

## **1995 E.H. JOHNSON AWARD**

**TIMOTHY M. NJOYA  
P.O. BOX 53258, NAIROBI, KENYA**

### **GOD’S PLAN AND FUTURE RESPONSIBILITY**

#### **1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

I am here because the world has come to recognize that African people have a rich God-Being consciousness worth placing on the world’s revelation agenda. My home Church and the people of Kenya who work with me for justice complement the E.H. Johnson Award as partners in recognizing our humble effort to make God awareness a part of current and future decisions in daily human affairs at the grassroots. They are grateful to God that my pastoral experience as their parochial minister at Dagoretti, Nairobi, Kenya, can make a recognizable contribution toward the future global agenda. The Award has vindicated my entire family from the traumas it has suffered when I was bodily injured, deposed and deprived of practicing my ordination for two years, harassed by police and put in jail on account of focusing the Gospel on human rights.

Allow me to state some of the theological thoughts responsible for what the E.H. Johnson Award has observed as my “cutting edge” of mission and human rights. Please understand that I am not making a general statement of Christian faith and theology. This is only a modest expression of how my whole being becomes mixed up in the doubts and despairs of the world to which my participation brings some hope.

This does not negate the fact that my theology is by tradition a Reformed theology, by influence very African and its expression awfully Kenyan. It retains a slight Princeton Seminary, New Jersey accent. It is also refined by the cross one must carry to demonstrate that human dignity and fulfillment cannot be realized without human rights and freedom of expression for all.

In this talk I have expressed four of the key theological imperatives responsible for my performance in Church ministry and human rights activities. These are (1) the divinity of the God-Being; (2) the God-Being’s emanation in historical and natural existence; (3) evil as a product of discordance in the relationship between existence and God; and (4) the pain God has to suffer for restoration and reconciliation. Except for emphasis, the four thoughts are not grouped one after the other, but form one coherent chain of argument.

#### **2. GOD OF THE FUTURE**

My contribution to Dr. E.H. Johnson’s vision of global “mission with a cutting edge” will be to propose a new theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. The expressions of God in images conceived in the past must shed those images in order for God to become God of the future. While we cannot dismiss the influence of the creedal and Catholic theology from Nicea through Augustine to classical Reformation, and the modern Protestantism, Catholicism, Pentecostal Revivals and Liberation theology, none of this heritage can help future generations deal with the ultimate issue of freedom in which some parts of God’s creation, in the pretext of being God-fearers, threaten others to non-being.

God of the future is one whose exercise of freedom Jesus explained with parables as governance which, while not opposed to material progress for the wellbeing of humanity, grows like a tree “so that the birds come and make their nests in its branches”.<sup>1</sup>

Theology of this and the last several centuries is old-fashioned, conceived in minds preoccupied mainly with one-dimensional<sup>2</sup> individualism and its focus on power, possessions and economic progress, but hardly conscious of the bonds between God-Being and existence, and the conflict inherent in the freedom of human beings to break or keep those bonds. By talking of liberation as resolution of conflict between man and woman, master and slave, have and have-not or oppressor and victim, tare and seed, or sheep and goat, rather than as resolution of contradictions potentially inherent in the exercise of freedom they cannot liberate anyone. One can only be free by taking care of the freedom of others.

In future, theology will grapple with the asymmetrical complexes inside every person considering that each human being is a mixture of opposites, “Animus and Anima”<sup>3</sup>. On the day only one person will be alive in this planet, there will still be struggle within that person, between man and woman, slave and master, oppressor and oppressed, saviour and destroyer and have and have-not. Instead of continuing to subdivide the divisions of the world into blocks of good and bad, theology must respond to the saint in every devil and deal with the devil in every saint, recognizing that “Every Christian witness is a human witness who is limited by space and time, by human wisdom and by human sin”<sup>4</sup>.

Theology of the future must concentrate on deciphering the dialectical relationship between God-Being as distinct from existence and existence as distinct from God-Being and how this relationship connects with the contradictions of human societies, cultures, economics, churches, governments and other historical phenomena, and how these contradictions affect the ecosystem. In the Garden of Gethsemane<sup>5</sup> and on the cross, Christ agonized with having to go through the full pain of connection with a hurting world, pleading with God to waive the contradictions of the cross before him. God did not waiver. A responsible God-Being cannot avoid the full consequence of connection with the contradictions of existence emanating from the very freedom with which God created existence.

The basic motor underlying the western missionary impetus was fueled not by theological consciousness about the link between God and existence, but by a utilitarian Christianity, moved by a deep-seated desire of western individualism to make itself universal through global self-actualization. According to Von Leeuwen<sup>6</sup>, this impetus for global self-realization is so much a part of western civilization that it will not stop expanding and spreading its monolithic culture, by means of its advanced economy, science and technology, even after Western Christianity stops sending missionaries to non-western parts of the world.

The root cause of danger and threat to the future of existence, is a theological misunderstanding that human beings are special beings with absolute freedom to act against each other and the rest of creation the way they want, without accountability to the Creator for their actions. The misunderstanding issues partly from ignorance of God as distinct from existence and also from the misconception of God’s love for human beings as God’s elevation of human beings above other forms of being. The divine-human alliance in God’s governance of earthly matters is supposed to reveal God’s love, grace and justice but not to demonstrate a special position for human beings in the hierarchy of existence. In its fight against

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 13:32

<sup>2</sup> Persons, Tacolt. One Dimensional Man.

<sup>3</sup> Sanford, John A. The Invisible Partners. Paulist Press, New York/Ramsey, 1980. p. 48

<sup>4</sup> Leith, John H. The Reformed Imperative. The West Minster Press. Philadelphia. 1988. p. 31

<sup>5</sup> Mark 14:35-36

<sup>6</sup> Von Leeuwen, Arend Theodoor. Christianity in World History. New York. Charles Scribner’s sons, 1964

Gnostic heresies the early Church refused to entertain the idea of divine hierarchies. Even the outcasts had full access to Christ and to God's spiritual and material gifts for existence, regardless of their religious, ideological, gender, ethnic, cultural or economic affiliation.

The greatest abuse of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which the 21<sup>st</sup> century must disabuse itself is the development of a global hierarchy in which some parts of the world have capitalized on their advanced organization, trade and technology to take advantage of the lesser organized parts, wantonly grabbing their power, plundering their resources, degrading their environment and trapping them to conditions of penury and neglect. By use of their relative economic and industrial advantage the affluent nations secure power for themselves to rule and divide existence into many worlds where they rank themselves as First World and relegate the rest as Second, Third and Fourth Worlds.

All human organizations must encapsulate in their structures the love God has for the world by incorporating God's governance in their exercise of freedom. They must recognize the image of God in every human being as the foundation of human rights and dignity but not a foundation of human racial, class, material or gender hierarchies. It is due to God's act of grace that God gives rights to all to partake of God's divine governance in creation.

This helps us to warn 21<sup>st</sup> century humanity about the looming danger of continuing with our misconception of God's governance as lordship, dominance and masterdom. Over and above this being embarrassing to the humility of God on the cross, it leads to reckless abuse of the ecosystem, integrity of creation, human rights and the subsequent problem of debasement of conscience. It emits signals of danger, calling for a different future understanding of God and God's relation to existence.

Today, I am therefore taking advantage of the E.H. Johnson Award to launch a new theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which means fitting our understanding of God as an eternal God-Being, whose being is distinct from existence, in our frame of finite existence, within our limited jobs, houses, medicine and resources, and rendering accountability to that God for our lives and actions. This does not augur well with the current human order whose greed for power and material progress is not commensurate with accessibility and availability of resources for all, and which lacks an adequate sense of responsibility and accountability to all.

The question raised for 21<sup>st</sup> century theology is this: how can the birth of God in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond take place, and how can God grow and survive, if the world does not stop being conditioned by the way our mode of production and consumption contaminate, destroy and upset the earth's ecological balance, and pass on the defects and costs of abuse to the unborn, poor, and others locked out of benefits? How can inequitable exploitation of the earth affect the health and life of God who was born and raised by our parents, surviving on fresh milk, grains, greenery, fruit, air, water, fish and warmth, like one of the earthly children? What would happen if God were to be born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when milk has radiation, fish have mercury and everything else is contaminated?

The responsibility challenging theology from now onwards is this: a concerted global agenda to make human beings responsible for the way they exercise their freedom in the use of knowledge and power to meet the basic physical and spiritual needs of an ecologically, socially redeemable form of existence.

This responsibility emanates from the fact that human beings are the part of existence whose abuse of freedom originated evil and can ruin the world unless they partake of God's plan for reconciling the world with itself and God.

This will change the theology of domination and control of the earth to theology that asks all parts of creation to show that none exists any longer for itself, or for existence's sake, but for the whole, for

Christ. It calls every aspect of creation to strive for satisfaction in communion with God and harmony with others. All things must maintain themselves by collaboration with nature and one another as part of their journey toward fulfillment in God.

In this collaboration there is inherent conflict that requires constant dialogue. In every God-oriented action there develops a counter-orientation that makes life dynamic and creative and prevents it from becoming monotonous and mechanical. By putting “the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad”<sup>7</sup>, the tree of life, that carries both life and death, in the heart of human freedom, God wished to have in the freedom of every creature, responsibility for the freedom of others. The first freedom is freedom to live followed by freedom of expression, access to means of existence, movement, privacy, association and to choose to whom to delegate some responsibility for protecting this freedom.

The cross of Christ must be the new tree in the middle of 21<sup>st</sup> century historical processes to remind humanity that it is foolish to tamper with creation to the point of destroying its central nervous system and the embodiment of God’s Spirit in it. Existence has only one central nervous system that networks, links and holds together everything in it and by which it becomes conscious of itself in order to sense God. The evil that was emanated solely from the abuse of freedom in the Garden by eating the forbidden fruit, hurts the whole existence and God’s embodiment of it. By virtue of God’s incarnation, abuse of freedom hurts God. God shared the pain, responsibility, culpability and punishment of existence, “even to the point of death on the cross”<sup>8</sup> due to the evil which could not have affected God, had not God decided to have God’s nervous structure connected with the one of existence. God risked having power blackouts, and experienced one on the cross<sup>9</sup> when “darkness covered” the world.

Theology of the future shall recognize that destruction inflicted on creation by one part of humanity can cause pain throughout the existence’s nervous system, to the point of touching God’s nerves, provoking headache in God’s own Being, and causing death to Christ and the environment. Existence has one central nervous system. The sin that hurts existence is solely by human beings but it hurt the whole existence, including the forests, water, air and animals. The universe is an association of forces constituting one body, a “cosmococracy”, sensitive to the feeling of a tiniest meteorite or dust particle. By virtue of incarnation, God shares the distress, responsibility, culpability and punishment, even the death penalty, with both culprits and victims. The Creator hurts when creation hurts because incarnation links the nerves of God-Being with the existence’s central nervous system. In fact, it is the Creator’s presence in creation that animates creation from numbness and death and makes every part of it sensitive to good or bad treatment by others.

