
A Theological Response To Suffering From 1 Peter 3:8-12

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Abstract

Suffering emerges within the complex dynamic structural context of human activities. In whatever form it takes, it is an outrage that calls for response to serve as active agents for social change, on behalf of, and in connection with, those suffering – the poor, the oppressed, and working people who experience injustice as a daily fact of life. This study employed the hermeneutical method of historical criticism in an attempt to retrieve meaning by reading the socio-historical background of the 'world of the author' behind the text. 1 Peter 3:8-12 formulated a theological response to suffering in the light of the Scriptures, the content of Christian behaviour – like-mindedness, compassion, loving as brethren, tender-heartedness, humble-mindedness – based upon the renunciation of retaliation that sought to address, challenge and change the harsh realities of life in the context of suffering.

Keywords: Church, Christian, Response, Suffering, Theological.

Introduction

The concept or experience of what suffering is all about differs from one context to another and the appalling depth and extent of human suffering are evident and very much experienced. Suffering holds a place of prominence in the epistle of 1 Peter. The recipients found themselves in a difficult situation wherein outside hostility was being expressed against their Christian faith. This is the basis for Peter's literary strategy, conditioned by his perception of the historical situation, to give a theological response. It is in this light that this paper seeks to exegete the text of 1 Peter 3:8-12 through the lens of historical criticism to know what the Christian is called to do in the face of suffering.

Greek Text of 1 Peter 3:8-12

Τὸ δὲ τέλος πάντες ὁμόφρονες, συμπαθεῖς, φιλάδελφοι, εὖσπλαγχοι, ταπεινόφρονες, ἡμὴ ἀποδιδόντες κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἢ λοιδορίαν ἀντὶ λοιδορίας, τοῦναντίον δὲ εὐλογοῦντες, ὅτι εἰς² τοῦτο ἐκλήθητε, ἵνα εὐλογίαν κληρονομήσητε. 10ὁ γὰρ θέλων ζωὴν ἀγαπᾶν καὶ ἰδεῖν ἡμέρας ἀγαθὰς παυσάτω τὴν γλῶσσαν ἀπὸ κακοῦ καὶ χεῖλη τοῦ μὴ λαλῆσαι δόλον, 11ἐκκλινάτω δὲ ἀπὸ κακοῦ καὶ ποιησάτω ἀγαθόν, ζητησάτω εἰρήνην καὶ διωξάτω αὐτήν· 12ὅτι ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ὅλα αὐτοῦ εἰς δέησιν αὐτῶν, πρόσωπον δὲ κυρίου ἐπὶ ποιοῦντας κακά.

Possible Literal Translation

Finally, *be* you all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded: not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise blessing; for hereunto were you called, that ye should inherit a blessing 10For, the one willing to love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: 11and let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it. 12For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil.

Theoretical Framework of 1 Peter 3:8-12

This study employs the hermeneutical method of historical criticism which seeks to retrieve meaning by reading behind the text – that is, by looking into

the 'world of the author' (socio- historical context and the issue of authorship among others (Smith, 2008:160). We believe that in whatever form suffering emerges, it is an outrage that calls for response to serve as active agents for social change, on behalf of, and in connection with, those suffering – the poor, the oppressed, and working people who experience injustice as a daily fact of life.

The church, being a social agent, her response cannot be limited to moral condemnation, nor acts of charity and good will. She ought to formulate a theology in the light of the Scriptures that seeks to address, challenge and change these harsh realities of life, not just targeting individuals. It is, therefore, theology that extends the bounds of traditional religious discourse by seeking dialogue with social science, to understand society and the role of religion in it. This effective response must be constructed with due consideration to the functioning of people within this complex dynamic structural context of human activities. This is bearing in mind the central importance to the organization, functioning, and development of the society at large.

