

A DISCOURSE ON SUFFERING IN NIGERIA FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a discourse on suffering in Nigeria from a Christian perspective. The curiosity of the work is heightened by the facts that Nigeria has all the fundamentals of abundant natural resources and vast human capital that make it robustly rich but contrary to expectations, it has poor citizens and adjudged the poverty capital of the world. One cannot blame God for the country's distress for he not only has blessed it so abundantly but sustains these endowments and protects same from natural disasters. The findings of this study reveal that Nigeria has anthropogenic sources of suffering; in other words, the suffering in Nigeria is man-made. Suffering has salvific value in Christian understanding but it should not be as a result of culpable factors which are at variance with the redemptive work of Christ who came that we may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). In fact, it is critical to Christian message to remove those unjust structures that breed human suffering. Furthermore, the paper discovered that the managers of the Nation's huge resources are the architects of human suffering and that those sighs and cries, agitations and protests by more groups than one in the country are predicated on the experiences of the excruciating suffering. In this light, therefore, the work recommends the ways of removing the avoidable and unnecessary suffering in Nigeria. The methodology employed in this paper is phenomenal-descriptive which means that suffering in Nigeria was studied over time and presented in the discourse as an ugly phenomenon that should be removed from the daily experiences of Nigerians.

Keywords: Discourse, Suffering, Christian perspective, Anthropogenic Sources, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

It is a frequent prayer in Christian Churches in Nigeria that God in his infinite mercy may save Nigerians from fellow citizens who are merchants of suffering, chaos, anarchy and doom. The country wallows in perennial distress as if social dislocations and abnormalities are necessities of its constitutional provisions. But they are not; the constitution, rather, in its secularity-characteristic provides robust spaces for the safeguarding of all inalienable human rights and social justice. In the wake of these harsh and hard realities that threaten the welfare of citizens and the corporate existence of the nation-state, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) initiated this spirituality of radical prayer as one can see in the **Prayer for Nigeria in Distress**, among other powerful intercessory prayers. The situation in Nigeria has been

variously described by persons who have been adversely affected by its torture or by concerned observers who dwell in the domain that is even extraneous to its adversities. Such descriptions include “Nigeria is sick”, “Nigeria has problems”, “There was a country”, “Nigeria has austerity”, “Nigeria lacks basic amenities”, “The Nation has relapsed into deep recession” and so on. All these are captions given to narratives of woes, wastes and worse conditions as evidenced in the common experiences of sufferings, deprivations, poverty, disease and death. The curiosity becomes even more when one realizes that Nigeria has robust economic fundamentals such as enormous natural endowments and vast human capital. In the sphere of religion, Nigerians have two Abrahamic faiths - Christianity and Islam - and the indigenous specimen of folk religion proper to its traditional societies, that is, African Traditional Religion. So on earth, Nigeria has all it takes to be great and to sustain its lofty heights among the comity of nations. In Heaven, Nigeria has God who blessed it with enough human capital and vast natural resources, hugely and richly. On this note, it becomes a huge worry that Nigeria has vast riches yet it has poor suffering citizens. Coming from this background, this paper strives to discuss suffering in Nigerian context from a Christian perspective.

SUFFERING IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Theology is a compound concept got from two Greek words; namely *Theos* (God) and *Logos* (Word, Science, Discourse or Study). Theology from its etymology is simply Word about God. In this sense, Theology therefore is the discourse on God as it cuts across human conditions. Christian Theology is science or study of God from the Christian view point. As a human activity, it has the engagement of reason (*ratio*) and because it pertains to God, it has the critical, indispensable aspect of faith (*fides*). Theology is *fides quarens intellectu* (faith seeking understanding). The capacity for adequate theologizing has the variables of intellectual density, horizon, faith and social contexts. As mysterious God (*Deus mysterium tremendum*) reveals his existence in creation, his love to save humanity is seen in the truth of the incarnation. Incarnation is theology that Christ took flesh and dwelt among us (*Et verbum Caro factum est, et inhabitavit in nobis*, John 1:14, Matthew 1:23). God's invisible hand shapes the tapestry of history with the cooperation of human persons whose actions are in tandem with his Divine Will. The primary text of Christian Theology is the Holy Bible and so we advance our discourse by a needed appeal to its authority. To it we now turn.