Like the nucleus of the central nervous system, the tree conferred responsibility to freedom, and duties to rights. The tree was a seal symbolizing God-human covenant to respect creation. The pain of Jesus on the cross and suffering in the center of human life is a warning bell of how far to go in search of power and resources. It pains God when creatures feel pain because of self-inflicted violence. If God were to remove pain as a warning mechanism from the world, people would not be responsible for their freedom. Just as freedom has responsibility and rights have duties, pleasure has pain as God’s way of putting an internal mechanism to remind creatures of their accountability to God for reckless exercise of freedom or misgovernance.

The ethic of the theology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond calls for all forms of governance, political, economic, social, familial, psychological, intellectual, religious, spiritual, scientific or technological to be God conscious in the exercise of freedom in order to feel what God feels when God’s creation afflicts

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 2:17

<sup>8</sup> Philippians 2:8

<sup>9</sup> Luke 23:44

itself with its abuse of freedom. This means seeing the world of the future no longer as an object for domination and exploitation, or as a product for possession and consumption, but as the body of which we are integral parts, and in which we live and have our being, a world which we must nurture and conserve in order for it to nourish and protect us. This reconciliation of human being with existence is part and parcel of God's plan to transform creation into a new heaven and a new earth.

Without God being in touch with the birthing pain that accompanies mothering, fathering, nurturing, caring and giving of life to others, and relating with animals, rocks, water, vegetation and gases, God cannot be fully in touch with us and our history. It is the Holy Spirit who makes us feel pain in our hearts when any part of existence is hurt by another, and unites us with it to deal with the source of pain. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world, indwelling in their mortal bodies, human beings bear a dead conscience which cannot feel pain when creation is groaning and longing for redemption.

In this redemptive hope, God is continually active in all human imperfections and relationships, even where the human side of the covenant, stewardship and formal religion is doing manifold appalling things, embarrassing to God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to assist us to be conscious of our condition of sin and death and our invitation by Christ to join Christ in God's election, mercy, and grace, humbly admitting that "we ourselves, who are the first fruit of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our salvation as children, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved"<sup>10</sup>.

### 3. GOD-BEING EMANATION AND REVELATION

The fact that Africans may copy the Biblical or Quran systems to articulate their own knowledge of God's revelation does not diminish or increase their God consciousness. Our awareness of God does not substantively vary when Africans become Muslims or Christians. This God consciousness in Africa is part of God's own emanation in history and in other parts of the world. God is the only source and cause of God's revelation. While God's revelation may have religions as some of its means of revelation, communication and transmission, God's revelation is nevertheless not religious in substance. It is found in nature<sup>11</sup>, or in persons, as in Christ.

God-Being is apart, free and distinct from any concrete set of realities which it creates, to which it relates, to which it corresponds, in which it is named or worshipped, in which it is manifested, by which it reveals itself, in which it appears in likeness, with which it shares love and freedom, and finally in any "representation by art and imagination"<sup>12</sup>. God remains different and unlike any other being because nothing but God is divine. While our awareness of God-Being can come directly in specific situations, by means of intuitions, prayer, relations, dreams, praise, worship, service, and human understanding, none of these means can constitute God. Christian love, truth, justice or concern are relevant and responsive to issues raised by God's revelation in varieties of contexts in existence.

African religions share this global view that God-Being is unknowable: only signs of God's emanations or incarnations can be known. Whatever we perceive as God-Being is not God but our own images and imaginations of who God is. God as God-Being behind human awareness of God, incarnations or emanations, cannot be exhaustively known or fully experienced in any given historical and natural occurrence. God's gifts of freedom and human fulfillment can only be enjoyed if this is part of the struggle to decipher and discern what is God's emanation in the real world, in concrete situations.

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:23 and 24a

<sup>11</sup> Romans 1:20

<sup>12</sup> Acts 17:29

This is why Africans have no problem accepting the Bible as true record of God's revelation akin to what their existence, physical matter, spiritual things, traditions, witness, myths, reason, and human climate speak about God. John Mbiti says that "Among Africa societies, the sun is considered to be a manifestation of God...There is no concrete indication that the sun is considered to be God, or God considered to be the sun, however closely these may be associated"<sup>13</sup>.

Africans may worship mountains or stones, believing that God exists in nature and participates in history. But if tomorrow a bulldozer comes and removes the stones and flattens the mountains, other stones and mountains will assume the role of hosting God. God can be any other stones and mountains or none. This sacralizes nature as something indwelt by God, by virtue of Christ's incarnation, without deifying it. It shows that the God-Being Africans know and worship in form of emanations, as stones and mountains, can be God without dependence on such natural emanations. This way, religion, including Christianity, can know God without being idolatrous or pompous.

There is one thing in common between the revelation of God in African religion and Judeo-Christian-Islam religion. That which the three forms of religion share in common, they also share in common with all other religions in the world: namely that God is a Being whose being is not dependent on how God is known or worshipped in concrete existence, form, event, reality, polarity, religion or projection. "For whoever seeks God in a definite mode accepts the mode and misses God, who is hidden in that mode"<sup>14</sup>.

Other than God's self-revelation in existence, the whole history of humankind has not produced any logical, or imaginative expression of God, even absolute reason, that can escape from existence. The world depends wholly on God's own self-revelation as a divine gift. When the world takes revelation to be God, it ends up having too many gods of existence, confusing God-Being with worldly means, creeds, names, events, modalities, things, methods and modes in which God-Being humbles itself into a form the human mind can comprehend.

The problem with the world today is not unbelief but how we believe. The fault is in how we perceive and communicate revelation. Many people, believers and unbelievers alike, take God as a product of what creatures know, obey, worship or acknowledge as God. To imagine that God's very Being depends on having some form of existence or on receiving human allegiance is idolatrous. This untruth that God's Being is a being dependent on having and being a frame of reference is dangerous to existence. It leads humankind to worship God as the highest form of power their own reason, reflection, race, tribe, religion, nation, class, gender, theory, theology, philosophy or records can understand. There is a tendency to assume that God has a frame of existence shaped by our own collective or traditional experience. This leaves little hope for people whose part in caring for creation fully depends on the misconception of God by which people confront each other. With this kind of persuasion, a monistic power can feel morally justified in erecting statues of its own likeness and hammering everybody in the world into obedience.

God does not originate from our beliefs, scriptures, or likeness. God is a Being distinct from existence. God-Being is not a product of what creatures know and worship as God. God-Being as declared by "I AM WHO I AM"<sup>15</sup>, implies unique God who becomes known and worshipped by limited God-Being to what existence can perceive. God is who God is, without dependence on having any bodily or conceptual existence. God has no peers, no rivals, and no predecessors or successors, in any part of existence, by which to be measured or compared. No religion, Christian or otherwise, can dictate to the world the terms

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<sup>13</sup> Mbiti, John S. African Religion and Philosophy, Frederick A. Praeger. New York. 1969. p. 52

<sup>14</sup> Fox, Matthew. Breakthrough: Meister Eckert's Creation Spirituality in New Translation. New York. Double Day and Company, 198?. p. 201

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 3:14

of God's revelation. The world is worried, not by whether God exists, but whether God has abandoned existence: has "forgotten we exist"<sup>16</sup>.

Existence is endangered by perceiving God's revelation as its own self-awareness rather than God's own revelation. The picture of the world as something self-originated, a product and possession made and owned by itself, can tempt some geniuses in a highly organized nation to take creation hostage and blackmail it to bow to their hegemony. Believing in God as a Being whose essence is made of existence is like a license for big, strong and powerful creatures to shape God in their own shapes and sizes, confining God in the front and center of the stage, where God cannot see them pound small, weak, powerless and wretched creatures into commodities: enslaving or discarding as they wish. The respect human beings have for their environment and each other issues from the worldview their theology gives them about the Creator and the purpose the Creator has for the gift of creation.

Existence comes from God. God created existence with all its plurality, diversity, contrasts and varieties of creatures, genes and things. The diversity of cultures, languages, styles of life are sanctified and are a reflection of the Creator's mind. God has put in every creature survival techniques, called balance of nature, by which one creature is food for another, and each survives by taking back from nature what it has given to another creature. At the highest level this give-and-take is trade of gifts and experiences, sharing of life. Any injury to this nature is like injury to the central nervous system, which, if too severe, can lead to environmental death. This causes severe injury to God's natural system or interdependence when Europe takes too much from Africa and returns too little, and when African states are spoiling the African self-respect by their aid dependency syndrome. Existence has some hidden interchange value in having big and small, bright and dull, majority and minority, aboriginal and modern, nomads or urbanites as part of its creative strategy.

It was not an expression God's revelation that the medieval crusades, subsequent colonialism, genocide and holocausts took place to superimpose religious views held by some people about their superiority and inferiority over others. The jihads of Christianity were more heretical than Islamic ones because they took God as the highest expression of human civilization. Such religious myths, as that the Caucasian offspring of Shem was mentally superior to races fathered by other sons of Noah emanated from a mechanistic notion of God as the most intelligent, holy, powerful and highest being in the heavenly hierarchy of beings. The heavenly hierarchy is revealed in the earthly hierarchy where some people are the wisest, highest, most holy and powerful individuals who cannot tolerate low, profane, meek and plain folk at the bottom. Colonizers and dictators applied this like a reverse Magna Carta guaranteeing eugenicists and exploiters absolute claim and monopoly of ideas by which world's resources are governed. God used Caucasian Christian and industrial power to reveal God power. Operating on the basis of this mechanistic view of revelation and capitalizing on its Constantinian tradition western Christianity did not evangelize Africans differently from a Muslim jihad.

Christianity has spread this monistic and mechanistic view of God as anti-diversity, unfree creature, determined by what some people believe, worship, produce and consume. Non-producers and non-consumers become redundant, dropouts, refuse discarded like outcasts in the "abyss"<sup>17</sup> of despair, where even the demons begged not to be sent<sup>18</sup>.

In such a mechanistic order, God is depicted as part of lopsided history excluding some while including others, and in turn this history determining its own gods, rich, sacred objects, writings, holy orders, saints,

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<sup>16</sup> Wagner, Jane. The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe. New York. Harper and Row Publishers. 1986. p. 25

<sup>17</sup> Luke 8:31

<sup>18</sup> Mark 5:10

“whited sepulchers”<sup>19</sup>, mushroom clouds and gas chambers. A considerable number of people around the world bow their knees not only to God as their Creator, but as their brainchild, policies, plans, institutions, records (such as Bible and Quran) and other objects in their mechanistic order has written, sanctified and preserved.

This conception of God as a being having a form of existence that springs from existence, or as a product of worshipper’s faith, makes God appear as one faction of the warlords competing for dominion with other factions over “the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing”<sup>20</sup>.

