

## AN EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORICAL REFLECTION OF THE CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IN NUPELAND

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### Abstract

Persecution is not a strange phenomenon in Christian faith. It started with Jesus Himself during His earthly ministry and culminated in His death on the Cross. This continued with His disciples particularly at the inception of the Church. Persecution has always been part of Christianity wherever it exists in the world. This is observed with the advent of Christianity in Nupeland. Due to the slow growth of Christianity in Nupeland, many people have an obscure understanding about the challenge of persecution being faced by the indigenous Christians in the land. The persecution of Christians in Nupeland is a composite of many factors. Relevant literature and interviews from Church leaders in Nupeland were conducted and the study discovered that other religious faiths see Christianity as a threat to their survival. Also, many people are not aware about the extent to which Christians are persecuted in Nupeland. The paper gave some concrete verifiable historical antecedents of the cases of persecution in Nupeland. The study closed by giving recommendations on how Christians in Nupeland should weather the storm of persecution. It concluded that apologetic approaches and social media should be used to explain Christian faith.

### Introduction

Christians in Nigeria have gone through series of persecution at different times in history. This is a common phenomenon in the history of the Church from the time immemorial. Persecution was part of the Jewish heritage where they believed that martyrdom would be rewarded by personal immortality. Despite the fact that Christianity was *religio licita*, cohesiveness, non-co-operative attitude of the Jews and their financial success made the Romans to hate and persecute them.<sup>1</sup> The Jews were the ones who exposed their fellow Jews who were Christians to the persecution from the Roman authority. The first persecution was the martyrdom of Stephen as seen in Acts 6-8. After the first persecution against Christians, other persecutions followed in succession through ages unabated till the present era. James was killed by Herod Agrippa in AD44 (Acts 6:14, 8:16), Emperor Nero accused Christians and persecuted them for the arson which he himself was responsible in AD64. Also, in about AD80, Christians were excommunicated by the Jews. Similar cases in Church history included persecution of Christians in the province of Bithynia by AD 112 during the reign of Emperor Trajan.<sup>3</sup> The authority of that time had slightest reasons to persecute the Christians. Such reasons included cannibalism, incest, Christian's concepts of eucharists and love feasts, magic, illegal assembly and their refusal to sacrifice to the emperor's name.<sup>4</sup>

The trend and wave of this persecution has spread to different parts of Nigeria over the years and still rages unabated. Owojaiye in his unpublished article makes reference to the Open Doors who alludes to the Christians in northern Nigeria that for decades they have suffered marginalization and discrimination as well as targeted violence.<sup>5</sup> He also refers to THISDAYLive of 4 February, 2022 where the United States House of Representatives described Nigeria as "the most dangerous place for Christians in the world and that the impunity of those responsible for the killing of Christians in the country seems to be widespread."<sup>6</sup> The Open Doors World Watch list 2022 ranks Nigeria to be 7<sup>th</sup> among 50 nations where Christians face extreme or very high persecution and 4<sup>th</sup> in Africa.

Instances of brutal and dastardly persecutions against Christians in Nigeria have dotted the historical plane of Nigeria. For instance, the most recent ones which came to mind include the public execution of Reverend Lawan Andimi, the chairman Christian Association of Nigeria, Michiga Local Government Area of Adamawa State and the gruesome murder of a University of Maiduguri student, Daciya Dalep.<sup>8</sup> Prior to this time, abduction of Chibok girls where Leah Sharibu is still held captive in the camp of the insurgents because of her refusal to renounce her Christian faith. One quickly recalls the abduction of the four seminary students of the Good Shepherd Major Seminary in Kakau, Kaduna State. Although three of them were released after some days, the body of the fourth person, Michael Nnadi was found dead on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2020.<sup>9</sup> On that same day, the lifeless body of Mrs Bola Ataga was found in Sabon Tasha on 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 after she had spent seven days in the captivity of her abductors with her two daughters. The most recent one which attracts both national and international attention is the barbaric killing of Deborah Samuel, a student of College of Education, Sokoto whom her murderers claimed blasphemed against Prophet Muhammed when she attributed her success to the power of Jesus Christ. She was asked to withdraw that statement, but she refused, and this made the Islamic extremists to do jungle justice for her by stoning her to death and burning her body.

