

Then God said to Noah..."AS for me, I am establishing a covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature..., the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth.....that never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. I have set the bow in the clouds and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the *earth*."  
*Genesis 9: 8-13*

At the UN summit on climate change (September 23, 2019) Greta Thunberg reminded the world that due to climate change "People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!" She prophetically said, "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. 'This Is All Wrong, [*Greta Thunberg Tells World Leaders at U.N. Climate Session on Sept. 23, 2019*].

She is not alone. Young activists around the world are enraged that their future was sold for a small number of people to amass an unimaginable fortune. They are right to be furious.

Humanity is fast approaching to a time for serious introspection; a planetary *kairos* where self-examination is warranted from leaders of religious, social, economic and political structures to identify their role in the ensuing environmental crisis. Through recent history, society is led under the cloud of deception presuming that economic growth and prosperity equals a good life, and hence, growth remains the primary and unitary objective for economic organization. This logic proposes that economic systems will collapse without the expansion of production and consumption.

However, the promotion of prosperity was made possible by creating an erroneous public consciousness that human beings are fundamentally motivated by material self-interest. Non-material human needs, such as love, faith and spiritual needs have no rational space in humanity's strive for a good life. People, as the economic pundits pontificate, are essentially selfish. They relate with others with an end-goal of advancing personal pleasure and identity. Besides, there seems to be no end to human actions for actualizing these goals.

*Earth is the principal victim of this perverted logic of economics.* The argument that achievements in science and technology, and the efficient management in production process are the undergirding spirit of economic growth is a partial story. Production depends on natural resources. Limitless extraction of resources, and consequentially, the destruction of life-giving qualities of nature is the foundation through which the erroneous concept of growth occurs. The Earth is objectified and devoid of any subjective right in creation. As the economy strengthens in dollar value, mother earth bleeds. This phenomenon is often called cancerous capitalism. The so-called advances are interlocked with destruction. Growth and death are interrelated. As the system unlocks more of its productive prowess, it automatically unleashes its powers of destruction.

The flood narrative described in Genesis informs a different message. The destruction experienced in the ancient community, according to the biblical narrative, was the result of human sin. Genesis writers notes these sins as injustice and wickedness that led to a hedonistic life. The narrator infers that this sin was rooted in the perversions started at the garden of Eden. The first sin was not the urge to seek an ethical consciousness regarding right and wrong, but rather, the pursuit of autonomy that transcends limitations embedded in inter-relationship. After eating the forbidden fruits, the primordial human

beings were ready to sacrifice their partner for self-security. They created logics to blame the other as the cause of sin, probably the first lesson of the hegemonic political order. They gained a self-centered consciousness that they were naked. This search for autonomy was first depicted in the change of orientation for consumption and therefore production. According to the text, Adam and Eve's reason for consumption was not to sustain life, but to gain power. By consuming the specific fruits, they yearned to be equal to their creator.

The environmental crisis is the result of this perverted logic. Life is not our reason for production and consumption. On the reverse, money, the reified form of power, is the primary objective. Money has subsumed all realities under its logic and in turn, objectified life and nature. The rule of money has created a hedonist approach to life and realities.

Wickedness steered the ancient community to destruction by a great flood. The flood narrative ended with the reiteration of the biblical theme that the restoration of the broken relationship between nature, people and God is the cardinal concern.

The anguish of God after the destruction of creation goaded a new covenant of preservation. And as the mark of the covenant, God agreed to place the bow [symbol of ruling power and authority in ancient cultures] in front of creation. And people were required to respect life [do not eat flesh with blood]. Covenant themes were revered as presiding principles to regulate an alternate social organization based on an ethically grounded convivial relationship among people, nature and between people, nature, and God. It offered a radically new set of principles for governance, and through the social construction of the covenant themes, people of God rejected a hierarchical order that promoted objectification of the other. Biblical covenants are a response to the self-giving and gratuitous love of God. The covenant of preservation after the flood is not with people and God, but "with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth". God fortifies the subjective rights of people and nature by inviting them to a covenant. The term covenant reinforces the idea that God respects people and nature as "thou" and extends the "thou" relationship as the ethical/religious principle for interpersonal relations among different communities and between people and nature. The text further reminds us that people are not above nature, but an integral part of it, and thus the covenantal narrative ends with specifying that the subjects of the covenants are God and earth. Converting a covenantal partner as an object for exploitation and consumption is a rebellion towards God.