

**SUFFERING AS A FORM OF SANCTIFICATION AMONG THE CHRISTIANS OF
THE DIOCESE OF LANGO**

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DECLARATION

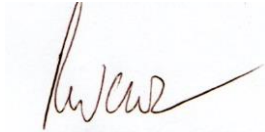
I, **OLUGE JASPER ROBINSON** hereby declare that this is my own original work and has never been presented to any institution of higher learning for any award.



Signed: Date: 24/04/2024

APPROVAL

This dissertation under the topic: “Suffering as a form of Sanctification among the Christians of the Diocese of Lango” has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University Supervisor.

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'C. Byaruhanga', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Signed: Date: 30/04/2024

Professor Christopher Byaruhanga (Rev. Dr.)

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Mrs. Juliet Oluge, my daughter Favour Tino who was born in the midst of this study, and the Christians of the Diocese of Lango, who through their suffering are being sanctified by the Lord.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

UCU : Uganda Christian University

ESV : English Standard Version

NIV : New International Version

NKJV : New King James Version

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at discovering the role of suffering in the sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. This was in response to the question that was being asked by many Christians in this Diocese namely why should Christians suffer when Jesus Christ has already suffered on their behalf on the cross? The study was qualitative, and the researcher used Integrative Theological Methodology. Following the three specific objectives, the researcher discussed the meaning of suffering and sanctification from the Christian perspective, established the relationship between suffering and sanctification, and finally, developed a theology of suffering from the African point of view and exhibited its relevance to the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. The study revealed that suffering is majorly caused by evil. The study further revealed that the key roles suffering plays in the sanctification of a Christian are: purification, formation of virtues, deterrence of sin, breaking of idols and causing dependence on God, creating motivation for change, causing repentance, enhancing of learning, and finally, ushering of him/ her to eternity (ultimate sanctification). A theology of suffering from the African point of view underscored the fact that although God reigns over suffering and uses it for the sanctification of His people, He does not approve of the suffering of His people, and wants it eradicated. These findings help the Christians of the Diocese of Lango understand the role of suffering in their sanctification and know how to appropriately respond to it.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1.0 Introduction

This dissertation is about suffering as a form of sanctification among the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. This chapter consists of background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, justification of the study, significance of the study, literature review and research methodology. In this dissertation, the word “suffering” refers to “the experience of physical or emotional pain,”¹ and the word “sanctification” refers to “the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.”²

1.1.1 Background to the study

The Diocese of Lango is one of the Dioceses of the Church of the Province of Uganda. The “Province of the Church of Uganda is a member of the Anglican Communion.”³ The Diocese was carved out of the Diocese of Northern Uganda in 1976. The Diocese that covers the districts of Lira City, Lira, Alebtong, Otuke, Amolatar, & Dokolo has its headquarters in Boroboro, Lira City.

Although it is true that “believers in Christ all over the world have entrusted their lives in Christ... many are facing pain, suffering, and death.”⁴ This suffering comes in the form of war, persecutions, unfair imprisonments, discrimination, prejudice,

¹ Andrews, E.D. *If God is Good: Why Does God Allow Suffering?* Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2015

² Hodge, C. *Systematic Theology Volume 3*. Woodstock: Devoted Publishing. 2016.

³ <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118320815.ch20> Christopher Byaruhanga. *The Church of the Province of Uganda*.

⁴ Eyongetah, T. *The Suffering of the Righteous*. Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing. 2018.

abductions, sicknesses, death of loved ones, hunger, poverty, and etcetera. A very close and “realistic look at our globe reveals that there is much suffering.”⁵ When faced with suffering, some Christians do “... backslide because they cannot believe a good God will allow them go through such ordeal.”⁶

Since the introduction of Christianity to Lango in “1903,”⁷ the sub region experienced peace and tranquility to 1984, notwithstanding the minor inter- clan conflicts that existed within the tribe. However, from 1985, the people of Lango began to suffer in the hands of the armed Karamojong cattle rustlers who have since then been raiding animals, killing people, and stealing property within the sub region. The most recent attack as reported by the Daily Monitor Newspaper of 24th April, 2023 was in Otuke district on “19th April, 2023.”⁸

Another source of suffering was the Lord’s Resistance Army. This is a rebel group originating from Acholi sub region. Since then it committed many atrocities such as abductions, murder, maiming, looting, and burning of houses. The worst act in the history of this insurgency was done in 2004 where these “rebels abducted and brutally murdered more than 300 people who resided in the internally displaced persons’ camp in Barlonyo,”⁹ Lira District.

Although the Lord’s Resistance Army insurgency ended about a decade and half ago, a scratch beneath the surface reveals “an unequal recovery and plenty of hidden scars”¹⁰ among the people of Lango. Many children who lost their parents to either

⁵ Reed, R. L. Christianity and Suffering: African Perspectives. Carlisle: Langham Global Library. 2017.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ <https://dacb.org>. Kevin Ward. A History of Christianity in Uganda. Dictionary of African Christian Biography. Retrieved on 4th June, 2023. 4:15 pm

⁸ <https://www.monitor.co.ug> Retrieved on 5th June, 2023. 10:22 am.

⁹ Kasule, J. Historical Dictionary of Uganda. Maryland: Rowman& Littlefield Publishers. 2022.

¹⁰ <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org> How the LRA still haunts northern Uganda. Retrieved on 12th June, 2023. 10:22 am.

the Lord's Resistance Army or the Karamojong cattle rustlers have become school-dropouts with very few affording education at secondary and tertiary levels. Consequently, many people, including Christians in this sub region are languishing in poverty and experiencing many other different kinds of suffering.

It is true the Bible talks about suffering but the biblical understanding of suffering seems to be of a different kind. For instance, the Apostle James urges his audience to consider their suffering pure joy because it would, at the end make them "... mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:4) NIV. Like James, Edward D. Andrews also believes that "the hardships of life act as a refining fire, purging impurities"¹¹ from Christians and making them holy, a process which is in this dissertation called sanctification.

Suffering is so closely related to sanctification. Jason McMartin and M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall assert that it "provides an opportunity for character growth,"¹² and that "many traits can only be developed"¹³ through it. Suffering, according to McMartin and Hall therefore "...serves God's purpose of making Christians more like Jesus Christ,"¹⁴ which is the process of sanctification.

In spite of its connection to sanctification, many Christians of the Diocese of Lango were wondering why they had to suffer when Jesus Christ has already suffered and died on their behalf on the cross. This left an urgent need for the development of a theology of suffering because, as Paul A. Barker opines, "the failure to develop a

¹¹ Andrews, E. D. Blessed by God in Satan's World: How All Things Are Working for Your Good. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2017

¹² McMartin, J., & Hall, M. E. L. (2022). Christian functional views of suffering: a review and theoretical overview. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 25(3), 247–262. <https://doi-org.ucu.sempertool.dk/10.1080/13674676.2021.1968812>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

theology of suffering may threaten a gospel worker's life... ”¹⁵ and as well negatively affect the faith of many Christians worldwide.

1.1.2 Problem Statement

For the last three to four decades, the people of Lango sub region have continuously experienced much suffering majorly in the hands of the Karamojong cattle rustlers and the Lord's Resistance Army. The Lord's Resistance Army both abducted and killed many people, maimed others and destroyed much property during the one decade of their atrocities in the sub region while the Karamojong cattle rustlers have up to date continued rustling animals, killing people and destroying much property. In the midst of these suffering, one of the most important questions that is being asked by many Christians of the Diocese of Lango is: why should Christians suffer when Jesus Christ has already suffered on their behalf on the cross? Using the Diocese of Lango's experience, this study aims at giving a theological justification for Christian suffering.

1.1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the role of suffering in the sanctification process of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. It aimed at answering the most important question that was being asked by many Christians of this Diocese namely why should Christians suffer when Jesus Christ has already suffered on their behalf on the cross?

1.1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study had both the main and specific objectives.

¹⁵ Barker, P. A. Tackling Trauma: Global, Biblical, and Pastoral Perspectives. London: Langham Publishers. 2019.

1.1.4.1 Main Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to assess the role of suffering in the sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango.

1.1.4.2 Specific Objectives of the study

The study was guided by the following three specific objectives.

1. To discuss the meaning of Suffering and Sanctification from the Christian perspective.
2. To establish the relationship between suffering and sanctification.
3. To develop a Christian theology of suffering from the African point of view.

1.1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following three research questions:

1. What is the meaning of Suffering and Sanctification from the Christian perspective?
2. What is the relationship between suffering and sanctification?
3. Is there a theology of suffering and of what relevance would it be to the Christians of the Diocese of Lango?

1.1.6 Scope of the study

The scope of the study was geographical, content, and timeline as indicated below.

1.1.6.1. Content scope

The study focused on the role of suffering in the sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango.

1.1.6.2. Geographical scope

The study was conducted in three archdeaconries of the Diocese of Lango.

1.1.6.3. Time scope

The study covered a period of January 1985 to April, 2024, a period when the Diocese of Lango experienced much suffering.

1.1.7 Justification of the study

The study was to help the Christians of the Diocese of Lango interpret the role of suffering in their sanctification. This interpretation led to the development of a theology of suffering from the African point of view which will help the Diocese of Lango in her ministry to the Christians.

1.1.8 Significance of the study

The study had both theological and practical significance.

1.1.8.1 Theological significance

The study assessed the role of suffering in the sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango and this assessment helped answer the most important question that was being asked by the Christians of the Diocese: “why should Christians suffer when Jesus Christ has already suffered on their behalf on the cross?”

The study also addressed the gap that had been left by many systematic theologians in Uganda namely the development of a Christian theology of suffering from the African point of view, thus adding to the already existing knowledge.

1.1.8.2 Practical significance

The study will help the Christians of the Diocese of Lango understand the Christian concept of suffering and sanctification and this understanding will equip them in their response to suffering and sanctification process.

The study will also help Church ministers of the Diocese of Lango know how to minister to the Christians in this Diocese, especially those who are suffering.

The study will also help other Christians outside the Diocese of Lango understand the Christian concept of suffering and sanctification and how to respond to them.

1.2.0 Literature Review

This section consists of different reviewed literature that are related to suffering and sanctification of the Christians in general.

1.2.1. The meaning of Suffering and Sanctification from the Christian perspective

This subsection focuses on the meaning of suffering and sanctification from the Christian perspective. The first part focuses on suffering while the second one on sanctification.

1.2.1.1 The meaning of Suffering from the Christian perspective

Christian theologians have come up with several reasons why there is suffering in the world. A few of them will be analyzed in this subsection so as to establish a gap that will be filled by this study.

Mike Mazzalongo, in his book, “Why Do The Righteous Suffer?” which focuses on the reasons for the suffering of the righteous opines that “sin is the cause of all

suffering.”¹⁶ Sarah Walton and Kristen Wetherell, in their book, “Hope When It Hurts: Biblical reflections to help you grasp God's Purpose in your Suffering,” holding the same view assert that this sin is “Adam & Eve’s rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden.”¹⁷ J. Bryson Arthur, in his book, “Theology of Suffering,” adds that this “Adam and Eve’s act of eating the forbidden fruit referred to as the original sin... opened the gate for evil to enter the world and corrupt human nature.”¹⁸ Apostle Paul also states in Romans 5:12 that death, one of the forms of suffering, entered the world through sin. Although Mazzalongo, Walton & Wetherell, together with Bryson state that sin causes suffering, they do not show how it does. This insufficiency of information leaves a need for further investigation.

Edward D. Andrews, in his book, “Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People,” which also focuses on the suffering of the righteous states that some suffering result from “... the fallen state of the world.”¹⁹ Michael P. Jensen, writing from the Evangelical Anglican perspective also states that suffering is “... inevitable in a fallen world.”²⁰ Although the above reviewed literature link suffering to the fallen status of the world, they do not clearly explain how the fallen status of the world leads to suffering, leaving a need for further study.

In his journal article, “No Neutral Bystanders When Christians Are Suffering,” Thomas Schirrmacher assesses the impact of suffering on Christians and opines that in fulfilling the Great Commission, Christians suffer because persecution is “... a

¹⁶ Mazzalongo, M. Why Do The Righteous Suffer?" Oklahoma: BibleTalk Books. 2016.

¹⁷ Walton, S., Wetherell K. Hope When It Hurts: Biblical reflections to help you grasp God's Purpose in your Suffering. London: Good Book Company. 2017.

¹⁸ Arthur, J. B. A Theology of Suffering. Carlisle: Langham Publishing. 2020.

¹⁹ Andrews E. D. Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People. Christian Publishing House: Ohio. 2018.

²⁰ Fitzpatrick, S. J., Kerridge, I. H., Jordens, C. F. C., Zoloth, L., Tollefsen, C., Tsomo, K. L., Jensen, M. P., Sachedina, A., & Sarma, D. (2016). Religious Perspectives on Human Suffering: Implications for Medicine and Bioethics. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 55(1), 159–173. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26749234>

permanent companion of preaching the gospel.”²¹ Christopher Tollefsen, writing from a Roman Catholic perspective also asserts that “... just as Christ's life was unavoidably accompanied by suffering, by continuing his work Christians also share his suffering.”²² To Jensen, the “... suffering of Jesus Christ subsequently becomes a pattern for his disciples.”²³ In Matthew 10:18, Jesus told his disciples that they would be hated because of his name. While the above literature link suffering to evangelism, they do not clearly show how they are connected, consequently leaving a need for further investigation, moreover from the context of the Diocese of Lango.

1.2.1.2 The meaning of Sanctification from the Christian perspective

Theologians throughout the past centuries have come up with several explanations to the meaning of sanctification. A few of them will be selected and reviewed here with the aim of identifying gaps that this study will fill.

Jimmy Chapman, in his book, “Blessed are The Pure In Heart,” which focuses on the pursuit of holiness asserts that “sanctification involves complete cleansing from all sin’s dominion”²⁴ in the life of a Christian. Charles Hodge, in his book, “Systematic Theology Volume 3” also opines that “sanctification involves a change of character.”²⁵ This change, according to Peter Toon is “... growth towards perfection.”²⁶ Although Chapman, Hodge & Toon view sanctification as a process of

²¹ Schirmacher, T. (2022). No Neutral Bystanders When Christians Are Suffering. *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 46(4), 340–342. <https://search-ebscohost-com.ucu.sempertool.dk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=160151084&site=ehost-live>

²² Fitzpatrick, S. J., Kerridge, I. H., Jordens, C. F. C., Zoloth, L., Tollefsen, C., Tsomo, K. L., Jensen, M. P., Sachedina, A., & Sarma, D. (2016). Religious Perspectives on Human Suffering: Implications for Medicine and Bioethics. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 55(1), 159–173. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26749234>

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Chapman, J. *Blessed are The Pure In Heart*. Morrisville: Lulu.com 2015

²⁵ Hodge, C. *Systematic Theology Volume 3*. Woodstock: Devoted Publishing. 2016

²⁶ Toon, P. *Justification and Sanctification*: Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2018

being cleansed from sin, they do not show how it takes place. Such insufficiency of information leaves a need for further investigation, a gap that this study will fill.

Thomas D. Hawkes, in his book, “Sanctification: A User's Guide to Becoming More Like Jesus,” states that sanctification begins with God who “... is the primary agent of holiness.”²⁷ Hodge also concurs with Hawkes and opines that sanctification is “a work of God’s grace.”²⁸ Hawkes therefore concludes that whatever a Christian does is “... in response to His (God’s) work and dependent on His grace.”²⁹ Although the above literature acknowledge God’s involvement in a Christian’s sanctification, they do not show the specific role played by both Him (God) and the Christian in the sanctification process. This consequently leaves a need for further investigation, a gap that this study will fill.

Apart from requiring the effort of both God and man, Sarah Brandt asserts that sanctification “is completed when we (Christians) die.”³⁰ At that point, Bandt opines that believers’ “souls are completely set free from sin.”³¹ Like Brandt, Apostle Paul also talks about sanctification though not just in future tense, but also in the past (Hebrews 10:10), and present. While these literature affirm the occurrence of sanctification, they do not show clearly what happens at its different stages/ phases. This insufficiency of information too leaves a need for further investigation, moreover from the context of the Diocese of Lango.

²⁷ Hawkes, T.D. Sanctification: A User's Guide to Becoming More Like Jesus. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2020.

²⁸ Hodge, C. Systematic Theology Volume 3. Woodstock: Devoted Publishing. 2016

²⁹ Hawkes, T.D. Sanctification: A User's Guide to Becoming More Like Jesus. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2020.

³⁰ Brandt, S. Blossom Like Eden: Come out of Hiding and Into the Son. Winnipeg: Word Alive Press. 2020.

³¹ Chapman, J. Blessed are The Pure In Heart. Morrisville: Lulu.com 2015

1.2.2 The relationship between suffering and sanctification

Many Christian theologians have expressed different ways through which they believe suffering relates to sanctification. A few of them will be selected and reviewed here with the aim of identifying gaps that will be filled by this study.

Bryan C. Babcock, James Spencer, et al in their book, “Trajectories: A Gospel-Centered Introduction to the Old Testament Theology” which assesses the concept of suffering in the Old Testament with regards to the New Testament opine that “suffering may be used of God to lovingly bring us (Christians) back into right relationship.”³² Looking at the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 who squandered his wealth, began to be in want and returned to his father in repentance, Jenifer Sum argues that this story “... is a picture of how God allows those who rebel against him to go through suffering in the hope that they will wake up to their senses and realize what they have been missing.”³³ Although Babcock, Spencer, et al, and Sum link suffering to repentance, they do not show the exact role suffering plays in repentance, leaving a need for further investigations.

Apart from leading a Christian to repentance, McMartin and Hall, still in their article, “Christian functional views of suffering: a review and theoretical overview,” state that “suffering provides an opportunity for character growth.”³⁴ John Hindley, holding the same view opines that suffering “... produces Christ- like character”³⁵ in a believer. Although McMartin, Hall, and Hindley in their work above link suffering

³² Babcock, B.C, Spencer, J., Meek, R. L. Trajectories: A Gospel- Centered Introduction to the Old Testament Theology. Eugene: Pickwick Publications. 2018

³³ <https://teachingumblehearts.com> Jenifer Sum. How God uses Suffering in our lives. Retrieved on 8th September, 2023. 10:44 am.

³⁴ McMartin, J., & Hall, M. E. L. (2022). Christian functional views of suffering: a review and theoretical overview. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 25(3), 247–262. <https://doi-org.ucu.sempertool.dk/10.1080/13674676.2021.1968812>

³⁵ Hindley, J. You can really grow: How to thrive in your Christian life. London: Good Book Company. 2015

to growth of character, they do not show the exact role played by suffering in this process. This too leaves a need for further study, the gap that this study will fill.

Apart from leading to character formation, Walthon & Wetherell, still in their book, “Hope When It Hurts: Biblical reflections to help you grasp God's Purpose in your Suffering” assert that “God uses our weakness to expose sin and protect us from it.”³⁶ In showing how this takes place, Darryl Burling opines: “our corruption leads us to act foolishly and sinfully. We reap what we sow; and in so doing we are humbled.”³⁷ Although Walton, Wetherell, & Burling argue that suffering exposes sin and protects us from it, they do not clearly present how it leads to sanctification. This insufficiency of information too leaves a need for further investigation, moreover from the context of the Diocese of Lango.

Apart from exposing sin and protecting Christians from it, Peter Kreeft, in his book, “How to Be Holy: First Steps in Becoming a Saint” asserts that through suffering, “God takes away our idolatries... by lovingly slapping our hands empty and making rooms for Himself.”³⁸ Although Kreeft relates suffering to the destruction of idols and creation of rooms for God in a Christian's heart, he does not show how this leads to sanctification. Such insufficiency of information also leaves a need for further investigation, the gap this study will fill.

³⁶ Walton, S., Wetherell K. Hope When It Hurts: Biblical reflections to help you grasp God's Purpose in your Suffering. London: Good Book Company. 2017.

³⁷ <https://darrylburling.com> Darryl Burling. 4 Ways God develops humility in His People. Retrieved on 20th September, 2023. 9:13 am.

³⁸ Kreeft, P. How to Be Holy: First Steps in Becoming a Saint. San Francisco: Ignatus Press. 2016.

1.2.3 The Christian theology of suffering and its relevance to the Christians of the Diocese of Lango

Theology of suffering refers to “the study of what the Bible says about suffering while considering who God is and the current state of humanity.”³⁹ Many Christian theologians have conducted several studies with the goal of developing a theology of suffering. Among them are John Ankerberg & Dillon Burroughs, who in their book, “Why Does God Allow Evil and Suffering?” that focuses on the reasons for the suffering of the righteous argue that “even if He (God) did not produce it, He permits it.”⁴⁰ Edward D. Andrews, in his book, “Blessed by God in Satan’s World: How All Things Are Working for Your Good” also argues that “while God is not the author of suffering, He allows it for purposes that conform to His will.”⁴¹ James A. Keller looks back to history and contends that “clearly some evil, like the Holocaust happened because of the evil choices and actions of some humans- humans who pursued evil purposes.”⁴² Although the above literature point out to gratuitous evil as the key cause of human suffering, they do not show how God regulates it, leaving a need for further investigation, moreover from the African context.

Paul D. Grams, in his book, “Why Me, Lord? A Study of the Book of Job” asserts that “it is Satan who is the root cause of all suffering.”⁴³ Tucker Bruce also asserts that “while Satan cannot possess a Christian, he can certainly oppress a child of God.”⁴⁴ Although Grams and Bruce hold that Satan is behind the suffering of God’s people,

³⁹ <https://justdisciples.com>. Theology Of Suffering: Definition, Biblical Views, Why It Matters. McKenna. Retrieved on 10th October, 2023. 10:22 am.

⁴⁰ Ankerberg, J., Burroughs D. Why Does God Allow Suffering And Evil? New York: ATRI Publishing. 2017.