### **Historical Antecedent of Christian Persecution in Nupeland**

Persecution against the Gospel is noticeable throughout Nupeland. This is not peculiar to a particular denomination, but it cuts across all denominations. In December 1905, the Sudan Interior Mission house in Bida was destroyed by fire through arson by the enemies of the Christian faith.<sup>10</sup> In some places Christians were summoned and made to go through severe tortures. At times, they were severely beaten and, on such occasions, they may force them to put their backs on hot sand and face the sun in the heat of the day.<sup>11</sup> This trend continued in various parts of Nupeland in different forms. For instance, such persecutions can manifest in form of parents cursing their children for deciding to follow Jesus Christ or even casting spells on them. In explaining how some Christians were persecuted in Nupeland, Philip Gana writes:

Their parents began to threaten that if they refuse to forsake their new found faith, nobody will give them wives to marry. This was not an empty threat because most of these pioneer believers later found wives for themselves after a long delay contrary to Nupe tradition. In Nupe tradition, the parents of a young man usually do necessary negotiation to get a good wife for their son.<sup>12</sup>

One of the greatest evils that any parent can do to his or her son or daughter is to disrupt or distort his or her marital life. When this happens, it beclouds life for an average Nupe man or lady making the future gloomy and the whole essence of life meaningless. Therefore, with this situation on ground, it was and is still difficult for the Church to get many converts into Christianity in Nupeland.

Denial of landed property where the Christians will erect their places of worship was another challenge. In some places, Christians are treated like second class citizens when it comes to the issue of securing a piece of land for public worship. In a situation like that, their citizenship and rights do not necessarily count. Philip Gana again laments this situation in his writing as follows:

When the news that Christians wanted to build a Church got to the Emir of Bida who was then known as Etsu Muhammadu (Ndayanko), popularly called Baba Kudu, (who reigned between 1935-1962) he ordered the Christians to appear before him immediately at Bida, and it was a

Christmas day, so they were not allowed to celebrate their Christmas at home. Bida from Nku is about a day's journey on foot, he ordered that they should go and come back in five days. When they reappeared before the Emir five days later, he ordered the "Dogaris" the traditional policemen to follow them back to Nku and to watch them put back the blocks in the hole where they had dug the mud to mould those blocks, until it appears as if no hole had been dug there. This order was strictly obeyed, and blocks were broken and put back to where they were originally dug.<sup>13</sup>

The above written story is just a tip of an iceberg in the way Christians are treated in Nupeland just because of their faith in Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, this is a widespread phenomenon in the entire region of northern part of Nigeria. John Onaiyekan, the former president of the Christian Association of Nigeria explains thus:

I receive several serious complaints from Christians from some parts of the North that they are hardly ever officially allocated suitable plots to build places of worship for their members...The perception then is that the relevant government authorities do not consider places of worship as a right of Christians living among them. This perception is further confirmed when we have government agencies allocating lands to people with the provision that the plot shall not be used for "Church, drinking house or brothel." This obviously indicates that Churches are placed on the same level as brothels and drinking house. Naturally this is offensive to Christians. More seriously, it seems to explain why there has been the system of reluctance to grant permission for places of worship for Christians in these parts.<sup>14</sup>

In a just, equitable and civilized society, this is a gross violation of the Fundamental Human Rights which may be partly responsible for religious crises in many parts of Northern Nigeria. It is an abuse of power for any government official or parastatal to allow them to be used against Christianity which seeks the good of the Nigerian nation.

The British Colonial rule in some places in the middle belt of Nigeria persecuted Christians and this made conversions difficult for the mission agencies in such axis. Yusuf Turaki stresses this point when he states thus:

Some British colonial rulers incited the local people to reject Christian missionaries who came into their area. Some advised the Muslim rulers not to allow Christian missionaries into their emirates. Some British colonial officers destroyed Christian places of worship and denied permits to Christian missionaries.<sup>15</sup>

The above quotation may be true because it was not every British Colonial Officer who had sympathy for the work of Christian mission in Nupeland. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the effects of the waves of this persecution from the British Colonial rulers blew either directly or indirectly in Nupeland.