THE SACRED SCRIPTURE

The Judeo-Christian tradition traces the origin of suffering to the disobedience of the first parents, Adam and Eve in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis (3:1-24). They ate the forbidden fruit in disobedience to the Divine injunctions. The consequence of this *fall* became the loss of friendship and heritage, suffering and death. In this understanding, suffering is a deprivation, an evil and an unwanted companion of humanity which was never a part of the original plan for humanity but an unfortunate departure from it. However, in the New Testament, Christ, the New Adam, born of a woman, the New Eve (Galatians 4:4, Matthew 1:23, John 1:14, Isaiah 7:14) came as Lord and Saviour. The *fall* of the old Adam changed by

Mary's *fiat* who in obedience to God's message through the angel Gabriel's annunciation accepted the role of motherhood of God (*Maria Theotokos*) in these words: *fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum* (may it be done to me according to your word). She became the mother of Jesus Christ who is God (John 1:1-3) and Man (John 1:14) as we see in the prologue of John as he explains his Christology in the Fourth Gospel that bears his name.

The fundamental understanding of suffering from the Christian perspective is “the messianic self-understanding of Jesus himself. In Jesus' announcements of suffering the Christian understanding of suffering is clearly expressed: suffering is not the final aim and end in itself in the realization of human destiny; it is the gateway to resurrection, to rebirth, to new creation” (*Britannica.com, p.1*). In the scripture, suffering is explained as a consequence of original sin committed by the primordial parents of humanity, Adam and Eve (Genesis 3). In the book of Isaiah, the suffering servant of Yahweh suffered willingly to save mankind; a prophetic oracle that said: “Ill-treated and afflicted, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughterhouse, like a sheep dumb before its shearers he never opened his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). This passage is believed to point to Christ Jesus in his *Kenosis* and Calvary-event; Christ in his messianic prophecy revealed his Glory (*Shekinah Yahweh, Doxa Elohim*) in his Cross (Philippians 2:1-11, Luke 24:26, Matthew 16:21). Jesus Christ, *Yehoshua Ben David* (Son of David), innocent though he was, suffered to save mankind from sin.

Christ who came to save mankind and reconcile the fallen humanity with God chose the way of suffering. He took the titles that pertain to suffering such as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the suffering servant of Yahweh and died on the Cross on Mount Calvary in grief, sorrowful pain and anguish. Very interesting was his mission to alleviate human suffering - he fed the hungry, cured many of infirmities and diseases, liberated captives, brought succor to the poor and raised the dead. His public teaching ministry emphasized the Cross as a way of salvation. The cross is synonymous with Glory and suffering. The crucifix, the imagery of his death on the infamous gibbet became the symbol of Christianity, its transformative powers, civilization and salvation. Hence on Good Friday, as the passion and death of Christ is commemorated, the sacred minister says or sings as he unveils the cross: “*Ecce lignum crucis in quo salus mundi perpendit*”. The congregation responds with simultaneous genuflection: “*Venite adoremus.*” (cf *Liturgia Triduum Paschale, Good Friday*). This informs us about the veracity of the centrality of the cross in Christianity. In his words, Christ told his followers: “If you want to be a follower of mine, take up your cross daily and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). People suffer lack and deprivation; and by this, accept that the strength of the Cross may shine mysteriously through their weakness. Others willingly take on the evangelical counsel of poverty for the sake of the Gospel and the spread of the kingdom of God. It is a sound Christian theology of the Cross that “people let go in order to let God”. In other words, there is need to link suffering with Christ in what is known in Spiritual Theology as “*Christification*” of suffering. This means bearing suffering patiently for the sake of Christ. In this instance, there is a connection between *suffering and smiling* because the future Glory surpasses the present tribulations, persecutions and even death in the gruesome execution of

red martyrdom. This understanding is evidenced in the dictum of Tertullian: “The blood of the Martyrs is the seed of Christianity”.

In Pauline Theology of suffering, we see in his *Kenosis* a connection with the incarnation (Philippians 2:1-11). Christ's acceptance to become man is already a passion as explained by Paul. Inspired by the fact that Jesus showed us love by his death and suffering, he encouraged Christians to ensure that nothing separates us from the love of Christ. He asked in Romans 8:35 “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?

