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**CHRISTIANITY AND INTOLERANCE: A CASE STUDY OF
THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY'S TRAGEDY.
ITS IMPLICATIONS TO THE
CHURCH IN AFRICA**

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by

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ABSTRACT

From the inception of the Church, faithful saints have been maimed, and martyred. They have paid the ultimate price for our Saviour, Jesus Christ. These precious souls stood valiantly on the side of the truth amidst the horrendous hardship and death. Their testimonies ring from the house tops today.

Unfortunately among the torturers of Christians there were those who were leading the Church. The task of this writer is to bring to memory the horrible sufferings Christians have inflicted Christians in the name of God.

After the reminder, the writer advocates for tolerance in spiritual matters, because the doctrine of the founder of Christianity does not give room for coercive measures in making disciples.

The Great Commission is to witness to the world. The expected response is expressed by free will adhesion to the faith with possibility of refusing the offer of salvation without triggering any punitive actions.

The 16th century's tragedy was chosen as a case study, because this is the most outstanding Christian era when persecution erupted from within the walls of the Church, and this persecution has been very cruel.

This project, therefore, stands as a modest contribution to the solution of the problem of intolerance and persecution among Christians. This is a warning to the African Church to shun away all forms of religious bigotry.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusion

The task of this project has been to remind Christians of all persuasions that no matter how noble may be their motives, true Christianity has never and will never give room to persecution. Coercive measures in spiritual matters can never proceed from God. God never forces His will on the conscience, but Satan's constant resort to gain control of those who he cannot otherwise seduce is compulsion by cruelty.

Through fear or force, he endeavours to rule the conscience, and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, Satan works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God.

The project has unveiled some of those religious and secular authorities that have been used by Satan. For the time being, the gross cruelty lies in the past. The study, however, has revealed that the Ecumenical Movement promoted by some owners of Media Houses such as Paul Crouch of TBN (TV Station in U.S.A.) may be regarded as a stepping stone to new outbreaks of intolerance and religious bigotry.

Having said this, the project will conclude by bringing forth a couple of recommendations in line with the way to shun

away intolerance within the body of Christ.

B. Recommendations

1. Christianity, a Movement of Good Will

Considering what has happened in christian circles for the past centuries, it seems recommendable that leaders of christendom should go back and assess their creeds and the teachings of their denominations, and see if these teachings are congruent with the New Testament's teachings on what is known as EKKLESIA.

Evangelicals should be acquainted with the concept of Believer's Church propounded by Martin Luther. In this respect, Darnbaugh made mention of Luther by saying:

From Luther's perspective, the believer's Church is made up of those who genuinely want to be christians, having shown this by signifying their names, have agreed to meet in a house, perform Christian works, accept discipline, give benevolent offerings, observe the ordinance of baptism, and emphasize word, prayer and love.¹³⁰

Unfortunately, Christianity today looks more or less like secular organizations, with highly hierarchical administrative structures, that the spirit of brotherhood is squarely destroyed. Those on the apex of the pyramid look down upon those on the lower echelons.

A profound reform is acutely needed. The reform should start from Christian mental attitude, to social relationship

¹³⁰Donald E. Darnbaugh The Believer's Church, (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1968), p.32.

between members. A restructuration of the administration setting of our denominations should be carried out, if the church aspires again any Christ-like representation. There is a need of denominational conferences to review some of these archaic constitutions.