Creation is a process of emanation in which new and original being forms existence and the world is its conscious and historical reality. There is nothing in the heavenly or earthly world even the highest ideal that mind can conceive, even demons and angels, if they do exist, can escape its composition as part of existence. The highest emanations of evil, even Satan, are products of existence’s contradictions. Satan was not there in the original creation and does not have Satan’s own separate existence. Creation, existence and the world are dynamic emanations of one and the same being: they are the process, the response and the consequence of each other.

This is where the philosophy of being, in which creation is free to be what God intended it to be, and the philosophy of having, in which some parts of creation want possession and control of others, are in sharp conflict, at each other’s throats. The resulting discord between God’s revelatory help for creation to enjoy what God intended it to be and the human tendency to have monopoly of control in the world gives birth to a philosophy of materialism with a masculine notion of history in which “The evolution of man, in all history, is characterized by man’s struggle with nature”<sup>21</sup>

This misunderstanding that God as a being which originates from a self-created existence explains the deterministic theologies and ideologies underlying the foundations of inequality, slave trade, colonialism, holocaust and modern market systems. Most of the world religions have joined Christianity in the conspiracy of this misunderstanding of God as one of the big states or big corporations threatened by “Marx’s Concept of Man”<sup>22</sup> as a competitive force of existence. Instead of infusing the idea of Sabbath and jubilee principles of freedom into human progress, people become captive means of production and helpless creatures of what they produce and consume. This lack of a rest break for creation to renew itself by recuperating from the injuries of exploitation, turns the world into predetermined force of self-destructive progress and self-exhaustion. It reduces human creativity to nothing more than built-in, automated parts of the economic and political appetite for state security, corporate power, slave labour and captive markets.

All this attempt by some self-deified components of existence to see God as a forecast of their own enterprise, and by extension of their aim to dominate the rest of existence, derives from faulty understanding of God and abuse of the freedom God has given humankind. One section, class, gender or person thinks of itself as the only true likeness of God with freedom to impose itself as a resident deity in charge of creation. The modern world and its so-called new world order is neither modern, new or orderly but a concoction of three fallacies that sanitize the Creator with praise, holiness, majesty, and glory to touch a leprous existence. Having banished God from their decision-making processes, agenda, plans and policies, people abdicate their call to participate in the dynamics of procreating and recreating existence into “a new heaven and earth”<sup>23</sup> in which God intends to “make all things new”<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew 23:27

<sup>20</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>21</sup> Fromm, Erick, Marx’s Concept of Man. Frederick Ungar Publishing Co. New York. 1966. p. 19

<sup>22</sup> Fromm, Erick, Marx’s Concept of Man. Frederick Ungar Publishing Co. New York. 1966. p. v-vi

<sup>23</sup> Revelation 21:1



From this misunderstanding stems three major fallacies, namely (1) that some parts of existence, in certain positions and corners of the world, can become gods unto themselves with powers to produce themselves by using others to make their own history; (2) that those parts of existence used by others to become the means by which they make themselves gods of history have no right to receive from their Creator their own likeness of God or being or existence – they are emanations of their oppressors; (3) that the whole of existence cannot continue to exist without worshipping those parts of itself, in certain corners, positions or material advantages, which are ahead of others in this tragic and conflicting history of self-creation, i.e., self-deification: idolatry.

#### 4. GOD’S ENTRY INTO EXISTENCE AND SUFFERING

Focusing incarnation solely on soul salvation, liberation, peace, welfare and fright from the world, at the exclusion of reconciliation and union with God and other things, smacks not only of spiritual arrogance and smugness but gives license to abuse of human rights, heedless desecration of the ecosystem and blasphemy to the Creator. God’s incarnation in existence is centered within God and mediated through Christ. Paul states very clearly that its mediation is “not from man, or by means of a man, but from Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead”<sup>25</sup>. It is neither from the Church nor from other modes of divine-human relationship. It is not emanated in the Creator-creation co-existence which is the object of redemption and restoration.

For several centuries, there was a direct correlation between the Christian view of soul salvation, God’s reign and stewardship and the rise of slave trade, mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism and racism. Had the Christianity kept a view of salvation as reconciliation of existence with God it would have practiced the Pentecostal model of faith where different nations, races and languages understood each other as equal before God. Pentecost did not take one centre of national, racial, political, economic and military power as the crown of existence. To avoid one nationality, Israel, taking charge as a spokesperson of the whole gathering of God’s people in the world, monolithism or centralism, the Holy Spirit facilitated God’s creative presence in many languages.

Jesus cancelled the idea of divine centralism when he told the Samaritan woman that “time will come when people will not worship God either on this mountain or in Jerusalem...God is Spirit and only by power of God’s Spirit can people worship God as God really is”<sup>26</sup>. In contravention with Jesus’ view of God’s Spirit as equally present everywhere, the mechanistic thinking of western Christianity, that God’s reign is centered in Western Christendom, compounded with missionary enthusiasm, and allied with the gospel of a “free world” hegemony, impacted negatively on the whole of existence. Nation-states emerged and increased, all this in the context of some parts of existence striving for dominance over others. God became one of the pawns in the play of Super-powers, corporations, and power elites quarreling about who had the “greatest”<sup>27</sup> ‘drum major’ instinct among them. This marginalized most of the world population on the periphery of power and resources. At stake was freedom of expression and conscience where millions of refugees along with countless ‘dead’ witnesses fled from military and one-party dictators, jailing, torturing, maiming and killing of real or imaginary political opponents.

Instead of being concerned with how to redeem and reconcile hostile elements, the Church wasted no time convincing the culprits and victims of this economic system that God is an extraterrestrial superpower dispatching crusaders and missionaries like shock-troops to see them out and evacuate their

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<sup>24</sup> Revelation 21:5

<sup>25</sup> Galatians 1:1

<sup>26</sup> John 4: 21-24

<sup>27</sup> Mark 9:34, Luke 9:46

souls from the world. A God who rescues the souls of social, economic and political victims from the existence with tweezers of poverty and disease, in fragments, compartments, bit by bit, spirit from flesh, soul from body like tusk from elephant, piecemeal, is “like” a poacher.

This portrays the Church as a Holy Spirit’s mining corporation, working in this world, extracting precious human souls and spirits for export to heaven. This contributes to the mutilation of the world, accentuated by nuclear threat, climaxed by environmental contamination, marked by domestic terrorism against women and children, underscored by material self-indulgence, and fueled by dictators with tales of state sovereignty. The inevitable contradiction clear, namely militarism, greed, family degeneration, extremes of wealth and poverty and ecological defilement.

The Holy Spirit turns a deaf ear to a Church which keeps on citing as news the actions of a Saviour who long ago cleansed the temple by driving out thieves with a whip, without relating the news to the children yearning for a Christ who drives out radiation, mercury, lead, tyrants and greenhouse gases from their milk, fish, water, nation and ozone respectively. Future incarnation shall need to show that the powerful Christ who cast out demons and calmed the storms with commands is elementary enough to get involved in pain suffering caused by effects of modern science, consumer technology, endemic draughts, drug abuse, unusual diseases, climatic change, displaced peoples, ignorance and poverty.

World problems are not caused by slavery, imperialism, holocaust or colonialism. Such are the consequences of deeply-ingrained misconception of God and the ignorance of God’s purpose for creating, procreating and recreating existence. It was because God gave human beings freedom to love and enjoy God without force that led to sin. When the abuse of freedom is removed, slavery, imperialism, and holocaust which are human ways of infringing on the freedom of others, become irrelevant.

This misconception is caused by a serious flaw in theology: the illusion that God exists as part of existence; the fallacy that God’s existence is the holiest and most powerful faction, junta, or administration, relative to other holy and powerful regimes. This heresy of classifying God with the attributes of existence, seeing God as the highest being in the hierarchy of many things (i.e. pantheism mixed with anthropomorphism), issues in sexist, racist, caste and other degrading relationships. In the feudal hierarchy God is seen by those in power as the highest man and man as the lowest god and the rest of creation as real estate, belongings, labour, votes, income tax, dumping grounds for contraceptives and human garbage. They plan massacres and make tribalism the scapegoat.

## **5. GOD-BEING FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY**

The modern world is suffering from mechanistic ideas of God. We have to shed mechanistic concepts of double predestination in order to make our faith more sensitive to the issues raised by our human and natural environment.

John Calvin is credited with having laid the doctrinal basis for teaching about double predestination. Supporters of double predestination use Matthew 25:31-36, about the sheep and goats, and in Jeremiah 18:1-12, about the pottery, as their theological basis of double predestination. There is nothing wrong in the doctrine of election about Jesus having chosen<sup>28</sup> us before we chose him. What is wrong is downplaying the dynamics of the creation process and the function of human response, in which God allows creation freedom to do what it pleases with responsibility for the consequences.

Jeremiah tells a story of the pottery as a loving and caring potter who sets out to make a perfect pottery which turns out to be imperfect. God’s intention to make a perfect pottery does not determine the destiny

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<sup>28</sup> John 15:16

of the pottery, whether it will be perfect or not. God gives the pottery freedom to participate fully in the process of being created. This freedom permits the right to say no or yes, even to say no to the Creator. While still in the hands of the potter, the pottery exercises its freedom. It turns out to be imperfect evil, contrary to the potter's plan. Instead of taking away its freedom God makes a provision for the imperfect pottery to turn perfect saying "If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought I would do unto them"<sup>29</sup>. In Christ, this opportunity was provided "once for all"<sup>30</sup> so that defective humanity could take that provision and become perfect.

In Matthew's story, the metaphor of the sheep and goats Jesus is implied as God's provision those sheep who have become goats to become sheep again. Otherwise there was no point telling the story. Everybody has the potential of being bad or good, tares or wheat, sheep or goat depending on alterable conditions. It is not a matter of either or. Even in the condition of total depravity, there is possibility for holiness and in holiness there is possibility for sin. In the context of the goats-sheep parable, what is sure is that those who leave this world forgiven will go to eternal life<sup>31</sup> and those who leave this world unforgiven will enter eternal punishment<sup>32</sup>. The condemnation is not in the process of creation, otherwise the Creator would be equally condemned for introducing freedom in that process. Neither is condemnation in the human response, otherwise freedom to say no or yes be evil. The double predestination is consequences of either negative or positive responses.

The purpose of creation is to enjoy God. Creation would not enjoy God in a mechanical, forced or programmed manner.

The mind by which Calvin and his followers arrived at double predestination is a legacy of the legalistic and mechanistic expression of Constantinian Christianity<sup>33</sup>. This has influenced the whole world's Christianity and made Calvinist theology circumscribed by churches' quest for bureaucratic identity. It has made the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa too rigid to participate in the positive changes going on in their respective regions. Until recently the Presbyterian Church in East Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa have found it too difficult to tolerate pastors who struggled for transition from one party system and apartheid to pluralism and democracy. For them God is the God of order: order in their favour, whimsically, without reference to human participation. In their minds God had already drawn an unalterable graph as to who would be masters or slaves, rich or poor, according to race, caste, colour or gender.