John, the Author of the Fourth Gospel that bears his name, extols the Love of Christ as *Agape*, which is found in selfless self-sacrifice. According to him “Greater love has no one than this, to lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13). Christ did not promise his disciples absence of suffering but he assured that “He will make the yoke easy and the burden light (Matthew 11:28-30); and that he who endures till the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13). Cross-less Christianity is falsehood in the same magnitude as a Christ-less Christianity is fakery. Christians who avoid suffering and forsake Christ go into many false measures and fake methods which promise nothing but harvests of crises for those who turn their back against Christ opt for face to face with crises. Examples are found in Matthew 19:16-23 - the rich man who refused to follow Christ, Acts of the Apostles 5:1-11 - Ananias and Sapphira, the couple in the Bible who hid their property and lied before the apostles' feet, *et cetera*.

In the world, suffering is in abundance which is adjudged by some as coming from the sources of evil such as metaphysical, natural and moral. In this light, some blame suffering on the devil's envy, world's natural disasters and man's moral depravity.

Nigeria has many suffering indices that ruffle the-would-have been smiling faces of citizens and change them into frowning facial contours of squeeze with exposed ropes of arteries and veins that scare beholders. In Nigeria, the experience that man comes into the world crying, lives in the world complaining and departs at death with a sigh is real in most lives, families and communities. This Nigerian situation corroborates the view of the English Author, Thomas Fuller (1608-1661) who said that “We are born crying, live complaining and die disappointed.”

In one sense, people suffer and die because of original sin and in another sense people suffer and die because of actual sins, that is, sins committed through human freedom and full knowledge. Suffering can be personal or communitarian according to victims, local or universal by its spread; it can be physical, social, psychological or spiritual by domain, temporal, transient or chronic, that is, persistent by duration, voluntary or forced by the authority of acceptance or imposition respectively, and so on. According to Boyle (2003:98), “From a human standpoint there is nothing more senseless than human suffering. On the other hand, from a faith perspective, there is nothing more meaningful than human suffering that has been...joined to the sufferings of Christ, accepted with the sufferings of Christ”.

However, suffering associated with Sin as a “justified evil” does not explain comprehensively the reason for suffering in Christian tradition. In this light, therefore, the innocent one can suffer like Biblical Job did, the man born blind (John 9) and Christ himself, among other instances. Christ taught that neither the man born blind nor his parents transgressed just as God the Father exonerated Job from any wrong doing to have suffered the way he did. This Christian perspective is obviously at variance with some explanations on the origins of suffering in biblical and extra-biblical cosmologies like the Hebraic and Igbo specimens, to mention but two. In fact, Christians willingly suffer after the example of Christ in order to enter into his Glory (1 Peter 4:12-19, Romans 8:17, Luke 9:27-36). The faithful disciples across centuries, cultures and continents have shown heroic, shining examples; some died as martyrs. St Paul exclaimed: Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my own body to make up all the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church (Colossians 1:24).

In Mariology, one sees Mary as an example of redemptive suffering as *Maria dolorosa* who stood at the foot of the cross in fulfillment of the prophecy of Simeon who said to her: “a sword will pierce your own soul” (Luke 2:35). The Seven sufferings of Mary in the Bible are: I, The prophecy of Simeon. ii, The flight to Egypt, iii, Loss of the child Jesus for three days, he was found later in his Father's house iv, Witnessing Jesus carry his cross v. The crucifixion of Jesus vi, Taking Jesus down from the Cross vii, The Burial of Jesus (*Wikipedia, Our Lady of Sorrows*).

The sacred scripture is replete with evidences that God can allow human suffering in order to foster discipline in the life of an individual, group or community; this he can permit as well for his divine purpose (Job 7:20, 2 Maccabees 6:12-14, Matthew 16:21, Isaiah 53:7, Philippians 2:1-11, Hebrews 5: 7-10). Human suffering in the Old Testament is understood to be rooted in God's Justice while it is explained in the New Testament's understanding as Love. In the words of Wilson (2019:2), “Suffering causes the biblically-grounded believer to worship God – praising His providential hand and trusting His loving heart – even when the causes for hurtful circumstances are unclear. However in Nigeria, suffering has both clear and unclear circumstantial sources.

