

**THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYR IS THE SEED OF THE CHURCH: A
PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE EYN CHURCH**

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Abstract

This paper examines the Christian martyrs in the New Testament and how the blood of the persecuted Christians led to the spread of Christianity all over the world and that is exactly what the Ekklesiyyan Yanuwan Christa of Nigeria (EYN) the church of the brethren in Nigeria went through in the North-East of which especially in Borno and the neighboring states for those that were killed rested in perfect peace but for those who are scattered wherever they find themselves, they were busy preaching the Gospel of Christ in different parts of the country. This study recommends, among other things, that Christians should pray and be happy whenever they are being persecuted knowing too well that those that die in Christ will receive a crown of glory.

Keywords: Martyr, blood, Christianity, EYN, New Testament

Introduction

Hanks (1998, pp. 21-22) maintains that the phrase, "The blood of the Martyr is seed of the church", is a paraphrase of the words written by Tertullian, in his book, *The Apology of Tertullian for the Churches*. Tertullian is a theologian and an apologist from North Africa, who lived from 150-225BC, and is one of the great writers of the Early Church. He lived in a time when Christians were being persecuted and was aware of the powerful effect the death of martyrs had on unbelievers; it was this very witness that brought him to faith.

Rather than destroying the church, the death of the martyrs actually increased admiration and respect for the believers and numbers were greatly won to Christ. Pagans were at times amazed at the courage (some said foolishness) of men, women, and children who faced death in the arena. The occasion of the martyr's death became known as the '**birthday**' (a phrase invented by Tertullian) and in some instances became an annual festival almost as important as the celebration of Easter (Hanks, 1998, p. 22).

Throughout its history the Christian Church has been subject to divisions and heresies, quarrels and wars, and no century has passed without it being troubled by enemies. Worst of all, countless numbers of believers have suffered torture and been cruelly put to death for their faith in Jesus. Warned that they would be betrayed and brought before governors and kings, they were stirred to great deeds of heroism and paid the ultimate price rather than deny their Lord. Not only did the early Church survive this terrible onslaught, but it increased in strength and by the fourth century was firmly established throughout the Mediterranean world (Hanks, 1998, p. 5).

The foremost of Tertullian's works, the *Apologeticum* or *Apologeticus*, is a defense of Christianity against the unreasoning and unreasonable criticism of the unbelievers. It was composed in the summer or autumn of 197AD, and addressed to the provincial governors of the Roman Empire. Tertullian refutes these as nonsense, and concludes by asserting the absolute superiority of the Christian religion overall, as a revealed religion. He realized that no war is won by remaining on the defensive, and so goes over to attack the indefensible attitudes of the unbelievers, who presumed to judge people who were infinitely their superiors, even by their own standards. With this, the victory of Christianity became possible.

Chuckles at how the Christians are always in the wrong, Tertullian stated, (ch 40): 'If the Tiber rises too high for the walls, or the Nile too low for the fields, if the heavens do not open, or the earth does, if there is famine, if there is plague, instantly the howl is, "The Christians to the lion!" What, all of them, to a single lion?

Episode of Martyrs

Blandina

The bravest of the martyrs was a slave girl called Blandina, who under torture confessed, 'I am a Christian and we have done nothing vile.' She was scourged in an attempt to force her to renounce Christ and was finally led to a stake and gored to death by a wild bull in the amphitheatre. The courage of this young girl encouraged the Christians and amazed even the hardened pagans, as it was something they could not understand (Hanks 1988, pp. 20-21).

Perpetua

Hanks (1998, p. 5) purports that the most memorable of martyrdoms at Carthage was that of a 22-year widow, Perpetua. Her mother was a Christian but her father remained a pagan. At the time of her imprisonment, she was nursing a new-born baby. Her father pleaded with her to renounce her faith, but she refused. Baptized while in prison, her cell (she related) 'became a palace.' At her interrogation, the procurator entreated her to offer a sacrifice to the Emperor, if only for the sake of the child, but she refused. She was taken with four other Christians to the amphitheatre where they were first savaged by wild beast; after giving each other the kiss of peace they were put to death by the sword.