We admit that there is still a gap between the ideal and reality for the emancipation of the poor, the exploited and the powerless against structural and institutional injustice resulting in profound sufferings. Nevertheless, the church must consciously identify the issues involved and the learnings she can contribute and put them into practice. This will reaffirm her undisputable place in society as a vehicle for the alleviation of human misery. The Church cannot stand aloof from the conflicting demands of society, as the ripples will eventually arrive equally at her door steps; neither can she escape from active participation in economic and social conflict issues but must continue to seek divine and humane solution to injustice.

The Text of 1 Peter 3:8-12 as a Suffering Discourse

Peter uses the adverbial accusative of termination with focus on conclusion *Tò...τέλος* as a marker of the conclusion to the exhortations to the *παροίκους*

καὶ παρεπιδήμους “aliens and strangers,” relationship to civil government, others in authority over them and the relationship between wives and husbands that preceded; nevertheless, he does not refer to the conclusion of the text. The pericope of 1 Peter 3:8-12 marks the last in a series of exhortations that began from 2:13-3:12. The conjunction *δὲ* “and” introduces a new thought to the preceding argument, shifting from the exhortations to a general exhortation to all the recipients who are God's elect and *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* “aliens and strangers” in diaspora sojourning in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1:1). The dispersion of these Christians centred around three hypothetical periods; the dispersion of Christians by the murder of James in CE 62, the reign of Nero about CE 60-64, and the reign of Domitian about CE 111 (Leschert 2002, 435). The most satisfactory to some scholars, and for this paper, is prior to the outbreak of the Neronian persecution in CE 63 or early 64. It could be that the dispersion of Christians by the murder of 3James in CE 62 (Acts 12:1ff) gave rise to Peter's address “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world” in 2:11. The pericope 3:8-12 is cast in an epistolary context called paraenesis in the ancient literature (Martin 1992, 67).

The Suffering Community of 1 Peter 3:8-12

Peter addresses the recipients of his letter as *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* 'aliens and strangers,' having acknowledged their temporary struggles with manifold trials in the hands of the Roman authorities and their citizenry. They had to adjust to a constantly shifting expression of imperial authority over their lives in terms of their walk with God in a hostile setting, which may not be linked exclusively with persecution alone, although there is evidence of 'wide spread persecution' against the disciples for their faith, perhaps the Neronian persecution shortly after the fire in Rome in July CE 64 (Michaels, 1988, 857). Elliott asserts that the vast area to which the letter is addressed, comprising Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia, Asia and Bithynia, are approximately 129, 000 square miles. This area mentioned here comprised the part of first-century Asia Minor that laid west and north of the Taurus Mountains.

This enormous area had few small cities that were far between. The population was diversified, consisting of indigenous people, Greek settlers, and Roman colonists. This region became the cradle of Christianity, where well established churches flourished in all five of the regions mentioned in 1 Peter (Elliot, 2000, 84). Some assumed Peter's audiences were mostly Jewish, while others, on the contrary, presumed they were mostly Gentiles. Each side of the argument relies on their description of the metaphor *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* 'aliens and strangers,' whether it is literal or metaphorical. While most modern interpreters argue for a mostly Gentle- Christian audience explaining *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* 'aliens and strangers,' metaphorically, ancient exegetes like Eusebius perceived the text to be a diaspora letter to the Jews (this is as opposed to Augustine and Jerome who did not see the recipients of 1 Peter as 4Jewish [Michaels, 1988, 49: Elliott, 2000, 81-82]). Those who argue for a Jewish recipient consider *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* 'aliens and strangers,' as literal. This is, of course, possible since there was a considerable Jewish population in Asia Minor by the first century. According to O'Brien, Jewish presence in Asia Minor dates, at least, from the early part of the second century BCE when two thousand Jewish families from Babylon and Mesopotamia were settled in Lydia and Phrygia by Antiochus III (O'Brien, 2004, 210).

Granting there is quite a consensus that the phrase *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* 'aliens and strangers,' should be understood metaphorically, as Elliott's view of a literal interpretation of the phrase ignores the presence of the comparative particle “ὡς,” that is, “as” in 2:11 and 2:16 which reveals Peter's use of the comparative analogy in the epistle (Elliott 1982, 81-82: Lim 2005, 2-8). From the sociological point of view, *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* “aliens and strangers” (2:11) are categorized as different social classes from “slaves” (2:16) and “free peoples” (2:16). The hierarchical order should be the reverse order: free peoples, aliens and strangers and slaves.