SUFFERING IN PATRISTIC THEOLOGY

The understanding of suffering in patristic theology is a reflection within the epoch of the early Christian Church “on suffering in the light of the biblical tradition, the example of Jesus Christ, the intellectual resources of the cultures, and the specific challenges that they faced” (Lefebure, 2015:29). Both Tertullian and Irenaeus attributed the origins of human suffering to the sin of the first parents which they called the primordial sin of impatience. Clement of Alexandria also linked suffering and death to Adam and eve's sin of disobedience. For Cyprian of Carthage, God sent plagues in order to convert human beings before the reality of the *eschaton*. He maintained that suffering is the lot both the innocent and the guilty. As St Ignatius of Antioch waited for his execution, he wrote in one of his *Letters*:

“I write to all the Churches and to certify to all that I die willingly for God provided that you do not hinder me. I exhort you: do not become an inopportune kindness for me; let me be the food of wild beasts through whom it is possible to attain God. I am the wheat of God, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread”. The Holy Bishop wished: “Allow me to be found an imitator of the suffering of my God” - *epetrepate moi mimeten einai tou pathous tou theou mou* (Schodel, 1985:170 cited in Lefebure 2015:34).

In summary, the early Christians had an articulated theological reflection on human suffering thus:

- Human suffering is a consequence of the frailty of human nature through Adam and Eve's sin. Therefore it is an effect moral evil.
- Both the innocent and the guilty can suffer alike.
- People should respond to the sufferings of others with charity and to theirs with heroic fortitude.
- God, in his infinite love and mercy, can allow sufferings as channels of graces in preparation for the last day. This is to foster discipline and repentance as the case may be.
- Suffering is a proof of imperfection in human condition.
- Christification of suffering is salvific; and as it is for the sake of Christ and his Body, the Church, it leads to Glory.

The early Christians had a lot of persecutions from emperors and deprivations from the hostile world around them but they took the ways of sufferings instead of offending God and their neighbour.

THE MAGISTERIUM

The Magisterial teaching of the Holy Mother Church is eloquent on the theology of suffering. Pope Saint John Paul II (1984:6) in his Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* wrote: Sacred Scripture is *a great book about suffering*. Let us quote from the books of the Old Testament a few examples of situations which bear the signs of suffering, and above all moral suffering: the danger of death, the death of one's own children and, especially, the death of the firstborn and only son; and then too: the lack of offspring, nostalgia for the homeland, persecution and hostility of the environment, mockery and scorn of the one who suffers, loneliness and abandonment; and again: the remorse of conscience, the difficulty of understanding why the wicked prosper and the just suffer, the unfaithfulness and ingratitude of friends and neighbours; and finally; the misfortunes of one's own nation. The Holy Father gave the copious Scriptural citations on the above mentioned species of suffering. All these examples of suffering are with us in Nigeria as recurring phenomena on daily basis. He further taught that “*Christ suffers voluntarily and innocently*”; and maintained that “The Saviour did not conceal suffering from his followers; it is a sign of true discipleship”. “At one and the same time”, he urged “*man to do good by his suffering and to do good to those who suffer*. In this double aspect he has completely revealed the meaning of suffering. This is the meaning of suffering which is truly supernatural and at the same time human. It is supernatural because it is rooted in the divine mystery of the Redemption of the world, and it is likewise deeply human, because in it

the person discovers himself, his own humanity, his own dignity, his own mission". Furthermore he taught that "Suffering is certainly part of the mystery of man. Perhaps suffering is not wrapped up as much as man is by this mystery which is an especially impenetrable one. The mystery of the Redemption of the world is in an amazing way *rooted in suffering*, and this suffering in turn finds in the mystery of the Redemption its supreme and surest point of reference (*Pope Saint John Paul II, 1984: 18, 25, 30-31*).

The meditation of *Salvifici doloris* ("redemptive suffering") flows from the Supreme Pontiff's own experience of bereavement, illness and pain including his recovery from the assassination attempt by Mehmet Ali Agca on Wednesday, 13 May 1981 at St Peter's Square in Vatican City. In 1993, the Pope was not himself a stranger to sickness and suffering "instituted the Annual World Day of the Sick as a way to bring compassion and greater attention to the suffering itself. The great event holds on February 11 each year on the feast of our Lady of Lourdes" (Makhalemele, *Oblates School*).