Polycarp (69-156ad): Bishop of Smyrna

During the reign of Antoninus, there occurred the most famous of all martyrdoms, that of the aged Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. Polycarp the Church's last link with the 'Apostolic Age', and was regarded with much reverence and affection by his flock, and many of them were happy just to have the privilege of removing his shoes. The event of Polycarp's martyrdom was in this fashion; when the Roman officials arrived to arrest him, he treated them with the utmost courtesy, and invited them to eat and drink as his guest. He asked the men to give him one hour in which to pray, and he spent some time in commending his friends to God and asking for courage to face the coming ordeal. When he was ready, the officials mounted him upon an ass and led him into the city. As they travelled, the men tried to persuade him to deny Christ: 'Why, what harm is there in saying "Caesar is lord," and so save yourself?' they argued.

But the purpose of their plea was not to save him from death. Rather the honor of breaking down a champion of the Church. As Polycarp was entering the stadium where the games were being held, there came a voice from heaven: 'Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man/ Some of the believers standing by heard the voice, but they saw no on; perhaps it was the voice of God? In the arena Polycarp

was brought before the proconsul who began by urging him to deny his faith. "Have respect for your old age," he told the bishop, swear by the divinity of Caesar; repent and say "Away with the atheists". Polycarp solemnly waved his hand towards the pagan crowd and repeated "Away with the atheists!" But the proconsul pleaded further with him, 'take the oath, and I will let you go; revile Christ.' To which the bishop nobly replied, "Eighty-six years I have served him, and he has done me no wrong - how can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?" Polycarp remained firm in his resolve, and at last the proconsul called the herald and told him to announce three times, Polycarp has confessed to being a Christian.

Without waiting for the wild beasts, the crowd demanded that Polycarp should be burned alive. Hurriedly, logs were gathered together. At his request he was spared being nailed to the stake. "He who gives me power to endure the fire will also give me the power to withstand the flames," he declared. As the flames leaped around him, Polycarp looked up to heaven, praising God and thanking him that he was counted worthy to take the cup of Christ. When the onlookers saw that the body was not being consumed in the fire, a gladiator was sent to dispatch the bishop with a dagger thrust through the heart (Hanks, 1998, pp. 14-17).

The EYN: A Brief Introduction

EYN is an acronym for 'Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria', interpreted to mean 'The church of the brethren of Nigeria'. The EYN has its origins in the work of missionaries sent by the Church of the Brethren in the USA which started in 1923, it has meanwhile grown to over 350,000 members. The Church of the Brethren in Nigeria has its home in the northeast of the country and is a young and fast-growing church. The seat of the church leadership is '**Kwarhi**' near the town of Mubi. Church life in EYN has a strongly inviting character. The EYN is also active in pastoral care, and its work concentrates on rural development, basic health services, HIV and AIDS and literacy. From its origins, the EYN is a church of peace which rejects any form of military violence in a bid to defend Itself-Retrieved from: <https://ems-online.org/en/countries/africa/nigeria>.

Persecution and the EYN (Ekklesityar Yan'uwa A Nigeria) Church

"In spite of our peace-loving nature, EYN church is the greatest single denomination that the Islamic fundamentalists, the so-called Boko Haram group, has almost successfully wiped out of existence in many Local Government Areas of Borno, part of Yobe and Adamawa States. Today as I am speaking, 26 out of the 50 EYN District Church Councils, together with its 156 local church council or parishes, have been closed down. 70 out of the 156 local church councils and 21 local church branches have been burnt down completely. In addition, over 2,287 houses belonging to our members have been burnt down included their properties such as food stuff.

Also, we have on record: over 3,038 of our members who have so far been killed and 8 pastors that were also killed. In addition, 180 of our members have been kidnapped including a pastor and pregnant wife of another pastor with three of her children were kidnapped. It may also interest you to know that 178 out of the total Chibok school girls that were kidnapped are children of EYN members (From <http://www.brethren.org/news/2Q14/newsline-special-eyn-is.html>). The notable among the agents of persecution of the EYN is the radical Islamic sect known as Boko Haram. A brief information of this sect is given below:

Boko Haram

The name '**Boko Haram**', is usually translated as '**Western Education is forbidden**'. Haram is from the Arabic 'haram', "forbidden"; and the Hausa word 'boko' [the first vowel is long, the second pronounced in a low tone], meaning "fake", which is used to refer to secular Western education. Boko Haram has also been translated as "Western influence is a sin" and "Westernization is sacrilege". Until the death of its founder Mohammed Yusuf, the group was also reportedly known as Yusifiyya. Northern Nigerians have commonly dismissed Western education as *ilimin boko* ("fake education") and secular schools as *makaronta boko*.

