law is transformed into lore as we abandon conformity to the present age and lean into the benign anarchy of the age to come. It is surely this which lies in Marisa Lapish's exploration of Julian of Norwich's mystical configuration of *poynthe* and her vision of Jesus' blood being poured out as the actual participation in Jesus' self-giving love inclusively for all, her in Middle Ages' experience with its many resonances for our contemporary catastrophes. It is this that defines the love stronger than death which substantiates the economics of love which

³ See Sue Mitchell and Francisco Jose Eiroa-Orosa in Roger Haydon Mitchell ed *Cultivating New Post-Secular Political Space*

⁴ Hopefully my paper will either be published by the Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies or else in a later volume of this journal.

Spencer Thompson treats in this volume's long read and provides the radical alternative to the superficial recourse to Nehemiah and Ezra that Michael Huffman discloses in relation to populist exceptionalism.

This volume brings two innovations to add to our new partnership. Firstly, we are excited to bring the opportunity for relevant and succinct book reviews of which there are three: one from Carol Kingston-Smith on Tom Oord's latest book *Pluriform Love*, another from Sam Tomlin on Catherine Keller's *Facing Apocalypse*, and one from Mike Winter on Professor Ellen Davis' book "Scripture, Culture and Agriculture. An agrarian reading of the Bible." Finally we have replaced our little used Forum page with the opportunity for you to engage with the authors live on zoom. Let us know by the submission link who you would like to engage with and we will do our best to set something up. We hope you will find this volume and these innovations a resource for your ongoing research and activism!