Therefore, if the recipients of 1 Peter consist of only a single social class comprising *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* “aliens and strangers” as such, then the occurrences of the designations “free people” and “slaves” for the addressees are definitely contradicting. In a similar vein, the designations for the readers to be both “slaves” and “free people” in the same context are also confusing.

In lieu of the above, it will be difficult to categorically classify the implied

audience *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* “aliens and strangers” of 1 Peter as the text shows little, at most, and nothing, in the least, in regards to the circumstances of the recipients. This research paper posits that, considering that Peter’s audiences are spread over such a huge geographical area, it is best to visualize his recipients as representing all Christian believers scattered across Asia Minor, whether “slaves or free.” This transcends geographical demarcation which authenticates the catholic nature of the text and the entire epistle in general.

Lexical and Syntactical Study of 1 Peter 3:8-12

The periscope by composition, according to the structure of the Greek sentences contained within the epistle, is two sentences. This exegetical work is divided into distinct sections to aid in the interpretive process. The first section will consist of verse 8; the second verse 9; and the third are verses 10-12. The sections will be analyzed in view of the context of the pericope in order to arrive at the meaning and significance.

What the Christian Is Called upon to Be In Spite of Suffering (3:8)

Peter using the vocative *πάντες* “all” marks an exhortational transition to a more comprehensive group of addressees. *Πάντες* “all” addressed here could refer to (a) wives and husbands as mentioned in verses 1 and 7 or (b) others not yet addressed in verses 1-7, that is, everyone besides wives and husbands, or (c) the entire community of the elect in diaspora who are *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* “aliens and strangers,” includes wives, husbands, and everyone else.

Option (c) is preferred since the presence of the vocative seems to be emphatic and directly brings the addressees into the discourse and furthermore draws attention to upcoming material, in addition to indicating breaks in the ongoing discourse from verses 1-7 (Mathewson and Emig 2016, 9-11). This is further reinforced by the conjunction *δὲ* “and,” which functions to introduce a new thought in the preceding argument, shifting from the exhortations to wives and husbands to a general exhortation to all the recipients who are the elect in diaspora, *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* “aliens and strangers,” sojourning in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1:1).

Thus, the exhortation to portray vividly what the Christian is called to be in this verse is not limited in its application to wives and husbands by the continuing use of the five nominative masculine plural adjectives - *ὁμόφρονες*, “likeminded,” *συμπαθεῖς*, “compassionate,” *φιλάδελφοι*, “loving as brethren,”

εὐσπλαγχνοι, “tender-hearted,” and ταπεινόφρονες, “humble-minded” - perhaps word groups that clearly address the entire community who are the elect in diaspora who are παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους “aliens and strangers” mentioned in 2:11 (cf. 1:1).

The five adjectives function imperatively in a sense in the light of an implicit imperative verb ἔστε summarizing, a persistent attitude. This implied verb of being “ἔστε,” which expresses a “state of being” entails the five adjectives, all serving as predicates. Consequently, the five adjectives portray vividly what the Christian is called to be - όμόφρονες, “likeminded,” συμπαθεῖς, “compassionate,” φιλάδελφοι, “loving as brethren,” εὐσπλαγχνοι, “tenderhearted,” and ταπεινόφρονες, “humble-minded” - coordinated by πάντες “all” as the compound identification of the subject of the implied imperative verb ἔστε. The vocative πάντες “all” coming before the adjectives points to the fact that it is the same addressee that is being referred to in all the five adjectives. Thus, Peter expects the suffering community to be likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted and humble-minded in the face of structural and institutional injustice resulting in profound sufferings.