In modern times in Nupeland, persecutions arise against Christians in the area of marginalization in getting jobs, admissions and political appointments in their various states of origin. Those who are seen to have had political appointments, jobs or admissions were just the few privileged ones and the number is highly

insignificant when compared to the total population of the qualified Nupe Christians. Philip Gana gave a concrete example of Niger State Executive Council and permanent secretaries during the era of Engineer Kure as the Governor of Niger State. In the executive cabinet it was only Dr. Shem Zagbayi, the Deputy Governor who was from other faith.<sup>16</sup>In the same vein, in the list of the twenty-two permanent secretaries and other political posts, except Mr. Jamiu Gamba who was also a permanent Secretary whose religion he was not sure, all other person belonged to other faiths.

Some traditional rulers in Nupeland are agents through whom persecutions are meted out against Christianity. The Nupe have a high regard for the traditional institutions because their sociological concept affects their religious practice. The Nupe believe that *Etsu* is next to *Soko* (God). Therefore, their words and declarations were forceful and authoritative. Some powerful kings who ruled in Nupeland brought this great ruling power to bear on the religious lives of their subjects. Hence, their pronouncements on religious matters become orders. Some of these kings who ruled in the past and in some places in this present era ruled against Christianity thereby constituting a great impediment to the growth of Christianity in Nupeland. *Etsu* Masaba became *Etsu* Nupe in 1859.<sup>17</sup> Even though it was Masaba who granted Bishop Ajayi Crowther the permission to establish a missionary Church in Lokoja,<sup>18</sup> he was the same king who latter ordered that all mission stations be closed. The reason was the fact that the Sudan Party had sacked some of the CMS missionaries in his domain for whom he had personal flair. Elijah Saba describes him as a fierce soldier who had no regard for human life. He made pronouncements that nobody in his domain must get converted into Christianity and it was so. Also, Masaba never allowed any more Christian workers in his Kingdom. His influence of power was said to be from Bida to as far as Mokwa, Egbian, Tsaragi, Patigi and Ilorin.

*Etsu* Maliki who reigned in 1874-1890 was said to have made a pronouncement that all Christians must vacate his domain and he must not hear the name of anyone who was a Christian. Fuller attests to this when he writes, "The mission base was operational from 1897 to 1890 when *Etsu* Maliki asked all missionaries to withdraw from his country."<sup>19</sup> One of those missionaries was Charles Paul, a Sierra Leonean who served with the CMS before he was forced to resign by novice English recruit and died in 1893.<sup>20</sup> Due to the reactions of some of these powerful rulers to Christianity, some enemies of Christian Gospel capitalized on the authority of the traditional rulers to stop the practice and spread of Christianity. In modern times, some traditional rulers in Nupeland forcefully marry Christian girls to non-Christian husbands taken without the consent of the girls' parents. An example of this was a case of an Igbo girl whose news was on the national television around 2014, who was forcefully married out to a non-Christian in Bida.

Persecution in Nupeland has taken more dangerous spiritual dimensions in some places where some new converts were attacked spiritually by strange diseases. Although this may be difficult to prove empirically, in the context of African milieu, the reality cannot be denied. When this happens to the converts, some people blame it on the victim's contemptuous abandonment of the traditions and taboos of elders which in most cases deal with offering of sacrifice to the gods and observance of anti-Christian rites. For instance, one Ndalentswa Ndagitsu in Kpankorogi continued to lose his children until the fifth one died, and they told him that he should renounce his new faith (Christianity) so that any other child born to him would live. After he truly renounced his Christian faith, the children who were born to him thereafter lived.<sup>21</sup>This corroborates the fact that the early converts were frustrated in every way possible to ensure that they did not embrace Christianity.

The negative reactions against Christianity have also been noticed in certain areas. Some Christians who had wives before conversion into Christianity lost their wives to their non-Christian counterparts and in the

case of others, their wives divorced them because they could not cope with their newly found faith. A good example is the case of one Elder Peter Gana who had two wives before his conversion but one left him as soon as he became a Christian. The one who left him had no child before her divorce. The second wife had a child, but the only child fell sick and died. However, his wife blamed the death of the child on her husband's new faith, and she also divorced him and got married to another man within the same community.<sup>22</sup>

There was a report about Mr. and Mrs. Merryweather, the missionaries who were stationed in Kpada Tifin in 1914. Owing to their success in the establishment of the Gospel in that area, there was some silent opposition against them. The enemies of the Gospel poisoned the missionaries' water, but God revealed it<sup>23</sup> and this averted the death which would have resulted if they had drunk it.