⁴¹ Andrews, E.D. Blessed by God in Satan’s World: How All Things Are Working for Your Good. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018

⁴² Keller, J.A. Problems of Evil and the Power of God. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited. 2013

⁴³ Grams, P. D. Why Me, Lord? A Study of the Book of Job. Bloomington: Author House. 2022

⁴⁴ Tucker, B. Standing Against Satan. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2015.

they do not show how his operations are affected by sovereignty. This too leaves a need for further investigation, a gap that this study will fill.

A number of Christian theologians have come out with what they believe are the relevance of theology of suffering to Christians. Some of their work will be selected and reviewed here with the aim of identifying gaps that will be filled by this study.

Looking at the Church in general, Jairo de Oliveira claims that “many Christians lack a theology of suffering,”⁴⁵ and that such ignorance may affect their understanding of suffering. In his book, “Suffering and God’s Redemptive Love,” Parrish W. Jones opines that a right theology of suffering helps Christians “... place suffering in its proper perspective within the providence of God.”⁴⁶ Although Oliveira and Jones assert that a theology of suffering helps Christians put suffering in its right place, they do not show how it does, consequently leaving a need for further investigation, moreover from the context of the Diocese of Lango.

Valerie A. Rance, in her book: “Trauma and Coping Mechanisms Among Assemblies of God World Missionaries: Towards a Biblical Theory of Well- Being,” argues that a right theology of suffering brings hope among Christians, and that this hope “... comes from knowing that God walks with them through the hard times.”⁴⁷

Apart from the creation of hope among Christians, Jones also argues that “... the Church needs to preach and teach a theology that will free people to face suffering.”⁴⁸ A proper theology of suffering, according to Jones prepares Christians

⁴⁵ Oliveira, J. Hope for the Afflicted: A Framework for Sharing Good News with Asylum Seekers and Refugees. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2023.

⁴⁶ Jones, P.W. Suffering and God’s Redemptive Love. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2014.

⁴⁷ Rance, V.A. Trauma and Coping Mechanisms Among Assemblies of God World Missionaries: Towards a Biblical Theory of Well- Being. Eugene: Pickwick Publications. 2021.

⁴⁸ Jones, P.W. Suffering and God’s Redemptive Love. 2014. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2014.

“... for facing the possibility of suffering and death in their own life.”⁴⁹ Oliveira also asserts that it equips us Christians “... to handle suffering so that we can avoid developing burnout, and indirect trauma, as consequences.”⁵⁰ Although Jones and Oliveira acknowledge that a right theology of suffering equips Christians to face suffering, they do not show how it does, thus leaving a need for further investigation.

As seen above, all the reviewed literature in this chapter did not only provide insufficient information regarding the role of suffering in the sanctification of a Christian but also raised and left many unanswered questions. Consequently, this study was conducted with focus on the role of suffering in the sanctification process of a Christian, hence filling the identified gaps.

1.3.0 Research Methodology

This section gives a detailed description of how the study was conducted and it covers research design, area of study, sources of information, study population, sampling determination, procedure/ protocol for data collection, data collection instruments, quality/ error control, strategy for data analysis and procession, ethical considerations, & methodological constraints.

1.3.1 Research design

This research was qualitative and the researcher used qualitative research design. The researcher also employed Integrative Theological Methodology as formulated by systematic theologians Gordon S. Lewis & Bruce A. Demarest. Integrative Theological methodology uses a very distinctive verification method for decision making through six steps namely it “defines a major topic, surveys influential alternative answers in

⁴⁹ Jones, P.W. *Suffering and God’s Redemptive Love*. 2014. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2014.

⁵⁰ Oliveira, J. *Hope for the Afflicted: A Framework for Sharing Good News with Asylum Seekers and Refugees*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2023.

the Church, amasses relevant biblical data in their chronological development, formulates a comprehensive conclusion, defends it against competing alternatives, and exhibits its relevance for life and ministry.”⁵¹

1.3.2 Area of study

The study was done in three selected archdeaconries of the Diocese of Lango which are Ajuri, Aloj, & Orum, found in the districts of Alebtong and Otuke. These areas were selected because they are places where the atrocities of the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Karamojong cattle rustlers had been experienced most.

1.3.3 Sources of information

Primary data were collected from the Christians of the Diocese of Lango found in Ajuri, Aloj, and Orum archdeaconries. Secondary data were collected from books, journal articles, Bible commentaries, encyclopedia, dissertations, and newspapers.

1.3.4 Population of the study

The study was done among the Christians of the Diocese of Lango, living in the three selected archdeaconries of Ajuri, Aloj, and Orum.

1.3.5. Sampling determination

Using purposive sampling method, a total of seventy respondents (Christians) who belonged to the revival group (“olongkole” or “born again”) was selected from each of the twenty three parishes in the three selected archdeaconries of the Diocese of Lango.

⁵¹ Lewis, G. R., Demarest B.A. Integrative Theology: Three Volumes in One. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 2016.

1.3.6. Procedure for data collection

While in the field, primary data were collected from the respondents who are the Christians of the Diocese of Lango, living in the three selected archdeaconries of the Diocese. Secondary data were collected from books, journal articles, encyclopedia, Bible commentaries, and dissertations found in both UCU library and online.

1.3.7 Data collection instruments

These are tools that were used in the collection of data.

1.3.7.1. Questionnaires

These are series of both open ended and closed questions that were distributed to the respondents to fill. Twenty four questionnaires were given to the respondents who filled them within a period of two weeks. They were then collected by the researcher and the two research assistants. The number of questionnaires given out was twenty four out of the initially forty planned ones as many respondents opted for interviews since they did not know how to read and write well.

1.3.7.2. Interview guides

These are planned questions that the researcher used to ask the respondents in a face to face setting with the aim of getting more information that could not be obtained through the questionnaires. Interview schedules were arranged and forty six interviews conducted.

1.3.7.3. Document analysis

This involved studies of the relevant documents like text books, journals, reports, newspapers, articles, dissertations, found in the UCU library and online.

1.3.8 Quality/ Error control

To ensure validity, reliability, and credibility of the instruments that were used in the study, questionnaires and interview guides were constructed by the researcher and edited by the supervisor in order to correct any possible mistakes. Validity of the respondents was ensured by scrutinizing their responses.

1.3.9 Strategy for data analysis and procession

The collected data were recorded, coded, and edited for completeness, consistency, accuracy and comprehensibility before interpretations.

1.3.10 Ethical considerations

Before commencing the study, the researcher first got approval from the Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology and a clearance from UCU Research Ethics Committee. While in the field, the researcher maintained a high level of integrity, honesty, and confidentiality.

1.3.11 Anticipated methodological constraints

During the study, the researcher encountered three main methodological constraints which were: difficulties in the filling of the questionnaires by those who were not able to read and write well, reservations from some respondents due to fear, and finally, unavailability of some busy respondents.

The researcher overcame these constraints by interviewing those who were not able to read and write well, building rapport with some concerned respondents and reassuring them that all the information they would give would be used strictly for academic purposes, and finally, making special arrangements with busy respondents and adjusting to their schedules.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MEANING OF SUFFERING AND SANCTIFICATION FROM THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is about the meaning of suffering and sanctification from the Christian perspective.

2.1. The meaning of suffering from the Christian perspective

This sub section presents a discussion of the meaning of suffering from the Christian perspective. This is done through a survey of influential alternative answers from the Church, assessment of relevant biblical data in their chronological order, a formulation of a comprehensive conclusion, a defense of the comprehensive conclusion against competing alternatives, and the exhibition of its relevance to life and ministry.

Suffering, according to David D. Andrews “... encompasses a wide range of experiences, from physical ailments to the loss of loved ones, natural disasters, and social injustices.”⁵² Anson Hugh Laytner notes that “bad things have always happened to basically good people and, from time immemorial, the experience of suffering has raised serious questions about God’s justice and goodness.”⁵³ Many respondents, holding the same view also stated that the physical and emotional pain they were experiencing as a result of the atrocities of the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Karamojong cattle rustlers are real demonstrations of suffering.

⁵² Andrews, E.D. *If God is Good: Why Does God Allow Suffering?* Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2015

⁵³ Laytner, A.H. *The Mystery of Suffering and the Meaning of God: Autobiographical and Theological Reflections.* Eugene: Resource Publications. 2019.

Several reasons have been put forward by many Christian theologians in regard to the existence of suffering in the world. One of them is evil. Jacob Shatzer looks at the sin of Adam and Eve and asserts that “two kinds of evil resulted from sin: moral evil and natural evil.”⁵⁴ Natural evil, according to Shatzer “... refers to the way the warped and broken world causes pain and suffering among humans.”⁵⁵ Mazzalongo also states that natural evil includes “... fires, accidents, diseases, (and) earthquakes.”⁵⁶ Many respondents also stated that part of their suffering had resulted from natural disasters like drought, locusts, and sometimes floods among others. Pointing to his garden containing dry immature plants, one respondent lamented: “see this garden! I spent Uganda Shillings 440,000 in buying seeds, planting, weeding, and spraying. Now I won’t get even Uganda Shillings 10,000!”⁵⁷

On top of natural evil is moral evil, which Shatzer says are “... consequences of actions that are directly sinful and evil.”⁵⁸ Mazzalongo also says that moral evil comprises “... crime, violence, immorality, (and) selfishness.”⁵⁹ Many respondents also stated that much of their suffering had come and were still coming from the evil thoughts and actions of godless men. Remembering the murder of his relatives by the Lord’s Resistance Army, one respondent asked: “if not out of wickedness, how can normal human beings joyfully butcher other human beings they have never met in life? How do they benefit from such acts?”⁶⁰ Bruce R. Reichenbrach, holding

⁵⁴ Shatzer, J. *Faithful Learning: A Vision for Theologically Integrated Education*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group. 2023.

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Mazzalongo, M. *Why Do The Righteous Suffer?* Oklahoma: BibleTalk Books. 2016.

⁵⁷ Response from interviewee number 17.

⁵⁸ Shatzer, J. *Faithful Learning: A Vision for Theologically Integrated Education*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group. 2023.

⁵⁹ Mazzalongo, M. *Why Do The Righteous Suffer?* Oklahoma: BibleTalk Books. 2016.

⁶⁰ Response from questionnaire number 13.

this same view also asserts that all such kinds of suffering are gratuitous, allowed by God, even when they do “... not lead to any specific greater good.”⁶¹

Christian theologians also believe that Christians can suffer as a result of their witness for Jesus Christ. Yakubu T. Jakada asserts that “the call to discipleship is a call to carry one’s cross, the cross being a symbol of shame, suffering, ridicule, and even death.”⁶² Jensen also adds that “Christian discipleship means giving one’s self over to a divine designation, even if that means suffering and death.”⁶³ Michael Kotch opines that “the world hated Jesus because he was the light that exposed their bad deeds, and thus crucified him.”⁶⁴ Jesus’ life, according to Coleman M. Ford was “... contrary to the way of the world.”⁶⁵ Rodney L. Reed further asserts that Jesus’ apostles like “Peter and John were imprisoned for their boldness in witnessing for Jesus and the resurrection.”⁶⁶ One respondent also opined: “I have been abused by many people in this community because of speaking the truth!”⁶⁷

Besides persecution, Christian theologians also look at sin as the cause of suffering among Christians. Clay Jones for instance asserts that Christians can “... suffer as a consequence of selfishness and sin.”⁶⁸ Dale Bud Brauer, in agreement with Jones also asserts that “sometimes our sin causes suffering for others, and the sin of others

⁶¹ Reichenbach, B. R. *Divine Providence: God’s Love and Human Freedom*. Eugene: Cascade Books. 2016.

⁶² Jakada, Y. T. *Through the Flames: Early Christian Responses to Persecution and Implications for Christians in Northern Nigeria*. Eugene: Pickwick Publication. 2024.

⁶³ Fitzpatrick, S. J., Kerridge, I. H., Jordens, C. F. C., Zoloth, L., Tollefsen, C., Tsomo, K. L., Jensen, M. P., Sachedina, A., & Sarma, D. (2016). Religious Perspectives on Human Suffering: Implications for Medicine and Bioethics. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 55(1), 159–173. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26749234>

⁶⁴ Kotch, M. *The Benefits of Trials for Christians*. Meadville: Christian Faith Publishing, Incorporated. 2020.

⁶⁵ Ford, C. M. *Formed in His Image: A Guide for Christian Formation*. Brentwood: B & H Publications. 2023.

⁶⁶ Reed, R. L. *Christianity and Suffering: African Perspectives*. Carlisle: Langham Global Library. 2017.

⁶⁷ Response from interviewee number 9.

⁶⁸ Jones, C. *Why Does God Allow Evil? Compelling Answers for Life’s Toughest Questions*. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers. 2017.

causes us suffering.”⁶⁹ Rodigrus Neal also adds that “... the decision we make constantly causes us to either reap in a good way or suffer the consequences in a bad way.”⁷⁰ But we ask, did Jesus not pay for our sin? To this Thomas D. Hawkes answers: “while justification removes the eternal punishment for sin, there are temporal consequences, which our Father may allow us to experience- not as judicial punishment, but as correct discipline- in order to train us in righteousness for the future.”⁷¹ Neal also asserts that “God chastises and corrects us at times, which may also cause us to suffer in ways that could be very frustrating and disheartening.”⁷² Hawkes further explains that “God’s discipline for sin may be as simple as allowing natural consequences; for example, when a man commits adultery and loses his family; or God may work directly to discipline us by removing our joy and replacing it with pain.”⁷³ Tami Walker, in agreement with this view looks at the Old Testament and notes that “time and again we see God’s hands of discipline upon his chosen people, Israel, when they would turn away from him and follow other gods.”⁷⁴

Some respondents also stated that it is true that God disciplines His children, and that it can lead to some form of suffering. However, they rejected the assumption that their suffering is linked to any sin they have committed. One respondent asked: “if our suffering is a result of sin, meaning that God pays Christians who sin with suffering, like death, what about these Lord’s Resistance Army and Karamojong

⁶⁹ Brauer, D. B. *Tackling the Toughies: Christian Issues We Ponder and Puzzle*. Meadville: Christian Faith Publication, Incorporated. 2023.

⁷⁰ Neal, R. *Suffering Gracefully for God: Empowering Faith*. Meadville: Christian Faith Publishing, Incorporated. 2019.

⁷¹ Hawkes, T.D. *Sanctification: A User's Guide to Becoming More Like Jesus*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2020.

⁷² Neal, R. *Suffering Gracefully for God*. Meadville: Christian Faith Publishing, Incorporated. 2019.

⁷³ Hawkes, T.D. *Sanctification: A User's Guide to Becoming More Like Jesus*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2020.

⁷⁴ Walker, T. *It’s a Gift: Understanding Suffering Through a Biblical Lens*. Bloomington: WestBow Press. 2022.

murderers? Are they also suffering? And, if the goal of discipline is change of behavior, how have the murdered Christians been made better in their graves?”⁷⁵

In addition to sin, many Christian theologians also believe that suffering is in the world because of the broken status of the world. Ismael Lahens calls it “the negative and disastrous effects of nature.”⁷⁶ But we ask, did God not create a perfect world? Ken Dignan answers that it is true that God created a perfect world but “the sin of man caused this world to become corrupted.”⁷⁷ As a result, Dignan opines that “death and decay became the norm for this world.”⁷⁸ Vincent Etwaroo, holding the same view therefore concludes that “as people living in a broken world, we will experience some sort of pain.”⁷⁹ Some respondents also acknowledged this reality and admitted that this world in its broken status indeed brings indiscriminate suffering, making even the Christians to suffer.

On top of the broken status of the world, Christian theologians also believe that Christians can suffer from their abuse of natural laws. Patricia Hofers observes the poor lifestyle of many Christians and asserts: “we (Christians) always tempt natural law while trusting in divine providence. We eat unhealthy things and pray that we won’t get sick. We don’t exercise, and then pray that God will deliver us from the disease or malfunction that follows.”⁸⁰ This is not good because, as Ronald Dunn notes, “our bodies are so constituted that if we flagrantly disregard the laws of health, the body will react in illness.”⁸¹ To drive the point home, Dunn gives a

⁷⁵ Response from interviewee number 18.

⁷⁶ Lahens, I. *The Benefits of Suffering: God Is Too Good to Make You Suffer*. Meadville: Christian Faith Publishing, Incorporated. 2023.

⁷⁷ Dignan, K. *Making Sense of a Suffering World: The Bible and a Life Story Reveals Answers to Why God Allows Suffering*. Bloomington: WestBow Press. 2013.

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Etwaroo, V. *Paul the Teacher*. Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing. 2013.

⁸⁰ Hofer, P. *Power of Yielding*. Arizona: Hats Off Books. 2016.

⁸¹ Dunn, R. *Will God Heal Me? God’s Power and Purpose in Suffering*. Nashville: B & H Publishing. 2013.

specific example: “if a person gorges himself into obesity and high blood pressure and drops dead of heart attack, he can’t say it was God or Satan (who killed him). It was his lifestyle.”⁸² Some respondents also stated that poor life style and wrong interpretations and applications of scripture have caused much suffering among Christians. One respondent in particular stated: “I sometimes see some Christians eating contaminated food, drinking dirty water, and refusing to sleep under mosquito nets under the guise of being covered by the blood of Jesus.”⁸³ When Christians abuse the laws of nature which were established by God, they cannot, and should not expect Him to protect them from the respective consequences of such abuses.

Besides the abuse of natural laws, Christian theologians have also opined that Satan is responsible for the suffering of Christians. Diane Langberg, holding this view asserts that “if, as John says, the world lies in his (Satan’s) embrace, then he is involved with our suffering.”⁸⁴ But to this assertion we ask, how does he (Satan) do it? Dunn answers that “Satan can inflict a person with sickness.”⁸⁵ Kotch looks at Satan’s opposition against God and His people and opines that “if we (Christians) follow God faithfully, we enter the battle against the devil and his followers.”⁸⁶ This, according to Kotch may cause some suffering because of the resultant “... demonic attacks.”⁸⁷ Louis Berkhof notes that Jesus “... suffered his entire life”⁸⁸ from “... repeated assaults of Satan.”⁸⁹ One respondent also asserted: “for most of the times

⁸² Dunn, R. *Will God Heal Me? God’s Power and Purpose in Suffering*. Nashville: B & H Publishing. 2013

⁸³ Response from interviewee number 28.

⁸⁴ Langberg, D. *Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores*. Greensboro: New Growth Press. 2015.

⁸⁵ Dunn, R. *Will God Heal Me? God’s Power and Purpose in Suffering*. Nashville: B & H Publishing. 2013.

⁸⁶ Kotch, M. *The Benefits of Trials for Christians*. Meadville: Christian Faith Publishing, Incorporated. 2020.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Berkhof, L. *Systematic Theology*. Woodstock: Devoted Publishing. 2017.

⁸⁹ Berkhof, L. *Berkhof’s Systematic Theology Revised*. Woodstock: Devoted Publishing. 2019.

I have conducted healing and deliverance on a person or a group of people, the devil has always counterattacked me and my family members.”⁹⁰ Several other respondents also stated that they had for several times been attacked by demons.

In addition to Satan, Christian theologians also believe that some suffering result from the need for the salvation or welfare of other people. Robert P. Vande Kappelle says that this kind of suffering is redemptive and involves us (Christians) “... voluntarily taking into ourselves the grief and sorrows of others in order to set them free.”⁹¹ Amy Orr Ewing asserts that best example of this is in the book of prophet Isaiah that presents “a servant of the Lord who would willingly suffer pain and transgressions of others.”⁹² Kappelle asserts that the “servant’s suffering is not for his own wrong doing but is the way he brings his people to salvation.”⁹³ Dignan confirms that Jesus Christ was this “suffering servant in the Old Testament book of Isaiah.”⁹⁴ Rogene A. Buccholz adds that “(He) Jesus had to suffer and die for the sake of others so they could get right with God.”⁹⁵ Louis Berkhof also holds the same view and opines that Jesus’ suffering “.... resulted from the fact that He took the place of sinners vicariously.”⁹⁶

Having looked at the meaning of suffering through the above survey of influential alternative answers from the Church, we now turn to the Bible and answer the same question through the assessment of relevant data in their chronological order.

⁹⁰ Response from interviewee number 6.

⁹¹ Kappelle, R. P. V. In the Potter’s Workshop: Experiencing the Divine Presence in Everyday Life. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2019.

⁹² Ewing, A. O. Where Is God in All the Suffering? Epsom: Good Book Company. 2020.

⁹³ Kappelle, R. P. V. In the Potter’s Workshop: Experiencing the Divine Presence in Everyday Life. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2019.

⁹⁴ Dignan, K. Making Sense of a Suffering World: The Bible and a Life Story Reveals Answers to Why God Allows Suffering. Bloomington: WestBow Press. 2013.

⁹⁵ Buchholz, R. A. Science and Religion: The Quest for Truth. Bloomington: AuthorHouse. 2023.

⁹⁶ Berkhof, L. Berkhof’s Systematic Theology Revised. Woodstock: Devoted Publishing. 2019.

The Bible presents several answers to the question of the meaning of suffering. The book of Genesis begins with the account of God's creation of the universe and puts it very clearly that He (God) created a world where everything was good (Gen. 1:31). After creation, God puts Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and gives them a command to either follow or not (Genesis 2:15-17). If they keep God's command, all will go well with them. However, if they don't keep it, they will "... certainly die." (Genesis 2:17) NIV. Although Adam and Eve clearly understand God's commandment, they choose to disobey Him.