What the Christian Is Called for In Spite of Suffering (3:9)

In addition, Peter uses a correlative pair of semantic markers μὴ...δὲ in a negative and positive construction to make known to the Christians what they are called for in spite of suffering. In this arrangement, the negated participial phrase μὴ ἀποδιδόντες κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἢ λοιδορίαν ἀντὶ λοιδορίας, “not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling,” serves to emphasize the positive participial phrase τοῦναντίον δὲ εὐλογοῦντες, ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο ἐκλήθητε ἵνα εὐλογίαν κληρονομήσητε,⁷ “but contrariwise blessing; for hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing.” Κακὸν “evil,” as used here could refer to (a) acts that stem from evil motives, (b) acts that cause evil or harm, or (c) a combination of the first two meanings. The third option (c) is most preferable as Peter admonishes the Christians not to render to anyone acts that stem from evil motives, but also acts that cause evil or harm.

It is important to note the compound word τοῦναντίον “contrariwise,” which is formed by the merging or “crasis,” of the definite article τοῦ and the adverb ἐναντίον which serves as an adverbial semantic marker of an emphatic contrast. This is further strengthened by the use of the conjunction δὲ which is decisive in marking the positive participial phrase as the counterpart to the negative prohibition μὴ ἀποδιδόντες... δὲ εὐλογοῦντες. τοῦτο “hereunto,” and

the subsequent ἵνα “that,” infers (a) the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο “hereunto,” is anaphoric as it points back to εὐλογοῦντες “blessing.”

The preposition εἰς giving rise to the prepositional phrase εἰς τοῦτο is fronted as a topical frame and since τοῦτο is anaphoric, the topical frame re-echoes the point of εὐλογοῦντες “blessing,” introduced. This means the recipients have been called to the antecedent of τοῦτο which is εὐλογοῦντες “blessing.” This is in lieu of the fact that ἵνα functions to introduce the purpose clause ἵνα εὐλογίαν κληρονομήσητε implying that Peter is of the view that because they have been called to bless others “in order that” they might “inherit a blessing” or (b) τοῦτο is cataphoric that is, it is anticipating the ἵνα clause which functions exegetically to define τοῦτο in the sense that Peter is affirming that because this is what they have been called to, which is to inherit a blessing. The first option (a) most likely befits the scriptural citation that follows as grounds for exemplification of the Christian calling.

The Christian Calling Exemplified In Spite of Suffering (3:10-12)

To illustrate to the elect in diaspora who are παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους “aliens and strangers,” sojourning in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1:1) what he meant, Peter furnished his argument with a scriptural citation from the Old Testament. Peter begins this section with whole participial construction from scriptural citation of the Old Testament which runs from verses 10-12 alluding to what might constitute the Christian calling in the face of suffering. This Old Testament citation comes from the Septuagint (LXX) of Psalm 33:13-17 which corresponds to the English translation of Psalm 34:12-16. The sequence of ideas in the English text of Psalm 34:12-16 is very close to that in the Masoretic Text (MT) of Psalm 34:13-17. A comparison of the New Testament Greek text (NT Greek text) alongside those of the Septuagint (LXX) and the Masoretic Text (MT) will aid in the understanding of this sub-section of verse 10.

New Testament Greek Text (1 Peter 3:10): *ὁ γὰρ θέλων ζωὴν ἀγαπᾶν καὶ ἰδεῖν ἡμέρας ἀγαθὰς πανσάτω τὴν γλῶσσαν ἀπὸ κακοῦ καὶ χεῖλη τοῦ μὴ λαλῆσαι δόλον*, Translation: For, the one willing to love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

LXX (Ps. 33:13-14): *τίς ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὁ θέλων ζωὴν ἀγαπᾶν ἡμέρας ἰδεῖν ἀγαθὰς παῦσον τὴν γλῶσσάν σου ἀπὸ κακοῦ καὶ χεῖλη σου τοῦ μὴ λαλῆσαι δόλον* Translation: Who is the man who desires life and loves length of days that he

affirms, alongside the Old Testament citation, that the elect in diaspora 10who are *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* “aliens and strangers,” must *πανσάτω τὴν γλῶσσαν ἀπὸ κακοῦ* “refrain the tongue from evil,” *χείλη τοῦ μὴ λαλῆσαι δόλον*, “lips that they speak no guile,”

The New Testament Greek Text of 1 Peter 3:11: *ἐκκλινάτω δὲ ἀπὸ κακοῦ καὶ ποιησάτω ἀγαθόν, ζητησάτω εἰρήνην καὶ διωξάτω αὐτήν*. Translation: And let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it.