Founding: The group was founded in 2002, and is an Islamic extremist group based in northeastern Nigeria, also active in Chad, Niger and Northern Cameroun. Prior to Abubakar Shekau's pledge of allegiance to ISIL, the group's official name was **Jama'atu Ahli is-Sunnah lid-Da'wati wal-Jihad** meaning "People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad". This

group presently refers to herself as '**al-Wilayat al-islamiyya Gharb Afriqiyah**', to designate it as a branch or "province" of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Leadership: The group was led by **Abubakar Shekau** until August 2016, when he was succeeded by **Abu Musab al-Barnawi**. The group had alleged links to al-Qaeda, but in March 2015, it announced its allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Ideology: Boko Haram was founded as a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist sect, influenced by the Wahhabi movement, advocating a strict form of Sharia law. It developed into a Salafist-jihadi group in 2009. The movement is diffuse, and fighters associated with it do not necessarily follow Salafi doctrine. The group has denounced the members of the Sufi, the Shiite, and the Izala sects as infidels. Boko Haram seeks the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria. It opposes the Westernization of Nigerian society and the concentration of the wealth of the country among members of a small political elite, mainly in the Christian south of the country. This group condemns the reading of books other than the Quran. **Retrieved from:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko_Haram.

Table: Some attacks in Northern Nigeria by Boko Haram Sect between July 2009 and June 2012.

S/N	DATE	STATE	Type of Violence/Attack
1.	Septembers, 2010	Bauchi	Bauchi Central Prison was set ablaze and members of the sect freed.
2.	December 25, 2011	Niger	About 50 people died on Christmas Day bombing in Madalla, Niger State.
3.	January6, 2012	Adamawa	17 people died in a Christ Apostolic Church, Yola, Adamawa State while 20 Igbo people were also killed in Mubi in the same state.

4.	January 22, 2012	Bauchi	Two churches destroyed in Bauchi State, two military personnel, a DPO and eight civilian were killed by gunmen at the headquarters of Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area in the state
5.	February 15, 2012	Kogi	Jail Break in Koton Karji Prisons, Kogi State. A warder was killed and 199 prisoners released.
6.	April 8, 2012	Kaduna	38 people killed on Easter
7.	June 17, 2012	Kaduna	Multiple bomb attacks on 3 churches killing 70 people and injured scores of others.

Excerpt from; 'The Socio-Economic Implications of Book-Horam Activities in Northern Nigeria' by Ovaga, Okey H. (Ph.D). University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Source: Adapted in Okpaga, Ugwu and Erne (2012:8) and also compiled by the Author.

Some Reports of Boko Haram Sect on The EYN

Since this insurgency (Boko Haram) started, it has killed 20,000 and displaced 2.3 million from their homes and was ranked as the world's deadliest terror group by the Global Terrorism Index in 2015.

On the night of April 14, armed men associated with the radical Islamic group Boko Haram, stormed the dormitory of a Christian school in the northeastern Nigerian town of Chibok and forced some 230 girls into a convoy of trucks before disappearing into the dense forest along the Nigerian-Cameroon border (The Mennonite, 9.30. 2014 Written by: John D. Roth).

Pastor Kidnapped, Church Burned as Boko Haram Kills 29 Christians in Nigeria

By Morning Star News, CP World, June 2, 2014 j 9:24 PM:

While international media sights have been justifiably fixed on 276 girls kidnapped from Chibok, Borno state, Islamic extremists last week killed Christians in the state's Gwoza area nearly unnoticed, as they have for more than two years. These Islamists kill at least 29 Christians on

Sunday and Monday (May 25-26), sources told Morning Star News. The attacks came after a slaughter of at least 121 people in the village of Izghe in the predominantly Christian area of Gwoza on Feb. 15.