God has not predestined anybody to be sheep or goat. The destinies of goats can be like those of the sheep given God's provision of the Holy Spirit. The Bible does not suggest that God programmed Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, Cain to kill Abel, Judas to betray Jesus, and inconsiderate men and women to marry each other, like hunters trap antelopes, and then blame them for falling into God's traps.

The Good News is that all people, whether victimizers or victims, are part of God's reign according to rules and conditions of grace set by God for all, because "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"<sup>1</sup>, "there is none righteous, no not one"<sup>2</sup> and that Christ died for sins "the just for the unjust"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Jeremiah 18:8

<sup>30</sup> Hebrews 10:10

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 25:34

<sup>32</sup> Matthew 25:41

<sup>33</sup> Walker, Williston. A History of the Christian Church. Edinburgh. T&T Clark 1937. p. 108-111.

<sup>1</sup> Romans 3:23

<sup>2</sup> Romans 3:10

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 3:18

The location of predestination is in the consequences, not in the process and response of creation. Any teaching about double predestination, from Calvin or anybody else, which locates predestination on the process of creation, or in the creation's participatory response, is guilty of misinterpreting the Word of God. With a mechanistic theology, dictators would argue that God has ordained their corporations, governments and churches to rule forever and massacre their challengers. This would make God's provision of Christ and the Holy Spirit for altering the historical conditions unnecessary. God does not predetermine one to be a goat or a sheep, but gives Christ and the Holy Spirit as provisions for any goat to revert to being a sheep. In every saint there is a potential devil and in every devil a potential saint.

This regeneration requires the help of the Holy Spirit. A sheep is its own engineer of degeneration if it wants to become a goat. Once a goat it loses the freedom to change its condition. Where sin begins freedom to choose ends. People become slaves of sin. But sin does not have irrevocable and final word over the condition of sinners. God provided the sacrifice of Christ and the help of the Holy Spirit for sinners to respond and alter their condition of sin. While a sheep causes its own degeneration to become a goat, there is regeneration of a goat to become a sheep which requires the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Just as the original initiative to create existence came from God, the initiative to regenerate existence from degeneration comes from God the Holy Spirit. Christ is the only engineer using the agency of the Holy Spirit, who can remake goats into sheep, thus, who can redeem or save the goats by transforming them into a new creation.

As part of the creative and responsive process regeneration does not deprive the redeemed or saved their freedom to sin or not to sin. Freedom is part of human dignity. God prefers having a sinful creation responsible and accountable for abusing its freedom than a holy robot. God does not, arbitrarily, load souls of the elect onto a heaven-bound train like bags of Irish potatoes. God would prefer all people went to hell by choice than that one person is dispatched to heaven like a potato.

The churches supporting autocratic governance, violation of human rights and desecration of ecosystem become oblivious of the fact that even under the condition of 'total depravity' where sinners are adjudged dead<sup>4</sup>, the election by God's grace does not take place without participation in which the Holy Spirit animates the dead to be aware of their condition, to account and take responsibility for it (repent). The incarnation of Christ made election participatory and free. It is the whole creation<sup>5</sup> that God takes into partnership in the redemptive plan and not human beings alone.

God's governance is very fuzzy in refraining from taking over from creation the freedom of taking part in shaping its own destiny. God follows the principle that the person who governs best governs least. God's reign is therefore catalytic, enabling creation to act freely and autonomously without coercion so that on its own accord it may be faithful and loving to its Creator.

While in God's election, the 'select', the 'elect', 'chosen', 'appointed', 'saints', 'born again', 'saved' and name it, are elected prior to their knowledge, according to God's initiative and foreknowledge, this election includes their freedom to respond and responsibility for consequences. Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit partook of the 'goats' corruptible and sinful nature in order to evoke human response in the divine election. If salvation were to be such a mechanical process, the Church would be a cold-storage warehouse with Christ as its chief electrical engineer to ensure that goats and sheep are kept in frozen condition until the day of judgment when the goats "will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life"<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 2:1-10

<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:22

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 25:46

God's decree of double predestination does not determine who repents and who does not. In Ezekiel 33:11-16 God begins by saying that "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live...if a good man starts sinning, his life will not be spared". There is no Church worth the name Body of Christ that can show in terms of statistical returns, how many of its members are genuine enough to inherit eternal life and bogus enough to obtain eternal punishment.

The doctrine of predetermination is therefore misleading insofar as it covers or interferes with any part of the process and response in which people are free to sin or not sin. The imperfect and perfect are made of one and the same "clay"<sup>7</sup> that will go to hell or to heaven depending on its choice to become sheep or goat.

Let us shed mechanistic images of God in order to concentrate on taking advantage of God's offer to existence to be God's partner in procreation and recreation, transforming the world into a new earth and a new heaven. We owe it to our freedom, responsibility to participate in such a great invitation and privilege to be God's partners, and more than partners, God's children<sup>8</sup> and heirs, and in that process assist creation to enjoy its Creator.

From the above discussion we can conclude that God-Being rules the world, thus, heaven and earth, in order to redeem creation and reorient it to its "glorious freedom"<sup>9</sup> and fulfillment in the divine fountain of emanation. Creation cannot realize its true being unless it finds its freedom to be what God intended it to be in union with its Creator. "All creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal God's children. For creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was the hope that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and share the glorious freedom of the children of God"<sup>10</sup>.

This makes the function of God's governance in the world, thus, in the historical and natural dimension, a catalyst of making existence conscious of its need to obey God in whom it can find fulfillment. The world should be conscious of God's governance in existence in order to realize God's christological and eschatological revelation in it. It is this revelation that orient the world toward God's eternal reign of justice, happiness and freedom.

Calvin's statement that "our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one of God"<sup>11</sup> is consistent with the idea that creation as God's emanation cannot stand on its own without continuing to derive power from the original emanation.

Since Luther discovered that only God is divine and our access to God depends on God's grace alone no new theology has emerged. Thereafter theology has received its intellectual underpinning from this masculine notion of material progress and domination over nature, which sired its own gods with answers for the whole world. This thinking about God as an answering machine, made in Westminster<sup>12</sup>, the Vatican and the Bible Belt, led many Christians to miss God's offer for them to participate at God's free partners in a search for answers. This left Christianity without an alternative but to seek resolution for

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<sup>7</sup> Jeremiah 18:7

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:2-18

<sup>9</sup> See quotation below

<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:19-21

<sup>11</sup> Edited by Bailie, John. McNeil, John T. Van Dusen, Henry P., Calvin's Institute of Christian Religion. The West Minster Press. Philadelphia. p. 35

<sup>12</sup> See for example the "order of the causes and Salvation and Damnation" in Torrance, J.B., Strengths and weaknesses of the Westminster Theology. In Alasdair I.C. Heron (Ed.), The Westminster Confession in the Church Today. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1982. p. 54

their conflict with God and existence in liberalism with its secular state, in fundamentalism with its other-worldliness, in Catholicism with its mortifying authoritarianism and in Liberation theologies with their dichotomy of culprit-victim fixation.

## 6. THE PAIN OF GOD'S EMANATION

Suffering does not issue from the conflicts between rich and poor, oppressors and victims, or masters and slaves, but from the conflict between Creator and creation within every human being. Existence was made to enjoy God. The disharmony between the embodiment of God in existence and existence itself causes alienation, injury and dissatisfaction in whole existence.

John 1:1, 4 and 14 tells us how the Creator was embodied in creation. It is written that “the word was God, and the Word was the same as God”, that “the Word was the source of life” and that the “Word became a human being”. This lays the foundation for anchoring liberation within the emanation of God in creation for enabling humanity “to enjoy God forever”<sup>13</sup>.

Other than this Word through whom “God made all things” and then became one with “all things” there is no other worthy spokesperson representing the whole existence. Neither the proletariat nor the poor are the focus of God's governance. The whole existence is the focus. The incarnate God by whom creation came into existence, partook of the essence of existence by breathing, drinking, seeing, smelling and touching various material forms of existence, and shared its history by suffering on the cross. Just as we cannot know God exhaustively we cannot know anything in creation, even ourselves fully without understanding Christ. The question “Who am I?” remains as a mystery as “Who is God?” This is why we cannot have better theologies of liberation than our faith in God.

The new faddish theologies of Feminism, Liberation and Black Consciousness have developed as a component of the mechanistic thinking of a doubly predestined world. They are symptoms of the same discordance that produce the social maladies, injustices and evils that they romanticize and glorify as the focus of God's incarnation. They wish to free people from oppression without freeing themselves from the mechanistic and hierarchical structures that alienate existence from God. They begin their theology from the wrong premise that by rectifying social injustices, pathologies and imbalances evil will come to an end. They forget that imbalances are not the causes of evil but its effects and that enemies can retain their enmity by achieving balances of power by use of military deterrence and diplomacy without liberation or reconciliation. Evil cannot be eliminated by affirmative action or reparation. In fact evil can perpetuate itself with artificial balances of power by means of coercion, domination, subjection, and compensating freedom with money and human dignity with ranks.

The world is not divided into oppressors and oppressed, goats and sheep, but in the conflicting tendencies of every individual and society to keep or surrender its freedom for a forbidden fruit. In this process it loses balance.

God's provision for the union of Christ and the Holy Spirit with the world makes a mockery of God's solidarity with the oppressed, which has become the cornerstone of Liberation Theologies. The fact that in every human being there is potential to become oppressor or oppressed, wheat or tares, goats or sheep, makes a joke of any theology which tries to identify God with a mechanistic order of right and wrong classes, castes, races, genders or nations. God is on every side of the imbalance.

The right place for liberation theology to begin is that freedom is a gift to all, and that no one violates the freedom of the other without compromising one's own. The oppressed should not struggle for sharing the

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<sup>13</sup> The First Article of the Shorter Catechism

loot of oppression but for the restoration of freedom for all. Material possession and power are the rights inherent in freedom, not the property of either the oppressors or oppressed. Whether power and riches are good or evil depends on the use into which freedom is put and for whose benefits. Like power and wealth are instruments, mind can be a powerful tool that can destroy freedom if used recklessly. Everybody, whether powerful or powerless, intelligent or average, oppressor or oppressed, poor or rich, should never be entrusted with limitless exercise of power. God is the God of grace in which freedom is allowed to impose limits on itself, democratically, by consensus or other forms of agreement, without external duress.

Liberation theologies make power, or lack of it, rather than freedom, their point of departure, and justice their focus of rectifying the inequalities of power. They indict classical and traditional theologies of the last several centuries of having had provided spiritual underpinning to a mostly masculine structure of feudal and bureaucratic power responsible for imbalances. By looking at evil as something emanating from the conflict between the haves and have-nots of power, rather than from the abuse of freedom they forget that even the have-not can abuse their freedom and image of God.

They fail to see the evil caused by discordance between culprits and victims as damaging to the whole existence including the incarnate Christ whose bleeding on the cross is the bleeding of the whole creation. They think of the oppressed as the only sufferers from oppression who need healing and reparation. God suffers as much in the oppressors who abuse their freedom by stepping on the toes of others' freedom as much as God suffers in the oppressed when their freedom is abused. As far as God is concerned the abusers violate their human dignity as much as they violate that of the abused.