Just like God has warned them, Adam's sin is followed by God's severe judgment. The snake is cursed (Gen. 3:14); enmity is put between it and the woman and between its offspring and the woman's (Genesis 3:15). To the woman, her pains during child bearing is made more severe (Genesis 3:16) and her husband begins ruling over her (Genesis 3:16). To Adam, the ground is cursed (Genesis 3:17), he is to begin eating through painful toil all the days of his life (Genesis 3:17), the ground begins producing thorns and thistles for him (Genesis 3:18), he begins eating the plants of the field (Genesis 3:18), he begins eating from the sweat of his brow and will finally die and return to dust (Genesis 3:19). It can be rightly seen from this chapter of Genesis that the cause of suffering is man's sin- what theologians refer to as retributive suffering. This concept begins to spread throughout the Pentateuch with several examples like the flood (Genesis 7), the death of the Israelites through snake bites (Numbers 21:6-9), and the curses (suffering) that result from disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The prophets also pick it up where Israel is presented to be punished for her sins (Hosea 41:1). Although it is held for a long time, the concept of retributive suffering gets challenged by the story of Job who suffered severely even when he is righteous and blameless before God (Job 1:8).

In the New Testament, the concept of retributive suffering is still held even during the days of Jesus' ministry, though mutedly. This is seen in the question his disciples ask him about the man who was born blind: "... Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2) NIV. Jesus' answer is so enlightening: "neither this man nor his parents sinned... but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him." (John 9:3) NIV. Although Jesus does not dismiss the connection between sin and suffering in some passages like John 5:14, he makes it very clear here that not every suffering is directly linked to either the sufferer's sin or his relatives'. The writer of Hebrews' assertion that some suffering come to God's people as discipline or chastisement (Hebrews 12:4-11) does not still disqualify this argument because discipline and punishment are two very different things. It can thus be argued that the popular notion of retributive suffering in the Old Testament does not feature so much in the New Testament.

Apart from sin, the Bible also associates evil (gratuitous) to the suffering of God's people. Moral evil is seen in several instances in the Old Testament like Abel's murder by his brother Cain (Genesis 4:3-5), the mistreatment of Joseph by his brothers and Potiphar's wife's (Genesis 37-40), the killing of the Israelites male babies by Pharaoh (Exodus 1:15-22), and the enslavement of the Hebrews by Pharaoh (Exodus 1-6). All these acts come from the evil thoughts and acts of godless men. Besides moral evil is also natural evil that is seen to cause much suffering among the people of God. After obeying God and heeding to his call, Abram encounters famine in Genesis 12:10. Isaac also encounters another famine in Genesis 26. In Genesis 47, the Israelites, the Egyptians, and the Canaanites also experience famine. Although famine, drought, floods, and pestilence, are always connected to retributive

suffering in the Old Testament, there are moments like these ones when they do not come because people have sinned but because of gratuitous evil.

The notion of gratuitous evil and gratuitous suffering keep on developing in the Old Testament and becomes even more prevalent in the New Testament. Remarkable examples are the massacre of the Hebrew boys who are two years and under by King Herod at the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2:16-18), the beheading of John the Baptist by King Herod (Mark 6:14-29), and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ among many others. Natural evil is also seen in instances like the storm in the sea (Mark 4:35-41), the severe famine which occurs during the reign of Emperor Claudius (Acts 11:27-30), and the shipwreck experienced by Paul in Acts 27:1-44 among others. The gospels and the book of Revelation also portend terrible suffering of God's people at the eve of the Parousia, confirming the claim that gratuitous evil is one of the causes of suffering among the people of God.

Another source of suffering according to the Bible is persecution. These are suffering that result from one's faith in God. Examples can be seen in Prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18:1-40), prophet Micaiah (1 Kings 22:1-29), Isaiah the weeping prophet (Isaiah 52:1-54), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 37:1-38), Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego who are thrown in a furnace (Daniel 3:1-30), and Daniel who is thrown in the den of lion (Daniel 6:1-23).

In the New Testament, the concept of suffering for righteousness becomes even more evident. Jesus Christ himself does not only acknowledge it but also teaches that those who are persecuted for righteousness are blessed (Matthew 5:10-12) because those who have lived before them also suffered like them. Very many people in the New Testament suffer because of their faith. A few examples are John the

Baptist who is beheaded by King Herod (Mark 6:14-29), Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 11:23-28), the rest of the Apostles together with other disciples, and not withstanding Jesus Christ himself who suffers because of the truth he proclaims. It thus becomes very clear that suffering can result from persecution.

Another cause of suffering in the Bible is the need for the welfare of other people- redemptive suffering. Prophet Isaiah for example presents a picture of a suffering servant who takes up his people's pain and bears their suffering (Isaiah 53:4). The servant's suffering, as Isaiah asserts is an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10), and a way for the justification of many people (Isaiah 53:11).

In the New Testament, the concept of redemptive suffering is made even clearer by the Lord Jesus Christ. While celebrating the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus stated that his body has been given for his followers and his bloodshed poured for their salvation (Luke 22:19-20). In Colossians 1:24, Paul states that he is suffering for the sake of the Colossians and completing what is lacking in Christ's suffering, affirming the reality of redemptive suffering.

Having looked at the meaning of suffering through the survey of the influential alternative answers from the Church and its chronological development from the Bible, we can now draw the following conclusions regarding the meaning of suffering.

First and foremost, suffering is in the world because of evil, and not God. This is seen in the evil acts of godless men and natural calamities that result to gratuitous suffering.

Also, suffering is caused by persecution which results from the believers' witness of their Lord Jesus Christ. Just like the world hated and persecuted their Lord Jesus Christ, it also does the same to them.

Apart from persecution, sin is also another cause of suffering in the world. Sin brings suffering on Christians through three key ways: the sinful acts of other men against their fellow men, God's acts of discipline or chastisement, and the natural consequences of sinful acts.

Furthermore, suffering is also in the world because of the world's broken status. Both the righteous and the wicked suffer indiscriminately through the world's broken and corrupt status.

Further still, suffering is caused by man's abuse of natural laws. These are laws which were established by God and any abuse of them comes with immediate repercussion, irrespective of one's status before God.

On top of the abuse of natural laws, Satan is also responsible for much suffering in the world today. This is seen through his attacks and opposition against God and His people.

Finally, suffering is at times caused by the need for the welfare of other people. This is when the sufferer chooses to suffer on behalf of those who are supposed to suffer.

In spite of the fact that the above conclusions are in agreement with scripture and the influential voices from the Church, there are some competing alternatives that have been presented by some people. One of them concerns the assertion that sin is the cause of suffering. Natasha Crain for instance takes note of an argument from

the mainstream scientific interpretation of fossil evidence that contends that “animal death, diseases, suffering and carnivorous eating existed for millions of years before humans arrived on earth.”⁹⁷ This view, according to Crain suggests that “God allowed death, diseases, and suffering before Adam sinned,”⁹⁸ meaning that sin is not one of the causes of suffering in the world. To this we respond: according to Romans 5:20, sin entered the world through one man, and death through that sin. There is also no case of suffering reported anywhere before the fall of man. This is what the Bible, which is the authentic book of the Christian faith teaches.

There are also those who contend that God is the causer of suffering. Dunn, for instance asserts that “... there are occasions when God himself is the source of sickness and suffering.”⁹⁹ Andrews also contends that the “... act of permitting suffering is an indirect responsibility on God’s part.”¹⁰⁰ To these assertions we also respond: first of all, as Shatzer notes, the “scripture nowhere shows God directly causing evil.”¹⁰¹ Secondly, as Lahens asserts, “to say that God is responsible for human suffering is not true. Human is responsible for suffering by the acts of disobedience he has committed in the Garden of Eden.”¹⁰²

The above understanding of the meaning of suffering is relevant for both life and ministry through several ways. First of all, knowing that evil exists and can affect not only the individual who commits it but the whole community he or she is living in enables the Christians of the Diocese of Lango to avoid it. The gospel ministers

⁹⁷ Crain, N. Keeping Your Kids on God’s Side: 40 Conversations to Help Them Build a Lasting Faith. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers. 2023.

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Dunn, R. Will God Heal Me? God’s Power and Purpose in Suffering. Nashville: B & H Publishing. 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Andrews E. D. Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

¹⁰¹ Shatzer, J. Faithful Learning: A Vision for Theologically Integrated Education. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group. 2023.

¹⁰² Lahens, I. The Benefits of Suffering: God Is Too Good to Make You Suffer. Meadville: Christian Faith Publishing, Incorporated. 2023.

there can also help the Christians know both the reality of and the danger of evil so they may prepare accordingly when it strikes.

Secondly, knowing that the call to follow Christ naturally attracts suffering helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango in their commitments to following Jesus Christ. They can't be surprised by the sufferings that might come to them because of their faith.

Thirdly, getting to know the impact of sin at a personal and community level can reawaken the Christians of the Diocese of Lango's need for a life of holiness. They get to handle their lives and ministry with great care.

Fourthly, the knowledge that the world we live in is broken and it ipso facto causes suffering helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango prepare accordingly for any eventuality. They also learn to factor in such eventualities in their lives.

Regarding the knowledge of suffering that comes from abuse of natural laws, the Christians of the Diocese of Lango can be provoked to live a disciplined life through the observance of personal hygiene and a healthy environment. Gospel ministers at the Diocese can teach the Christians environmental management skills. An example is a sermon on global warming, a global problem which I believe has also been contributed to by Christians.

The awareness that Satan always attacks God's people helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango stay alert to any attack by the Devil so that they are not taken by surprise. Gospel ministers also get to focus on ministry and not get discouraged in case they experience such attacks.

Finally, knowing that a Christian must sometimes suffer for the good of others can drive out any selfish desire from the Christians of the Diocese of Lango and cause them to accept such sufferings whenever called upon. Gospel ministers in this Diocese can also understand the needs of the people they are leading and design programs that effectively meet them at those points of needs.

2.2 The meaning of sanctification from the Christian perspective

This subsection presents a discussion on the meaning of sanctification from the Christian perspective. The discussion focuses on the process of sanctification and its indicators in the life of a Christian. This is also done through a survey of influential alternative answers from the Church, an assessment of relevant biblical data in their chronological order, a formulation of a comprehensive conclusion, a defense of the comprehensive conclusion against competing alternatives, and the exhibition of its relevance to life and ministry.

The word sanctification, according to Morton H. Smith means “to set apart.”¹⁰³ Louis Berkhof states that the Hebrew word for the phrase ‘to sanctify’ is “qadash,”¹⁰⁴ which also means “to shine.”¹⁰⁵ Commenting on Genesis 2:3 where God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, Edward Hoare opines that in sanctifying the seventh day, God “separated it from the ordinary purposes of common life, and set it apart as a day peculiar to Himself.”¹⁰⁶ This concept of being set apart for God, according to

¹⁰³ Smith, M. H. *Systematic Theology, Volume Two: Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2019

¹⁰⁴ Berkhof, L. *Systematic Theology*. Woodstock: Devoted Publishing. 2017.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Hoare, E. *Sanctification*. Frieburg: Outlook Verlag. 2024.

Hoare is also “... said of the Priests, the vessels of the Sanctuary and the lambs taken from the flock.”¹⁰⁷

Apart from being set apart, sanctification in the Old Testament also involves the aspect of cleansing unto holiness. Adyodeji J. Adewuya looks at the instructions given to the priests and Levites in 2 Chronicles 29 & 30 and asserts that they were to “make themselves ritually acceptable for worship.”¹⁰⁸ We can thus say that in the Old Testament, sanctification includes the element of cleansing of God’s people unto holiness, though through ceremonial rituals.

Unlike the Old Testament concept of sanctification that involves both vessels and humans, the New Testament concept focuses much on humans, who are the believers. Morton H. Smith says it involves “the setting apart of Christians unto God as holy.”¹⁰⁹ Matthew Michael looks at it as “the progressive work of God and man which aims to make us (Christians) more conformed to the image of Christ and less comparable to the ways of sin.”¹¹⁰ Caleb Macdonald says that it “means to be separated unto holiness; to be made pure from impurity, to be made more into the likeness of Jesus.”¹¹¹ A. W. Pink & Terry Kulakowski say it is “... a moral act, by which a sinner is made holy.”¹¹² We can therefore conclude that sanctification has to do with the cleansing of God’s people unto holiness.

From the above assertions, sanctification seems to be so central in the life of the believer. So we ask, what is the significance of sanctification in the life of a

¹⁰⁷ Hoare, E. Sanctification. Frieburg: Outlook Verlag. 2024

¹⁰⁸ Adewuya, J. A. Holiness in the Letters of Paul: The Necessary Response to the gospel. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2016.

¹⁰⁹ Smith, M. H. Systematic Theology, Volume Two: Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2019

¹¹⁰ Michael, M. Christian Theology and African Traditions. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2013

¹¹¹ MacDonald, C. God’s Basic Doctrines. Bloomington: AuthorHouse. 2014.

¹¹² Pink, A. W., Kulakowski, T. Doctrine of Sanctification. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2015.

Christian? To this question, Pink & Kulakowski first take note of two major effects of sin in the life of a human being namely “... the filthy defilement it causes... (and) the awful guilt it entails.”¹¹³ In order for any human being to stay with God, Pink & Kulakowski argue that we reconnection to Him through justification and also “... a personal fitness to enjoy”¹¹⁴ His presence, a condition that is acquired only through sanctification.

The fact that sanctification is a condition that can be acquired leaves us with yet another key question: how long does it take for a Christian to be sanctified? Michael first notes that sanctification “... involves three stages”¹¹⁵ or phases. Robert Gobelet calls these stages “... past, present, and future.”¹¹⁶ As we will see shortly, sanctification seems to take a long time to be completed in the life of a believer.

The first stage or phase of sanctification is referred to by many Christian theologians as ‘positional sanctification.’ This first stage of sanctification, according to Gobelet, “... occurs at the beginning of our Christian lives,”¹¹⁷ or, as Gregg R. Allison puts it, “... at the beginning of salvation.”¹¹⁸ At this first stage, Michael asserts that a Christian experiences “... regeneration.”¹¹⁹ Gobelet also adds that “... a new spiritual nature is imparted to the believer,”¹²⁰ as he experiences “... an initial moral change, (and) a break from the power and love for sin.”¹²¹ Michael further asserts that the “impartation of the new spiritual nature at regeneration brings about a definite

¹¹³ Pink, A. W., Kulakowski, T. *Doctrine of Sanctification*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2015.

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Michael, M. *Christian Theology and African Traditions*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2013

¹¹⁶ Gobelet, R. *Questions and Answers from the Bible*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2016.

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Allison, G. R. *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology*. Michigan: Baker Publishing Group. 2018.

¹¹⁹ Michael, M. *Christian Theology and African Traditions*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2013

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Gobelet, R. *Questions and Answers from the Bible*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2016.

radical or gradual moral change”¹²² in the life of a believer. John Charles Ryle also asserts in the affirmative that the person “... who is born again and is made a new creation receives a new nature and a new creed.”¹²³ Allison, holding the same view also states that a Christian is “... separated from her old life and consecrated to her new life in Christ.”¹²⁴ Allison also adds that this first stage of sanctification “is usually true of all believers.”¹²⁵

The second stage of sanctification is referred to by many Christian theologians as progressive sanctification. At this stage, Michael asserts that what “... began at regeneration continues in increasing measure throughout our lives as we give the Holy Spirit place to operate fully in our lives.”¹²⁶ Allison adds that it is at this stage that “... ongoing transformation into greater Christ- likeness occurs”¹²⁷ as a Christian experiences “.... an increasing break from sin and a growing conformity to the image of Christ.”¹²⁸ This second stage of sanctification, according to Gobelet “... requires a life time to complete.”¹²⁹ This is because growth in Christ- likeness, as Caleb MacDonald asserts, “... doesn’t all happen at once, but... over time,”¹³⁰ in what Gobelet sees as “... a process of daily spiritual renewal,”¹³¹ and, as Ellen G. White asserts, “... continuing as long as life shall last.”¹³²

¹²² Michael, M. *Christian Theology and African Traditions*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2013.

¹²³ Ryle, J. C. *Holiness: For the Will of God Is Your Sanctification- 1 Thessalonians 4:3*. Abbotsford: Life Sentence Publishing. 2019.

¹²⁴ Allison, G. R. *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology*. Michigan: Baker Publishing Group. 2018.

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Michael, M. *Christian Theology and African Traditions*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2013

¹²⁷ Allison, G. R. *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology*. Michigan: Baker Publishing Group. 2018.

¹²⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹ Gobelet, R. *Questions and Answers from the Bible*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2016.

¹³⁰ MacDonald, C. *God’s Basic Doctrines*. Bloomington: AuthorHouse. 2014.

¹³¹ Gobelet, R. *Questions and Answers from the Bible*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2016.

¹³² White, E.G. *The Sanctified Life*. London: DigiCat. 2022

The other important aspect of progressive sanctification, as noted by Allison is that unlike positional sanctification that is equal for all believers, it can be “... greater in some believers and lesser in others.”¹³³ Ryle, holding the same view adds that “a person may climb from one step to another in holiness and be far more sanctified at one period of his life than another.”¹³⁴ Ryle however notes that this person “... cannot be more pardoned and more justified than he is when he first believes, though he may feel it more, but he can certainly be more sanctified, because every grace in his new character can be strengthened, enlarged, and deepened.”¹³⁵

Christian theologians also believe that sanctification, or progressive sanctification has “... regards for the dominion of sin.”¹³⁶ Gobelet opines that a Christian is “.... no longer under sin’s dominion”¹³⁷ because, as Ryle asserts, “Jesus separates him from his natural love for sin and the world.”¹³⁸ He also gets “a reorientation of desires, and (a developed)... love for righteousness.”¹³⁹

Although sanctification involves a break from the dominion of sin, Ryle states that it is “... not something that keeps a person from having a great deal of inward spiritual conflict... a struggle within the heart between the old nature and the new, between the flesh and the Spirit, which are to be found together in the believer.”¹⁴⁰

¹³³ Allison, G. R. 50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology. Michigan: Baker Publishing Group. 2018.

¹³⁴ Ryle, J. C. Holiness: For the Will of God Is Your Sanctification- 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Abbotsford: Life Sentence Publishing. 2019.

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ Pink, A. W., Kulakowski, T. Doctrine of Sanctification. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2015.

¹³⁷ Gobelet, R. Questions and Answers from the Bible. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2016.

¹³⁸ Ryle, J. C. Holiness: For the Will of God Is Your Sanctification- 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Abbotsford: Life Sentence Publishing. 2019.

¹³⁹ Gobelet, R. Questions and Answers from the Bible. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2016.

¹⁴⁰ Ryle, J. C. Holiness: For the Will of God Is Your Sanctification- 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Abbotsford: Life Sentence Publishing. 2019.

Thomas Murosky also holds this same view and asserts that “... even while we are being sanctified, we can still make wrong choices.”¹⁴¹

Progressive sanctification, according to Michael also involves the “... ethical and moral change in the life of a believer.”¹⁴² Murosky also opines that it “... is demonstrated in our life by a change in our actions from natural, sinful choices to things that would honor God.”¹⁴³ This justifies Ryle’s assertion that the “idea of a person being sanctified while no holiness can be seen in his life is flat nonsense and is a misuse of words.”¹⁴⁴ According to this view, people from both the Church and outside should see a change in the life of a believer; a change from a life dominated by sin to a life dominated by the Holy Spirit, and holiness.

Apart from the change from a sin dominated life to a life of holiness, Ryle, like many other Christian theologians also believes that sanctification shows “... itself in habitual respect to God’s law and habitual effort to live in obedience to it as the rule of law,”¹⁴⁵ as well as “... habitually trying to do Christ’s will and to live by His practical precepts.”¹⁴⁶ It also further involves living “... up to the standard that Apostle Paul set before the Churches in his writings,”¹⁴⁷ & being in “... compliance with the revealed will of God in all duties of obedience and abstinence from evil issuing from a principle of faith and love.”¹⁴⁸ This, according to Pink is possible

¹⁴¹ Murosky, T. *Testing and Temptations: A Guide to Sanctification*. Bloomington: WestBow Press. 2014.

¹⁴² Michael, M. *Christian Theology and African Traditions*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2013

¹⁴³ Murosky, T. *Testing and Temptations: A Guide to Sanctification*. Bloomington: WestBow Press. 2014.

¹⁴⁴ Ryle, J. C. *Holiness: For the Will of God Is Your Sanctification- 1 Thessalonians 4:3*. Abbotsford: Life Sentence Publishing. 2019.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁷ Ibid

¹⁴⁸ Pink, A. W., Kulakowski, T. (2015). *Doctrine of Sanctification*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2015.

because of the “... internal change or renovation of our souls, whereby our minds, affection, and wills are brought under harmony with God.”¹⁴⁹

Having looked at the second stage of sanctification with its marks, we now turn to the third, and last stage or phase. This stage or phase is referred to by many Christian theologians as perfected or ultimate sanctification. Perfected sanctification, according to Allison, is where “... God’s final work of completing salvation”¹⁵⁰ is done. Allison, like many other Christian theologians believes that perfected sanctification will take place “... at the end of salvation,”¹⁵¹ and that it “will be equally true for all believers.”¹⁵² Michael further asserts that perfected sanctification will take/ takes two phases: “... at the point of the death of the Christian, (and at) ... the Lord’s return.”¹⁵³

In order to understand how ultimate sanctification takes place/ will take place, we ask: what exactly happens at the point of death of a Christian and what will happen at the resurrection? In response to this question, Gobelet explains: “when believers die, their spirits go to be with Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). Since nothing unclean can enter heaven (Revelation 21:27), we must be made perfect at that point.”¹⁵⁴ Chun Tse adds that at death “a believer’s soul is immediately and wholly sanctified”¹⁵⁵ and he/ she become “sinless but also bodiless.”¹⁵⁶ Allison adds that at this very point of death believers, “are perfectly sanctified for their disembodied

¹⁴⁹ Pink, A. W., Kulakowski, T. (2015). *Doctrine of Sanctification*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2015.

¹⁵⁰ Allison, G. R. *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology*. Michigan: Baker Publishing Group. 2018.