LXX (Ps. 33:15): *ἐκκλινον ἀπὸ κακοῦ καὶ ποιήσον ἀγαθόν ζήτησον εἰρήνην καὶ δώξον αὐτήν* Translation: Turn away from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.

MT (Ps. 34:15): *יָפֹט מִפֶּשַׁע וְיִשְׁכַּח מִדֶּשֶׁל וְיִשְׁכַּח מִדֶּשֶׁל וְיִשְׁכַּח מִדֶּשֶׁל* Translation: Turn away from evil and do good seek peace and pursue it.

There are a few discrepancies as appeared from the texts. The imperative forms that appear in the New Testament Greek Text as third person singular (*ἐκκλινάτω*, *ποιησάτω*, *ζητησάτω* and *διωξάτω*) are second person singular in the LXX and MT. With regard to the sentence structure, the first two clauses exhibit contrastive parallelism, and the second two clauses exhibit synonymous parallelism. The conjunction *δὲ* introduces the next step in the argument, shifting from addressing sins of speech in verse 10 to addressing sins in general.

Peter affirms, alongside the Old Testament citation, that the elect in diaspora who are *παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους* “aliens and strangers,” called must *ἐκκλινάτω ἀπὸ κακοῦ* “turn away from evil,” *ποιησάτω ἀγαθόν* “do good,” *ζητησάτω εἰρήνην* “seek peace.” and *διωξάτω αὐτήν* “pursue it.” *Εἰρήνην* “peace,” here being the accusative direct object of *ζητησάτω* “let him seek,” is rather than a general state of well-being as in the LXX (*ζήτησον εἰρήνην* “seek peace”) and MT (peace, *שָׁלוֹם*), the reference is to peace within personal relationships. These discrepancies might 11probably be ascribed to the Greek translator whose inclination will be in the realm of exegesis rather than textual criticism of the MT (Olofsson 2009, 176-178). Nevertheless, it is equally important to note that it might also be as a result of a different MT *Vorlage* which differed recensionally from MT and the text behind the LXX in producing the New Testament text.

New Testament Greek Text (1 Peter 3:12): *ὅτι ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ὦτα αὐτοῦ εἰς δέησιν αὐτῶν, πρόσωπον δὲ κυρίου ἐπὶ ποιοῦντας κακά.*

Translation: For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil.

LXX (Ps. 33:16): *ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ὦτα αὐτοῦ εἰς δέησιν αὐτῶν* Translation: The eyes of the Lord is [sic] upon the righteous and His ears to their prayers

MT (Ps. 34:16): *וְעֵינֵי יְהוָה בְּרֹאשׁ צְדִיקִים וְאָזְנוֹתָיו בְּדִלְגָּתָם* Translation: The eyes of the Lord are towards the righteous and His ears to their cry.

It is evident that from the texts, that is, in the New Testament Greek text, the conjunction ὅτι introduces a causal clause, however, it does not appear in the LXX nor is a causal conjunction used in the MT. Thus, compared to the LXX and MT, the text of 1 Peter makes more explicit the function of verse 12 as a motivational ground for the series of third person imperatives in verses 10-11. The NT Greek text, the LXX and the MT agree in regards to the anarthrous quality of *ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου* “eyes of the Lord,” which requires the omission of the definite article. The phrases *ὦτα αὐτοῦ* “his ears” and *πρόσωπον...κυρίου* “face...Lord” also similarly adopt the anarthrous character. On the contrary, καὶ “and” functions to mark the next clause as closely joined with the preceding clause, anticipating the new development introduced by δὲ “and” in the subsequent clause. Here, as it appears in the NT Greek text, issues a further act of God in relation to the righteous. The LXX retains almost, if not, all the elements of the MT in this verse. This is also true of the NT Greek text with the exception of additional stiches *πρόσωπον δὲ κυρίου ἐπὶ ποιοῦντας κακά* “but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil,” which corresponds precisely to the LXX Ps. 33:17a being closely in tandem with the MT Ps. 34:17.