Hostility and attack against the Gospel in Nupeland were targeted against Christians in 1923 when the mission house in Patigi was struck by thunderbolt and the whole house was set on fire. This incidence is widely believed among the Christians that it was a spiritual attack on the Church because of their experiences with the non-Christians. Incidentally, Mr. Banfield came to visit Mr. Henshaw and both of them were in the house when it happened. Fortunately, Mr. Banfield was conscious, and he quickly moved Mr. Henshaw out of the burning house. The entire house was razed down by the inferno thereby rendering the missionaries homeless. This event forced Mr. Henshaw back home.<sup>24</sup>

Non-Christian Nupes show their displeasure to Christianity by denying them of their political positions. There was a particular case of one Elder Elijah in Kpada Tako whose determination to follow Christ and refusal to participate in the traditional religious rites led to his being denied right to chieftaincy title. He was consequently poisoned, and he died on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1938.<sup>25</sup>

The event narrated above is strange to the extreme because the principle of African Religion all over the world is "Live and let us live." That notwithstanding, that is a clear picture of many people's dispositions to Christianity in Nupeland. Up till today in many places in Nupeland, it is difficult for a Christian to assume both traditional and political positions not only because they are in minority but because the non-Christians are intolerant of them.

In the early days of the Gospel in Nupeland, the works of the mission proved very difficult to the CMS and other major denomination like SIM and UMS. In the view of Mr. Goertz he expressed his opinion thus:

At this time many thought that the work among the Nupes should be closed. It had taken the health of too many missionaries. Of the twenty-three missionaries stationed among the Nupes, only the Merryweathers were now left, and they had suffered so much. (five years later Mrs. Merryweather was to lay down her life among the Nupe people). Up until this time only seven Nupes had been baptized and a few from other tribes. Other fruitful fields had opened at Egbe, Isanlu, Oro-Ago, Agunjin, Kwoi, Karu and other places. Why not leave the Nupe work and go to another more fruitful areas.<sup>26</sup>

The above statement by Goertz shows the true picture of the situation in Nupeland. It was a difficult work for the missionaries across all the denominations because of the unresponsive attitude of many Nupe.

Islam and Christianity are the two most competing religions in Nigeria. Islam is a big road-block to the spread of Christianity in Nupeland. On most occasions Islam takes advantage of the traditional rulers who are in positions of influence to put hindrances in the way of Christianity. Philip Gana, a onetime secretary of the Patigi District Church Council of ECWA reports that First ECWA Patigi decided to give a piece of land belonging to her to some members of ECWA Garogi who relocated to Patigi in 2004. After a site plan was developed and taken to the Emir of Patigi, Alhaji Ibrahim Chatta to append his signature, he blatantly refused saying that a Church must not be built there because the place was already in the heart of the town. All the efforts of the District Church Council to build a Church there proved abortive. Philip attributed this to brutality and discrimination against Christianity because their Muslim counterparts do not seek permission to build mosques in schools, marketplaces, personal houses and public places.<sup>27</sup>Till today, such treatments and similar ones are meted out against Christians. These make the activities of the Church to be crippled in Nupeland. CAPRO in their research in Nupeland reported their observation thus:

We noticed in some places, notably in the Bida Emirate that certain religions/political agencies prohibit conversion of Muslims to Christianity as agents often spy on the areas and report any such cases to the authorities. It is said that evangelism is actually prohibited in the area.<sup>28</sup>

The attitude of the authorities (the traditional rulers) and some indigenes to Christianity is making the work of Christian mission difficult in Nupeland. When Mr. Alfred Ball was a missionary in Bida, he was vehemently opposed by people and the authority. Hatred for mission work and the missionaries was also observed at the rejection of the health care service rendered by the Christian missionaries in Bida. Only a few people responded for treatment because they did not want to receive help from the “infidels” (Christians).<sup>29</sup>The negative reaction to Christianity also became evident in the failure of non-Christian girls to marry Christian men who wanted to get married. Hostility to Christian faith was not limited to Bida the Nupe capital alone but also to the other parts of the kingdom. They did not just reject the Gospel but also persecuted their fellow countrymen who accepted the faith.