Liberation theologies forget that the haves may not have enough power and wealth to share with the have-nots. The wisdom of getting power and riches from depletable sources of the haves, instead of getting them from God the source of all power, wisdom and freedom, makes Liberation and Feminist theologies not theologies in the strict sense of interpreting God's word for every generation but ethics of affirmative action based on ideological attempts to rectify class and gender imbalances. They are not theological analysis helping people to understand God's revelation and governance in history. The struggle of Liberation and Feminist theologies is characterized by the sociology of trying to correct the imbalances where the rich dominate the poor and men dominate women rather than by restoration of freedom. They fail to take care of the fact that in every individual, whether man or woman, there is anima and animus in conflict, killer and protector instincts, and goat and sheep mentality. They can rectify one social imbalance by any means, violent or peaceful, piecemeal, without rectifying the cause of imbalance within the individual. Both the oppressor and the oppressed should join hands, not to dislodge each other, but to seek for ways of controlling the goat tendencies in every one of them.

The provisions of God's governance is available and accessible to all conflicting parties and interests. Liberation and Feminist theologies want to avail God's support to victims of oppression fighting dictators to wrest power from them. There is nothing for slaves to make themselves responsible and accountable to God once they grab power from their masters. Only the Holy Spirit, whose role is to convict us of sin and its tendency to make all evil appear relative, can help us break from the vicious circle of today's victims of oppression becoming tomorrow's oppressors.

God wants to rectify such imbalances not by affirmative action, or by transferring power from one side to another, but by abolishing the imbalance within the human psychical structure. When Africans overthrew their colonial masters without first dealing with the hierarchy of evil internalized in their psyche, evil dictated the terms and conditions of independence. African Christians were quite comfortable with thanking God for helping them to become the new masters over one another. They got rid of domination and dispossession of rights by white people but perfected the same domination and dispossession toward each other. No sooner than the slave and white masters vacated their governing chairs, then the new

African masters put in their seminaries' and universities' syllabi lessons for Africanizing, indigenizing and contextualizing the hierarchies of oppression.

When God chose to participate in existence through flesh, to the extent of partaking in the penalty of sin, God demonstrated that creation cannot be redeemed in any other way than each part being reconciled to its own state of limited condition of unfreedom. All claims of superiority "master-race", "chosen people", "special-revelation", "White Man's Burden", "Christian religion", "spirit-filled", "born again" and "Manifest Destiny", are empty jargons, as invalid as government without representation.

Limiting God's revelation to solidarity with liberation movements deprives liberation chance to transcend the social, racial, class and gender interest of the victims. The victims see freedom in terms of securing what the culprits have instead of restoring the unity, dignity and imago dei of all God's children. The failure of Liberation theologies to appreciate the need of redemption for the whole existence, rather than for only those disadvantaged by historical, sociological and ideological imbalances makes them unable to work for the transformation of the whole existence in which creation "itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious hope of the children of God"<sup>14</sup>.

The bias of liberation theologies is not different from the oppressors' bias in traditional theologies. They share a common history of mechanistic thinking. The support of oppressed side of evil structures fails to perceive that once the oppressed gain power they can turn around and use the same support for an opposite purpose.

Any theology derived from God's revelation as divine intervention in worldly affairs works to change and reconcile people, their circumstances, structures and situations without siding with any party in the conflict. The enthusiasm, honesty and commitment of Liberation and Feminist theologies is not in question. Their lack of volatility is alarming. Their versatility wanting and their theology an expression of the slave conditions from which it seeks liberation.

God's liberation cannot take place until enemies and the circumstance in which people find themselves alienated from each other are reconciled and united. The balancing of hostile forces within existence creates a truce in which further pressure develops and bursts loose into more evil. The world has witnessed the eruptions of such evil in Hitler's extermination camps, in Rwandese massacres where all demons came out without a single "devil left in hell", and in ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. When the Kenya government adopted affirmative action, replaced merit with quota system to achieve tribal balance in education, industry, civil service, employment, armed force, athletics and promotion, the system became unwieldy, clogged, unproductive and decadent, collapsed under the weight of corruption, and produced tribal massacres. This sunk Kenya to the economic bottomless hole.

The African understanding that "a person is a constitution of many persons and their environment" can help the world to know that it can avert the threats of nuclear cataclysm, ecological breakdown or economic calamity if each unit of existence recognizes the others as complete and rightful members of God's creation, without those who have bombs looking down upon and teasing those who have none.

The incarnation of God-Being by which we are liberated from enslavement in power structures that abuse freedom transcends individualism and permeates the whole existence, sometimes in terms of judgement imposing "God's curse on anyone who deprives foreigners, orphans, and widows of their rights". Unlike Liberation theologies God's liberation neither favours and glorifies the weak, victims of oppression and the poor, nor vilifies the rich and oppressors. God is in the whole of existence and deals with the root cause of injustice without having to side with the victims of oppression, aggression and exploitation. God

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<sup>14</sup> Romans 8:21



fighters for freedom in God's own capacity, by virtue of incarnation, as a part of the contradictions of history. God experiences God's own pain where creation is hurt, because God entered, joined and united with the whole existence through Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our mortal bodies<sup>15</sup>.

The Good News is that all people, whether victimizers or victims, are part of God's reign according to rules and conditions of grace set by God for all, because "all had sinned and come short of the glory of God"<sup>16</sup>, "there is none righteous, no, not one"<sup>17</sup>, and that Christ died for sins "the righteous for the just and for the unjust"<sup>18</sup>.

## 7. GOD-BEING AND GOD'S GOVERNANCE

God's hand got dirty in touching the contradictions of history, trying to make God's governance open for all to participate. This gave opportunity for human beings to test God's governance. They ate the forbidden fruit. In the same manner Satan tested the reality of God's governance by asking permission to reduce to shambles Job's family dynasty, wealth and health. God allowed Joseph's brothers freedom to sell him into slavery, and yielded to people to have Jesus crucified. God's answer did not come by removing freedom or its contradictions from God's governance, or by running away from them, but by working through them for reconciliation, hope and resurrection.

That's how God governs the world, by being distinct from existence, yet being present, accountable, responsible, available and accessible in all aspects, circumstances and contradictions of existence, whether in fun or boredom, in cancer ward or birthday party, in carnival or Church and in heaven or hell.

The difference between God's participatory government<sup>19</sup> and mechanistic ones is not in extent of power, size and wealth, but is the fact that in God's governance the mechanisms of sharing, distribution, dialogue, accountability and transparency function on an even playground and never cease functioning. The focus of the governance is not power and authority but equality, mutual accountability, sharing responsibility, accessibility, love, fellowship, service. God is compelled by God's own divine accountability to suffer disgrace on the cross. This means that God forfeits to determine everything in the process, response and consequence of history, so that creation can enjoy some exercise of freedom. The price that Jesus paid for our freedom on the cross does not allow anybody to trade it for doctrines of development and national sovereignty.

If God the Creator is thus accountable to creation by fact of making God's governance participatory, accessible and answerable to all, to the extent of inviting critics, malcontents and sinners, saying "Come let us reason together"<sup>20</sup>, our worldly governments must also be participatory accountable. In fact God is so accountable to all members of God's governance that in every family, when a baby gets wet after midnight, and cries, God is the first to wake up and respond.

Freedom of participation is what makes God's governance dynamic, neither mechanical nor a robot. When any part of existence fails to limit its own freedom for the sake of other's freedom, it tends to become absolute and irresponsible, without accountability. This creates conflict or disharmony within

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<sup>15</sup> Romans 8:9-11

<sup>16</sup> Romans 3:23

<sup>17</sup> Romans 3:10

<sup>18</sup> 1 Peter 3:18

<sup>19</sup> The term governance covers more than political and economic power. It consists of all the known and unknown range of interlinkages which require certain behaviour, duties, taxes, services, obligations and responsibilities from those interlined.

<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 1:18

existence. No creature can enjoy its freedom without regard to the freedom of others. When any creature steps on the toes of another's freedom it compromises its own freedom. Evil reigns when one group sees itself as global, orthodox, universal and ecumenical and others as deviations and heresies. The mark of evil is seeing one's point of view, ideology, beauty, dogma, sect or government as better and bigger than of others. When Peter tried to obstruct Jesus from fulfilling God's plan Jesus told him "get away from me, Satan"<sup>21</sup>. Evil is when "You will see the 'Awful Horror' of which the prophet Daniel spoke. It will be standing on the holy place"<sup>22</sup>.

Evil is possibility inherent in the very nature of God's gift of freedom to existence. It is a potentiality of the freedom inherent in existence. God's governance, from which the world is supposed to emulate regulates freedom in terms of constant and continuous setting and review of the limits to which one can enjoy freedom without stepping on the freedom of another. God participated in this regulation of freedom by being born within the limitation of human flesh.

When people attempt to make their freedom absolute, it becomes license and irresponsible; infringe, transgress or trespass upon the freedom of others. This steps on God's toes. God has God's nerves on every part of creation. By trampling other's rights God is injured. Having had delegated freedom to existence to participate in directing its own affairs God could not evade sharing accountability for the sin of creation. This is why God is hurt when dictators, criminals, drugs and wickedness harm their victims. The state of slave, trade, colonialism and holocaust would have reigned forever had not God been involved in the mess, as part of God's emanation in history. It is the Holy Spirit, in union with our thoughts, who makes up feel pain when others suffer. Without the Holy Spirit being part of existence creation cannot sense its own wounds beyond physical feelings.

The Holy Spirit encourages and bids us, whatever our race, gender, tribe, age, position or experience in the world to live abundantly, and govern ourselves responsibly without hurting even the tiniest particle of existence. Even the most weak and gentle parts of existence, like lilies of the valleys<sup>23</sup>, are as much part of our intimate, dignified and essential existence, and God's incarnation in it, as the strong and muscular ones. Whatever extra intelligence God gave to human beings it should be used responsibly to ensure respect for all forms of existence without hammering any to conform to hierarchical structures set by a clique at the top.

Christ's incarnation makes the whole world conscious of itself as one body. Pain is the Holy Spirit's alarm system making existence aware that it is creation that gives God concrete the manifestation of who God is. Paul's message to Christians in Corinth, in 1 Corinthians 12, telling members of the Church that they are parts of Christ's body should serve as a model of how the whole existence is God's body. Microorganisms are as much parts of God's body as giants and mountains.

But the human crime of imposing hierarchical order on existence is meeting resistance from unexpected quarters. The bacteria, soil, air and water are fighting against their integrity being degraded and trampled upon. By their heath and lives millions of people, including those advancing the theories of being the highest creatures in the universe, are paying dearly for the injuries they have caused to the rivers, forests, oceans and animals. Christianity has wrecked havoc on the environment and bio-diversity in its pursuit of happiness and spiritual supremacy over nature. In their thoughtless desacralization of nature, some churches have no shame adorning their sanctuaries with ivory and trophies made of the remains of animals extinct by cruel methods of hunting.