It is interesting to note how the additional stiches gives the contrast idea of the *ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου ἐπὶ δικαίους* “For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,” mentioned at the beginning of the sentence shifting from God's attitude toward those who practise righteousness- *ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου ἐπὶ δικαίους* “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.” In addition, *ὦτα αὐτοῦ εἰς δέησιν αὐτῶν, πρόσωπον* “his ears unto their supplication,” in contrast to a description of God's attitude toward those who engage in evil deeds refusing to live worthily of God's call and are considered by God as *ποιοῦντας κακά* “them that do evil” and *κυρίου ἐπὶ* “the Lord is against,” them. This makes it likely that the addition stiches [sic] have been made in NT Greek text rather than the LXX and the MT an inclination within the realm of exegesis rather than textual

criticism of the LXX or the MT (Olofsson 2009, 176-178). Nevertheless, it is most probably that it might be as a result of a different MT *Vorlage* and the text behind the LXX.

The Theological Reflection of 1 Peter 3:8-12

The pericope does not seem to present distinct theological themes but ethical concerns in regards to suffering. The instructions to be like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded, not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling is connected to an eschatological promise: the promise of a blessing and good life which is conditioned on good behaviour. This is in view of the fact that both good behaviour and evil deeds are done under the watchful eyes and ears of the Lord. Thus, the eschatological promise of a blessing, life and of good days can only refer to eternal life with God. In dealing with unjust suffering, where Christians suffer violence and experience evil, they should break through the vicious circle of 13retaliation. This is in view of the fact that Christians are “called to this,” “to inherit a blessing,” a blessing should befall even their opponents in their encounter with them as blessing-bearers.

Practical Application of 1 Peter 3:8-12

This pericope makes it clear that the directives to be like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded, not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling did not have as a goal the hardening of societal injustice and oppressive structures but are about a behaviour that presents an alternative to the violence and suffering that is experienced. These biblical virtues are commended with respect to the inner relationships of the community as the basis of togetherness. They are the conscious alternatives to the power and force that define the reality and reveal themselves in the suffering being experienced which Peter seeks to address.

This community's inner relationship is made visible in their outward relationships of renunciation of retaliation in dealing with the “abuse” of the world around them. The renunciation of returning abuse picks up the example of Christ in 2:23, but the commands echo above all Jesus' instructions known from the Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain (Matt. 5:38ff; Luke 6:28a cf. 1 Thess. 5:15; Rom. 12:14, 17; 1 Cor. 4:12).

This admonition gains its profile in the context of dealing with unjust suffering,

precisely where Christians suffer violence and experience evil, the content of Christian behaviour should be expressed as behaviour that is based upon the renunciation of retaliation. Peter advocates a Christian ethos stressed by the five adjectives - be like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded - thereby expressing the Christian conviction in this manner reducing the potential for violence inherent in a Greco-Roman society.

CONCLUSION

14Suffering emerges within the complex dynamic structural context of human activities. It is ideological that where suffering prevails, those undergoing any form of it breed also resistance to it. In whatever form suffering emerges, it is an outrage that calls for response. The deliberate action of Peter shows the appropriateness to change society rather than remaining aloof thereby undermining the sufferings of the poor, the exploited and the powerless.

The Church, being a social agent, must respond by formulating a theology in the light of the Scriptures that seeks to address, challenge and change these harsh realities of life. This effective response must be constructed with due consideration to the functioning of people whom Peter admonished to be like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted and humble-minded in the face of structural and institutional injustice resulting in profound sufferings. The insights expressed in this pericope are a Christian ethos displayed in a complex dynamic structural context of human activities with unjust and oppressive power structures to the degree of reducing the potential for violence inherent in such structures.

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