¹⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁵² Ibid

¹⁵³ Michael, M. *Christian Theology and African Traditions*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2013

¹⁵⁴ Gobelet, R. *Questions and Answers from the Bible*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2016.

¹⁵⁵ Tse, C. *Assurance of Adoption: A New Paradigm for Assurance of Salvation*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2020.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

life in heaven.”¹⁵⁷ They (believers) “... become like Christ, but without their physical elements.”¹⁵⁸ This is the sanctification of the soul.

The second phase of perfected sanctification will take place at the return of Jesus Christ, and Allison says that it is when “believers will receive their resurrection bodies and will be fully sanctified for their embodied life to come.”¹⁵⁹ Tse adds that believers’ bodies will be “resurrected imperishable, in holiness, glory, and power.”¹⁶⁰ Tse further opines that it is at perfected sanctification that “all the redemptive benefits believers have received from Christ through their union with him will be consummated and complete.”¹⁶¹

Given the fact that sanctification involves growing in holiness, an attribute of God that comes only from Him, we ask another important question: does God work alone in the sanctification of a believer or does a believer also have a role to play? Michael answers that sanctification “... involves the corporate acts of God and man.”¹⁶² Heather Randell also adds that “there is God’s part and humanity’s part.”¹⁶³ According to Allison “believers are not to attempt to do God’s work for him, and God does not do their work for them.”¹⁶⁴ So we ask again, what does God do?

On God’s side, Gobelet states that He provides the Holy Spirit who makes a Christian “... practically godly in life.”¹⁶⁵ The Holy Spirit, according to Ryle “... convinces the

¹⁵⁷ Allison, G. R. 50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology. Michigan: Baker Publishing Group. 2018.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ Tse, C. Assurance of Adoption: A New Paradigm for Assurance of Salvation. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2020.

¹⁶¹ Ibid

¹⁶² Michael, M. Christian Theology and African Traditions. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2013.

¹⁶³ Randell, H. A Quest for Holiness. Bloomington: Xlibris. 2013

¹⁶⁴ Allison, G. R. 50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology. Michigan: Baker Publishing Group. 2018.

¹⁶⁵ Ryle, J. C. Holiness: For the Will of God Is Your Sanctification- 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Abbotsford: Life Sentence Publishing. 2019.

believer of sin by the law and leads him ... to a spiritual use of the law.”¹⁶⁶ Apart from placing the Holy Spirit in Christians, Allison further asserts that God “... empowers them (believers) to overcome temptations and face trials.”¹⁶⁷ Many respondents also held this similar view, stating that they cannot be sanctified without the help of the Holy Spirit.

On the side of believers, Michael argues that God’s involvement in their sanctification makes them “... both active and passive at the same time.”¹⁶⁸ Passively, Gobelet asserts that we (Christians) participate by “... presenting our bodies to God... and yielding to the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶⁹ It is true that although God is willing to sanctify us, He does not force sanctification on us; He waits for us to avail ourselves to Him, making it truly passive. One respondent, in agreement with this view said: “although God has the power to transform me, if I don’t work with Him by first of all availing myself, He cannot do much. I must have the will and avail myself to Him.”¹⁷⁰

On the active side, Murosky asserts that we (Christians) “... actively work with God to produce holiness in our lives”¹⁷¹ by doing things like “... putting to death the ‘misdeeds of the body (Romans 8:13), striving for holiness (Hebrews 12:14), fleeing from immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18), cleansing ourselves from every defilement (2 Corinthians 7:1), and making every effort to supplement our faith.”¹⁷² Zacharias

¹⁶⁶ Ryle, J. C. *Holiness: For the Will of God Is Your Sanctification- 1 Thessalonians 4:3*. Abbotsford: Life Sentence Publishing. 2019.

¹⁶⁷ Allison, G. R. *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology*. Michigan: Baker Publishing Group. 2018.

¹⁶⁸ Michael, M. *Christian Theology and African Traditions*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2013.

¹⁶⁹ Gobelet, R. *Questions and Answers from the Bible*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2016.

¹⁷⁰ Response from questionnaire number 13.

¹⁷¹ Murosky, T. *Testing and Temptations: A Guide to Sanctification*. Bloomington: WestBow Press. 2014.

¹⁷² Gobelet, R. *Questions and Answers from the Bible*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2016.

Tanee Fomum also adds that a Christian must “put off and... put on,”¹⁷³ because God will not do it for him. Allison adds that Christians are further supposed to “... read scripture, pray, confess their sins, submit to the Spirit’s guidance, (and) resist temptations.”¹⁷⁴ Many respondents admitted that on top of availing themselves to God, they are supposed to “work with (Him) God by choosing to say no to temptation and saying yes to the Holy Spirit.”¹⁷⁵ By doing this, sanctification will be realized.

Having looked at the meaning of sanctification through the survey of influential alternative answers from the Church, we now turn to the Bible and assess the relevant data in their chronological development.

The word sanctification is mentioned for the first time in Genesis 2:3 where Moses records that “... God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” (Genesis 2:3a) NKJV. Andrew Murray asserts that “when God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, He lifted it above the other days, and set it apart to a work and a revelation of Himself, excelling in glory all that had preceded.”¹⁷⁶ Sanctification, according to this passage means being set apart for the Lord alone. It is mentioned only once in the book of Genesis. The next time we see it mentioned is in the book of Exodus. When God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, He commanded Moses to consecrate for Him every first born male, asserting that the first offspring of every womb (whether humans or animals) among the Israelites belongs to Him (Exodus 13:2). At this point, we can clearly see a progression in the understanding of sanctification as being set apart for God. This concept keeps on growing throughout the Pentateuch as seen in

¹⁷³ Fomum, Z. T. Sanctified and Consecrated for Spiritual Ministry. London: ZTF Books Online. 2015.

¹⁷⁴ Allison, G. R. 50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology. Michigan: Baker Publishing Group. 2018.

¹⁷⁵ Response from questionnaires 4, 8, 11, &18.

¹⁷⁶ Murray, A. Holy in Christ: Thoughts on the Calling of God’s Children to be Holy as He is Holy. Dallas: DigiCat. 2023.

passages like Leviticus 27:26, Numbers 3:13, & Deuteronomy 15:19 where God sets apart people and things for Him alone. At a national level, God chooses the Israelite tribe of Levi and sets it apart for Him (Numbers 3:12-13).

The concept of sanctification as being set apart for God is also carried forward to the New Testament. A few significant examples are the setting apart of John the Baptist even before he is born (Luke 1:13-15), Christians being referred to by Peter as a holy nation set apart for God (1 Peter 2:9), Christians being called a holy vessel for the Lord (2 Timothy 2:20), and as Luke records, Barnabas and Saul being set apart for the Lord (Acts 13:2).

The other aspect of sanctification that we also see in the Bible is cleansing unto holiness. In Exodus 19, God comes down to meet the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai. However, before the Israelites meet Him, God commands Moses: "... Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes." (Exodus 19:10) NIV. The Israelites, after receiving this instruction, "... washed their clothes." (Exodus 19:14b) NIV. Moses also tells them to "... abstain from sexual relationships." (Exodus 19:15b) NIV. Isaiah also calls God's people to wash themselves and be clean (Isaiah 1:16). This concept of cleansing unto holiness goes throughout the Old Testament.

The concept of sanctification as a process of being cleansed unto holiness is also carried forward to the New Testament. However, unlike the Old Testament which focuses on the physical realm and rituals, the New Testament looks at cleansing from sin, and not through rituals. Significant examples are in John 15:3 where Jesus tells his disciples that they have been cleansed by the word they have heard; 1 Corinthians 6:11 where Paul tells the Corinthians that they have been washed and

made holy through the blood and water; and 1 John 1:9 where John says that God cleanses us from all unrighteousness. We can thus say that sanctification in the New Testament focuses on the cleansing of believers from sin.

Another very important thing that we also see in the Bible regarding sanctification is the role played by both God and men. In the Old Testament, God's role is clearly stated. Specific examples can be seen in passages like Exodus 29:44 where God asserts that He "... will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve... (Him) as priests." (Exodus 29:44), Leviticus 20:8 where God further asserts that He is the one who consecrates the Israelites, and Isaiah 1:18 where He (God) assures the Israelites that He will wash them as clean as snow. While God claims a big role in sanctification, He time and again gives instructions that point to the fact that man also has a role to play. Significant examples are seen in Exodus 19:10 where He sends Moses to consecrate the Israelites and Moses does so, Exodus 19:14-15 where Moses also tells the Israelites to consecrate themselves and they do so (Exodus 19:14-15), Isaiah 1:16 where the Israelites are called to wash themselves, make themselves clean, remove every evil from God's eyes, and also cease doing evil- acts.

Like in the Old Testament, the New Testament also presents the aspect of dual responsibilities in the process of a believer's sanctification. In John 15, Jesus indirectly points out to the Father's role in sanctification and describes Him as the gardener who prunes the plants- a language for sanctification. In the high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus asks the Father to sanctify his followers. In Hebrews 10:10, the writer asserts that believers have been made holy; in 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul states that believers were washed and sanctified; in Phil. 2:13, God works in believers to will and act according to His purpose. Believers too are presented with

roles to play in their sanctification. They must present themselves to God (Romans 12:1), put to death the deeds of the flesh (Colossians 3:5, Romans 13:12), put on the armor of light (Romans 13:12), submit to the Spirit's leadership (Galatians 5:16), flee evil desires and pursue righteousness (2 Tim. 2:22).

Another aspect of sanctification that we also see in the Old Testament is the agents involved in its process. The word of God is used in the sanctification of the seventh day (Exodus 20:11, 31:14), water is used by the Israelites in their sanctification (Exodus 19:10, 14); blood and anointing oil are used in the sanctification of Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:21); blood is further used to purge sin from Israel (Leviticus 14); oil is also used in the anointing of Kings (1 Samuel 10:1, 1 Samuel 16:13), suffering is used by God to bring his people back to Him (Leviticus 26:18, Psalm 32:1-5, 119:71); and the Holy Spirit comes powerfully on David after his anointing (1 Samuel 16:13). We can thus say that the agents of sanctification in the Old Testament are the word, water, oil, the blood, suffering, and the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament, the same agents of sanctification are also carried forward. The word of God is used in the sanctification of Jesus' disciples (John 15:3, 1 Corinthians 6:11), blood is used in the sanctification of God's people (Hebrews 9:12-14 & 10:20-22); water is used in the washing of believers (1 Corinthians 6:11); suffering is also an agent of sanctification among God's people (Romans 5:3-5, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, James 1:3, Hebrews 2:10, etcetera).

The other aspect of sanctification that we also see in the Old Testament is the duration it takes to be completed. Sanctification is an instantaneous act (Genesis 2:3, Exodus 19:14, 2 Chronicles 29:5). However, in the New Testament, sanctification is not instantaneous as per se. Although positional sanctification, the

first phase is instantaneous, the other two phases are not attained instantly. These can be seen in Paul's usage of phrases like "we have been sanctified..." (Hebrews 10:10) ESV, "... those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14) ESV, and "God will accomplish ..." (Phil. 1:6), clearly pointing to the fact that sanctification is a life-long process, and not instantaneous.

From the above survey of influential alternative answers from the Church, the assessment of the relevant biblical data in their chronological order, we can draw the following conclusion regarding the meaning of sanctification.

First and foremost, sanctification means being set apart for God, being freed from the dominion of sin, and being made holy. It is a necessity for every believer.

In addition to being set apart, sanctification is a journey that takes three stages; past, present and future. The first stage beginning at confession, the second after confession and up to death, and the third stage occurring at death and ending at the resurrection.

Furthermore, in sanctification both the believer and God have designated roles to play. A believer is not supposed to do God's work, as God also does not do for the believer his/ hers.

In addition to the designated responsibilities between God and man, sanctification involves a change of life- from a sin dominated life to a righteousness dominated life. A life of holiness marked by growth in obedience to God's laws and a rejection of sin is among the key signs of sanctification.

Finally, the key agents in the sanctification of God's people are God (The Trinity), the word of God, and suffering. They each play unique roles that all lead to the sanctification of a Christian.

In spite of the fact that the above comprehensive conclusions are in agreement with both the views from the Church and the Bible, there are some alternatives that have been raised and do compete with them. To the extent that sanctification is necessary and attainable, Doughan Clark notes that there are people who regard sanctification "... as a very desirable and a very lovely thing to gaze upon, but they also regard it as quite impossible to attain."¹⁷⁷ To this we answer that God Himself has commanded us to be holy, and that means we can be holy since He cannot ask us to be what is not possible.

Another competing alternative to the assertion that sanctification requires the efforts of both God and man comes from Clark who argues that sanctification is a gift that is "... not received by struggle nor effort, nor merit of our own... not by going, nor trying, nor suffering, nor resolving, but by stretching out the hand of faith and taking."¹⁷⁸ To this assertion, we go back to the scripture and point out passages like Joshua 3:5 where Israel is commanded by God to sanctify herself- a command that requires action on her side, 1 Corinthians 9:27 where Paul strikes his body in order to remain holy, Colossians 3:5 where Paul tells the Colossians to put to death whatever belongs to the earthly nature, and Ephesians 4:22 where Paul tells the Ephesians to put off their former way of life (the old man).

¹⁷⁷ Clark, D. *The Theology of Holiness*. Dallas: DigiCat. 2022

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

The above comprehensive conclusions are relevant to the Christians of the Diocese of Lango in several ways. First of all, the understanding of what sanctification is helps them pursue it because of its significance in their lives. Gospel ministers there can also effectively teach it from an informed point of view.

Secondly, knowing the different stages of sanctification helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango respond well to those who may fall to sin on their journey of salvation. They cannot be surprised by such things, knowing that they are still work in progress.

Thirdly, knowing that both God and man have designated roles to play in sanctification helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango do what they are supposed to do as God also does His part, hence leading to their growth.

Fourthly, knowing that there are different agents used in the sanctification of a Christian helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango know how to make use of these agents like the word of God, suffering, and the Holy Spirit in their sanctification process.

Fifthly, and finally, knowing that sanctification is partially accomplished at death and fully at the return of Christ (resurrection) creates a living hope among the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. They can look forward to the appearing of Christ with great joy, knowing that it will come with their final stage of sanctification-ultimate sanctification.

CHAPTER THREE: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUFFERING AND SANCTIFICATION

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the establishment of the relationship between suffering and sanctification in the life of a Christian. This is done through a survey of influential alternative answers from the Church, assessment of relevant biblical data in their chronological development, a formulation of a comprehensive conclusion, a defense of the comprehensive conclusion against competing alternatives, and the exhibition of its relevance to life and ministry.

3.1. The relationship between suffering and Sanctification

Many Christian theologians have come up with different theories and ways through which they explain the relationship between suffering and sanctification. One of them is the purification theory. Hugh Barber asserts that suffering is used by God in the “purification, refining, and cleansing”¹⁷⁹ of His people. Tabor Laughlin, holding the same view looks at the process of refining gold or silver and asserts that “just as the blazing heat of the furnace refines the gold or silver, so God uses the fiery furnace of trials in our lives to refine and purify our faith.”¹⁸⁰ John Newton also opines that God uses suffering “to form us into softer and humbler people.”¹⁸¹ Barber further asserts that suffering leads to “... the removal of impurities which can limit us in our life and faith.”¹⁸² But we ask, how do these experiences lead to the purification of a Christian? In order to explain how suffering leads to the purification of a Christian, June Hunt uses the analogy of silver or gold melting. Hunt takes note

¹⁷⁹ Barber, H. *Liberated: Living in the Divine Freedom That Is Yours in Christ*. Bloomington: Xlibris. 2014.

¹⁸⁰ Laughlin, T. *In the Fiery Furnace of Suffering*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2018.

¹⁸¹ Newton, J. *Falling Into Grace: Exploring Our Inner Life With God*. New York: Morehouse Publishing. 2016.

¹⁸² Barber, H. *Liberated: Living in the Divine Freedom That Is Yours in Christ*. Bloomington: Xlibris. 2014.

of the six stages that are involved in this process and shows how each of them relates to God's acts of purifying a Christian through suffering.

The first stage, as Hunt notes, involves the breaking of the natural ore by the refiner. Looking at Jeremiah 6:27 where God calls Israel His ore, Hunt argues that "we (Christians) are a rock in need of hammering, breaking, and refining."¹⁸³ In the second stage, Hunt says that the refiner puts the broken ore in the crucible and then "places the crucible into the furnace at the precise temperature necessary for separating out inferior metals that would otherwise mar the quality of the gold or silver."¹⁸⁴ Relating it to us Christians, Hunt asserts that "just as the furnace is used to purify silver in the crucible, our Refiner (God) uses the heat of a severe test or a life- impacting trial to purify our hearts and cleanse our character."¹⁸⁵ In the third stage, the heat begins to melt the ore and Hunt observes that "as the ore melts in the crucible under the watchful eye of the refiner, a layer of impurities, called dross, eventually appears."¹⁸⁶ Hunt opines that "dross represents anything impure or worthless- any wrong motive, wrong attitude, wrong action- anything that prevents us from being all God created us to be."¹⁸⁷ In the fourth stage, Hunt states that the refiner removes "the dross- the impurities emitted during the refining process,"¹⁸⁸ and that "after the refiner painstakingly skims off these impurities, he then increases the heat and places the crucible back into the blistering furnace."¹⁸⁹ As in this stage, Hunt asserts that "our refiner (God) knows the exact temperature needed to extract the dross, and He knows that only certain impurities are released

¹⁸³ Hunt, J. *Trials: God's Refining Fire*. Torrance: Rose Publishing. 2015.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid

¹⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁶ Ibid

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁹ Ibid

at certain temperatures.”¹⁹⁰ At the fifth stage, Hunt asserts that “each time, with utmost skill and patience, the refiner removes layer after layer of dross and increasingly, the silver and gold become more and more precious than before,”¹⁹¹ a process that relates to God’s continuous acts of removing every element of ungodliness from us, one step at a time. The final stage involves the final removal of dross to have the clean metal, and Hunt opines that it is “only after repeatedly skimming off the top layer of dross floating on the surface, and only when the refiner looks into the metal- filled crucible and sees a clear reflection of himself is the process complete,”¹⁹² as “the metal attains its highest degree of purity!”¹⁹³ Hunt says that this is exactly what God does using suffering, in the purification of His people. Barber also holds this same view and opines that at the end of our suffering, the “impurities of character flaws, attitudes and weaknesses are burned,”¹⁹⁴ and “what is left is our character and spirit reflecting the person of Jesus Christ, pruned for greater purposes.”¹⁹⁵

Another theory that is also used by Christian theologians to explain the relationship between suffering and sanctification is the virtue formation theory. Frank Viola asserts that “persecution and failure give birth to humility,”¹⁹⁶ while “adversity produces strength and endurance”¹⁹⁷ in Christians. Michael Ridenbaugh also hold the same view and opines that “just as a piece of coal is put under intense heat and pressure to become a beautiful diamond, we also go through the heat and pressures

¹⁹⁰ Hunt, J. *Trials: God’s Refining Fire*. Torrance: Rose Publishing. 2015

¹⁹¹ Ibid

¹⁹² Ibid

¹⁹³ Ibid

¹⁹⁴ Barber, H. *Liberated: Living in the Divine Freedom That Is Yours in Christ*. Bloomington: Xlibris. 2014.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁶ Viola, F. *48 Laws of Spiritual Power: Uncommon Wisdom for Greater Ministry Impact*. Illinois: Tyndale House Publications. 2022

¹⁹⁷ Ibid

of this life and are changed.”¹⁹⁸ But we ask, how does suffering contribute to the formation of these virtues in a Christian?

In order to help us understand how suffering contributes to the formation of virtues in a Christian, Elizabeth Danna explores the role of heat and pressure in the production of diamonds. Danna states that “diamonds are found in certain places in the earth mantle, 90 miles (150 km), or more beneath the surface,”¹⁹⁹ and that the temperature in these places “is an unimaginable 2000 degrees Fahrenheit (1050 C), or more.”²⁰⁰ Danna adds that “these diamond- producing areas, known as “diamond stability zones,” are usually found in the centers of continental plates, with the weight of an entire continent pressing down on them.”²⁰¹ Danna states that it is only in these extreme conditions that “the carbon atoms that make up the diamond form the cubic lattice structure that gives diamonds their strength.”²⁰² Anything less, says Danna “... produces graphite, with its weak single- layer lattice structure.”²⁰³ Like the miner who applies extreme heat and pressure in order to get diamonds, Danna opines that “when the pressure is on, God is making us into diamonds.”²⁰⁴ One respondent, holding this same view also asserted: “the hardship I went through during the war taught me patience and endurance. I had no choice but to learn and grow in them through experience.”²⁰⁵

Another theory is also the dependence on God theory. Many Christian theologians believe that suffering destroys man’s idols and pushes him to depend on God.

¹⁹⁸ Ridenbaugh, M. Victory in the Storm: Finding Faith, Hope, and Healing in the Storms of Life. Murrels Inlet, SC: Covenant Books, Incorporated. 2019.

¹⁹⁹ Danna, E. Through the Lens of Faith. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2022.

²⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁰¹ Ibid

²⁰² Ibid

²⁰³ Ibid

²⁰⁴ Ibid

²⁰⁵ Response from questionnaire number 14.

Christopher A. Hutchinson observes that “when people are doing well, they do not think they need God’s help; they may forget their sheer dependence on Him for every good thing.”²⁰⁶ Hawkes also holds this same view and asserts that “when our lives are going well externally, there is little motivation to change.”²⁰⁷ This, according to Peter Kreeft is not good because for a Christian to attach his “...very identity and hope and destiny to something other than God... is idolatry and an infallible recipe for destruction.”²⁰⁸ Suffering, according to Andrews therefore “serves as a constant reminder that independence from God”²⁰⁹ is disastrous. So we ask, how is this connected to sanctification in the life of a Christian? Hutchinson opines that suffering “... drives believers to their knees.”²¹⁰ Newton further adds that “only in the presence of pain and suffering do we get very clear about not being God,”²¹¹ an experience that definitely clears the sin of pride and idolatry.