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<sup>21</sup> Mark 8:33

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 24:15

<sup>23</sup> Luke 12:27

I do not know what superiority or priority human beings have over bacteria-germs-virus capacity to resist even the most lethal medicine invented by humanity against them. This reminds me of George Orwell's satire, *Animal Farm*, that "all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others". I have visited AIDS patients in hospitals. HIV virus has taken full control over their destinies. Such AIDS patients no longer owe any allegiance to theories that human beings are superior, prior and more equal than other beings. While God made all things different in their make-up, like metal, wood and clay, none is superior to another. All things have some likeness and unlikeness with each other, for the purpose of attracting and repelling each other. This retains their interdependence and freedom at the same time. In helping Timothy to fight attempts by some groups to compel others to conform their own standards Paul wrote "In a large house there are dishes and bowls of all kinds: some are made of silver and gold, others of wood and clay; some for special occasions and others for ordinary use"<sup>24</sup>.

For several centuries Christianity organized missions as parts of its mechanistic struggle for ascendancy, superiority and priority over other religions, not by humility in relation to them but by contempt. The Church has been an accomplice to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, by advocating forms of gender, spiritual and social Darwinism relegates women, children and slaves to lesser value than gold and silver. Some are sacrificed at the altar of power and others are mutilated for the fun of it. Survival of the fittest.

There is nothing that emanates from existence, even its highest outgrowth, that can transcend existence without the help of the Holy Spirit<sup>25</sup>. Faith, which is the union of mind and the Holy Spirit lifts the mind beyond and above its unfreedom in ideological, cultural, economic, tribal, class, gender and social manifestations, creating open space in the mind for diverse and pluralistic relations. As a product of existence, mind, at its highest level of action in empirical or speculative reason, cannot rise above the world made of religion, philosophy, state, business, imagination, dreams, hallucinations, science, technology or art. Logic, expressed by mathematics with the aid of computers, cannot understand properly that it is a creature of given circumstances, a helpless prisoner of its own laws, systems and prejudices.

Reason, the device by which mind constructs the world with its psychological, scientific, technological, political, social, legal, economic, philosophical and spiritual systems, in turn becomes shaped by them to become a world alienated from its source of being. Once reason becomes a prisoner of this triple alienation from existence, from the world and from mind it suffers from the passion of wanting to become a self-created god, god as a state of absolute unfreedom. Reason becomes idolatrous by forming itself into churches, states and corporations of its own. The more advanced reason becomes the more it capitalizes on its advanced organization to take advantage of the lesser organized, and deliberately disorganize and degrade them to conditions of penury and neglect – injustice. Reason advances further in science and technology and makes itself the lord of history. It emanates itself into nation-states with mechanisms for grabbing power and resources from others, and then appointing themselves centers of existence, grading themselves as First World, and relegating the rest as Second, Third and Fourth World. Abstract reason without accountability to its source of existence in natural and human freedom becomes the enemy of existence. It seeks to annihilate existence with bombs.

Contrary to this evil attempt of some products of existence to elevate themselves above existence, and be opposed to existence, hope lies in God's humiliation on the cross which took place for the sake of reconciling and uniting all aspects of existence with their divine origin: that is, reconciling "all things whether on earth or in heaven"<sup>26</sup> "in heaven and on earth and under the earth"<sup>27</sup> with the Creator. It was

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<sup>24</sup> 2 Timothy 2:20

<sup>25</sup> John 14:16-19

<sup>26</sup> Colossians 1:20

<sup>27</sup> Philippians 2:10

for its reason, not for the rescue of human souls from the rest of existence, that God was compelled by God's own inner accountability to suffer disgrace through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. And if God the Creator was not opposed but accountable to corruptible creation, what super-being, superpower, reason, government or corporation is exempt from accountability to its immediate and other forms of existence? There is no way God can grant economic development, political power or spiritual salvation that can outrun the horizontal aspect of incarnation where "a new creation"<sup>28</sup> new life and new relationship emerge out of reconciled discordant forces of nature.

God's governance consists of interlinkages of all forms of existence from micro level, atoms, elements, compounds, inorganic material, organic material, microorganisms, macro-organisms, covering the whole creation, and setting "God's glory above the heavens"<sup>29</sup>. There are so many emanations of heaven and "heavenly places"<sup>30</sup> in the Bible that, few of them parts of the earth where skies, rain, moon, sun and stars exist, as in Genesis 1:1 and 8. But most heavens are abstract territories, some without territorial appearances. "Behold, the heave and heaven of heavens is the Lord's"<sup>31</sup>. In 1 Kings, 27, 30 and 39, out of the three references for heavens God cannot fit in the first heaven while God fits in the other two. The heavens are too small for God to fit. This means that God's reign does not fit any pattern of governance in heaven or earth. It assumes the body of the whole existence.

The heaven referred to in the prayer "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is different from the many heavens the book of creation talks about. The mechanistic missionary and evangelical heaven is peaceful like a morgue. It is different from the dynamic one in which "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough and they lost their place in heaven"<sup>32</sup>.

In a dynamic world God wills that human beings exercise their power as equally and perfectly, justly and orderly, as God exercises sovereignty, shares and distributes power in heaven. As God's emanation, creation is supposed to do within itself what God does within the Trinity.

This is why the missionary portrait of God as absolutely good, happy and peaceful is unchristian and immature. It contradicts God's participation in the suffering and pain of creation in which "creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was the hope that creation would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God"<sup>33</sup>.

A God not affected by same evil and the results of evil, suffering and death, that affect creation would not understand the prayers of that creation. God is under internal pressure to respond to external pressure including pressure from Satan who asked God permission to test Job and tempted Christ for forty days in the wilderness.

This means that God's governance does not have barriers that include or exclude, but only open choices. It is the same in the family and marketplace, extends love to both friends and "enemies"<sup>34</sup>. The governance of God prefers to have mechanisms of reconciliation, arbitration, attainment of one's potentials and struggle for self-fulfillment as a lifelong continuous struggle than static and fixed solutions.

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<sup>28</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>29</sup> Psalm 8

<sup>30</sup> Ephesians 3:10

<sup>31</sup> Deuteronomy 10:14

<sup>32</sup> Revelation 12:7-9

<sup>33</sup> Romans 8:20-21

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27,35

It is not all the governments of the universe under God's governance which means universalism; or only one under one emperor, which means monism, but a God's governance in as many forms and shapes as the diversity of human tendencies and differences in creatures participating in it. God's reign manifests itself in bio-diversity, multi-ethnicity, divergent religions and pluralism.

There is not a single Christian whose salvation and election does not have both weeds and seed, goat and sheep, struggling inside his or her life to destroy or actualize freedom. This is where there cannot be perfect human institutions, and governments need checks and balances. Human creativity has many emanations of freedom, some theocratic, democratic, autocratic, tyrannical, coercive, just, benign or authoritarian, with different degrees of weeds and seed. Even the most demonic governments do acknowledge God's governance, "with fear and trembling"<sup>35</sup> to the extent of pleading with Christ "not to destroy us"<sup>36</sup>.

There are no powers apart from that of God. Even the most totalitarian power is a distortion of God's power and abuse of God's freedom with potential to become good for all. There is nobody who has one's own power or freedom apart from God's. It is our Christian responsibility, not necessarily to take over governments, but to emanate in their lifestyle governance that seeks correspondence with God's sovereignty.

Equally true God's governance is not identical with any government in history. Nothing in existence has any possibility of becoming the true government of God. All governments have the potential for both evil and good. All we can do to help create good governance is march, journey, move, act, organize and hope toward the realization of God's reign and no other. Only the reign of our Maker incarnated in worldly structures can lead toward true governance.

Ecclesiastical bodies, like secular ones, cannot constitute the fullness of God's reign in the world. In their exercise of power, they cannot avoid apportioning and deploying their human and material resources, on the basis of the same principles as secular institutions. God stirred Cyrus the King of Persia<sup>37</sup> and said "Cyrus, he is my shepherd" and addressed him as God's "anointed"<sup>38</sup>. God's governance is free to manifest itself in as many forms of governance as possible whether inside or outside the Church: in any family, industry, judicature, parliament, association, executive or group entrusted with stewardship of power and authority. Power is in most cases, especially in poor countries, about the allocation of resources, the distribution of goods, jobs and services. The presence of God's power in the whole existence is clearly stated in Psalm 148. Beyond the praise of the individual (Psalm 146) and of the chosen people (Psalm 147), a praise is due to the Creator from the whole creation. That is the subject of Psalm 148; Psalm 96:11-12; and Revelation 5:13. In Psalm 148, the heavenly beings (v.2), the heavenly bodies (v.3) and the very constituent parts of the heavens themselves (v.4) are summoned to praise, on the ground that God is their Creator (v.5b), Sustainer (v.6a) and Controller (v.6b)<sup>39</sup>.

To prove that God is the source of all power and authority and that there is no threat to God's government, God permitted the request of Satan for permission to persecute Job. God said to Satan, "Very well, all that he has is in your power"<sup>40</sup>. When Pilate threatened Jesus, "Remember, I have authority to set

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<sup>35</sup> James 2:19

<sup>36</sup> Mark 1:24 and Luke 4:34

<sup>37</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:22 and Ezra 1:1

<sup>38</sup> Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1

<sup>39</sup> Guthrie, D., Motyer, J.A., New Bible Commentary. Third Edition. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1988. p. 545

<sup>40</sup> Job 12

you free and also to have you crucified”, Jesus replied “You have authority over me only because it was given to you by God”<sup>41</sup>.

According to the Job-Jesus principle, God allowed full freedom without washing God’s hands of the responsibility over existence. When people delegate some of their freedom to governments to protect their other freedoms, they remain responsible for that freedom, and do not lose their right to hire and fire governments. Business Law does not exempt the principle from debts incurred by the agent. When the government of Israel sinned, God punished the whole nation. Law does not exempt one partner from liabilities contracted by other business partners. God sent Christ to die for the sins of the world because, as a partner of creation in running the affairs of existence God felt obliged to pay for the crimes other partners had committed. The issue was not that God sent Christ to die on the cross because God “loved the world”<sup>42</sup>, but that the world God so loved abused its faithfulness to God by misusing its freedom. God would have lost God’s honour and prestige if God avoided accountability and responsibility for the mischief of God’s offspring in the world.

According to the Job-Jesus principle, that the victims, rather than blame themselves for the suffering rooted in widespread misgovernance, they blame God. There are times when the mobs and crowds want to exonerate themselves by shouting, “crucify him, crucify him”, and Pilate washes his hands for the death of an innocent person, and only God in the whole existence, can own responsibility. This is why Jesus voiced his accusation against God in the most passionate cry, on the cross, and by echoing the famous complaint in Psalm 22:1-2, screamed, “My God, My God, why have you abandoned me? I have cried desperately for help but it does not come. During the day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer: I call at night and get no rest”. There is no genuine parent, factory manager, school teacher and shepherd, who can disclaim liability for delinquent children, factory emissions, student’s failure and lost sheep. The fact that in my context missionary Christianity portrayed God as a king and lord who takes credit for what goes right and never the blame for what goes wrong has created the climate where governments accept no liability for political thuggery, corruption and mass murders, and Christians accept no responsibility for keeping asinine dictators.

