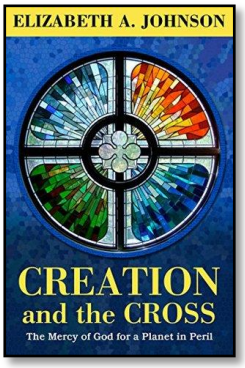
CREATION AND THE CROSS: THE MERCY OF GOD FOR PLANET IN PERIL



Judul : Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for Planet in Peril

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In this book, Johnson addresses one of the problematic issues in ecological theology, namely, the problem of (natural) evolutionary evil. She rightly says, quoting from Roman 8:18-25, "How can we imagine the gracious, compassionate love of God for the created world while the whole creation is groaning in labor pains until now?" Pain, suffering, death, and extinction have been intrinsic to the process of evolution by natural selection. This leads to a real problem of evolutionary theodicy, yet little addressed up to now in Christian theologies. Creation has been forgotten by many (Western) theologians since theology is always centered on human redemption, overlooking the importance of cosmic redemption. For Johnson, this mis-leading paradigm can be rooted in the work of Anselm *Cur Deus Homo* which has been the dominant paradigm for the Church. Anselm's satisfaction theory is not only inadequate, but also expresses an *ecological silence*: the natural world merely as a stage on which the important drama of human salvation is played out (26). Driving by this concern, Johnson invites the readers to explore salvation in a different theological paradigm which she calls "a theology of accompaniment" (222). This theology holds the faith conviction that God forever companions the world with liberating, saving mercy. The living God, who is in the Spirit is already "in, with and for" all creation, has in Jesus Christ joined the history of the world and participates in its journey. Thus, following Niels H. Gregersen, Johnson introduces the logic of "deep incarnation" and "deep redemption" where God-in-Christ is with all that suffers and dies, not just human beings; God is "with every field mouse caught and eaten by a hawk" (188).

Johnson's book is a rich and engaging work as she colors her theological discussion with creative imaginations. She also draws insights from diverse sources in order to be faithful to the tradition: the Church traditional teaching of Anselm, the Biblical narrative of Isaiah 2, the Trinitarian Christology and the evolution theory. Interestingly, her writing style employs the dialogic way of proceeding by summoning up an imaginary interlocutor, Clara (clear and bright-Latin) who interro-gates, encourages, challenges and often leads the discussion. This strategy highlights her belief that a contextual theology demands an unending conversation, bridging theory and praxis, doctrine and life and also bringing up new problems which are important and demand new scrutiny.

I have three comments in her work. First, Johnson shares similar solutions on the problem of natural evil with other eco-theolo-gians, like Arthur Peacocke, Niels H. Greger-sen, and John Polkinghorne. They basically propose that: God suffers with God's creation through self-emptying love, of which Christ's Cross is indicative (the kenotic God) and God does not abandon the victims of evolution since the cross gives warrant for God's compassion (the soterio-logical God). This position affirms the

radical proposal that God has no long-term goals for creation, but willingly keeps company with its unfolding. However, there is also another alternative approach which highlights the importance of cosmic redemption in the present time. Jürgen Moltmann in *The Way of Jesus Christ* (1990) rightly points out that: "a *Christus evolutor* without *Christus redemptor* is nothing other than a cruel, unfeeling *Christus selector*, a historical world-judge without compassion for the weak, and a breeder of life uninterested in the victims." James A. Nash argues for the Church as agent of ecological liberation and reconciliation while Arthur Peacocke refers human as God's "co-creator" since human through their science and technology, would be exploring with God the creative possibilities within the universe God has brought into being. These are some theological perspec-tives on how human beings can participate in healing the world.

Second, Johnson's theology of accompaniment is deeply rooted in her idea of panentheism which is derived from the Greek *pan* (all), *en* (in), and *theos* (God): all-in-God. Different from pantheism, panentheism allows that God who dwells within also infinitely transcends the world at every point. Panentheism is "the belief that the being of God includes and penetrates the whole uni-verse, so that every part of it exists in Him, but as against pantheism, that his being is more than, and is not exhausted by, the universe" (*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*). In its core, panentheism is able to "guard" God from being a subject of evolution; thus, it brings back God as the "Source" of creation without separating God from God's creation; it redefines God's *creatio continua* where God empowers the creation to flourish and to grow in its own dynamic. But, how about the Church's teaching on panentheism? In 2011, Johnson was asked by the US Bishop Doctrine Committee to clarify her theological panentheism in her book *Quest for the Living God* since "by introducing panentheism to illuminate God-world relationship, Quest makes the world *ontologically constitutive* of God's own being." It is clear that the Church's authority anticipates the seed of pantheism in Johnson's theology of panentheism.

Third, Johnson dedicates her work to have concrete implications in society; thus, in the last chapter, she proposes five "thought experiments" that can be helpful in fostering ecological commitments (195-226). In its core, it is an invitation to undergo "ecological conversion", placing human as creature among other beloved creatures. Moreover, Johnson's five thought experiments offer a new insight for developing *catechism for ecological awareness* where ecological concern can be integrated into the dynamics of faith formation in school or parish context. Ecological catechism is needed to foster Christian ecological responsibility.

(Alexander Hendra Dwi A.)