On Sunday (May 25), Boko Haram killed 21 Christians of a congregation of Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in Gwoza town during a worship service, said the Rev. Moses Thliza of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN). The next day, rebels from Boko Haram, which seeks to impose sharia (Islamic law) throughout Nigeria, burned down seven churches and numerous houses in the area, Christian leaders reported. Nglamuda Ibrahim, a resident of Gwoza town, gave Morning Star News the names of seven Christians killed on Monday (May 26) in Chinene village, these are: Bulama Dajiba, Bulama John, Haruna Wadda, Bitrus Kurma, Haruna Kwatha, Haruna Waruda, and Shaibu Galva, retrieved from: <http://christianresponse.ca/boko-haram-violence-cripples-christianity~in-areas-of-nigerias-borno-state/>.

Thousands flee attacks; public worship impossible for some who remain

Islamic extremist Boko Haram insurgents have driven thousands of Christians from areas of Borno state, with some of those remaining unable to hold worship services, church leaders said. Boko Haram attacks that killed at least 150 members of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria, or EYN) in the past 10 months have caused 8,000 Christians to flee, EYN leaders said. "Most of our church members affected by these attacks have fled to other communities, and they are in desperate need for help," said the Rev. Daniel Yumuna, Jos district secretary for the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria.

Boko Haram, based in Borno state, has killed at least 900 Christians in the past year in its stated campaign to establish strict sharia (Islamic law) throughout the country, according to the Hudson Institute. Filibus Gwama, former president of the EYN, told Morning Star News that a Sept. 27 attack by Boko Haram on his community, Gavva West in Gwoza District, forced many Christians to flee to neighboring Cameroon. "Five members from my village who escaped from the attackers said seven of our Christian members were killed in the attack, and two of them were children, ages 6 and 8," Gwama said. Yumuna and Gwama said 75 houses were burned in the attack on the Christian community near the border of Cameroon. They said it was the 10th attack on Gavva West village this year. Another attack on Barawa, also in Borno's Gwoza District, devastated local churches, EYN leaders said.

One church member was killed, three EYN churches were burned, and 19 houses were destroyed, including the house of our pastor/Yumuna told Morning Star News. "The Boko Haram gunmen forced about 8,000 people out of Barawa area and set fire on nine churches, while 400 houses were destroyed.

The Rev. Samuel Dante Doll, president of EYN, says in a denomination report that church services have become impossible in some areas: "They attacked Christians from house to house and burned almost every church in the Gwoza and Gavva areas/'. Dali further states in the report. "Most of the EYN churches in these areas are close to Cameroon. About 2,000 of our church members have fled to Cameroon as refugees. And sometimes we are very confused and depressed because there's not much you can do" he adds. "The church cannot mobilize and provide security. The resources aren't there. And sometimes you can't have a church service at all, worship is out of the question in some places" (Jos, Morning Star News, November 6, 2013, by Our Nigeria Correspondent).

The Relationship Between The Phrase: 'The Blood Of The Martyr Is The Seed Of The Church' And The EYN Church

In its first three centuries, the Christian church endured persecution at the hands of Roman authorities. This experience and its resulting martyrs and apologists, would come to have significant historical and theological consequences for the developing faith. Among other things, persecution sparked the cult of the saints, facilitated the rapid growth and spread of Christianity, prompted defenses and explanations of Christianity (apologies), and, in its aftermath, raised fundamental questions about the nature of the church.

Besides being put to death they [Christians] were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beast and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had thrown open his grounds for the display, and was putting on a show in the circus, where he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or drove about in his chariot. All this gave rise to a feeling of pity, even toward men whose guilt merited the most exemplary punishment; for it was felt that they were being destroyed not for the public good but to satisfy the cruelty of an individual (Nero, the Emperor).

In general, public opinion condemned the government's violence and admired the martyrs' passive resistance, and the Christian movement was thereby strengthened. The last major Roman persecution of Christians occurred under Diocletian, and it was the worst of all. It is known as the "Great Persecution." Diocletian ordered the burning of Christian books and churches, but promised not to spill any blood. In actuality, the Diocletian persecution turned out to be extremely violent. This violence "did not succeed in annihilating Christianity but caused the faith of the martyrs to blaze forth instead." The second-century theologian Tertullian had converted to Christianity based in part on his wonder at Christians' faithfulness in the face of martyrdom and it clearly had a similar effect on others as well. Indeed, persecution seemed to have a dramatic effect on Christianity's numbers, but not in the direction intended by the persecutors, amongst the reasons for the expansion of the Church are Paul's persecution and Stephen's preaching (John Ishaku. Handouts on Acts of Apostles, p. 4).