Hawkes further looks at us Christians and the common temptation of always wanting to trusting in ourselves and opines that God uses suffering to bring us “... to the end of ourselves where we see the seriousness of our sin and our inability to defeat it, so that we will turn from self- dependence to seek help from him.”²¹² According to Charles Erlandson, “Being deprived, poor, and needy reminds us better than anything else that we have been and forever will be dependent on God and his mercy.”²¹³ Such experiences, according Andrews also “... lead to greater humility as we recognize our dependence on God and seek His comfort and guidance in our

²⁰⁶ Hutchinson, C. A. *Rediscovering Humility: Why the Way Up Is Down*. Greensboro: New Growth Press. 2018.

²⁰⁷ Hawkes, T. D. *A User’s Guide to Becoming More Like Jesus*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²⁰⁸ Kreeft, P. *How to Be Holy: First Steps in Becoming a Saint*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. 2016.

²⁰⁹ Andrews E. *Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

²¹⁰ Hutchinson, C. A. *Rediscovering Humility: Why the Way Up Is Down*. Greensboro: New Growth Press. 2018.

²¹¹ Newton, J. *Falling Into Grace: Exploring Our Inner Life With God*. New York: Morehouse Publishing. 2016.

²¹² Hawkes, T. D. *A User’s Guide to Becoming More Like Jesus*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²¹³ Erlandson, C. *Take This Cup: How God Transforms Suffering Into Glory and Joy*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

lives.”²¹⁴ One respondent, holding this same view also stated: “suffering brings a man to the end of himself; it kills his idol, casts his pride away and causes him to be humble as he again learns to depend on God alone.”²¹⁵ Another respondent also stated: “there was a time when I had so much money that I didn’t see any need for prayer. However, when I lost that money, I realized how I needed God. I went back to the place of prayer and began seeking God seriously.”²¹⁶

In instances of love for the world, another form of idolatry, David Gonza looks at sickness and argues that it is “... God’s cure for the love of the world”²¹⁷ as “it takes away our love for the world and elevates our heart for heaven.”²¹⁸ Laughlin also adds that in the midst of life disappointments, “We are thus more interested to please God with our lives, rather than trying to seek worldly pleasure.”²¹⁹ Walton & Wetherell further add that “by removing the earthly comfort of those around us, the Lord moves us... toward a deeper intimacy with our Savior.”²²⁰

Apart from the dependence on God theory, Christian theologians also use the deterrence theory to explain how suffering relates to sanctification. Mazzalongo precisely states that “suffering reveals the horror of sin.”²²¹ Laughlin adds that “through our own trials we recognize the fallen state of the universe.”²²² So we ask, how do these experiences lead to sanctification? Mazzalongo answers that they “...

²¹⁴ Andrews, E. D. *Unshakable Beliefs: Strategies for Strengthening and Defending Your Faith*. Amazon Digital Service, LLC- Kdp. 2023.

²¹⁵ Response from questionnaire number 29.

²¹⁶ Response from interviewee number 36.

²¹⁷ Goza, D. *Seeking Virtue: Through History and Scripture*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²¹⁸ Ibid

²¹⁹ Laughlin, T. *In the Fiery Furnace of Suffering*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2018.

²²⁰ Walton, S., Wetherell K. *Hope When It Hurts: Biblical reflections to help you grasp God's Purpose in your Suffering*. London: Good Book Company. 2017.

²²¹ Mazzalongo, M. *Why Do The Righteous Suffer?* Oklahoma: BibleTalk Books. 2016.

²²² Laughlin, T. *In the Fiery Furnace of Suffering*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2018.

can produce a healthy revulsion and rejection of sinful things”²²³ in and by a Christian. A Christian, according to Mazzalongo gets to hate sin after seeing “enough of the damage it has caused in people’s lives.”²²⁴ One respondent, in agreement with this view also stated: “when you see someone suffering as a result of sin, you don’t want to ever commit such kind of sin for the rest of your life!”²²⁵ In this way, suffering ends up not only deterring the other would be sinners from sinning but also compels them to seek goodness, a mark of sanctification.

Besides causing a Christian to hate sin and pursue goodness, Paul Chaulox states that “suffering is a message from God that identifies the evil to be avoided or the good to be attained.”²²⁶ John Thurston & Freddie Ruth Grier, holding this same view assert that “disappointments, failures, and adversities all serve to foster, inside of God’s children a desire for a life that is constructive and virtuous.”²²⁷ We are, according to Chaulox, motivated “... to seek out the goods that we are missing and to avoid what will potentially harm us.”²²⁸

Another theory is the gratuitous theory. Christopher Mahar, holding this view asserts that “even the innocent who suffer frequently gain valuable insights about life and increase in virtue as a result of the trials they face.”²²⁹ The best example, according to Mahar is “a woman who experiences discrimination in the work place and goes on to make dignity and respect the hallmark of her professional life.”²³⁰ Another

²²³ Mazzalongo, M. *Why Do The Righteous Suffer?* Oklahoma: BibleTalk Books. 2016.

²²⁴ Ibid

²²⁵ Response from interviewee number 36.

²²⁶ Chaulox, P. *Why All People Suffer: How a Loving God Uses Suffering to Perfect Us*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press. 2021.

²²⁷ Thurston, J.L., Grier, R. *Born to Be Born Again: Fatherless! A Blessed Reality*. Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation LLC. 2013.

²²⁸ Chaulox, P. *Why All People Suffer: How a Loving God Uses Suffering to Perfect Us*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press. 2021.

²²⁹ Mahar, C. M. *Finding God in Suffering*. Toronto: Pauline Books and Media. 2023

²³⁰ Ibid

respondent, holding this same view also opined: “after spending five years in the Internally Displaced Persons’ Camp and seeing the pain that comes with war, I made up my mind to be a promoter of peace wherever I am.”²³¹ We can thus see that through their experience of suffering, Christians end up on the path of godliness, a way towards sanctification.

Apart from the gratuitous theory, Christian theologians also believe that suffering acts as check and balance in the life of a Christian, pointing to them the way of repentance. Thomas D. Hawkes for instance notes that “we (Christians) are naturally blind to our sinfulness and to our inability to fight sin.”²³² Suffering, according to Tollefsen points out to two key things in the life of a human being: “an awareness on our part of a harmony that should exist, whether in our physical or mental being, or our moral being, or between loved ones, or between ourselves and God, and a further awareness that that harmony is currently being damaged, (or) rent asunder.”²³³ Hawkes therefore argues that “God lovingly sends us crosses to wake us from our slumber of sin.”²³⁴ Tollefsen further adds that we (Christians) are therefore “... capable of recognising, in certain experiences, including some involving pain, that we are in one or another state of disharmony: whether within ourselves, as a result of illness or wrongdoing; or with others, when our relationships are strained or severed; or with the larger universe or its Creator.”²³⁵ Erlandson, holding the same view puts it plainly that “pain is a messenger that something’s wrong with our

²³¹ Response from interviewee number 40.

²³² Hawkes, T. D. *A User’s Guide to Becoming More Like Jesus*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²³³ Fitzpatrick, S. J., Kerridge, I. H., Jordens, C. F. C., Zoloth, L., Tollefsen, C., Tsomo, K. L., Jensen, M. P., Sachedina, A., & Sarma, D. (2016). Religious Perspectives on Human Suffering: Implications for Medicine and Bioethics. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 55(1), 159–173. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26749234>

²³⁴ Hawkes, T. D. *A User’s Guide to Becoming More Like Jesus*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²³⁵ Ibid

bodies, mind, or souls and that we should seek healing of this pain.”²³⁶ Goza says that suffering is sometimes a call to humans “... to turn from sin and rely on God.”²³⁷ Rochelle Zieman also holds the same view and asserts that God uses suffering “... to gently bring us back to Him.”²³⁸ Chaulox further asserts that suffering has the ability “... to redirect people’s lives to be in line with God’s plan.”²³⁹ But we ask, how does suffering lead to repentance?

There are quite a number of ways that theologians believe suffering leads to repentance. Clayton Howard Ford says that the pain we experience “... in the flesh enables us to do the will of God.”²⁴⁰ Bob Sorge looks at the pain of chastisement and opines that it “... is like a refining fire that serves to burn away the dross of un-Christlikeness so that we are changed in the process and progress towards complete obedience.”²⁴¹ Apart from the pain of chastisement, Mazzalongo adds that suffering through its pain prompts a Christian “to change the behavior that may have led them to their suffering in the first place.”²⁴² Andrews also asserts that the pain of suffering motivates “... individuals to seek alignment with”²⁴³ the will of God. Chaulox, holding the same view also asserts that “by making us uncomfortable, suffering motivates us to attain the good that is found to be lacking.”²⁴⁴ In the long run, we, says

²³⁶ Erlandson, C. *Take This Cup: How God Transforms Suffering Into Glory and Joy*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²³⁷ Goza, D. *Seeking Virtue: Through History and Scripture*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²³⁸ Zieman, R. *God’s Design for Suffering: How Spiritual Practices Help Us in Our Suffering*. Bloomington: WestBow Press. 2022.

²³⁹ Chaulox, P. *Why All People Suffer: How a Loving God Uses Suffering to Perfect Us*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press. 2021.

²⁴⁰ Ford, C. H. *The Christian’s Biggest Challenge: And Other Hard Truths Concerning Suffering*. Morrisville: Lulu.com. 2019.

²⁴¹ Sorge, B. *The Chastening of The Lord: The Forgotten Doctrine*. Missouri: Oasis House. 2016.

²⁴² Mazzalongo, M. *Why Do The Righteous Suffer?* Oklahoma: BibleTalk Books. 2016.

²⁴³ Andrews E.D. *Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

²⁴⁴ Chaulox, P. *Why All People Suffer: How a Loving God Uses Suffering to Perfect Us*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press. 2021.

Chaulox, learn to restrain “... from giving in to disordered choices...”²⁴⁵ until it becomes our habit. One respondent, in agreement with the above view also noted: “when people are experiencing pain that are related to some sinful acts, the first thing they do is ask for forgiveness from God. They re-evaluate their lives and repent of all the sins they have committed, and I think this is greatly contributed to by the pain they are experience.”²⁴⁶

In addition to the detection of sin and the lead to repentance, many Christian theologians also argue that suffering can awaken believers and remove anything distracting them from serving their God. Erlandson notes that we (Christians) often get lost in the world so that even “when God whispers in times of plenty, we are so busy pleasing ourselves that we often can’t hear God.”²⁴⁷ Forgetting God, according to Erlandson, “... is not a minor peccadillo but the essence of sin.”²⁴⁸ Suffering, according to him is “... one of God’s trumpets that blows loudly and arrests our attention.”²⁴⁹ Jacob H. Friesenhahn also holds this view and opines that “suffering gets our attention and calls us to re-evaluate the way in which we are living, and does so in a fashion that God intends to lead to our spiritual betterment.”²⁵⁰ Erlandson gives an example of the Israelites, opining that when they “... got distracted by foreign gods and foreign wives and forgot their God... God sent them the angel of suffering in the form of captivity.”²⁵¹ Erlandson adds that upon “hearing

²⁴⁵ Chaulox, P. *Why All People Suffer: How a Loving God Uses Suffering to Perfect Us*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press. 2021

²⁴⁶ Response from interviewee number 29.

²⁴⁷ Erlandson, C. *Take This Cup: How God Transforms Suffering Into Glory and Joy*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²⁴⁸ Ibid

²⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁰ Friesenhahn, J. H. *The Trinity and Theodicy: The Trinitarian Theology of Von Balthasar and the Problem of Evil*. Abingdon: Routledge. 2016.

²⁵¹ Erlandson, C. *Take This Cup: How God Transforms Suffering Into Glory and Joy*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

this trumpet blast, Israel awoke from her dream of self and returned to the Lord her God.”²⁵² Another respondent also stated: “although I had been saved, my prayer life was dead. However, when war broke in this region, I woke up and began seeking God like never before.”²⁵³

Christian theologians also believe that suffering creates learning opportunities for a Christian. Andrews, coming from this school of thought opines that although God is sovereign, “He allows human suffering and unfairness to teach humanity.”²⁵⁴ Mahar also holds a similar view and asserts that “suffering can and does teach a great deal of wisdom to those who are touched by it.”²⁵⁵ One respondent, holding this same view exclaimed: “suffering is the best teacher! It does not only teach you very powerful lessons but also places you where you have no choice but to learn.”²⁵⁶ But we still ask, how do these experiences aid learning in the life of a Christian, leading to his/ her sanctification?

Chaulox responds to the above question by asserting that “when people make poorly reasoned decisions, it causes suffering, whereas making prudent decisions avoids suffering.”²⁵⁷ So, through suffering, God gives us “... direction on what to avoid and what to pursue”²⁵⁸ and also “to direct us away from vice and toward virtue.”²⁵⁹ Chaulox further adds that “once we learn how to avoid suffering, we are highly

²⁵² Erlandson, C. *Take This Cup: How God Transforms Suffering Into Glory and Joy*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²⁵³ Response from questionnaire number 7.

²⁵⁴ Andrews E.D. *Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018

²⁵⁵ Mahar, C. M. *Finding God in Suffering*. Toronto: Pauline Books and Media. 2023

²⁵⁶ Response from interviewee number 40.

²⁵⁷ Chaulox, P. *Why All People Suffer: How a Loving God Uses Suffering to Perfect Us*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press. 2021.

²⁵⁸ Ibid

²⁵⁹ Ibid

motivated to continually repeat the process until it becomes framed as a habit.”²⁶⁰

One respondent also stated: “the pain that comes with some careless decisions and actions constantly remind one not to repeat such acts.”²⁶¹ Another respondent also added: “when we suffer as a result of our foolish acts, we get to know that what we were told was actually true, and that we should avoid such acts if we don’t want to have the same experiences again.”²⁶²

Suffering is also believed to carry out its educative role in a Christian by changing their perceptions about God, and leading them to the holy fear of Him. Chaulox argues that “the reorienting of people toward God often requires more than redirection from vice to virtue... (but also) refining a person’s understanding of the nature of God.”²⁶³ According to Chaulox, “false images and understanding of God and His nature are very hard to break, and so suffering has a prominent role in doing so.”²⁶⁴ Chaulox looks at Job, who, having been “... systematically deprived of his property, his family, and his health... demands a hearing before God to defend his innocence, only to recognize when confronted by God that he himself is in no position to judge God.”²⁶⁵ Job finally got a new perspective of God which greatly contributed to his sanctification.

In addition to the facilitation of learning among Christians, Christian theologians also believe that suffering has the ability to both bring and keep Christians on the path of holiness. Chaulox asserts that God’s desire is that all believers should walk on the

²⁶⁰ Chaulox, P. *Why All People Suffer: How a Loving God Uses Suffering to Perfect Us*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press. 2021.

²⁶¹ Response from interviewee number 29.

²⁶² Response from questionnaire number 13.

²⁶³ Chaulox, P. *Why All People Suffer: How a Loving God Uses Suffering to Perfect Us*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press. 2021.

²⁶⁴ Ibid

²⁶⁵ Ibid

path of holiness and we Christians “are kept on this path by suffering, which we experience any time we stray from it.”²⁶⁶ Newton holds this same view and states that “our mind has the power to get us on our knees but suffering alone can keep us there.”²⁶⁷ Goza adds that “the ultimate blessing that trials bring into the life of a believer is that they drive us into our knees in prayer.”²⁶⁸ One respondent also stated that “when a Christian is going through suffering, he prays so much and as well lives a holy life because he wants God’s help.”²⁶⁹ One priest of the Diocese also observed: “throughout these last two decades, there has been great revival among Christians in this part of the Diocese. People are praying fervently and pursuing righteousness, a thing which has never occurred before.”²⁷⁰

Finally, many Christian theologians have also argued that death, one of the forms of suffering is a prerequisite for attaining the next and last phase of sanctification. Erlandson states that a Christian “cannot have a cross without a resurrection or a resurrection without a Cross.”²⁷¹ According to Erlandson, “since our suffering unites us with Christ, it necessarily unites us to the resurrected Christ.”²⁷² Erlandson further adds that “every time a Christian dies and enters into the presence of God, God’s mighty victory over sin, death, and the devil is published both in heaven and on earth.”²⁷³ This however does not justify the acts of sinful people who go on murdering others, nor does it counter the argument in chapter two of this study that

²⁶⁶ Chaulox, P. *Why All People Suffer: How a Loving God Uses Suffering to Perfect Us*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press. 2021.

²⁶⁷ Newton, J. *Falling Into Grace: Exploring Our Inner Life With God*. New York: Morehouse Publishing. 2016.

²⁶⁸ Goza, D. *Seeking Virtue: Through History and Scripture*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²⁶⁹ Response from questionnaire 17

²⁷⁰ Response from interviewee number 33.

²⁷¹ Erlandson, C. *Take This Cup: How God Transforms Suffering Into Glory and Joy*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2020.

²⁷² Ibid

²⁷³ Ibid

the death of a believer cannot be God's chastisement since the believer no longer lives in this physical form. Here, death is seen as an open and necessary door the believer uses to cross over to the next stage of sanctification namely ultimate, or perfected sanctification.

Having established the relationship between suffering and sanctification through the survey of the influential alternative answers from the Church, we now turn to the Bible and assess the relevant data in their chronological development.

The word suffering is indirectly mentioned for the first time by God Himself when He puts Adam in the Garden of Eden. God tells Adam that he will surely 'die' the day he eats the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:17). God tags breaking His command to death, probably to deter Adam from sinning. Such kind of command is seen in several places like Exodus 31:14 where anyone who desecrates the Sabbath is stoned to death, Deuteronomy 22:13-22 where any woman who is married and found out to not be virgin is also stoned to death, and many others. To bring the point home, God gives a command regarding those who treat priests and judges with contempt: "anyone who shows contempt for the judge or for the priest who stands ministering there to the LORD your God is to be put to death. You must purge the evil from Israel. All people will hear and be afraid, and will not be contemptuous again." (Deuteronomy 17:12&13) NIV. This particular passage clearly brings out how God relates suffering to sanctification: purging out evil from Israel and deterring other would be sinners. This concept of deterring evil through capital punishment is also seen in the Prophets and other Old Testament books. Prophet Ezekiel for instance says that anyone who sins shall die (Ezekiel 18).

In the New Testament, the concept of deterring sin through punishment is also held, though mutedly. An example is seen in John 8 where a woman is caught in adultery and is brought to Jesus by the Pharisees so that he can give them permission to stone her to death as instructed by Moses. Jesus however refuses to condemn the woman. In spite of the message of grace that dominates the New Testament, there are several occasions where the experience of suffering is supposedly used to deter sin and promote godliness. Jesus for instance tells the Jews that if they don't repent, they too will perish like the Galileans who were killed by Pilate (Luke 13:1-3). Jesus wants them to let such experiences either cause them to repent or deter them from sinning. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul commands the Corinthians to hand over a member who was fornicating to the devil so that his soul could be saved on the day of the Lord. We can thus see in these passages that the experience of suffering is supposed to deter Christians from sinning so they can seek righteousness.

The other way that the Bible also presents the relationship between suffering and sanctification is character formation. In Deuteronomy chapter 8, God links the suffering of the Israelites in the wilderness to their sanctification. Moses writes that God caused them to be hungry and later on fed them in order to humble them (Deuteronomy 8:2-3). Suffering is seen here as a means of producing godly character among God's people.

In the New Testament, the concept of suffering that comes with the purpose of producing godly character among God's people is also highly held. The best example is in 2 Corinthians 12 where Paul says that he is given a messenger from Satan, a thorn in his flesh to torment him. The purpose of this messenger, according to Paul is to keep him from becoming conceited (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul, in his letter to

the Romans further states that “... suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character, hope.” (Romans 5:5) NIV. We can thus assert that suffering is used by God in the formation of character in His people.

Besides enabling the formation of character, the Bible also presents suffering as a key agent in the fostering of repentance among the people of God. Moses brings out this idea in Deuteronomy 8:5 as he relates Israel’s experience to the Lord’s discipline. The same idea is also carried out in the book of Job where God is said to chastise people on the bed of pain so that they may repent (Job 33:19-26). In the book of 1 Kings, King Ahab, after his murder of Naboth, is confronted by Prophet Elijah who declares God’s judgment upon him for the sin he has committed. After hearing the judgment, King Ahab “... tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted while also laying on the sackcloth and going around meekly. (1 Kings 21:1-27). Afterwards, God himself recognizes how King Ahab has humbled himself and repented after learning of the judgment against him. In Psalm 32, the pain that David experiences in his body causes him to confess all his sins. The Psalmist also describes his painful experience in Psalm 118:18 as God’s acts of chastisement. In the book of Daniel, the once proud King Nebuchadnezzar humbles himself in repentance before God after serving his seven year sentence of living like and with wild animals. (Daniel 4). In the book of Jonah, the people of Nineveh, after hearing Jonah’s proclamation of God’s judgment upon them repented of their sins (Jonah 3:6-10). We can thus see that in the Old Testament, suffering plays a very key role in leading the people of God to repentance.

Like in the Old Testament, the concept of suffering leading a believer to repentance is also widely held in the New Testament. The best example is seen in the prodigal

son, who, after suffering, comes back to his senses and returns to his Father in repentance, ready to live a transformed life (Luke 15:11-32). In 2 Corinthians 7:10, Paul asserts that godly sorrow produces repentance, leading to salvation. In his first letter, Peter states that suffering in the flesh means ceasing to sin (1 Peter 4:1-2). The writer of Hebrews also states that God chastises His children so that they can repent and walk in obedience (Hebrews 12:6). The Lord Jesus also tells believers in the Church at Laodicea: “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.” (Revelation 3:19). Jesus’ desire is that his rebuke and discipline in this Church lead to repentance. We can thus say that suffering leads to repentance among God’s people.