Pope Benedict XVI sees the words of Psalm 22 as ones "with strong Christological implications because they are the words spoken by Christ on the Cross". The Holy Father taught that the cry "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me" may appear that God is distant and silent which one in the Psalmist's shoes may be tempted to think in the face of tragedies. He further catechized that the seeming forsakenness one feels in such moments is an illusion manufactured and embraced by one. He stressed that God is ever close in his infinite presence in a mysteriously inseparable way in times of suffering. "This cry of anguish is transformed and transfigured in the mystery of the Resurrection. With these words, Jesus gives us the weight of his unspeakable suffering, beyond which the certainty of glory opens. Faith Transforms death into a gift of life, and the abyss of pain into a source of hope", the Vicar of Christ maintained (Bartels, 2020:1-3).

Pope Francis teaches in his *Magisterium* that "In hopeless situations of pain and suffering, God never abandons his children but rather remains close to them. God's answer to our pain is a closeness, a presence that accompanies us, that doesn't leave us alone" (*thetablet.co.uk, p.1*).

The President of CBCN, Most Rev Augustine Akubeze (2020) in his *Homily* noted that "suffering is part of Christian living, adding that joy and glory await the person who remains faithful to Christ, irrespective of the suffering or challenges we encounter as human beings". The Archbishop spoke about the Coronavirus pandemic with certainty thus: "Nothing lasts forever. Your present suffering will end. The Covid-19 pandemic will come to an end. No matter what we go through at the moment, God is standing by us. He stands by us through our feats, questions and pains. So in all things we must give Him thanks" (Homily, Benin City Nigeria, June 5, 2020).

Nigeria has new indices of suffering due to Covid-19. Apart from the old versions of poverty, suffering, disease and death, Covid-19 has generated, in the words of Bishop Godfrey Onah of Nsukka Diocese, "the new poor", new pains and myriads of dimensions to suffering in Nigeria.

SUFFERING IN NIGERIA IS MAN-MADE

Suffering in Nigeria, to a very large extent, has links with an anthropogenic source which means that it is man-made – *inimicus hoc fecit* (an enemy has done this). It is the enemy of happiness, progress and authentic human values that plant the danel of suffering in the farm with corns of comfort and well-being (Matthew 13: 28). Suffering in Nigeria can be described as a culpable type packaged by Nigerians for Nigerians. The suffering in Nigeria is a sad commentary on its history and a grave challenge to its peoples. It is a woeful historical note that a country with enormous wealth has poor citizens in huge numbers; and ranked the **poverty capital of the world** as such by international index groups such as World Bank, Development Finance International (DFI) and Oxfam, Nigeria placed bottom in a ranking of 157 nations (kazeem, 2018:1). Nigeria has little or no natural disasters like draught, earth quakes, famine, and perennial adverse climatic conditions yet there is suffering. Based on this fact, suffering in Nigeria is from the effects of moral evil when man through his human act does what is contrary to social justice, disrespects the dignity of personhood, violates injuriously the Divine Will and organizes the Nigerian society without God. On this note, therefore, one can exonerate both metaphysical and natural evils from the adversities of the country and rest it squarely on moral evils; hence, it is *Nigerian-made*.

Human suffering in Nigeria is a product of Nigerians. It has anthropogenic origins in large varieties. These sources include but not limited to:

1. Bad Governance

The ruling class in Nigeria has misruled the country overtime. The very fundamentals that function bad governance in the nation-state are evidently found in ethnocentrism, battle for tribal supremacy as one has the disorientation of “born to rule” implying that others were born to serve as perpetual subjects. The aforementioned basics for bad governance give rise to nepotism, favouritism, oppression and suppression, mediocrity, lopsided appointments, Fulanization-Islamization agenda, agitations and aggressions, militancy, protests, insecurity and overall attributes of weak state status. The institutional weakness can be seen in outright violations of the rule of law and social justice, illegal migrations and porosity of borders, arms proliferation and insufficient provisions or ineffective protection of persons and public squares as well as inefficient administration of Public utility services.

All the above vices and ugly situations have contributed to the increase in human suffering in Nigeria.