In other to find a clear-cut comprehension of the phrase "the blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church" in relation to the EYN, one must first and foremost take into account the following references:

JOHN 12:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat falls to the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it dies, it bringeth forth more fruit (KJV).

According to Tertullian; the fruit is always present in the seed. Tertullian further stated: "Our sufferings are our triumph. Our endurance in your view redounds to our discredit; the fortitude of others to their honour. You may gain popularity by your injustice, but our sufferings and practical example continually attract new converts; Christian and Pagan in the Roman Empire", *The Witness of Tertullian (Selections from the Fathers of the Church)* Robert D. Sider, ed. The same can be said of the EYN, for even in the incident of their persecution they continued to be a force to be reckoned with and increased numerically.

ROMANS 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (KJV).

What are the all things that Paul is referring to? In the previous verses (vv. 17-23), Paul spoke of how as heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, we share in his suffering (v, 17), it is obvious from the context that Paul is not speaking primarily of the suffering that we endure as being part of the fallen creation,

but the suffering that is unique to the children of God. As bad as such suffering is, Paul says, it is not worthy to compare with the glory that awaits us when Christ return. Persecution is therefore, not intrinsically good, but good in as much as God is able to bring good out of something evil, in the same way as Joseph could tell his brother in Genesis 50:15, "God turned in good what you meant for evil" (NLT). Even so, the EYN in her persecuted state have continued to exude fortitude, knowing that no persecution she presently experience is worthy to be compared with the glory awaiting her.

2 TIMOTHY 3:12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (KJV).

I find it interesting that Paul did not see the suffering that he endures as exceptional, but rather typical for everyone who wants to live a godly life. Will persecution make us better Christians? Perhaps it seems to me, however that the witness of scripture and the testimony of todays persecuted Church is better reflected in the phrase, "Better Christians tend to produce persecution. It is said of the Church leaders who are without marks of persecution on their backs, as those who are not being faithful to the faith (Gleen Penner, pp.2-4).

MATTHEW 10:23-24: "They persecute you in one city, flee to the other" (KJV).

Early Christians who were persecuted in Judaea, Jerusalem, and Samaria fled to Antioch in yria and other parts of the globe; and wherever they went the spread the gospel, and converts were added to Church. Even so, the EYN members are witnesses to the good news in whatever and town and community they fled to. According to handout on 'Acts of the Apostles' among the reasons for the expansion of the Church are Paul's persecution and Stephen preaching (Mr. Ishaku 2017, P- 4).

Purification Of The Church: An accompanying assumption is that persecution typically causes the Church to be purified, and believers to walk more closely with God. Consequently, persecution is often seen to have a benefit for the Church. In the Prophets, the Hebrew Scriptures purports: ...Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand - Daniel 12:10 (KJV). This concept is further buttressed in the New Testament: For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake (Phil 1:29). For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps (1 Peter 2:21). Beloved think it not strange

concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf (1 Peter 4:12-16).

The Role Of Apologists: The consistent criticism of the faith gave rise to another group of Christian writers - known as the Apologists. These writers argue for the faith, and in the process allowed Christians and non-Christians of all ages to know what the second century Church believed. These took upon themselves the task of making reasonable defenses and recommendation of the faith to outsiders. They made appeals in favor of fellow Christians, presenting the Christian faith on a philosophical and rational basis, as such, many were won to the faith. Examples of Apologists are: Justin the Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus of Lyons, etc. even so, members of the EYN in the likes of Daniel Yumana (Jos district secretary for the Church of the Brethren of Nigeria); Mbode M. Ndirmbita (Vice President of EYN) have been the voice of the EYN community in the face of persecution.

Rising Of The Spirit Of Brotherliness: Like the Anabaptist, the EYN church along with its global family is committed to the practice of prayer for their brethren in other lands. Recently, dozens of Church of the Brethren congregation throughout North America united for a week of sustained prayer and fasting on behalf of the brothers and sisters in Nigeria, sharing with the Psalmist the voices of their lament, despair, trust, and hope.