One good example that readily comes to mind is the story of the eighteen brutalized Doko Christians. According to a source, the District Head of Zhima/Doko paid a three-day working visit to Doko. Immediately after their arrival, the subjects started their usual acts of terrorism and brigandage. They sighted a Doko man who went to fetch firewood to pay his remaining tax of two shillings. The servants of the District Head asked him to surrender his firewood, but he pleaded with them because that would rob him the opportunity to pay his tax. The servants took the firewood from his head and slapped him violently. The victim, Samuel of Takogi could not take the humiliation and hit one of the servants with his fist and knocked him to the ground. When the other servants saw what happened, they rushed at Samuel to beat him. However, a group of agitated fellows who sat nearby tree also rushed to the scene of the fight and attacked the servants of the District Head. Soon, it became a free for all fight. At the end the servants ran for their lives.<sup>30</sup>The following morning, the palace police were sent with a list of eighteen names to be arrested for interrogation at Bida. The list contained only Christian names even though the non-Christians also participated in the fight. For instance, Mr. Peter Gana’s name was included only because he was the evangelist in charge of the Anglican Church Doko, not that he participated in the fight.<sup>31</sup>

Those arrested were taken to Bida and arraigned before the Emir, Mallam Saidu for investigation. Prior to this time, they had not eaten anything neither had they taken water. After the interrogation, the *Etsu* found them innocent but only advised that they should be warned and released. This decision did not go down well with those who arrested them and there was a very sharp reaction from the people that they must be

punished. When the pressure became too much on the *Etsu*, he simply retired to his Chamber leaving the victims in the hands of their tormentors.<sup>32</sup>At last, each of them was given six strokes of horse whip and released. This is reminiscent of Jesus' unfair trial before Pilate.

When Rev. Alvarez who was in charge of the Christian communities in Nupeland learnt what happened, he wrote a letter to the District Officer requesting that the case be investigated. At the end of it all, those who were connected with the matter, from the District Head down to the scribes were relieved of their posts. The eighteen Christians who were victimized were taken home by Rev. Alvarez where they remained for four days nursing their wounds and feeding them. At the end of their stay, Rev. Alvarez gave each of them a Hymn Book and instructed them to go back to Doko to sing praises to God.<sup>33</sup>

A similar incident which happened in Doko was the event that was described as the miracle of the collapsed *Kuchi* Bridge. There was a proposed visit of an eminent political and religious leader in the North to Doko. Christians in Doko had been informed two weeks before that time that the purpose of the August visitor's coming was to Islamize everybody and whoever refused would be persecuted severely. In preparation for the coming of the visitor, the authorities forced Christians to abandon their Sunday worship to prepare a locally made tent to welcome the guest. Therefore, Christians were seen on the field with their Bibles and other Holy Books.

On that same day too, Christians in Doko were harassed by their non-Christian counterparts that they would be killed on that day unless they changed their religion. Consequently, Christians went to pray. On the eve of the day the guest was to come, cloud formed around the wooden bridge which linked Bida to Doko. Not long after this there was a torrential rain which washed the entire bridge away. The amazing thing was that there was no drop of rain in both villages linked together by this bridge and the villages are just about half kilometer apart. The damage to the bridge was so severe that according to the engineer's report, it could not be successfully repaired in a period of three months.<sup>24</sup>Consequently; the visitor could not reach Doko and had to stop at Tsuyankpa where he was met by the people who wished to be converted into Islam.

On the general note, despite the stiff opposition against Christianity, Christianity was established and spread. The persecution was not only from Islam but also from the African Traditional Religions worshippers. The persecution which rose against the converts was not unconnected with their disrespect for the traditional religion and its festivities or rituals. They also failed to revere the traditional cults. The converts were beaten, starved of food by their parents, the traditional religionists made attempts to curse the converts through libations, incantations, and divinations in their various shrines but all to no avail. This only made room for more converts. However, on the other hand, the challenge of persecution led many Christian converts to backslide.