The other way that we also see suffering relating to sanctification in the Bible is the purification of God’s people. In Deuteronomy 4:20, God relates the experience of the Israelites in Egypt to that of the iron- smelting furnace, an analogy of sanctification in a Christian. The Psalmist also states that God has refined them like silver (Psalm 66:10). In Isaiah 48:10 & 11, God looks at the afflictions of the Israelites in Babylon and describes them as His refining and testing acts. Suffering is hereby presented as a way of removing ungodliness from God’s people. The writer of Proverbs puts it even clearer: “Folly is bound in the heart of a Child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.” (Proverbs 22:15). The notion of God purifying His people through suffering is also held among prophets. Special examples are prophets like Jeremiah through whom God affirms that Israel’s Egypt experience was like that of the iron furnace (Jeremiah 11:4), Ezekiel through whom God says His chastisement of the Israelites is like a furnace (Ezekiel 22:17-22, Ezekiel 22:20-22), and Zechariah 13:9 where God looks at Israel’s suffering and says He has tried and refined them in the furnace of affliction.

In the New Testament, this concept of suffering as a tool used by God in the purification of His people is also widely held. In his letter, James asserts that trials test believers' faith and make them (believers) mature, complete, and lacking nothing (James 1:2-4). In his first letter, Peter tells his audience that they are being refined through their suffering (1 Peter 1:7). It is also stated in Hebrews 2:10 that Jesus Christ is made perfect through suffering.

Besides the purification of God's people, the Bible also closely links the suffering of God's people to their learning. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses says that God used the suffering of the Israelites in the desert to teach them (Deuteronomy 8:3). In Psalm 119:71, the psalmist notes that his affliction results to great learning of God's decrees. In Isaiah 30:20-21, God promises to teach Israel in the midst of their adversity and affliction.

In the New Testament, several passages also point out to the reality of God's people learning through their afflictions. The apostle Paul says in Philippians that he has, through suffering learnt to be content in every situation (Philippians 4:10-13). In Hebrews 5:8, it is also written that the Lord Jesus Christ himself learned obedience through suffering (Hebrews 5:8).

Having looked at the ways through which suffering relates to sanctification through the survey of influential alternative answers from the Church, the chronological development in the Bible, and the experience of Christians of the Diocese of Lango, we can now conclude that suffering is closely related to sanctification through the following ways.

First of all, like the role played by heat in the melting and purification of silver and gold, suffering is used by God to remove ungodly character in the life of a believer. This definitely leads to their purification, and ultimately sanctification.

Secondly, suffering is also used by God to form virtues in His people. This comes through their exposure to such experiences that cause them to have their faith stretched to levels they have never imagined.

In addition to the formation of virtues, suffering also reveals the horror of sin and by this Christians do not only get to know how bad sin and evil are but also get disgusted by them. They consequently get to hate them and love goodness.

Also, the pain that comes with suffering does not only help in the detection of sin in the life of a believer but also pushes him/ her to repentance and forsaking of the sinful things he/ she could have been doing. In the long run, the Christian gets on the path of righteousness and sees a change in his life.

Apart from enabling believers to detect sin and repent of it, suffering also awakens believers from their spiritual sleep in the world so that they begin to seek God more than they have been doing. With the removal of such distractions, a Christian can focus on his/ her God.

In addition to the detection of sin and fostering of repentance among Christians, suffering also destroys man's idols, brings him to the end of himself, leaving him in a place where he has no choice than to once again go before God. This consequently leads to a life of humility and dependence on God.

On top of destroying man's idol and bringing him to God, suffering also provides very many learning opportunities for the people of God. Through their experience of

suffering, they get to know the effect of sinful acts and learn not to repeat them. At the end, they live a life of holiness.

On top of the provision of learning opportunities to the believer, suffering also creates an environment for the people of God to not only grow in holiness but remain on that path. This is done through the pain one experiences once they depart from such a path.

Finally, death, one of the forms of suffering is a prerequisite for receiving ultimate/perfect sanctification. Without death, a believer cannot experience ultimate sanctification, as Paul also asserts: "... flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 15:50).

In spite of the fact that the above comprehensive conclusions are in line with God's word and influential voices from the Church, there are a number of competing alternatives that have been presented by different people.

To the conclusion that suffering leads to the formation of virtues, Eleonore Stump notes that "some people will point out that suffering sometimes leads to the opposite effects... not to a person's increased closeness to God but rather to his distance from God."²⁷⁴ One respondent also argued that suffering can make some people bitter and hate God instead of coming closer to Him. Looking at the book of Job, the respondent opined: "the story of Job's wife teaches us that some people can become bitter and backslide in the midst of their suffering."²⁷⁵ To this alternative competing alternative answer we respond: first of all, the Bible does not only state that suffering leads to sanctification but also gives very many examples

²⁷⁴ Stump, E. Atonement. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2018.

²⁷⁵ Response from interviewee number 29.

of those who suffered, never backslid, and got sanctified through their suffering. Secondly, as Stump asserts: “since human beings have free will, nothing can guarantee that anything that might be healing or helpful for the post- Fall human condition will actually have that effect.”²⁷⁶ Further still, as seen in the previous chapter of this work, both God and man have designated roles to play in sanctification. If God does His part and man fails to do what he is supposed to do, it does not render God a failure, or the role played by suffering in sanctification null and void.

Another competing alternative, as Stump notes, come from some people who “object that there are afflictions, such as depressions which cut sufferers off from any religious consolation no matter what their suffering”²⁷⁷ is. To this we respond: the scripture puts it very clear in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that God cannot let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. He controls the suffering that comes to us. Even in situations like depression, God is still able to work out His purpose if we choose to work with Him, since there is no situation that is irredeemable by Him.

Having defended the above comprehensive conclusions against the competing alternatives, we now turn to its relevance to life and ministry.

First and foremost, knowing that God uses suffering in the purification of His people can keep the Christians of the Diocese of Lango strong in the midst of their suffering. They can work with God towards His desired end in their lives by identifying the elements of ungodliness that are being removed from them.

²⁷⁶ Stump. E. Atonement. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2018.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

Secondly, knowing that God uses suffering to form virtues in His people can help the Christians of the Diocese of Lango work with Him patiently as they watch such virtues being formed in them. The gospel ministers in this Diocese are also able to walk with the people they are pastoring as they patiently watch these virtues grow in the lives of these people entrusted to them by the Lord.

In addition to helping in working with God towards virtue formation, the knowledge that suffering reveals the horror of sin can motivate the Christians of the Diocese of Lango to hate sin and pursue goodness. It also enables the gospel ministers in this Diocese to point out to the Christians the horror of evil and sin being exposed on a daily basis, encourage them to avoid all such evil acts, and instead pursue goodness. The very many evil acts being committed in the society can be used for evangelism and discipleship purposes.

Furthermore, the fact that suffering helps a believer detect sin and repent of it can provoke the Christians of the Diocese of Lango to first of all assess their lives in times of suffering. In the event that they have committed any sin so that their apparent suffering is God's acts of chastisement, they can immediately repent of such sins and get back to God. They can also not get annoyed by God's chastisement. Gospel ministers in this Diocese are as well able to point out to the people they are leading the impact of both individual and communal sins. In the event of a corporate sin that might have attracted a corporate chastisement, God's people can be led in the prayer of repentance as they realign their lives to God's way.

In addition to being provoked to hate sin and seek goodness, knowing that God uses suffering to awaken His people from their sleep can help them wake up from such oblivion and get back to God's place of holiness. Suffering can therefore become a

catalyst for communal revival since many people are always so receptive to the gospel during troublesome times.

Furthermore, knowing that God uses suffering to bring man to the end of himself can help the Christians of the Diocese of Lango return and put their trust in God once again. They can also forsake all kinds of idols they might have created in their lives as they look to the Lord again.

On top of learning to trust God alone, like David said, “it was good that I was afflicted so that I might know your decrees” (Psalm 119:71) NIV, knowing that God uses suffering as learning opportunities can help the Christians of the Diocese of Lango draw many lessons from their suffering. Such learning can lead to growth among both the Christians and their leaders.

In addition to the learning of valuable lessons from their suffering and growing through them, knowing that God uses suffering to keep His people on the path of righteousness means that whereas a Christian is not supposed to look for suffering in order to be close to God, the Christians of the Diocese of Lango can use their experience of suffering to draw closer to God and remain firm in that relationship.

Finally, the reality of death as a means for God’s people to get to the next phase of sanctification and life first of all clears all kinds of death- related fear from the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. They can prepare themselves well, knowing that they are not going to be here forever. Gospel ministers in this Diocese too can prepare the sheep of God that have been entrusted to them for this reality. In the event of the death of their fellow believers, they can mourn, but with hope, knowing that what has happened is necessary for the next phase of life, and not a punishment.

CHAPTER FOUR: A THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING FROM THE AFRICAN POINT OF VIEW AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE CHRISTIANS OF THE DIOCESE OF LANGO

4.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the development of a theology of suffering from the African point of view and the assessment of its relevance to the Christians of the Diocese of Lango.

4.1. A theology of suffering from the African point of view and its relevance to the Christians of the Diocese of Lango

While comparing the suffering in Africa with those in other parts of the world, Matthew Michael comments that “even though situations of pain and suffering exist in other parts of the world, the African continent seems to have monopoly of human problem.”²⁷⁸ As Michael notes, Africa’s dark history of slavery and colonialism, together with the current problems like famine, war, drought, debt burden, labor export (modern day slavery), to mention but a few vis-à-vis the exponential growth in the number of Christians in the continent greatly poses a need for the development of a theology of suffering from her point of view.

In the development of a theology in any community, Keon-Sang An asserts that the tradition of that particular community “... significantly influences the way in which theology is done,”²⁷⁹ because “people read the biblical texts in a particular historical and cultural context.”²⁸⁰ In developing a theology of suffering from the African point of view, Elizabeth Wairimu Mburu, in her article, “Is God a God of Retribution? A

²⁷⁸ Michael, M. *Christian Theology and African Traditions*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers. 2013.

²⁷⁹ An, K. *An Ethiopian Reading of the Bible: Biblical Interpretation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications. 2015.

²⁸⁰ Ibid

worldview Interpretation Using the Four- Legged- Stool Hermeneutical Model,” opines that “the traditional African understanding of suffering, like that of many other theological themes therefore influences how a modern African views and relates to suffering.”²⁸¹

The first question that comes to mind when we talk about a theology of suffering is, did God create evil, or, is He the cause of suffering in the world created by Him? Gwinyai H. Muzorewa answers that “among the Africans, there is a prevailing thinking and belief that God did not create evil, nor does (He) God cause it to inflict humanity.”²⁸² Brian Grogan opines that “evil is the major cause of human suffering.”²⁸³ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop traces the root of this evil to original sin, and asserts that “when Adam and Eve sinned, the whole of creation was affected, which explains why we now have to endure natural disasters such as earthquake and ravages of diseases.”²⁸⁴ The Langi also traditionally believe that God is a good being, with no evil intent against His creation. Suffering, according to them is caused by Satan, who works through his agents called “cene or jogi,” literally translated as “demons.” These demons are believed to cause suffering by “directly attacking men or influencing them to do malicious acts like murder, theft, witchcraft, etcetera against their fellow men.”²⁸⁵ In fact, “Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army is believed to be under the guidance of an evil spirit who keeps on

²⁸¹ Reed, L. R. *Christianity and Suffering: African Perspective*. Carlisle: Langham Publishing. 2017.

²⁸² Muzorewa, G. H. *African Origins of Monotheism: Challenging the Eurocentric Interpretation of God Concepts in the Continent and in Diaspora*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications. 2014.

²⁸³ Grogan, B. *God You’re Breaking My Heart: What is God’s Response to Suffering and Evil?* Dublin: Messenger Publication. 2016.

²⁸⁴ Kunhiyop, S. W. *African Christian Theology*. Carlisle: Langham Publishing. 2023.

²⁸⁵ Response from interviewee number 33.

directing him on what to do.”²⁸⁶ Suffering, according to Africans is therefore in this world because of evil, and not God.

The concept of evil, and not God being the cause of suffering in the world is also held by many non- African Christian theologians. Andrews for instance asserts that when men make wrong choices, “... those choices come with consequences.”²⁸⁷ Barry L. Callen also asserts that “God never intends sin or evil”²⁸⁸ but “it comes from our choosing not to love in response to God’s love.”²⁸⁹

On top of the belief that suffering is in this world because of evil, and not God, many African Christian theologians also believe that although suffering exists in God’s world, God, through providence, which is “His supreme authority and control over His creation”²⁹⁰ fully controls it. Stephen Kanta Msiska asserts that “God who created humanity and all things governs all things in his perfect, holy love.”²⁹¹ Mburu also asserts that “although evil is allowed to prevail, and pain and suffering abound in the world, God is still in control.”²⁹² The Langi’s traditional understanding of God is also that He is able to do anything. God is described as “Obanga Atwer,” meaning “God Almighty.” Because He is “Atwer,” that is “The Almighty,” “everything that takes place in this world, including suffering, is under His control.”²⁹³

This idea of God being in control of suffering in the world is also held by many non- African Christian theologians. Rochelle Zieman, for example opines that “all

²⁸⁶ Response from interviewee number 28.

²⁸⁷ Andrews E. D. *Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

²⁸⁸ Callen, B. L. *The Jagged Journey: Suffering- God’s Heart and Our Calling*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2018.

²⁸⁹ Ibid

²⁹⁰ Andrews D.E., *Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

²⁹¹ Msiska, S. K. *Golden Buttons: Christianity and Tradition Religion Among the Tumbuka*. Mzuzu: Luviri Press. 2018.

²⁹² Reed, L. R. *Christianity and Suffering: African Perspective*. Carlisle: Langham Publishing. 2017.

²⁹³ Response from questionnaire number 20.

suffering is under God's sovereignty and authority; for there to be any suffering outside His authority would render Him powerless."²⁹⁴ Dianne Langberg also states that "suffering occurs with the knowledge and oversight of the Father."²⁹⁵ Jerry Bridges, holding the same view also adds that "... all occasions of pain and sorrow are under the absolute control of God."²⁹⁶ But we ask, how is God's control seen in the suffering of His people?

A number of respondents asserted that God's control over suffering is seen through His permission of it, regulation of the devil's operation, screening of His people's suffering, and matching His people's suffering with their abilities. One respondent said, "I believe that these Lord's Resistance Army and the Karamojongs entered our land because God permitted them to do so."²⁹⁷ Another one added, "Like in Job's story, I believe that these evil men and women attacking us cannot go beyond the limits set by God."²⁹⁸ Another respondent also stated, "I strongly believe that God cannot give us what we can't handle."²⁹⁹

Like the African Christian theologians and the Langi Christians, other non- African Christian theologians also acknowledge that God reigns over suffering through different ways. Ronald Dunn for instance looks at Job's story and asserts that "the Devil himself could not touch him (Job) without divine permission, and only within limits prescribed by God."³⁰⁰ Linnea Ebersole also opines that "God, in His wisdom, has allowed Satan to operate in this world within the boundaries God has set for

²⁹⁴ Zieman, R. *God's Design for Suffering: How Spiritual Practices Help Us in Our Suffering*. Bloomington: WestBow Press. 2022.

²⁹⁵ Langberg, D. *Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores*. Greensboro: New Growth Press. 2015.

²⁹⁶ Bridges, J. *Trusting God*. Colorado: NavPress. 2016.

²⁹⁷ Response from interviewee number 4.

²⁹⁸ Response from interviewee number 26.

²⁹⁹ Response from questionnaire number 3.

³⁰⁰ Dunn, R. *Will God Heal Me? God's Power and Purpose in Suffering*. Nashville: B & H Publishing. 2013.

him.”³⁰¹ According to Joni Tada, “this sin- stained planet would have ripped apart at the seams long time ago were it not for the restraining hand of God.”³⁰² Tada further asserts that “moment by moment, God is engaged with suffering, restraining it and only allowing those harmful things to reach us that ultimately fit into his plan for your life.”³⁰³ Even in the suffering that results from man’s exercise of His free will, Bridges asserts that although God permits people to act contrary to and in defiance to His revealed will, “He never permits them to act contrary to His sovereign will.”³⁰⁴

Regarding the screening and regulating of suffering, Zieman states that “God is there to allow only what is beneficial for us and the Kingdom.”³⁰⁵ Bridges also holds the same view and asserts that God “... brings or allows to come only that which is for his glory and our good.”³⁰⁶ About believers’ suffering vis-a-vis their abilities, Zieman opines that “God won’t give us more than we can handle.”³⁰⁷ Even in suffering that comes through temptation, Andrews opines that God “knows the point where temptation would be too much for us to handle and He promises never to allow us to reach that point.”³⁰⁸ Even in the event of chastisement, Jeff Biggerstaff asserts that “God is very merciful and compassionate, and He will only apply the amount of corrective force necessary and no more.”³⁰⁹

³⁰¹ Ebersole, L. *Pain, Suffering, and Overcoming While We Wait to Hatch: Hope and Encouragement for Hurting People*. Meadville: Fulton Books. 2023.

³⁰² Tada, J. *Pain and Providence*. Peabody: Rose Publishing. 2022.

³⁰³ Ibid

³⁰⁴ Bridges, J. *Trusting God*. Colorado: NavPress. 2016.

³⁰⁵ Zieman, R. *God’s Design for Suffering: How Spiritual Practices Help Us in Our Suffering*. Bloomington: WestBow Press. 2022.

³⁰⁶ Bridges, J. *Trusting God*. Colorado: NavPress. 2016.

³⁰⁷ Zieman, R. *God’s Design for Suffering: How Spiritual Practices Help Us in Our Suffering*. Bloomington: WestBow Press. 2022.

³⁰⁸ Andrews E. D. *Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

³⁰⁹ Biggerstaff, J. *Suffering from God’s Perspective: Learning to Overcome Most of Your Pain*. Columbus: Gatekeeper Press. 2022.

Besides the belief that God fully controls the suffering of His people, African Christian theologians also believe that God both knows and is concerned about the suffering of His people. Msiska asserts that He (God) "... looks after every human life in his gracious keeping."³¹⁰ Francis A. Arinze also holds the same view and asserts that "our Lord (Jesus Christ), by everything he did, showed that he had come for persons who are suffering, who are abandoned and rejected by society."³¹¹ Like these other Africans, the Langi also traditionally view God as a merciful being. He is referred to as "Akony," literally translated as "Helper." God is believed to not only fight for but is always on the side of the weak and the downtrodden. This traditional concept of God was carried forward and integrated into Christianity, so that in the midst of suffering, God becomes the ultimate defender. One particular respondent asserted: "one of the things that gave us hope during the insurgency was the assurance that God was aware of our suffering and was there, fighting for us."³¹² Even today, African Christians who are oppressed in various ways still believe that God is aware of their suffering, that He condemns all injustices being done against them, and is also fighting for them.

The concept of God knowing His people's suffering and fighting for them is also held by other non- African theologians. James R. Edwards for instance asserts that "God is not a detached observer in the universe, deaf to the cries of his people and indifferent to the plight of suffering"³¹³ but "knows everything about the affliction

³¹⁰ Msiska, S. K. *Golden Buttons: Christianity and Tradition Religion Among the Tumbuka*. Mzuzu: Luviri Press. 2018.

³¹¹ Arinze F. A. *Christ's New Homeland- Africa: Contributions to the Synod on the Family by African Pastors*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. 2015.

³¹² Response from interviewee number 41.

³¹³ Edwards, J. R. *The Divine Intruder: When God Breaks Into Your Life*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2016.

of his people, all their oppression and suffering.”³¹⁴ Joni Eareckson Tada also asserts that “God watches out for the most vulnerable among his people.”³¹⁵ Kenneth C. Way also says that “God remains present with his suffering people.”³¹⁶ Aimee Patterson, holding the same view also asserts that as Christians suffer, “God observes their misery, hears their groaning, and knows their suffering.”³¹⁷

In addition to the belief that God knows the suffering of His people and fights for them, African Christian theologians also believe that God equips His people with the required strength to handle any affliction that He permits in their lives. John Jusu asserts that “His (God’s) grace is always sufficient for us in our circumstances.”³¹⁸ Many of the respondents stated that they believe it was God’s strength that had enabled them to go through their afflictions. One respondent looked back to the loss of his son and said: “when my boy was murdered by the Karamojong warriors, I didn’t know how I was going to move on. However, I found myself getting stronger every time I prayed. That’s how I managed it. And that was God.”³¹⁹

Like the African Christian theologians, many non- African Christian theologians also believe that God gives His people strength to go through their suffering. Andrews, for instance asserts that He (God) provides “... the resources for us to cope, survive, and even strive amidst adversity.”³²⁰ Dunn also holds this same view and states that

³¹⁴ Edwards, J. R. *The Divine Intruder: When God Breaks Into Your Life*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2016.

³¹⁵ Tada, J. E. *Beyond Suffering Bible: Where Struggles Seem Endless, God’s Hope is Infinite*. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers. 2016.

³¹⁶ Way, K. C., *Judges and Ruth (Teach the Text Commentary Series)*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group. 2016.

³¹⁷ Patterson, A. *Suffering Well and Suffering With Reclaiming Marks of Christian Identity*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2023.

³¹⁸ Jusu, J. *Africa Study Bible. New Living Translation*. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishing. 2017.

³¹⁹ Response from interviewee number 18.