2. Religious Bigotry

In Nigeria, there are perceived moves to convert citizens by force to Islam through corrosive Islamic Jihadists. This religious intolerance has brought sufferings in many ways to Nigerians. The activities of Boko Haramists, Islamic insurgents and Fulani herders who terrorize the country very aggressively in the name of Islamic propagation for over a decade now have dislocated families and vacated communities from their ancestral homes. There are a growing number of camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the Northern parts of the country and down south through the

North-Central Zone little or no agricultural activities due to the culpable Fulani herders' trespass on Farmlands. Families have lost bread winners to these escalated conflicts and sufferings are the daily companions of the victims. In all these woeful narratives, there are no robust legal frameworks that function protection of lives and properties; all the religious and other inalienable human rights guaranteed in the secularity of the Nigerian constitution are not applied comprehensively as one could see gaps in implementations. The recent "Companies and Allied Matters" 2020 signed into law by President Buhari on 7th August, 2020 and subtle RUGA concept, Muslim symbols and architectural designs in public squares and structures are specimens of remote and subtle versions of jihadism in the country.

Nigeria has, to its bad side of history, a long list of multiple narratives of religious riots, crises and discriminations against Christians with their members and sacred places incessantly committed to smoking ruins.

3. Conflict Escalations

The recent history of Nigeria has conflict escalations in such a manner that peace has become a scarce commodity in the land while sufferings due to deaths, loss of property in the hands of the nefarious operations of armed robbers, bandits, kidnappers, ritual killers and Fulani herdsmen, land grabbers, among other merchants of violence and syndicates of conflicts. In more places than one, there are inter-tribal conflicts and intra-community clashes due to various reasons chief among them are religious terrorism and intolerance, land boundary disputes prompted to initiate and consolidate genocide, suppression, oppression and usurpation. Conflicts and clashes over ancient boundaries are the bane of peace and societal harmony in the country. The stories of Southern Kaduna and the Middle Belt are just two instances out of plural cases in Nigeria's contemporary history. The injurious violence against the sacredness of human life and disrespect for people's property are on the rise on daily basis; this has brought death, dislocation and displacements, untold sufferings to individuals, families and communities.

4. Greed and Materialism

The moral evils of greed and materialism enthrone unbridled quest for the inordinate acquisition of material possessions from filthy transactions and foul means. This explains money laundering, ritual killing, uncompleted projects in public spaces, incessant strikes, political deceits, baby factory syndrome, dissatisfaction in the economic sphere, fabrications and lies in the social, print and electronic media and socio-cultural crises. The rich buy their ways and manipulate the ways of the poor to their advantage. It is an unfortunate index that despite the huge resources available in the country, the wealth is in the hands of very few selfish ones leaving the masses to founded wail and bleeding wounds.

5. Adverse Historic-ecological Exigencies

In the face of adverse historical exigencies due to disease such as Ebola, **Covid-19**, pestilence or harsh climatic conditions like the variables of weather change found in flood, drought, et cetera, Nigerians still prey on fellow citizens thereby increasing the

hard realities of suffering on them. It is on record that some resources brought to cushion the negative side effects of these adverse conditions have been diverted to the pockets or bank account details of private individuals who had the privilege to access them. In these instances, the would-have-been beneficiaries were left out in the cold without care or succor. The point here is that human factors which should help solve the issues of natural or ecological deficits are busy multiplying the woes that accrue from these harsh and adverse natural intermittent variables.

6. Corruption

Ordinarily, corruption would have been grouped under the fourth above but it was consciously separated from it in order to give it the punch that it deserves. Corruption is the weevil that has destroyed the beauty of Nigeria in many ways. It has given it a bad name and given some rusts to its image and very unfortunately advanced the unpleasant presence of suffering among Nigerians.

God has given enough for the needs of every Nigerian but not for the greed of any Nigerian. The explanation of certificate forgery, plagiarism, manipulation of school or election results, truancy, lateness to office or fake measures in the markets and commercial venture circles, falsified meters in oil and gas stations, dishonesty on the stools of traditional institutions and false prophecies in the name religion are glaring specimens of corruption. Each example of corruption, no matter its guise and shade, produces harvests of suffering at physical, emotional or spiritual level.

