

## Editorial

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My own research has disclosed the impact of the subsumption of transcendence by empire in much of our Western mainstream expressions of theology and politics. While I have focused mainly on the toxic political impact of this misunderstanding of the nature of church, gospel and the kingdom of God, it is great to begin this sixth volume of *The Kenarchy Journal* by examining the planetary impact of reading 'rule' or 'dominion' as imperial domination in the creation account of Genesis 1. Melissa Stewart's detailed scrutiny of the four eco-theological models she presents and the revised eschatological hope she sets out are a welcome response to an otherwise horrendous anti-planetary and ultimately anti-human Anthropocene destruction. In the article that follows, Latasha Hazlett confronts the implications of our own humanity being created in the image of God. Simply put, if God is good then so are we. Humans are made in the image of God whatever else may have happened along the way.

A defining characteristic of kenarchic theology is that God is revealed progressively and developmentally. It may well follow that Godself is also on a journey of discovery, something that it would be great to receive a submission on for Volume 7! However, what a help to realise that Augustine understood this, and that those of us who have struggled with some of his theology were perhaps simply encountering his evolving conclusions along the way. Hazlett unpacks three Augustinian iterations of what sin does to our divine image, the third of which ceases to view the *Imago Dei* as lost in the fall and only restored to those who are reformed. Instead, "the image of God is persistently present in the nature of the ... soul itself as an intrinsic capacity." Regardless of whether they choose to exercise it or not, there is always that of the divine self to be revealed in the other, even if they are our enemy. That originally divine, then humanly embodied impulse, dimmed but not extinguished, to be poured out in love, in blood, for the 'other,' is at the heart of kenarchy and our hope for humankind. Lisa Meier's article then challenges us to ponder further, not just the soul's capacity to image a good God, but the female body's intelligence of poured-out blood in considering how, "as an icon of Christ's kenotic atonement, menstrual blood enables us to encounter God's expansive wonder and mystery where love spills, leaks, invites, and welcomes all to come in". She describes Christ's divinity as "porous and leaky", where his 'for-other' relationality seeps through boundaries, and so we dive next into the equally shared pain and angst that we experience today in our contemporary world.

The threat we face to both human and ecological survival can perhaps only properly elicit a lament of the order of the extraordinarily heartfelt cry of the Book of Lamentations. As I see it, laments are simply that. They are not primarily about logic or reason; they are simply the eloquent intuition's response to a situation seemingly beyond hope. The existential question is whether they are a cadence or a climax. Mark Stone's contribution enables us to discover the former in these wrenching scriptures by facing full-on the liberating, and in my view, only sane approach to the text. We need to realise that the Bible is a diverse set of literature with a diverse set of opinions and that this in no way detracts from its revelatory potential. As Stone puts it, "the Bible very often disagrees with itself. This is not the tired old game of Bible contradictions, but instead the rather transparent observation that the Bible was composed by multiple human authors. And, as humans are wont to do, they interpreted things in varying, sometimes contradictory, ways." This is of course, a troubling approach to some, but for those of us familiar with Jesus' own hermeneutical practice, it is a crucial one, as Derek Flood's helpful *Disarming Scripture* makes clear.<sup>1</sup> Our necessary lament becomes an anti-theodicy, the revelatory disclosure of a non-dominating amipotent God, to use Thomas Jay Oord's exciting term.<sup>2</sup>

It is because lament is absolutely necessary in our present day experience of war and catastrophe, that we now take the opportunity to re-print here two contemporary laments concerning the situation in Israel and Gaza. We begin with Munther Isaac's unequivocal 2023 Christmas sermon of lament from Bethlehem, over the Israeli government's response to the violent attacks by Hamas on October 7th. Published here with his permission, it is available elsewhere online. Having decided to publish this, we were concerned to complement it with a strong Jewish voice and Rabbi Brant Rosen's statement from the leadership of the Jewish congregation and synagogue Tzedek Chicago, originally published by Truthout, is exactly that. Finally, Andrew Klager's updated background overview of the situation in his article originally published in Huffington Post recounts the deep memory, story and context that give depth and texture to the present crisis, and we realize "we are all far more interconnected than we often realize — we are all 'interdividuals.' The individualistic tendency to pick sides obfuscates this interconnectedness and forces us to ignore atrocities as they happen, right now, in-the-moment, regardless of their origin and target." JP Roble's compelling welcome to the beauty of human otherness provides a further antidote to the alienating effects of the power politics of our Western construct. This system, whose discriminating outworking is now coming to a head in what George Monbiot describes as the extrinsic value set of

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<sup>1</sup> Derek Flood. *Disarming Scripture* (San Francisco: Metanoia Books, 2014), 81–89.

<sup>2</sup> See Thomas Jay Oord. *The Death of Omnipotence and the Birth of Amipotence* (USA: SacraSage Press, 2023)

much contemporary Western politics<sup>3</sup>, is in desperate need of such a remedy. Finally, Spencer Thompson clearly explodes any assumption of divine violence. We have, he asserts with thoroughly argued conviction, a non-violent God. In so doing completes what is another extraordinary line-up of applied theological work.

The question of how we got here has been my motivation for as long as I can remember. First as an evangelist, then as a prayer leader and latterly as a theological researcher and writer, I have tried to discover and communicate some of the answer. My response to Bruce McCormack's *The Humility of the Eternal Son* and his conclusion that there is only a kenosis of the Son but not of the Father or the Holy Spirit,<sup>4</sup> mentioned in my last editorial, will be published in next month's edition of *The Theology Journal*.<sup>5</sup> I have now added historical fantasy fiction to my efforts to answer the question; re-inscribing history with what might have been had kenarchy really been understood. The first novel in the series was published in December by Top Hat Books and is available from Amazon and all major retailers. You can explore it here: [www.dayofthelabyrinth.com](http://www.dayofthelabyrinth.com) and in this Volume's own review of it alongside Mike Winter's review of Randy S. Woodley's radically insightful *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview – A Decolonized Approach to Christian Doctrine*. The latter provides another crucial reminder of what could have been, and what needs to be addressed as we embrace the future.

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<sup>3</sup> See George Monbiot. The Guardian, Jan 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/jan/29/donald-trump-americans-us-culture-republican>

<sup>4</sup> Bruce McCormack. *The Humility of the Eternal Son* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 263-264.

<sup>5</sup> <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/theology-journal> forthcoming