

Coronavirus: A Theological Reflection

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Introduction

Since the declaration of the coronavirus by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, the number of those infected by this virus has continued to increase astronomically. Unless the situation changes drastically, many more will die.

While this challenge raises serious medical, ethical, and logistical questions, it also raises serious theological questions. The aim of this paper is to briefly discuss some of those theological questions.

Is Anyone There?

This is a fundamental question that is begging for an urgent answer, especially during this trying period. The amazing order and design that is seen all over the world and the universal laws which hold everything perfectly together is a very loud indication that a Master Designer is responsible for creation. That is, the Designer is God!

There are several theories of creation, but they are all fragile. Prominent among them is the Big Bang Theory, which is a leading scientific

explanation about how the Universe began. A major blow to this theory is that; it is practically impossible for 'nothing' to evolve into 'something,' let alone this earth, with its amazing complex designs and forms.

As their theories continue to fall apart, the scientific community has also been asking for proof of the existence of a Creator. The answer: there is God, and he created our world and everything in it. Nothing happens without his knowledge or permission. "While it is impossible to 'prove' God in a mathematical sense, the evidence is convincing."¹

As we pass through this universal challenge caused by the coronavirus, the Church as the people of faith should be encouraged and comforted in the knowledge that there is God, and he has absolute authority and control over his creation (1 Chronicles 29: 11-12). He is omnipotent (all power), omniscient (has all knowledge), and omnipresent (is in all places). He guides and governs all circumstances (Genesis 41: 32). Awesome!

God knows all about the coronavirus pandemic as well as all other human challenges. He has the power to deal with this situation; he has the power to stop its further spread and heal all those who have been infected whenever he chooses to do so.

¹ John Blanchard, *Ultimate Questions* (E P Books, UK), p 4

There are fear, confusion, and depression because of this great challenge that has befallen the world. At this point, the world needs someone to tell them about the place of God in the midst of all that has been happening. That is the responsibility of the Church. "Our world needs people who will receive from God the wisdom to interpret what people see but cannot understand"¹

The Holy Spirit has adequately equipped the Church with all kinds of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12: 1-11). Instead of different congregations contradicting each other and going contrary to scriptures as is prevalent today, the Church should come together with a repentant heart and aim to bear greater witness to God's saving presence in the world.

Is it From God?

The coronavirus is having a frightening effect and making people all over the world to 'loss their minds.' The effect has also been highly detrimental to so many Christians who are already losing their faith. Some are already asking whether this pandemic has anything to do with End Times.

There are several conspiracy theories about the origin of the coronavirus. There are rumors that the virus started from a Chinese laboratory.

¹Yusufu Ameh Obaje, *God is in control*, p41 (Access Academy Publication, Ibadan).

According to Barclay, "There are two main versions of the rumor, and they have one common thread: that the coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, originated in a level 4 (the highest biosafety level) research laboratory in Wuhan."

"In one version of the rumor, the virus was engineered in the lab by humans as a bioweapon. In another version, the virus was being studied in the lab (after being isolated from animals) and then 'escaped' or 'leaked' because of poor safety protocol."¹

However, so many people are also of the opinion that this virus is from God as a foreshadow of what is to come, or as a punishment for the numerous sins of the world. Such a view is not out of place as there were several instances in the Bible when God administered punishments on people or nations.

The flood of Noah's time was an instance when the whole world was destroyed because mankind had become excessively sinful (Genesis 6: 11 - 13). The rain of "sulfur and fire" that annihilated Sodom and Gomorrah was caused by God as a judgment for sin (Jude 1: 7). The three -day plague that wiped out 70,000 men after King David conducted a census was caused by the wrath of God (2 Samuel 24: 10 - 17).

¹Eliza Barclay, *The Strategist*, March 12, 2020

The nation of Israel suffered a series of punishments from God, including plagues, similar to what happened in Egypt (Amos 4:10). The list is endless.

A look at the present state of moral decadence in the world shows that God has very good reason to unleash his anger on humanity. One does not have to look far to know that humanity has become increasingly godless. All kinds of sin thrive in the world today.

Even the Church that was designed to be "the light of the world" (Mathew 5:15) and be a standard for right and wrong has been infested by the darkness of the world. On a general scale, it is conspicuous that the Church has "abandoned God's word and replaced it with man's words."¹

How Should the Church Respond?

The coronavirus pandemic has placed the Church in a position where the world is carefully watching to see how it would react under these trying circumstances. As the people of God, it is paramount that the Church should evaluate the present challenge within the theological context.

Incongruously, the scourge has also brought about an epidemic of false prophets, with all of them claiming that their messages are from God (even though they contradict each other and the scriptures).

¹Brandon Clay, *COVID - 19: A Biblical Plague?*

These pseudo-prophets are all over satellite television and on social media, causing more confusion in Christendom and attracting ridicule to the faith from enemies of Christianity. The Church of God must beware and silence these false prophets by using the truth of God's word as a potent weapon.

Just recently, one of such prophets told his followers that God asked him to tell the world that the immunization against contracting the coronavirus is for people to rub a mixture of sand, palm oil and salt all over their body for one week.

Another prophet claimed that he also had a revelation from God that anyone who makes an incision on his left arm and mixes his blood with grounded charcoal and ashes will not be infected with the dreaded virus. The only explanation for their deceitful activities is that such prophets have "lost their way, lost their moral compass, sold themselves out to satisfy their vanity and lust. They are false prophets on the hunt for an audience and following."¹

¹David Christe, [www. goodmenproject.com](http://www.goodmenproject.com)

The Church must be careful not to respond to this pandemic as the world does. To most people in the world, this is a frightening time as everything is shutting down. Cities and even entire countries are shutting down.

The world is now wondering, "What is going to happen next?"

Governments all over the world are responding by giving practical guidelines to their citizens so as to protect them from contracting the coronavirus or passing it on to others. The Church should adhere to such instructions and all other directives issued by constituted authorities (Romans 13: 2), especially if they are not intended to go against God. Social distancing, which has restricted Christians from meeting in large numbers, is a case in point.

As 'called out' People, Christians are to operate on a different pedestal from the rest of the world (Colossians 2: 8). The Church must be steadfast in its faith in God. It should hold to the fact that the outbreak of coronavirus is not by chance even if it was created in a laboratory, as some have proposed.

The book of Isaiah tells us that nothing happens by accident (Isaiah 46: 9 - 10). God does what he wants to do when he wants to do it, in the way he wants to do, for the purpose he wants to accomplish and he can involve any person he wants to use. During this pandemic, the Church

needs to hold fast to the biblical concept of God that his supreme rulership is based on the perfection of his divine being.

Conclusion

In this situation, the first thing the Church should do is to ask some broad spiritual questions like: Why do such viruses occur? Why does God allow such harmful things? What is the solution to this crisis? These and all other questions should be directed only to God – the only one who can provide all answers and unravel mysteries. This is possible because he knew long before he even created the Universe, the coronavirus pandemic would hit our planet (Isaiah 46: 10).

While the Church is doing this, Christian congregations (especially the affluent ones) should urgently reach out to offer a helping hand to those in need. They can do so by providing some of the needs of the poor, especially in Africa, where the level of poverty is alarming.

While they are providing relief to their less-privileged members, affluent churches should also try to identify and reach out to poor churches (and there are so many of them), especially the ones that are located in rural areas.

During this crisis, the Church should also reach out to people with emotional or physical disabilities, the sick, the widows, the orphans, the unemployed, underemployed, etc. Such an act of love will make a great

impact on this hard, selfish, and uncaring world, especially during this trying period.