Our Christian attitude should be “We are the ones responsible for what happens to our world” because “God is also responsible”. This is why I love to network with Amnesty International, World Watch, the Robert Kennedy Centre of Human Rights and the International Center of Human Rights in Montreal for monitoring the situation of how the world is governed.

This demonstrates that no matter who else and what else has responsibility for governing this world, God is the ultimate governor. Jesus would not have died a political death the way he did had he confined his healing ministry, civic education and feeding the hungry to social welfare, without this tilting the balance of influence and power from the Roman and Jewish authorities to the people. It is in the very dynamics of God’s reign that the participation of Jesus in existence empowered people to order their own lives in such freedom that the authorities could not tolerate. It was the disorienting impact of this freedom that prompted those busy exercising power and influence, ruling and taxing the people to mock Jesus, saying “This is Jesus the King of the Jews”<sup>43</sup>.

The prayer of Christ asking God “Your reign come” shows that governance in the sphere of existence must correspond with governance within God-Being. The function of the heaven-earth correspondence is required in all parent-child, state-citizen, and employer-employee relations. This requires our obedience to one another to be like Christ’s obedience to God and disobedience to powers inconsistent with God’s

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<sup>41</sup> John 19:10-11

<sup>42</sup> John 3:16

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19

reign. It was in obedience to God that the midwives of Egypt disobeyed Pharaoh's orders for them to commit infanticide in the maternity chambers, and the wise men refused to return to Herod. Obedience to earthly authority must have correspondence and resemblance with how God shares power and resources within the God's various Selves.

This led to a trinitarian understanding of God. Just as God is who God is in relationship to three in one, the world could not experience justice and sharing of resources without reciprocity and distribution on goods and services within the unity of its members. In the language of Paul Tillich "It is not a victory of the reign of God in history if the individual tries to make himself out of participation in history in the name of the transcendent reign of God. Not only is it impossible, but the attempt itself deprives the individual of full humanity by separating him from the historical group and its creative self-realization"<sup>44</sup>.

"Only those who have experienced the shock of transitoriness, the anxiety in which they are aware of their finitude, the threat of non-being, can understand what the notion of God means. Only those who have experienced the tragic ambiguities of our historical existence and have totally questioned the meaning of existence can understand what the symbol of the reign of God means"<sup>45</sup>.

The elevation of temporal into the eternity from which it emanated the absorption of history into its beginner and finisher, leads to the "divine-human encounter" of Emil Brunner by which the finite returns to the infinite.

## 7.        **TRANSPPOSITIONS OF GOD'S WORD**

The first chapter of John's Gospel teaches that Jesus Christ was God's governing Word by which existence was ordered to appear.

God's Word which had no beginning opted to have a beginning and an end, existence in both earthly and heavenly dimensions in order to transform existence to greater likeness with God. We all pretend to know what democracy is, and strive to achieve its perfect form, but this never happens in history. Yet, without the concept of democracy to strive for people would be trampled upon by governments like human remains in mortuary. That which is without source or boundary confined itself to boundaries or existence. The world will never know democracy unless it learns it from Christ.

Something existent cannot be a correct measure of its own existence. It cannot be conscious of its own beginning or end. In the light of this, it is fallacious for any mode of religion or politics, being an outgrowth of finite existence, to claim full knowledge of itself. It is erroneous for any Christian sect to pretend that it can calculate or be conscious of the date of the world's end. In admitting his inability to measure the extent of God's governance and its full realization, Christ said that it will "come like a thief"<sup>46</sup>.

Taking part in God's reign requires us to press forward<sup>47</sup>, to watch<sup>48</sup>, and to remain eternally vigilant<sup>49</sup>.

To be faithful to God's governance means to admit fallibility about any predictions we can make about the government of God. The incarnate Christ could not predict the end of time because he was of the time

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<sup>44</sup> Tillach, Paul. Systemic Theology. The University of Chicago Press. 1971. p. 392

<sup>45</sup> cited Page 61-62

<sup>46</sup> Revelation 3:3, 16:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 2:10; Matthew 24:14; Luke 12:39

<sup>47</sup> Philippians 3:12-14

<sup>48</sup> Matthew 24:42-44; Luke 12:35-40

<sup>49</sup> 1 Peter 5:8

and space that could not know its end and beginning. Created measurements are confined to the limitations and imperfection that are the very essence of existence.

A measure cannot be a segment of the same thing that it measures or know the beginning and end of that of which it is a component. This is why when Christ taught about the reign of God he was not presumptuous, he spoke in many parables.

Much of the Christian idolatry about God's government centers more on quarreling about the lengths of its intervals, now, past or future, than on its worth in fulfilling the community, human dignity and God's will. Millenarian movements have arisen out of the need to demarcate God's government as a succession of time from one period to another based on various apocalyptic prophesies consisting of the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 during which holiness is to prevail and Christ is to reign on earth. Rather than see the God's eternal government as part of one continuous divine activity that transforms and directs the world and its history toward the non-being of history and existence, and ushering in eternal life, millenarians see God's reign as a spiritualization of history – their own history.

We have men capable of applying John's and Daniel's apocalypse to quantify the God's governments by "meters", "clocks", "liters", "gold", "dollars", "grams" and "dials" or by other spatial-temporal-causal associations. As Jesus said members of God's government do live in a new dimension that is "in this world but not of this world"<sup>50</sup>

The inability to express our suffering and unconscious selves fully or know God's reign totally makes it necessary for us to rely on the Holy Spirit for participation in God's governance. "...the Spirit also comes to help us, weak as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express...the Spirit pleads with God on behalf of God's people and in accordance with God's will"<sup>51</sup>.

Today, people have no problem appreciating the Jewish apocalypse, the New Testament parousia, and eschatology associated with the events expected to mark the end time in Mark 13, Matthew 24, 1 Thessalonians and Revelations 19-21 heightened the Christian readiness to die for Christ. They have no difficulties celebrating the presence of the risen Christ as a realized eschatology, in which the presence of God's reign manifests its power in miracles and conversion of unbelievers. People have however too many difficulties when this is preached as method of releasing them from their participatory role in using the parousia as God's gift and resource for changing their existing circumstances.

When the return of Christ stayed in the future for too long, and trying to get a way out of the prevailing economic crises, the non-Pentecostal missionaries started to teach their converts in Africa and Asia the importance of building national churches. They did this not according to any theological criteria but according to common sense business procedures of becoming self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. This philosophy of ecclesiastical survival locked itself out of the dynamics of God's governance in the world.

The Church is therefore failing in its function as God's placenta for delivering the Gospel to the world. The miscarriage of the Gospel by the Church inevitably certifies the miscarriage of justice in the world.

## 8. **HOLDING GOD ACCOUNTABLE - PSALM 22**

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<sup>50</sup> John 15:19, 17:19, and 18:36, where "My kingdom is not of this world".

<sup>51</sup> Romans 8:26-27



The dynamic aspects of God's governance were neglected by religious and theological communities because they do not augur well with their search for material comfort and security. The Psalms in which the revelation of God's governance is found are described by Walter Brueggemann as Psalms of Disorientation and by such scholars as Hermann Gunkel, Sigmund Mowinckel and Westermann as Psalms of Lamentation or Complaint.

For me, they are Psalms of how God's governance relates to the street child, single mother, displaced person, refugee, detainee and other victims of social imbalances. They are about Jesus sharing their severe pain through personal cross in Psalms 13, 35 and 86 where God is not exempted from sharing national disorientation and calamity. In Psalms 74, 79 and my favourites, Psalms 137 and 88, disillusioned worshippers are preoccupied with the absence and silence of God. This is a widespread situation which today's Churches, seminaries, rituals and pastoral programs are organized to deny. If the expression of disenchantment found in these Psalms were to be voiced in Church worship today by starving and suffering masses, the worshippers would be treated as atheists and anti-government, priests tortured, "disappeared" or killed, and if lucky, kept sick in police cells without bail.

Today when a significant amount of governance consists of disseminating information, misgovernance can occur by withholding information, disinforming or plain use of information for propaganda. When people did not know what to do they preferred to castigate God for the evils done to them by those who exercised power unjustly over them than engage themselves in suicidal matches and riots against merciless and brutal overlords. God had no problems accepting false accusation by victims of oppression who would have met dire consequence if they dared accuse their oppressors. God offered himself as a target for attack for what is wrong with society and as a forum of education and transformation and to show that at the end of the day God is in control.

In Psalm 69:7 and 9 the worshipper draws God's attention to the fact that "it is for your sake that I have been insulted and that I am covered with shame...the insults that are hurled at your [God] fall on me". God reciprocated by sending his Son Jesus Christ to accept the blame and pay by his death for sins that were not his own. In Romans 15:3, Christ offered himself to die for the sins of humankind on the basis of the same principle as "The insults that are hurled at you have fallen on me". Paul climaxes this principle of God's involvement in the pain, conflict and death, being in and for the world, by saying "up to the present time all creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth. It is not creation alone that groans...the Spirit comes also to help us, weak as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express. And God, who sees into our hearts, knows what the thought of the Spirit is; because the Spirit pleads with God on behalf of his people and in accordance with his will"<sup>52</sup>.

With the help of the Holy Spirit we share in the redemptive pain and suffering of Christ, with the hope that "if we share Christ's suffering, we will also share his glory"<sup>53</sup>. In times of sickness and the fear of enemies the worshipper uses worship as a forum of protest to God for feeling forsaken, as recorded in Psalms 38:5,7,12,19; 41:2,3; and 102:5,8.

When hanging on the cross, forsaken by his fellow Israelites, Jesus targeted his rights to castigate his offenders on God, confident that God would not unleash police terror to silence his prayer. God did not render physical relief when Jesus prayed "Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me" (Mark 14:36). Evildoers sometimes prefer their victims blaming Satan for their misdeeds than God who might punish them. Africa is backward because much of the irresponsibility is blamed on supernatural causes rather than on the human and rational agent.

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<sup>52</sup> Romans 8:22,23,26-27

<sup>53</sup> Romans 8:17

Some of today's Christianity is so perverted that it has through worship and practice transformed Jesus' classic complaint in Psalms 42:9 and 22:1-2 from "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" to read "Satan, why are you causing me so much pain?"

Even if victims have misgivings about the way God has shaped the present world, by means of slave trade, colonialism and conflict, the fact is, God did not shape anything alone. Like it or not, God created human beings as partners, co-workers and co-creators in the continuing work of creation, and not as mere instruments and tools in God's hand. The human hand in God's continuing work of creation is something no theology can dismiss.

