

Church.

In the concluding chapter the author attempts an articulation of a renewed Igbo Christian ritual of reconciliation. This flows from his conviction that the survival of this sacrament in Igboland and the future of Christianity generally in Igboland and Africa as a whole depends on the project of inculturation. He observed that inculturation is not new in Christianity as Christianity right from the time it left the Hebraic world has been interacting and borrowing from other world cultures. The first task in the project of inculturation is to heal the wounded psyche of the Igbo and Africans which has been damaged as a result of long experience of slavery, colonialism and other forms of oppression. This will restore the confidence of Africans in themselves and their traditional world view. To show that he was not merely speculating, he drew up a proposed Igbo Christian rite of reconciliation.

The work under review is indeed scholarly going by the number of authorities called into service by the author to buttress his points. It is to the credit of the author that while sticking to his theme he was able to address other contemporary theological issues and relate them to his chosen theme when necessary. The author cited frequently the Council of Chalons (pp. 166, 169, 175). Two opposing views were attributed to this council. One is left to wonder how this council could have contradicted itself. But the author did not explain this discrepancy. Secondly the author dated the council at 813 (pp. 166, +75) and on page 169 he asserted that the council took place barely sixty years after 589. It is not clear how he arrived at this calculation. Apart from these and few cases of misspelling (perhaps typographical errors), the work is superb and it is one which anybody interested in the project of inculturation generally and the renewal of the sacrament of reconciliation in particular should endeavour to read.

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2. Amuluche Gregory Nnamani, *The Paradox of a Suffering God*. On the classical, Modern-Western and Third World Struggles to Harmonise the Incompatible Attributes of the Trinitarian God. Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Peter Lang, 1995, 428 pages.

There are varied conceptions of reality among different peoples and cultures. This is particularly so about God and his relationship with the world. The Jews conceive God in the context of history and relationship. Immanence and transcendence are conceived in their mutual inclusiveness. God is one who can suffer or change his ways. And so he is represented in anthropomorphic and relational terms. On the other hand, Greek philosophers emphasise the discontinuity between God and the world. For them, God cannot experience

change, suffering or other passions.

The coming together of these two traditions in Christianity gave birth to a conception of God with incompatible attributes, a God who is passible and impassible. Gradually, and for a long period, Christian theology gave priority to the Greek tradition and as such was very hesitant to affirm that God can suffer. However, today, in modern pluralistic theologies, it has become almost a global experience that the affirmation of divine suffering is a favoured presupposition in Christian God-talk. This renewed claim that God can suffer is indicative of a shift in the whole of Christian conception of and theological propositions about God.

In this book, Nnamani sets out to explore this shift and by so doing also exposes the struggle to harmonise these contrasting attributes of God in the classical, modern-Western and Third World theologies.

His probe into the history of this struggle right from the New Testament period to the Reformation reveals that the question of divine suffering is not new. What is new is the central position which it now occupies in Christian God-talk. According to him, there exists in the West a systematic treatment of the theme of divine suffering. There, the *kenotic* motif - the idea of Christ who emptied himself to become human - set forth in a Trinitarian framework is the principle with which the discussion is carried on. And to accentuate this, he reviews the works of three prominent theologians which typify the Western contribution to the theme of divine suffering.

In the Third World, Nnamani observes, we may not find a systematic presentation of the theology of divine suffering. But that does not mean that this issue is absent. He goes on to show that the affirmation of divine suffering is a presupposition underlying the liberation theologies in Latin America, Black theology in North America and African Christian theologies. For instance, in liberation theology, the logical consequence of its key proposition that God has resolute option for the poor is that God suffers along with the poor.

After an extensive review, Nnamani underlines three important tendencies/positions which can summarise the various attempts made in different epochs and places to explicate the nature of the Christian God with regards to divine suffering. These include, one dimensional affirmation of divine impassibility, an unconditional affirmation of divine possibility and a paradoxical approach to divine impassibility and passibility.

In the author's view, since the nature of God denotes a paradox, only the paradoxical approach would provide the best model of talking about God. God has to be conceived as a being in whose nature, the possibility of suffering and not suffering are compatible.

Nnamani further remarks that even though divine suffering cannot be proved or disproved, it can be deduced from the Bible, the nature of human love, and from the fact of the personal unity between God the Father and the Son. And that in view of these "the possibility of divine suffering must be taken for granted." (Cf. P. 390). And so our question should no longer be whether God suffers but how he suffers. More so, in proffering answers to how God suffers, Nnamani

advocates the use of metaphorical language. For in metaphor, the similarities and differences between the known and the unknown are held in constant tension. Also, the use of metaphorical language in God-talk affords one the advantage of avoiding extremes, the acquisition of new metaphors and the constant evaluation of our operative God-metaphors.

For the sake of precision, Nnamani further focuses on *love* as the most preferable metaphor which provides the best analogy for the God-world relationship and divine suffering. Love affirms divine suffering since “suffering is an inevitable possibility in a true love especially in the type that is attributable to God.”

Nnamani notes that following from all these, there has again been a shift from the question, ‘who is God’ to ‘where is God’. And this latter question marks the direction of the God-talk today. In effect, the author feels that these shifts are related to the actual concern in our time to measure reality and perfection in terms of relationality rather than substance.

Nnamani, in this book, offers us very rich insights about the reality of God, his relationship with the world, the nature of divine suffering and the necessity of contextual theologies. These insights and the particular way they are presented, betray an author who is at home with philosophy and theology. His choice of words and style of expression make for easy reading and understanding.

We find in this book an appreciation of the diversity of cultures, the world and human passion. These are worthy of God. The author would impose no limits to our list of appropriate God-metaphors but he does not tell us in clear terms how to distinguish ‘appropriate’ from ‘inappropriate’ metaphors. Again, the author seems not to take note of the fact that in trying moments, the sufferer is hardly consoled by the fact that God suffers with him/her. Rather, the question that readily bothers one is, why should God and one suffer at all?

All in all, I find in this book a compelling treatment of the question divine suffering and contextual theology.

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