In the 17th century, Mennonites living in the Netherlands took note of the sufferings of their Swiss Brethren cousins, by sending fact-finding delegations, raising funds for refugee relief, making direct appeals to government authorities and carefully recording the names and stories of those who were being persecuted for public attention, consideration, and empathy. A large scale holistic program continues providing emergency relief and early recovery, even as programming is transitioning to long term recovery activities in some communities with improved security. By caring for the whole person and community, providing basic needs

- Spiritual care
- Trauma healing
- Education
- Agriculture and
- Community development

As part of the response and relief efforts, new homes for displaced people are being built in safer areas of North East Nigeria, for families not able to return to their home community. A large trauma healing program is holding trauma awareness workshops while training additional facilitators to reach more people in their own villages. The Nigeria Crisis Response and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) are working alongside EYN in supporting this important program. Providing education for children is a critical part of their long term recovery and trauma healing. Some children have been out of school for up to two years. The response includes sponsoring a school in Jos, supporting orphans, providing school fees for children in other towns, and supplies for thousands of children. New schools have been started for displaced children in safe areas.

Food and basic household supply is an ongoing cornerstone of the relief effort. A major part of 2015 & early 2016 programming has been food distribution. These will continue until the harvest allows families to support themselves. A typical distribution includes corn, rice, vegetable oil, noodles, and spices, sleeping mats, water containers, cooking and dining supplies, soap and other hygiene supplies. Medical care is being provided in temporary camps, churches, as part of food distributions, at new relocation centers and at existing clinics in the Northeast. With all national staff displaced, the Church headquarters overrun, and two-thirds of the churches destroyed, the EYN body was in crisis. A critical part of this response has been to support EYN leadership so they can help lead the recovery efforts. Through church strengthening, EYN has built capacity to be the largest response partner in this crisis. Through this effort temporary EYN headquarters were established in Jos, Kulp Bible College (KBC) was relocated, key meetings were supported and housing for displaced national church leaders were provided. In 2016, with improved security around Kwarhi, EYN headquarters has now been repaired and KBC has returned to its original site and has reopened for students. With better security, many families are returning to this area. Retrieved from <http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis/response.html>

The Relationship: In A Nutshell

Jesus said: "Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than the master. If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you" - John 15:20 (KJV). He further stated: "And I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all men unto me" - John 12:32-33. Persecution is nothing new for Christians. The phrase "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church" is commonly said to have been almost literally copied from Tertullian, who in 197AD penned it. Nevertheless, the idea behind the phrase was contained in a speech by an unknown author to the pagan Diogneto in the mid-2nd century: "Do you not see that the Christians thrown to the wild beasts that they may recant the Lord - do not allow themselves to be beaten? Do you not see that the more they are punished, the more they increased in numbers?" Lippolito Romano was one of Tertullian's contemporary, who during the persecution organized by Septimius Severus, wrote; that a large number of men attracted to the faith by martyrs also became God's martyrs (see Commentary to Daniel, 11, 38).

Hence, the relationship between the phrase "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church" to the EYN can be seen in the light of "fortitude, continuity, and expansion in the face of persecution".

Conclusion

Tertullian witnessed how Christians were killed for their faith, and discovered that their death had effect on the society that was persecuting them. He watched unbelievers within his people group persecuting believers who were among them, and the effect was one of yeast in dough -the yeast representing the persecuted believer and the dough symbolizing the persecuting community, the heat of persecution helping the yeast mature and transform dough. Scriptures says: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, tilt the whole was leavened (Matt. 13:33).

In John 12:24 Jesus said; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it dies, it bringeth forth much fruit". The martyrs followed the path shown by Jesus (John 14:6). Martyrs through the loss of their lives in bearing witness to Jesus, gain eternal life. Nevertheless, this is positive for the Church, that receives new members and it also serves as encouragement to converts and renewal among existing believers (John Paul II, teachings, 23/1, 776).

Recommendations

1. Pastors should teach their members that there is a season of persecution
2. Christians should know that people will reject them for the sake of Christ
3. Christians should know that the only church expanded as a result of the persecution of the church.
4. Christians should pray and be happy when they are persecuted.
5. Clergymen should teach their adherents that the body can be destroyed but the soul cannot be destroyed.
6. For those that die as a result of persecution will receive the crown of life
7. The world will reject us because we are not of the world.

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