³²⁰ Andrews E. D. *Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

“God has not promised that disaster will not find its way to believers... but he has promised us grace to bear it.”³²¹

On top of equipping His people with the strength to go through their suffering, African Christian theologians also believe that God always meets His people in their suffering. Many respondents stated that the end of the Lord’s Resistance Army insurgency is a very clear demonstration of God’s power in the midst of suffering. One respondent in particular asked, “Who brought this insurgency to the end? Who could stop Joseph Kony, if not only God?”³²² Another respondent recalled his escape from the Lord’s Resistance Army and said: “I was abducted by the rebels seven times and I managed to escape all those seven times. Who protected me and as well enabled me to escape all these times, if not God?”³²³ One other respondent looked at suffering in the context of the cross and said: “although I am suffering right now in this physical form, I know that the death of Jesus Christ has saved me from eternal suffering.”³²⁴

Like the Christians of the Diocese of Lango, several non- African Christian theologians also believe that God always provides a solution to the problem of human suffering. Andrews, for instance states that God “... always provides an escape through His wisdom.”³²⁵ Tada adds that “(He) God is constantly protecting us from full force of the fall and the evil and suffering that goes with it.”³²⁶ Barry L. Callen also asserts that “sometimes God intervenes and sometimes God remains silent and

³²¹ Dunn, R. Will God Heal Me? God’s Power and Purpose in Suffering. Nashville: B & H Publishing. 2013.

³²² Response from questionnaire number 14.

³²³ Response from interviewee number 29.

³²⁴ Response from questionnaire number 7.

³²⁵ Andrews E. D. Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

³²⁶ Tada, J. Pain and Providence. Peabody: Rose Publishing. 2022.

inactive,”³²⁷ yet even in silence, He knows what He is doing. Biggerstaff holds the same view and adds that “God is always with us in a trial, to watch over us and to protect us.”³²⁸ Aimee Patterson looks at Jesus’ ministry and opines that he “... has a compassionate attitude or disposition that moves him to action when he meets people who suffer.”³²⁹ Jensen also notes that “the apostles likewise are depicted as restoring physical wholeness to several individuals.”³³⁰ Andrews looks at the cross and asserts that “the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ provided us with a way to escape the eternal consequences of our own wrong doings.”³³¹

The other very central issue regarding suffering and God is justice for the victims of suffering. God, according to the Langi is the “Angol Kop Atira,” literally translated as “The Righteous Judge,” who judges every one impartially. Although the wicked always seem to get away with their wrong doings, many respondents asserted that they believe that God knows all their suffering and will give them justice, “whether in this world or in the coming world.”³³² Andrews also holds this same view and asserts that “God’s cosmic justice ensures that all accounts will be settled, whether in this life or the next.”³³³ Regarding what may appear like God’s delay in judging wicked men who hurt His people, Callen states that the “Bible puts divine power in the context of God’s love relationship with his beloved world.”³³⁴ God, according

³²⁷ Callen, B. L. *The Jagged Journey: Suffering- God’s Heart and Our Calling*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2018.

³²⁸ Biggerstaff, J. *Suffering from God’s Perspective: Learning to Overcome Most of Your Pain*. Columbus: Gatekeeper Press. 2022.

³²⁹ Patterson, A. *Suffering Well and Suffering With Reclaiming Marks of Christian Identity*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2023.

³³⁰ Fitzpatrick, S. J., Kerridge, I. H., Jordens, C. F. C., Zoloth, L., Tollefsen, C., Tsomo, K. L., Jensen, M. P., Sachedina, A., & Sarma, D. (2016). Religious Perspectives on Human Suffering: Implications for Medicine and Bioethics. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 55(1), 159–173. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26749234>

³³¹ Andrews E. D. *Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

³³² Response from questionnaire number 11.

³³³ Andrews E. D. *Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

³³⁴ Callen, B. L. *The Jagged Journey: Suffering- God’s Heart and Our Calling*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2018.

to Callen “tends to withhold acts of divine coercion in favour of the wooing of reaching and redeeming love”³³⁵ so that although He has the power to always destroy the wicked, He gives them time to repent, for He does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23).

African Christian theologians also believe that although suffering is bad, it can also come with positive impact. Jusu, holding this view contends that “God works in our suffering for our good.”³³⁶ Looking at their lives at the time of this study, many respondents acknowledged that in as much as they had lost many people and property during the Lord’s Resistance Army insurgency and the Karamojong cattle rustling, many positive things had happened to them. One respondent asserted: “my suffering has made me know how powerful and trustworthy God is. I saw His hands as I escaped from the hands of the enemy, and that has caused my faith to grow.”³³⁷ Several respondents stated that they met the Lord Jesus Christ in the Internally Displaced Persons’ Camps, a thing they believed could have hardly happened to them if all was going well for them.

Like the African Christian theologians, many non- African Christian theologians also believe that God can indeed bring good things out of the suffering of His people. Andrews, for instance asserts that “God can use even the bad things for a greater good.”³³⁸ Tada says that this is possible because “God’s overarching decrees allows

³³⁵ Callen, B. L. *The Jagged Journey: Suffering- God’s Heart and Our Calling*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2018.

³³⁶ Jusu, J. *Africa Study Bible*. New Living Translation. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishing. 2017.

³³⁷ Response from questionnaire number 23.

³³⁸ Andrews E. D. *Why Me? When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Ohio: Christian Publishing House. 2018.

for him to turn wicked hearts and evil motives this way and that, all to suit his higher purpose.”³³⁹ Tollefsen also adds that “... God will bring good out of all evils.”³⁴⁰

In the midst of these suffering, God expects Christians to respond in some constructive ways. One of them, according to the Langi Christians is prayers. Before the introduction of Christianity to Lango, the Langi worshipped different gods who played different roles in their community. Whenever there was drought, a specific community would carry out ‘myelo kot,’ literally translated as ‘rain dancing.’ All mature members the affected community would go to a specific hill where these gods were believed to reside, offer sacrifices to them, and ask them for rain. Surprisingly, “it would always rain immediately those rituals were performed.”³⁴¹ After the introduction of Christianity, the Langi replaced these gods with the living God of Israel. Just like they would go and cry to these gods in times of drought, “the Langi Christians believe that praying to the living God is one of the best ways of responding to suffering.”³⁴² During the Lord’s Resistance Army insurgency, several prayer meetings were held, and one respondent, referring to those prayer meetings opined: “it is God alone, through those prayers, and not the government of Uganda, that brought this war to an end!”³⁴³

African Christian theologians also have a belief that when suffering has occurred, one must see how to cope up with it instead of questioning why God has allowed it to happen. This however does not negate the fact that suffering is in itself painful

³³⁹ Tada, J. Pain and Providence. Peabody: Rose Publishing. 2022.

³⁴⁰ Fitzpatrick, S. J., Kerridge, I. H., Jordens, C. F. C., Zoloth, L., Tollefsen, C., Tsomo, K. L., Jensen, M. P., Sachedina, A., & Sarma, D. (2016). Religious Perspectives on Human Suffering: Implications for Medicine and Bioethics. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 55(1), 159–173. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26749234>

³⁴¹ Response from interviewee number 45.

³⁴² Response from interviewee number 28.

³⁴³ Response from interviewee number 19.

and cannot be enjoyed. Even in instances of gratuitous suffering, hope is still put on God, who has the absolute knowledge about all that takes place in the world. Many respondents stated that they decided to move on with their lives as they waited for God to heal their land.

African Christian theologians also believe that compassion must be exercised in the midst of suffering. Jacquineau Azetsop, speaking from the Igbo community of Nigeria's world view asserts that "restoration of human dignity remains a primary concern for the overall health of any community."³⁴⁴ This African culture is built on the continent's philosophy of Ubuntu, which focuses on a communal life of interdependence. Among the Langi, "one person's suffering is considered all the community members' suffering and, a communal effort is always applied in addressing the identified suffering."³⁴⁵ This same concept is also carried on to Christianity. Langi Christians work together to eradicate all kinds of suffering identified in the respective community. Funds are sometimes collected to help those in need so that they are relieved from their suffering. Perpetuators of evil are also confronted and brought to book. Callen also holds this same view and asserts that "we (Christians) are to represent Jesus Christ in this evil- laden and suffering world, by relieving the suffering of others, even at the cost of our own suffering."³⁴⁶

Having developed a theology of suffering from the African point of view through the survey of the alternative influential answers from the Church and views of the

³⁴⁴ Azetsop, J. HIV & AIDS in Africa: Christian Reflection, Public Health, Social Transformation. New York: Orbis Books. 2016.

³⁴⁵ Response from interviewee number 46.

³⁴⁶ Callen, B. L. The Jagged Journey: Suffering- God's Heart and Our Calling. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2018.

Christians of the Diocese of Lango, let us now turn to the Bible and assess the relevant data in their chronological development.

The first thing that the Bible says about suffering is that it is caused by sin, and not God. God's creation accounts ends with Him seeing everything to be good. After creation, everything goes on well until Genesis chapter three when Adam and Eve sin against God. Adam and Eve's sin is followed by judgment against them and the snake (Genesis 3:14-19). From that moment, suffering enters the world and evil begins to manifest in several ways. Specific examples are the murder of Abel by Cain (Genesis 4:8), the increase of wickedness in the world and God's judgment of the flood (Genesis 6:1-8), Joseph's mistreatment by his brothers (Genesis 39), the mistreatment of the Israelites by the Egyptians (Exodus 1-3), etcetera. In the prophets, the concept of suffering resulting from evil is also seen in places like 1 Kings 21:1-25 where Naboth is murdered by King Ahab and Jezebel, 2 Samuel 11:1-27 where Uriah is murdered by King David, to mention but a few.

The concept of suffering being caused by sin and not God also goes on in the New Testament. Specific examples are seen in the murder of the Hebrew babies at the birth of Jesus by King Herod (Matthew 2:16-18), the demonic imposed suffering on God's people (Mark 1:21-34, 5:1-20, Luke 13:10-17), and the persecution of Jesus' disciples (Acts 7:54-60, 8:1-3, 12:1-5, Revelation 2:10). Paul also puts it very clearly that death entered the world through sin (Romans 5:12).

The other thing that we also see in the Bible is God's control over the suffering of His people. In 2 Samuel 24:16, the Lord, having sent an angel to punish Israel, commands him to stop when he has stretched his hands to destroy Jerusalem, and the angel does just that. In the book of Job, Satan attacks Job only after getting

permission from God (Job 1:12, 2:6). Even when the permission is given to him, Satan operates only within the limits set by God (Job 1:12, 2:6). Prophet Amos also states that no disaster can occur in the city without the Lord's approval (Amos 3:6).

In the New Testament, the concept of God's control over suffering is also vividly seen. Significant examples can be seen in places like Luke 22:31 where Jesus tells his disciples that Satan has asked for permission to sift each of them like wheat but he has prayed for them all, John 19:11 where Jesus tells Pilate that the authority he has over him has just been given to him from above, Revelation 20:7-8 where Satan is released from prison after the a thousand years so that he can go and deceive the world, etcetera. In all these passages, we see God's control over suffering being clearly displayed.

Apart from God's control over human suffering, the Bible also clearly states that God knows the suffering of His people and He also fights for them. Notable among many examples are His hearing of the cry of Abel's blood (Genesis 4:10); His hearing of the cries of Ishmael and help to him (Genesis 21:1-20); His seeing of the misery of His people in Egypt, hearing of their cries, concern about their suffering, and coming down to deliver them (Exodus 3:7-10). The Psalmist also acknowledges that God does not only uphold justice for the poor (Psalm 140:12) but He also defends the weak (Psalm 68:5, Proverbs 22:22-23). Prophet Isaiah also states that God suffers with His people (Isaiah 63:9) and Zephaniah adds the He as well saves them (Zephaniah 3:19). In Daniel 3, God steps in the blazing furnace and prevents it from consuming Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Daniel is also saved by God who sends His angel to shut the mouths of lions (Daniel 6:22) so that he (Daniel) is not eaten by them.

The concept of God's care for the suffering is also clearly seen in the New Testament. Jesus for instance heals the sick (Matthew 4:23-25, Mark 1:29-34, 5:1-20, Luke 13:10-17), feeds the hungry (Matthew 14:13-21), has compassion on the crowd (Matthew 9:36), and tags helping the needy in society to helping him (Matthew 25:31-45). After his ascension, Jesus' disciples also continue with his work of healing the sick (Acts 3:6). In Acts 9:4-6, Jesus himself identifies with the suffering Church by asking Saul why he is persecuting him. When Peter is arrested by Herod and put in prison, the Church prays and God sends an angel to release him from the prison (Acts 12:1-11). Paul also commands Timothy to ensure that widows are taken care of (1 Timothy 5:3-6).

Apart from acknowledging God's care for the suffering, the Bible also states that He (God) brings good out of the suffering of His people. The best example is seen in Genesis 50:20 where Joseph states that God has turned what was meant for evil to good. The same thing is also seen in Prophet Isaiah where the afflictions of God's suffering servant turns out for the salvation of His people (Isaiah 53). The suffering of the Israelites in their Babylonian exile is also used by God to call them to repentance (Jeremiah 29).

In the New Testament, God is also seen to bring good things out of the suffering of His people. Significant examples are the crucifixion of Jesus Christ that turns out to be the salvation of men (Luke 22:20-21), the persecution of the disciples that results to the scattering of all the believers except the apostles throughout Samaria and Judea and the preaching of the gospel (Acts 8 & 9), Paul's imprisonment that results to the advancement of the gospel (Philippians 1:12), and the suffering of the saints that turn out to be a form of their sanctification (Romans 5:3-5 James 1:4, 1 Peter

5:10), Romans 8:28 where Paul says God causes everything, (including suffering), to work for the good of His people.

In spite of the many evil committed against the people of God, the Bible still presents a picture of the prevalence of God's justice at the end of it all. In the book of Genesis 4, God instantly judges Cain for his murder of Abel. In Numbers 12, Miriam and Aaron are immediately punished by God for their grumbling against Moses. After the death of Naboth, God severely judges the house of Ahab (2 Kings 8:1-10:36), and David is also punished after his murder of Uriah (2 Samuel 12:1-22). The author of Ecclesiastes also says that God will judge everyone for whatever they have done (Ecclesiastes 3:17 & 12:14).

The concept of God's justice is also held so highly in the New Testament. In Matthew 22:22, Jesus says that the son of man will be betrayed as decreed but it will be terrible for the one who betrays him. Paul says in Romans 2:6 that everyone will be repaid according to what they have done. Paul also adds in Colossians 3:25 that whoever does wrong will be repaid for their wrong doing. In Revelation 20:13, John gives a picture of everyone being judged according to what they did while on earth. Even Satan, the tormentor of God's people is finally judged and thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

Regarding the appropriate response to suffering, prayer is one of the things that God expects from His people. In Numbers 21, when the Israelites sin against God and He sends poisonous snakes to bite them, they respond by prayers, and God hears them. In 2 Chronicles 7:12-14, God's people are also expected to pray in their times of suffering so that their land is healed. Many people in the Bible are also presented to cry to God in their pain. Examples are King David in Psalm 22:1-2, King Jehoshaphat

in 2 Chronicles 20, and King Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 32:20-30. God also says in Jeremiah 29:10-13 that Israel will cry to Him in their captivity and He will hear them.

In the New Testament, believers are also expected to pray in the midst of their afflictions. Jesus himself prays when he is covered with sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42). In Acts 12:1-10, believers earnestly pray for Peter when he is put in prison by King Herod. Paul also prays three times when he receives a thorn in his flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). The apostle James also tells those who are in trouble or sick to pray (James 5:14-16).

Another kind of response to suffering that we also see in the Old Testament is vengeance. Examples are the blood of Abel that cries to God (Genesis 4:10), the exercise of the rule of an eye for eye and tooth for tooth in Exodus 21:23-27, Leviticus 24:19-20, and Deuteronomy 19:21. In other words, one is to be repaid with the exact kind and amount of the suffering that he/ she has caused the other.

Although the concept of vengeance is so highly held in the Old Testament, Jesus changes its approach in the New Testament. In Matthew 5:38-42, he forbids his disciples from implementing the eye for eye or tooth for tooth principle in the face of suffering. He instead teaches forgiveness, even daily forgiving seven times seventy a brother who sins, yet sincerely repents (Matthew 18:21-22). He also asks the Father to forgive those who are crucifying him on the cross (Luke 23:34). While being stoned to death, Stephen, like Jesus, also asks the Father to forgive his killers (Acts 7:60). The apostle Paul likewise teaches the Romans to not be overcome by evil but instead overcome it with good (Romans 12:21). Like Jesus had taught his disciples to love their enemies (Luke 6:28), Paul also goes on and teaches the Romans

to bless those who curse them and feed their enemies because vengeance is for the Lord (Romans 12:19).

Another constructive response to suffering that we also see in the Old Testament is suffering patiently as one waits for the LORD. A special example is Joseph, who, having found himself in the midst of many acts of injustices decides to wait upon the Lord (Genesis 40:15). Prophet Isaiah also talks about the good things that come to those who wait upon the Lord in their afflictions (Isaiah 40:31). In the book of Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego embrace the burning furnace as they confess that God is able to deliver them from King Nebuchadnezzar's hands.

In the New Testament, the concept of bearing afflictions patiently while rejoicing and waiting for God is also underscored. Jesus Christ for example teaches his disciples to expect suffering (Mark 10:29-31, John 16:32-33), rejoice in their suffering (Matthew 5:10-12), and as well take heart in the midst of their suffering (John 16:32-33). In Acts 5:41, the apostles, having been persecuted, leave the Sanhedrin with great joy because of the opportunity to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. Apostle James also teaches his audience to consider it pure joy when they face different kinds of trials (James 1:2-4).

From the above survey of influential answers from the Church, assessment of the relevant Biblical data in their chronological development, we can draw the following comprehensive conclusion regarding a theology of suffering from the African point of view.

First of all, suffering is in the world because of evil, and not God. The sin of Adam and Eve that brought evil to this world together with the sinful acts of different men and women are the main causes of suffering, and not God.

Secondly, although God permits suffering in the world, He maintains absolute control over it through providence. No act of suffering can occur without the permission of the Father or beyond the limits set by Him.

Also, God knows the suffering of His people, cares for them and as well fights for them. God does not only know what His people go through but is working towards their freedom from the power of their oppressors.

Furthermore, God equips His people with the strength they need to go through their suffering. When He permits any kind of suffering in His people's lives, He definitely gives them the required strength to handle it.

The other conclusion about the way God relates with the suffering of His people is that He provides solutions to their suffering. This takes place through the end of some kinds of suffering among His people but also majorly through the redemption that comes through Jesus Christ on the cross.

Apart from offering solutions to the problem of human suffering, God's justice also prevails in the midst of human suffering. Everyone who has done any wicked thing against God's people and has refused to respond to His forgiveness through Jesus Christ will be judged, whether in this life or the next.

The other comprehensive conclusion also drawn from the above theology of suffering is that God brings good out of His people's suffering. He causes all things to work out for the good of His people, notably bringing about their sanctification.

In the midst of these suffering, Christians are expected to pray; embrace suffering when it comes their way, forgive those who offend them, and work towards the eradication of suffering in the world.

Having formulated the above comprehensive conclusion on the theology of suffering from the African point of view, we now defend it from one main competing alternative- deism. Deism competes with the assertion that God fully controls all the suffering that take place in this world. As Valerie G. Rempel notes, deists “have suggested that God simply created this world and the natural laws that govern it but now leaves it alone to keep running as if it were some kind of self- wondering watch.”³⁴⁷ God, according to this alternative is like an absentee land lord who has left the management of the house to the respective tenants so that when things go wrong “it is not God’s fault, nor can we expect God to intervene.”³⁴⁸ To this alternative we respond that God, as the Bible says, is actively involved in the affairs of this world. In 2 Chronicles 16:9, God’s eyes are said to run throughout the whole earth, looking for those to help. Bridges also adds that even “the so called laws of nature are nothing more than the physical expressions of the steady will of Christ.”³⁴⁹

Having defended the above comprehensive conclusion from the competing alternative, we now turn to the relevance of the above theology of suffering to the Christians of the Diocese of Lango.

First of all, from the knowledge that believers are supposed to expect suffering, the Christians of the Diocese of Lango get to prepare for any kind of suffering that may come to them, given the fact that they are disciples of Jesus Christ. For a believer, suffering is not a matter of if, but when.

³⁴⁷ Rempel, V. G. *Why Do We Suffer and Where Is God When We Do?* Harrisonburg: Herald Press. 2020.

³⁴⁸ Ibid

³⁴⁹ Ibid

Also, as Callen asserts, a theology of suffering helps Christians “... understand why evil manages to happen even in God’s world.”³⁵⁰ Such understanding, according to Rempel helps them not “blame God for what might look like a weakness in the creation of humanity.”³⁵¹ Knowing that suffering is in the world not because of God but evil precisely helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango get the right picture of who God is in regards to the cause of their suffering.

The above theology of suffering also helps stabilize the faith of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. This is because, as Rempel notes, when a disaster strikes, “people may begin to wonder whether it is possible or even right to believe in God”³⁵² as they ask: “after all, if God is not all powerful and in control of the world and its events, why should we believe?”³⁵³ Knowing that God is in control, according to Callen, helps “... stabilize our faith when the storms of life come.”³⁵⁴ Jusu also adds that we can, through this knowledge “... face the cruelty of suffering and pain without wavering.”³⁵⁵ One respondent, holding the same view also opined: “when people know that God is in control of their suffering, they can remain firm, even as they suffer.”³⁵⁶

The knowledge that God is present in the suffering of His people and ready to always protect and fight for them also helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango face

³⁵⁰ Callen, B. L. *The Jagged Journey: Suffering- God’s Heart and Our Calling*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2018.

³⁵¹ Rempel, V. G. *Why Do We Suffer and Where Is God When We Do?* Harrisonburg: Herald Press. 2020.

