

# The Kenarchy Journal Volume 5

## Editorial

Roger Haydon Mitchell

I spent the past weekend with a group of friends collaborating with Mike Love of the Leeds Together for Peace initiative as he presented us with a draft of the final chapter of his PhD thesis on seeing like a city, which he began to set out in Volume 3:4 of this journal. Some of the same friends had shared in the collective research begun some eighteen years ago into a proposed subsumption of transcendence by sovereignty that was tracked in my book *Church, Gospel and Empire: How the Politics of Sovereignty Impregnated the West* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011). At the time of publication, Graham Ward described it as “a major contribution to contemporary Christian political theology” and hopefully he was right. It is certainly exciting to recognise how our relational collaboration is emerging into some serious and applied political theology in a city like Leeds here in the UK and elsewhere where the lens of the poor exposes the way to social transformation and wellbeing.

Two things flow from this that it is important to emphasise. The first is to recognise a decisive move away from the modernity of Descartes et al and their promotion of rationality over relationality. This journal and the connections that it helps sustain are ongoing expressions of this relationality. Our collective agreement is that all knowledge is relational and that rationality alone generally undergirds a sovereignty legitimating approach that Catherine Pickstock helpfully describes as a *mathēsis*, a reductive exclusivism which academia is greatly diminished by. It is with the intention of consolidating this relationality that we are encouraging you our readers to connect with our authors virtually. To this end, we are glad to announce that in September there will be the opportunity to meet with Anna Mercedes around her article “Kenosis in Catastrophe” in Volume 4:1, and the opportunity to discuss with me the relationship between kenarchy and sovereignty. Please use the submissions section of the site to show your interest in either of these webinars and to express your interest in interfacing with authors from this current volume. Secondly, kenarchy is an applied kenotic theory developed in response to the reductive impact of the subsumption of transcendence by sovereignty. It is important not to miss this. For while kenotic theology in general does tend to oppose the dominating hierarchy of sovereignty, it often does so partially or temporarily. Kenarchy, however, upends sovereignty completely. This has extensive implications for

our understanding of God, the gospel, the cross, the ecclesia, and the findings of church councils, those termed early church fathers, and tradition generally.

This last year has seen the publication of two highly significant books on kenosis that both display at times this only partial commitment to the foreclosure of sovereignty in God: Bruce McCormack's *The Humility of the Eternal Son* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) and Paul Nimmo and Keith Johnson's *Kenosis: The Self-Emptying of Christ in Scripture and Theology*, a collection of contemporary essays dedicated to McCormack (Grand Rapids Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2022). McCormack's book even concludes with the extraordinary answer of an emphatic "No," to the question of whether there is a kenosis of the Father and the Holy Spirit. I am currently working on an article gently exposing and challenging the assumptions behind this. Watch this space! A possible antidote to this tendency is to be found in Thomas Jay Oord's similarly recent publication, *The Death of Omnipotence and the Birth of Amipotence* (USA: SacraSagePress, 2023). A book review please somebody?

All this to say that this volume of the journal continues our exploration of the deep structural implications of kenarchy. Bradley Jersak from our own editorial team offers us biblical and Christological grounds for the essentially voluntary character of kenosis, while Julie Tomlin completes her triptych of articles with an original presentation of Divine Wisdom culminating in the work of social reproduction, re-enchantment and re-connection to the earth as sites of social, economic and political transformation. Simon Cross, the chair of the British Progressive Christianity Network, draws on his doctoral research to offer a collegial way of conducting ourselves as theologians by outlining some observations and recommendations derived from a study of the experiences of people who understand themselves as working for the 'common good'. Australian Christi-anarchist Dave Andrews, invites us to journey with him on a lifetime of radical activism as he charts his quest for 'good', and his struggle for 'good' against 'evil'. Michael Huffmann then engages us in another of his challenging Biblical exegeses to demonstrate that, despite many subsumed perspectives to the contrary, Palestinian Arabs are co-heirs of the Abrahamic promise! These five articles are matched by five highly relevant book reviews: Mark Corner introduces us to Paul Nimmo and Keith Johnson's *Kenosis*, the aforementioned collection of essays; Bradley Jersak examines Timothy Stacey's significant work on stories of lived experience as functioning myth in *Saving Liberalism from Itself*; Michael McDougle takes us into our academic advisor Anthony Reddie's important book *Introducing James H Cone*; Paul Lancaster enthuses over Bradley Jersak's recent *Out of the Embers: Faith after the Great Deconstruction*; and finally Spencer Thompson investigates

Eugene McCarragher's *The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism Became the Religion of Modernity*. Enjoy, and if you do so, please recommend the journal!

Finally, we are delighted that our partner, IRPJ, now has a new name, *The Jim Forest Institute for Religion, Peace and Justice*. Jim Forest (1941–2022) was a peacemaker, activist, journalist, and author of twenty books and countless essays. Originally from New Jersey, he was close friends with Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Thich Nhat Hanh, Daniel Berrigan, A J Muste, Bayard Rustin, Henri Nouwen, and many others engaged in peace and justice. He worked in activism and journalism for the Catholic Worker, and was deeply involved in the civil rights movement, led IFOR in the Netherlands and helped found both the Catholic Peace Fellowship and Orthodox Peace Fellowship. We are glad of the association with his work and memory.