God is an existential partner of a person teetering on the brink of meaninglessness and abyss of non-being due to all manner of negative existence including bankruptcy, humiliation, war, dejection and terminal illness. God is immersed in the totality of existence: molten in the hottest star and fossilized in the coldest meteorite. In death God heard the blood of Abel crying. In Egypt God heard the trauma of a suffering people crying. God put on human nature, and on the cross God partook in the sobbing of everyone and in the grave the mourning of each. Christ traversed the universe to the ends of hell to be with and free the imprisoned souls.

In emanation where Christ suffers for the world and the world suffers for God, pain and suffering are the maternity, pedagogy and steward of salvation, peace and hope. This is the meaning of "creation [that] groans in pain, like the pain of childbirth"<sup>54</sup>. It was when the birthing pain on the cross as God's maternity bed reached its orgasmic point, and the hope of a new creation was born, that Christ said "It is finished"<sup>55</sup>.

The Church has no mission of its own in this world apart from God's mission of sustaining and redeeming creation from the abuse of its freedom to participate in God's work. It takes its mission from the work the Creator has assigned to every creature in the world, which is to orient itself and everything in the world toward God. And that constitutes what the Church knows as "Call". Response to the 'Call' takes place as a union of creation and the Holy Spirit, which is God's bearer of history.

The Church can fulfill its call only if itself is a living witness with internal mechanisms of love, creation, procreation and recreation, capable of interaction and reciprocal sharing of life with people outside the Church. This is a law applicable to all living organisms, that, in order to remain alive they have to survive, grow and reproduce themselves in cooperation with the environment. When a Church ceases to have Christ's mission, thus, loses vision, it "perishes"<sup>56</sup>.

It's only in procreating and propagating the incarnation of Christ as a living body that the Church can remain alive, continue growing and become missionary. This propagation, procreation or reproduction means interaction with the world or being world-oriented. The Church therefore decays the moment it becomes unmissionary: self-centered, doing everything solely for its own maintenance, expansion and self-perpetuation. Jesus said "whoever tries to save his own life shall lose it".

In his Epistle to the Galatians, Paul rejected the circumcision of Gentiles into Jews because this would have made the Gospel to be a means of subjecting those classified inferior to work for becoming equal with the people classified superior. It would have changed God-oriented Gospel to a human-centered means of control. According to the human-centered gospel, the missionaries could teach Christianity like tricks to circus animals without learning anything from the converts. Unlike Christ who learned pain and

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<sup>54</sup> Romans 8:22

<sup>55</sup> John 19:30

<sup>56</sup> Proverbs 29:18

humility by the things he experienced in the world the missionaries said they had nothing to learn from interacting with the ‘savage’ religions that they found in the mission field.

Any part of creation that usurps the role of other parts in participating in God’s governance and sustenance of existence, by violating others’ rights for equal participation, violates its own call to be God’s servant. The only way the world can survive from threats of nuclear catastrophe, ecological collapse or economic disaster is by each unit of existence recognizing the other as a complete and legitimate component of God’s creation with equal and direct access to its Creator.

The goal and mission of the Church in this world is to awaken and strengthen in all creatures their God-orientation and role in God’s continuous governance of life and work for the transformation of creation. Lack of teaching of love to one’s neighbour, is not the cause of genocide in Rwanda and Burundi, because that was the major content of three centuries of missiology, but failure to incorporate God’s governance in worldly governance. Father Kizito’s recent notebook on Rwanda blames the crisis on Church hierarchies saying that they “remained too closely linked with the ruling regime to be a credible voice of protest. The numerous declarations during genocide were insignificant and inadequate. Perhaps it is not so much evangelism which failed, but the model of Church, a hierarchical church, with obedience as the major virtue, too much integrated into the social structure. Obedience to the hierarchy merits particular attention. It is considered in ecclesiastical praxis one of the most typical Christian virtues. It is an obedience which in practice often loses the dimensions of dialogue and common search for truth”<sup>57</sup>.

Within the western missionary model, there was no way any missionary organization could transcend its national and hierarchies, racial identity and cultural orientation. Faith, which is a union of mind and Holy Spirit, had no chance to unite the missionaries with the natives. Their mission was a function of Church growth and expansion, an unidirectional model, and not a reciprocal relationship where different parts of the world were reconciled with God and with each other. Such a model would be idolatrous even if it transpired between members of the same family. It would lead to clan and family feuds. God’s mission does not grant priority or superiority to any part of existence, as Christ demonstrated by being least and servant of all.<sup>58</sup>

For several centuries western Christianity adopted the missionary enterprise as a strategy of establishing itself as a global structure of ascendancy, incomparability and seniority over other forms of Christianity and religions. Ignoring the fact that God created existence with all its plurality, diversity, contrasts and varieties of creatures, and gave freedom to existence to make itself a world where all creatures enjoyed rights to procreate themselves and produce its own cultures, languages and lifestyles, the missionaries went headlong changing to fit their own vision of a monolithic world.

Obsessed with this spiritual Darwinism the missionaries superimposed irrelevant value structures that had developed in Europe over their non-European converts. This made the missionary enterprise an essential component of westernization. Mrs. Watts, expressing her frustrations with this attempt to westernize the Africans and the inability of Africans to acquire the stereotype image of a ‘good and westernized Christian’ wrote about “the conditions which prevail in the midst of savage barbarism. Amongst these tribes, it is humanly speaking impossible to move to the Lord’s side. In their midst is Satan’s throne. For long ages he has reigned there supreme. The people are bound hand and foot by the devil. The unwritten law of the tribal custom enslaves them. The first man of the pagan tribe who proclaims himself a Christian has an urgent need of a mighty power behind him---the power of the Spirit of the living God. Nothing short of that could enable the savage warrior to take a stand, singly and alone, against the

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<sup>57</sup> Sunday Nation. Lifestyle-4. April 2, 1995

<sup>58</sup> Matthew 20:26-28; 23:11-12; Mark 9:35; Luke 9:48

fiendish and soul-enslaving environment of his clan...It is utterly impossible for savage to burst the bonds of his encasement and emancipate himself from the shackles of his degrading surroundings”<sup>92</sup>.

This mentality that existence has a hierarchy of cultures in which some cultures are superior to others, defeats God’s purpose of sending Jesus to be born in a world made of many cultures. God’s mission for Christ in the world was to re-orient those disoriented by their cultures back to the Creator. Missionaries had no business circumcising people of other cultures with infected instruments of Western values. “It does not matter at all whether or not one is circumcised; what does matter is being a new creature”<sup>93</sup>.

Daniel Coker, an African-American missionary to Africa, having adopted this white to black missionary model for his black to black mission to Africa, wrote to a friend “Oh! my dears, what darkness has covered the mind of this people. None but who come and see can judge. You would be astonished to see me travelling in the wilderness...to behold hundreds of men, women and children, naked, sitting on the grounds on mats, living on the natural productions of the earth, and as ignorant of God as the brutes that perish...I expect to give my life to bleeding, dark, benighted Africa”<sup>94</sup>.

Contrary to this missionary fallacy of evil as something made of harmony between people and nature, the New Testament Christianity would endorse a petition to the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) to grant an award to any inhabitants of the world where “hundreds of men, women and children, sitting on the ground on mats, living on the natural productions of the earth” can be found. A New Testament has an opposite definition of evil as anything that causes disharmony with God and conflicts with nature<sup>95</sup>.

Soren Kierkegaard must have observed Christianity working as a slave of cultural hierarchy rather than as a servant of God, when he wrote, “The Christianity of the New Testament simply does not exist. There is nothing to reform; what has to be done is to throw light upon a criminal offence against Christianity”.

The people of today has seen so much pain, hunger, death and genocide in the media, that they suffer from crying fatigue. They like to elect touch guys who cannot cry. They identify their leaders with perfection, not subject to human errors, suffering pain and weeping, because they rule by hiding and denying suffering, sickness, error and terror, and the inadequacies of their power structures. One of Africa’s foremost humanists, former President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, carried a white handkerchief whenever going to meet the public in case his tears might come out when faced with an issue that missed his mind and strayed to his heart. In the case of God, weeping and being part of our weakness is a divine mode of governance.

Intercession is divine-human sharing of conflicts, life and search for solutions. Prayer has these days become a conspiracy to leave the whole burden of looking for solutions to God. Passing the buck. God takes part in the intercession, not by answering prayers but by being part of the search for answers.

This is what is meant by “we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26). Christ suffers and enjoys the same relationship with people as the Holy Spirit. For Christ “also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34).

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<sup>92</sup> Watt, Stewart, Mrs. In the Heart of Savagedom. London, Edinburgh, New York, Marshall Brothers Ltd. Publishers. pp. 13, 428, 429

<sup>93</sup> Galatians 6:15

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 145

<sup>95</sup> Romans 1:18-23

God participates in reconciliation by uniting with sinners and being killed like one of them. This is what makes God present in our worship as our comrade in arms in which the Holy Spirit unites with our spirits to “bear witness that we are God’s children, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together”<sup>100</sup>.

God is with us in our pain, “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (Romans 8:35), because the cross makes God inseparably involved in conflicts, wars and genocides in the world. When victims of sickness, war, neglect and holocaust pray to God, it is the Holy Spirit and Christ praying in and with them making their prayers an assurance of God’s ever present governance. The intercessory role of the Holy Spirit and Christ before God demonstrates that the Holy Spirit and Christ do play a human and representative role before God. Christ and the Holy Spirit are the first to feel headache when constipation occurs in our system. Like Mom and Dad, Christ and the Holy Spirit intercede with the doctor for the condition of their sick babe, the world. When the Church which claims to be the body of the Holy Spirit and Christ cannot share suffering with the world it invalidates its claim.

Rather than deal with pain from a distance, through relief programs, God deals with it by embodying it. Nobody in one’s sound mind would like salvation to abolish pain before cure. Pain is the intercessor, tutor and alarm system in the body: the best monitor. If there was no pain or headache in the central nervous system how could we know that we are sick, burning or injured, especially inside the body? How epicureanism fare in life with numbness and paralysis, without pain? Rather than being able to separate us from the love of God<sup>101</sup>, pain unites with God. It awakens us to the reality of sin and oppression by governments. It is by accepting suffering as God’s gift to help us to cry out to God for assistance that the oppressor cannot use our suffering as a tool of intimidation.

We heap so much praise, worship and glory to God to anaesthetize and sanitize God as the God of grace, love and truth who does not share the contradictions and pains of existence. On their way to worship a clean God, churches become mechanistic by bypassing the victims of their industrial and consumer habits bleeding to death on the wayside.

Our God rules existence by being embodied in it so that God can share firsthand its labour and pain and give birth to a new creation. God did not bear the pain and boredom of creation endlessly, without a break, kairos, or Sabbath, to relate with and enjoy what God was creating. God governs by sharing fun of companionship with creation, looking at what God had made as a mirror to see what God’s personality looks like.

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<sup>100</sup> Romans 8:16-17

<sup>101</sup> Romans 8:35