³⁵² Ibid

³⁵³ Ibid

³⁵⁴ Callen, B. L. *The Jagged Journey: Suffering- God’s Heart and Our Calling*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2018.

³⁵⁵ Jusu, J. *Africa Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers. 2017.

³⁵⁶ Response from the interviewee number 45.

their suffering with hope. Jusu, holding this same view asserts that this hope “... helps us to face squarely our pain and suffering now without fear.”³⁵⁷

Knowing that suffering is in the world because of the sin of Adam and Eve and the sins of other men and women helps in the liberation of the African Christians from the claim of a curse on them, leading to their suffering. This is from the fact that the Bible, especially Genesis 9:18-27 which talks about the curse of Canaan by Noah has been wrongly asserted against Africans. Gene Rice notes that many people have asserted that this passage “... speaks of a curse on black people.”³⁵⁸ He also adds that this passage has been used by many non- Africans to justify their “... prejudice against people of African descent,”³⁵⁹ and as well “calm divine sanction for slavery and segregations.”³⁶⁰ Dube, Owusu-Ansah, et al further note that “the Bible was used by those who colonized Africa to justify colonization.”³⁶¹ From the knowledge that they are not cursed, African Christians in general and the Christians of the Diocese of Lango in particular get to reject any wrong teaching they might have received, causing them to ignorantly accept the unjust sufferings imposed on them because of wrong interpretations and application of the Bible.

Apart from the use of the Bible against Africans by some non- Africans, Azetsop looks at the prevalence of Human Immune Virus in Africa and notes that “a fact sheet published in 2014 shows that African women are more infected than women in other continent.”³⁶² According to Azetsop, this has been so because women’s rights have

³⁵⁷ Jusu, J. Africa Study Bible. New Living Translation. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishing. 2017.

³⁵⁸ Rice, G. Africa and the Bible: Corrections Lenses—Critical Essays. Eugene: Cascade Books. 2019.

³⁵⁹ Ibid

³⁶⁰ Ibid

³⁶¹ Dube, M. W., Owusu- Ansah, S., Musili, T.K. African Women Legends and the Spirituality of Resistance. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis. 2024.

³⁶² Azetsop, J. HIV & AIDS in Africa: Christian Reflection, Public Health, Social Transformation. New York: Orbis Books. 2016.

been abused in several ways in Africa, even using the Bible. Azetsop therefore asserts that the liberation of women will only happen through steps which “criticize and condemn erroneous readings of the Bible that unfortunately reinforce cultural practices that block African women from making choices that would preserve their health.”³⁶³ As observed by Azetsop, knowing that God is against suffering helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango stand on their feet and challenge any wrong interpretations of the Bible that could have contributed to their suffering.

The understanding that suffering is part and partial of our salvation helps clear a number of heretical teachings, especially on prosperity gospel by some heretics in Africa and the Diocese of Lango. Jusu notes that there are Christians who “teach that followers of Christ should not suffer and should not be sick.”³⁶⁴ True salvation, according to these people, does not involve any kind of suffering. But from the above theology of suffering, as Callen argues, Christians of the Diocese of Lango learn to “resist embracing faith in ways that promise exemption from suffering.”³⁶⁵ The Christians of the Diocese of Lango can face their suffering with a positive attitude, knowing that it is not a sign of lack of faith on their side but rather a mark of true salvation.

There is another challenge that many Christians face when it comes to interacting with those who are suffering- the assumption that those who are suffering have committed some sin (s). Elizabeth Mburu asserts that “the book of Job challenges this assumption and forces us to think more deeply about the suffering of the

³⁶³ Azetsop, J. HIV & AIDS in Africa: Christian Reflection, Public Health, Social Transformation. New York: Orbis Books. 2016.

³⁶⁴ Jusu, J. Africa Study Bible. New Living Translation. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishing. 2017.

³⁶⁵ Callen, B. L. The Jagged Journey: Suffering- God’s Heart and Our Calling. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2018.

righteous or innocent people.”³⁶⁶ The Christians of the Diocese of Lango therefore learn to treat those suffering in their midst well, knowing that their suffering are not necessarily resulting from any sin they may suspect them to have committed.

One other key thing we learnt about God in the above theology of suffering is that His heart is with those who suffer and He expects His people to have the same towards them. Dube, Owusu- Ansah, et al assert that Christians, borrowing from God, should respond with compassion to the suffering, for “there is no way that one can praise the Lord while ignoring the people’s suffering.”³⁶⁷ Michael G. Maness & Kevaughn Mattis also add that “compassion requires one to enter into spaces where one identifies with the weak, vulnerable, and the powerless.”³⁶⁸ The Christians of the Diocese of Lango therefore learn to respond to those suffering in their midst through acts of compassion.

Besides the motivation for compassion, Arinze looks at Jesus’ response to the suffering and contends that “every pastor, imitating Christ, his sole model, should show to the faithful who are entrusted to his pastoral care, especially to those who are afflicted, the love, the kindness, and tenderness of God.”³⁶⁹ This model is so important to the Christians of the Diocese of Lango because, as Stan Chu Ilo asserts, “In our times, the Church’s involvement in the life of the poor, the needy, the suffering, and those on the margins of life is perhaps the greatest defense we have about the validity of our gospel.”³⁷⁰ If the Church ministers of the Diocese of Lango

³⁶⁶ Mburu, E. African Hermeneutics. Carlisle: Langham Creative Projects. 2019.

³⁶⁷ Dube, M. W., Owusu- Ansah, S., Musili, T.K. African Women Legends and the Spirituality of Resistance. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis. 2024.

³⁶⁸ Maness, M. G., Mattis K. Can You Hear My Pain?: Making Pastoral Theology Relevant in the Modern World. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2022.

³⁶⁹ Arinze F. A. Christ’s New Homeland- Africa: Contributions to the Synod on the Family by African Pastors. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. 2015.

³⁷⁰ Ilo, S. C. The Church and Development in Africa, Second Edition: Aid and Development from the Perspectives of Catholic Social Ethics. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2014.

follow in the footsteps of Jesus as described above, they will be effective shepherds to the sheep God has entrusted to them.

From the understanding that Christians are supposed to pray in the midst of their suffering, Christians of the Diocese of Lango also get the motivation to pray as they put their hope and trust in God. In prayer their burdens are lifted by the Lord and they also get healed and sanctified.

Furthermore, from the understanding that Christians are supposed to forgive those who hurt them, the Christians of the Diocese of Lango learn to forgive all those who have caused them much havoc as they get healed by the Lord and leave vengeance from him.

The understanding that Christians should wait for God in their suffering also helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango put their trust in God as they wait for Him to come to their rescue.

Furthermore, knowing that God screens all the suffering that come to His people, ensuring that they do not only get what will benefit them but is also manageable encourages the Christians of the Diocese of Lango to face their suffering with hope.

Further still, the knowledge that God controls Satan's operation helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango face their suffering with hope, knowing that they will not be forever or turn out to be destructive since God is in control.

Finally, the fact that God brings out good from every kind of suffering helps the Christians of the Diocese of Lango look out for the positive things, the lessons, the sanctifying effects that might be hidden by God in their suffering so that they don't remain the same at the end of their suffering.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the summary, conclusion, and recommendations based on the results of the study, as well as areas for further studies.

5.1 Summary of the research findings

This study was about the role of suffering in the sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. It was guided by three main objectives namely to discuss the meaning of suffering and sanctification from the Christian perspective, to establish the relationship between suffering and sanctification, & finally to develop a theology of suffering from the African point of view and show its relevance to the Christians of the Diocese of Lango.

The study revealed that the major causes of suffering in the world are: evil, persecution, sin, the broken status of the world, abuse of natural laws, satanic activities, and the need for the salvation of others. Although sin came out as one of the causes of suffering, respondents argued that their suffering was not in any way related to any sin they might have committed. This, according to the researcher's view is partly true because retributive suffering no longer exists among Christians in the New Testament although some kinds of suffering, as discovered in the study, can be inform of chastisement.

Regarding the meaning of sanctification, the study revealed that sanctification, which is about the believer's growth in holiness takes three main stages namely positional sanctification that takes place at confession, progressive sanctification that takes place from the confession of a believer to his/ her death, and ultimate or perfect sanctification that takes place at death and at the resurrection.

Sanctification, according to the study involves the effort of both man and God, and the completion of the second phase takes one's entire life here on earth. It is also marked by growth in obedience to God's and a life of holiness.

Regarding the relationship between suffering and sanctification, the study revealed that suffering indeed leads to sanctification of Christians through: aiding their purification, aiding the formation of virtues in them, causing them to depend on God, deterring sin among them, leading them to repentance, removing distractions from them, enforcing learning in them, brining and keeping them on the path of holiness, and finally, death, opening the door to their ultimate sanctification.

According to the study, many Christians of the Diocese of Lango have, through their suffering been sanctified and are growing in their sanctification. This could be seen in their testimonies about growing in holiness as a result of the three to four decades of their suffering.

The study also led to the development of a theology of suffering from the African point of view and the exhibition of its relevance to the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. This developed theology of suffering from the African point of view holds that: 1) Suffering is in the world not because of God but evil and man's sin. The suffering of the Africans are like the suffering of any other people in the world. 2) Although God permits suffering, He exercises full control over it. 3) God knows the suffering of His people and He stands with them against their oppressors. God is against all the oppression being experienced by Africans. 4) God equips His people with the strength they need to go through their suffering, 5) God provides solutions to the problem of human suffering, 6) God's justice prevails in the midst of human suffering. The wicked will never escape the judgment of God. 7) God brings good

out of His people's suffering, & 8) Christians are expected to pray; embrace suffering when it comes, and work towards the eradication of suffering in the world.

The study also found out that the above theology of suffering finds relevance among the Christians of the Diocese of Lango through: equipping them for their current and future suffering, having a clear picture of God as not the causer of suffering in the world but evil, stabilization of their faith, creation of hope in the midst suffering, correction of heresies regarding the false victimization of the Africans as the cursed community, liberation from abusive use of the Bible, having a right attitude towards those who suffer, motivating the believers to have compassion on those who are suffering, equipping the Church ministers in this Diocese, guiding the saints on the appropriate response to suffering which are: prayers; forgiving the offenders; and suffering with a positive attitude.

5.2. Conclusion

From this study, it can be concluded that suffering is indeed a form of sanctification in the life of a Christian. This can be seen in the influential alternative answers from the Church, the Bible, and the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. It must however be noted that whereas suffering leads to the sanctification of a Christian, there are those who might choose not to yield to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, given the fact that both man and God have roles to play in sanctification. In the event that a believer does not do his part, and fails to get sanctified, God cannot be blamed, and neither this thesis rendered null and void.

5.3. Recommendations

From the above discussions of findings and conclusions, we make the following recommendations regarding the role of suffering in the sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango.

First of all, the Church ministers of the Diocese of Lango should take much time to study the doctrines of suffering and sanctification before teaching them to the Christians. This should be done through intensive Bible studies at the local Church level.

Secondly, given the severity of suffering, appropriate pastoral care should be offered to the suffering Christians in this Diocese who may not easily get to understand the significance of suffering in their lives.

Finally, mass evangelism should be done in the entire three archdeaconries in order to counter the false claims by some preachers that no one can be truly saved and suffer at the same time.

5.4. Areas for further research

Due to limited time, the researcher did not exhaustively examine the effectiveness of suffering in the sanctification of a Christian and the role of other agents like the Holy Spirit and God's word in the sanctification of a Christian. The researcher therefore suggests the following topics for further studies.

1. The effectiveness of suffering in the sanctification of a Christian.
2. The role of the Holy Spirit in the Sanctification of a Christian.
3. The role of God's word in the Sanctification of a Christian, and finally,
4. The role of suffering in the mission and growth of the Church.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THE CHRISTIANS OF THE DIOCESE OF LANGO

UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

BISHOP TUCKER SCHOOL OF DIVINITY AND THEOLOGY

Dear respondent

My name is Oluge Jaspher Robinson, a student of Uganda Christian University pursuing a degree of Master of Arts in Theology. I am carrying out a research on **the role of suffering in the sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango**. I kindly request you to fill this questionnaire which is meant purely for academic purposes. The information you give will be handled with confidentiality.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION (Please, tick appropriately where applicable and fill the blank space with appropriate information).

a) Please indicate your age & gender by ticking the appropriate category.

Age: Under 30 ... Under 50 ... Under 65 ...

Gender: Male ... Female...

Name of the Church where you are/ have been praying from.

.....

Years you have spent in salvation

SECTION B: THE MEANING OF SUFFERING AND SANCTIFICATION AMONG THE CHRISTIANS OF THE DIOCESE OF LANGO (Please answer the questions in the blank spaces).

1. What kind (s) of suffering have you experienced in the past ten to thirty years?

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2. As a Christian, what do you think are the causes of suffering among Christians in this Diocese?

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3. What is your Christian understanding of the word ‘sanctification?’

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SECTION C: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUFFERING AND SANCTIFICATION IN THE LIVES OF THE CHRISTIANS OF THE DIOCESE OF LANGO.

As a Christian, in what ways do you think suffering is related to sanctification? (You can share your own experience if possible).

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SECTION D: A THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING FROM THE AFRICAN POINT OF VIEW AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE CHRISTIANS OF THE DIOCESE OF LANGO

1. As an African Christian, do you believe that there is a theology of suffering? If yes, explain.

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2. What is the relevance of the above mentioned theology of suffering to the Christians of this Diocese?

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APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE SELECTED CHURCH LEADERS AND CHRISTIANS

UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

BISHOP TUCKER SCHOOL OF DIVINITY AND THEOLOGY

Dear respondent, my name is **Oluge Jaspher Robinson**, a student of Uganda Christian University, pursuing a degree of Master of Arts in Theology. I am carrying out an academic research with the aim of **discovering the role of suffering in the sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango**. I kindly request you to provide answers to this interview which is purely for academic purposes. The information you provide will be handled with confidentiality.

1. (a) What is your name? (Optional)

 (b) How long have you been in salvation?
2. a) What do you think are the causes of suffering among Christians in this Diocese?

 b) What is your general Christian understanding of the word ‘sanctification?’
3. As a Christian, in what ways do you think suffering is related to sanctification?
(You can share your own experience if possible).
4. a) As an African Christian, do you think there is a theology of suffering? If yes, explain.
5. What do you think are the relevance of the above mentioned theology to the Christians of this Diocese?

Thank you so much for giving me your time for this interview.

APPENDIX 3: TIME LINE

ACTIVITY	TIME LINE
Supervision	3 rd May, 2023- 30 th April, 2024
Topic submission and approval	3 rd May, 2023- 31 st May, 2023
Concept presentation and approval	1 st June, 2023- 30 th June, 2023
Proposal submission and approval	30 th October, 2023
Data collection and analysis	1 st November, 2023-31 st December, 2023
Chapter 1	1 st January, 2024-10 th January, 2024
Chapter 2	11 th January, 2024- 25 th January, 2024
Chapter 3	26 th January, 2024-10 th February, 2024
Chapter 4	11 th February, 2024-25 th February, 2024
Chapter 5	26 th February, 2024- 14 th March, 2024
Submission of draft copy of the dissertation	20 th March, 2024
Submission of the final copy of the dissertation	10 th April, 2024

APPENDIX 4: BUDGET (IN UGANDA SHILLINGS)

NUMBER	ITEMS/ ACTIVITY	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTAL COST
1	Trip to UCU to meet the Supervisor	20	30,000=	600,000=
2	Trips to UCU library	50	30,000=	1,500,000=
3	Trips to Northern Uganda (Alebtong and Otuke Districts) for data collection: transport, meals, and accommodation for three people	1	1,200,000=	1,200,000=
4	Airtime and internet data for data collection	1	300,000=	300,000=
5	Typing, printing, & binding of four copies of the Proposal	4	30,000=	120,000=
6	Typing, printing, & binding of four copies of the dissertation	4	40,000=	160,000=
	GRAND TOTAL			3,880,000=

APPENDIX 5: CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: Suffering as a form of Sanctification among the Christians of the Diocese of Lango

Principle Investigator: OLUGE Jaspher Robinson Tel. contact +256-771493312

Affiliated to Uganda Christian University, Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology, P.O Box 4, Mukono, Uganda.

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Study

I am conducting a study to discover the role of suffering in the Sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. The general objective of this study is to assess the role of suffering in the Sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. The information you give us will be confidential and used only for the purposes of this study. In the process of report writing, your name will never be used and so everything you tell us will remain anonymous. We shall ask questions about the role of suffering in the Sanctification of the Christians in this Diocese. If you do not want to respond to a particular question, you can simply say so, and we will not insist.

2. Description of the Research

This is a qualitative research design analysis of the role of Suffering in the Sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango.

3. Subject Participation

Participants will be Christians and Priests of the Diocese of Lango, found in the selected three archdeaconries of Ajuri, Aloj, and Orum.

4. Potential Risks and Discomforts

This is a study involving two way conversation between the researcher and the respondents on the roles of suffering in the sanctification of the Christians of the Diocese of Lango. Minimal risk is expected.

5. Potential Benefits

The findings will inform both the Christians and Church leaders of the Diocese of Lango on the role of Suffering in the Sanctification of a Christian.

6. Confidentiality

The information you give us will be confidential and used only for the purposes of this study. In the process of report writing, your name will never be used and so everything you tell us will remain anonymous. We shall ask questions about the role of suffering in the Sanctification of a Christian. If you do not want to respond to a particular question, you can simply say so, and we will not insist.

Every participant will be asked to sign a written study informed consent form before participating in the Study as this ensures voluntarism and acceptability to participate in the study.

7. Authorization

By signing this form, you will be authorizing me to use the information from this research; for example, for the understanding of the role of suffering in the sanctification of a Christian.

8. Participation

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to not participate in this study, it will not affect your work in any way.

9. Withdrawal from the Study and/or Withdrawal of Authorization

As a participant in this study, you can withdraw at any point if you choose not to continue.

10. Whom to contact in case of ethical related concerns.

In case of any Ethical related concerns or inquiries, you can contact UCU-REC Chairperson; Prof. Peter Waiswa on 0772 405 357, pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug or UCU-REC Secretariat, Mr. Osborn Ahimbisibwe on 0775737627 or oahimbisibwe@ucu.ac.ug

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research program; tick appropriately

Yes

No

I understand that I will be given a copy of this signed Consent Form.

Name of Participant (Optional):

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 6: UCU RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE LETTER



UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

17/11/2023

To: Robinson Oluge

Uganda Christian University

0771493312

Type: Initial Review

Re: UCUREC-2023-705: Suffering as a form of Sanctification among the Christians of the Diocese of Lango

I am pleased to inform you that the Uganda Christian University REC, through expedited review held on **16/11/2023** approved the above referenced study.

Approval of the research is for the period of **17/11/2023** to **17/11/2024**.

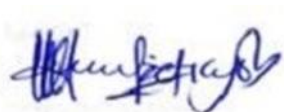
As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and addenda to the protocol or the consent form must be submitted to the REC for re- review and approval prior to the activation of the changes.
3. Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or any new information which could change the risk benefit: ratio must be submitted to the REC.
4. Only approved consent forms are to be used in the enrollment of participants. All consent forms signed by participants and/or witnesses should be retained on file. The REC may conduct audits of all study records, and consent documentation may be part of such audits.
5. Continuing review application must be submitted to the REC eight weeks prior to the expiration date of 17/11/2024 in order to continue the study beyond the approved period. Failure to submit a continuing review application in a timely fashion may result in suspension or termination of the study.
6. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence with the REC of record.
7. You are required to register the research protocol with the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) for final clearance to undertake the study in Uganda.

The following is the list of all documents approved in this application by Uganda Christian University REC:

No.	Document Title	Version Number	Version Date
1	Informed Consent forms	English 1	2023-10-30
2	Data collection tools	English 1	2023-10-30
3	Protocol	English 1	2023-10-30

Yours Sincerely,



Prof. Peter Waiswa

For: Uganda Christian University REC

APPENDIX 7: UCU INTRODUCTORY LETTER



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**
A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

24TH November 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR DATA COLLECTION

This letter serves to introduce to you OLUGE JASPER ROBINSON a student of Bishop Tucker School of Divinity pursuing a Master of Divinity/ Master of Arts in Theology/ Master of Arts in Theology and Development/Master of Arts in Theology and Health care Management/ Bachelors of Divinity.

He/she is carrying out a research as a partial requirement for him/her to be awarded the degree he/she is pursuing. So kindly avail him or the required information for building his/her research work.

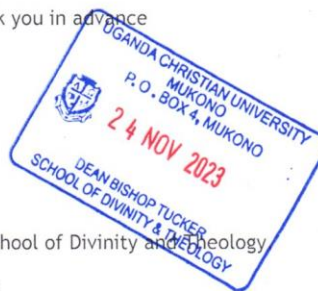
Counting on your cooperation and thank you in advance

Yours faithfully

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Mukeshimana

Research coordinator, Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology

emukeshimana@ucu.ac.ug, 0772505474



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APPENDIX 8: TURNITIN REPORT

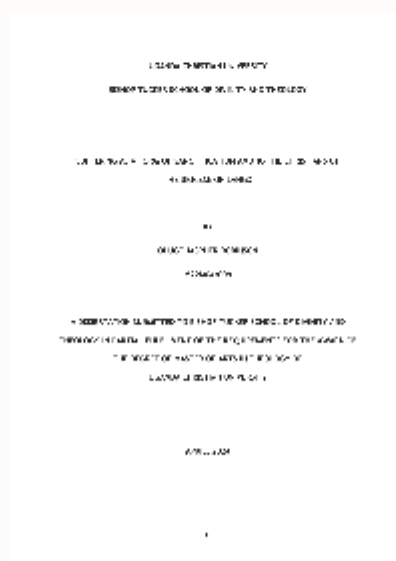


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Suffering as a form of Sanctification among the Christians of the Diocese of Lango

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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