CONSIDERATIONS FROM CHRISTIAN ETHICS

The anthropogenic origin of human suffering in Nigeria means that the moral evils that give birth to human suffering in the country are human acts; these are acts that arise from *man as man* in full knowledge and voluntariness of his actions. In the words of Peschke (2009:228), “Human acts (*actus humani*) are actions that proceed from insight into the nature and purpose of one's doing and from consent of free will; or shorter, they are acts which proceed from insight and freewill. They can also rightly be called personal acts”. He went further to say that from the definition above, human acts have two constituent principles; namely: the intellectual constituent (knowledge) and volitive constituent (free will, volition). It follows therefore to note that the actions or inactions that breed human suffering in Nigeria are originated from Nigerians. In the light of Christian understanding, it is morally wrong and sinful. Such human actions are evil in the sight of God who punishes every offence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations are made with the view to proffering solutions to man-made suffering in Nigeria. They are:

1. Nigerians who are entrusted with the vast wealth of the nation should carry out the task as an assignment from God and to whom they would render the accounts of their stewardship. The issue here is that one's atheistic bents or empirical orientations do not affect the veracity of God's existence, eternal judgment, rewards or punishment.
2. There is need for repentance and restitution. Those who stole from the public treasuries

or diverted the wealth meant for the welfare of Nigerians should repent and return what the stole guided by restitution and restoration principles.

3. There is need for righteousness in patience. Even though there is much suffering in the country, the solution is not to do evil and cheat on others or cause havoc in order to survive. The righteous person may suffer a lot of trials but God in his infinite mercy would redeem him.
4. Good governance is a necessity. The major contributory factor to suffering in Nigeria is bad governance. The enthronement of good governance in the country will solve the issue of man-made suffering to a very large extent; this makes it a viable solution.
5. The need to vote out bad government. The citizens should hold the political class accountable by their powers to vote out any bad government that tortures them with suffering in its unpleasant varieties.
6. The use of religion to suppress others should be avoided. The citizens of this country are suffering myriads of religious riots, terrorists' attacks, loss of lives and property unceasingly in the name of Islamic Jihads. Religion should be choice and not by force. The perpetrators of these mayhems should be brought to justice and the victims to succor and compensation.
7. Anti-graft agencies should be independent and not a willing tool in hands of the ruling party to fight opposition. The long arms of the law should catch all culprits across parties. There is good evidence of one leaving a political party for another in order to escape from the ropes of the anti-graft agencies.
8. Welfare of citizens and their happiness should be top priorities. The satisfactory fulfillment of the very reason for nationhood is found to exist when the welfare of the citizens is met and their happiness is thus advanced through securities, opportunities and social justice.
9. Personal virtues such as holiness, accountability, to be inculcated. Many Nigerians have affiliations to religiosity without spirituality. There is need, therefore, to be religious people who serve God through their brothers and sisters in love.
10. Religious leaders or community leaders to desist from the recognition of looters of state wealth. When looters and merchants of human suffering are given titles of honour as if they were right in their evil doings, then suffering will continue to be found in our midst. But when they are corrected through denials of such recognitions, they would come to right sense. Again, the youth would be given good examples of honesty, industry and reward for good service.
11. Porosity of Nigerian borders has contributed to suffering in the country in huge measures. It is well-known that the gross traffic of migration into the country has impacted negatively on the economy. Let the borders be manned without compromises to help the aliens' data according to best international practices.
12. The Nigerian constitution should be respected to protect citizens and punish offenders. The secularity of the constitution and its powers should be taken as sacred. But where the rule of law could be eclipsed and Sharia Law operates in some northern states as if

those jurisdictions were of a different country brings much suffering to those affected by these gaps and lapses. Therefore, no one no matter how highly placed should be above the law and all citizens, both the poor and the rich, should be equal before the law.

CONCLUSION

Human life has the index of human suffering understood from Judeo-Christian tradition as a consequence of sin. However, the freedom of man and his knowledge are excellent powers given him by God to choose good deeds and avoid evil ways. Nigeria has all the blame for the suffering it endures because it has all it takes to do better. Nigerians who marginalize others and procure sufferings for fellow citizens by their actions or inactions, commissions or omissions should turn a new leaf to help change the undesired narratives of man-made suffering in Nigeria. Even though suffering has redemptive value in Christian Faith but it is not this imposed and unwanted type. In this line of thought, Christians suffer and smile in the face of these hardships as they unite the injustices they experience and the suffering they endure with that of Christ. Still living in the adverse action, they remain righteous and work towards the eradication of suffering as they walk with Christ.

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