Among the villages which responded positively to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was Essan, in the present-day Niger State. The early converts faced a lot of persecutions from their kith and kin for leaving their traditional religion. Regardless of the tense situation which the new converts found themselves they did not renege on their decisions to follow Christ. They were constantly encouraged by the CMS missionaries through visits and the teaching of the Word of God. Christianity later thrived in Essan to the point that it extended to other villages like Egbe, Emigi and Ndagbira.

In Lanle, persecution broke out against the first converts. The converts gave their lives to Christ and were later advised by Papa Abu, the resident pastor at the CMS Kutigi to start attending Church services at

Kutigi since Kutigi is closer to Lanle than Fazhi. The heat of persecution came through their town's men. They collected their Bibles and any material that had to do with the Christian faith and burnt them. They also made several attempts to stop them from attending Church services at Kutigi. On a particular occasion when they went to Panti for tax census in 1893, Tsaduya, the District Head stationed at Kutigi tortured and embarrassed them in the public and also threatened that authorities would arrest them. They were however rescued from the hands of Tsaduya by Papa Abu.<sup>35</sup>

The new converts in Katamba-Bologi were not exempted from persecution which rose against them. As a result of the steadfastness of these new converts in faith, many other converts were won from Katamba-Bologi. These early converts were severely persecuted and resisted especially from the village head at that time, Ndana Zhitsu Yisa. The converts were punished with farm work by apportioning to them more work than they could do, and, on some occasions, they forfeited their meals, but these did not in any way deter them from following Jesus Christ. The new converts from Katamba-Bologi were encouraged and supported by Christians in Fazhi.

Also, in Kakpi, the early converts went through a severe persecution, especially in 1949 from the village head of Kakpi and the villagers. This made most of the early believers to backslide from their Christian faith. This persecution left only six people standing as believers in the entire village. The six standing believers came to be fondly known as "Kakpi six." The new converts were made to go through horrors. They were blackmailed, ostracized and attacked both spiritually and physically. They were also denied wives but contrary to the expectations of their persecutors, they found wives and bore children. More so, the families of the "Kakpi six" were poisoned by their persecutors yet did not die. Rather their number increased when three youths decided to give their lives to Jesus Christ at the same time. These three youths were not exempted from this persecution but when they were persecuted, Jeremiah's house was always ready to host the new believers. There they received solace and encouragements. The three youths who were the converts that joined later included Mr. Peter Amako, Mr. David Taidi and Mr. Moses Mamudu. These nine people later became known as the "Kakpi nine."<sup>36</sup>

After the conversion of Papa Joshua Usman Sule, he took his evangelistic crusade to Bankorogi which was a neighbouring village near Esheti. As more converts joined the Esheti Church, Papa Joshua Usman Sule who was the patriarch of Christianity in Esheti declared Sunday a work free- day of worship for Christians. This decision angered the elders of the town, and they reported him to *Etsuyankpa*, the village Head. The *Etsuyankpa* in turn reported the case to the *Etsu* Nupe in Bida. His arrest and detention was ordered by the Emir. The Dogaris (local authority-policemen) carried out the order and Papa Joshua Usman Sule was detained in prison for three months. However, after three months, his father, Baba Yisa protested the illicit detention of his son by accusing the leader of Esheti village council, Nda Makun that he masterminded the arrest and detention of his son. Nda Makun was a renowned hunter and herbalist. Nda Makun sworn to an oath that if he knew anything about the arrest and detention of Baba Yisa's son he should die before Baba Yisa's son return. However, before the return of Papa Joshua Usman Sule, Nda Makun died.

## **Conclusion**

Prior to the coming of the Christian missionaries the Nupe people had diverse powers which they used to protect and defend themselves. Unfortunately, some of these things were used negatively to inflict pain on their fellow human beings. Such powers include ega (witchcraft), eshe sorcery), duwa (rainbow), chekperi (evil magic), ewatikansanna (dry headed snake), etc. These evil powers were used to attack some missionaries who came to evangelize, and this led to their death in some occasions.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, these



powers were also used to attack some converts in order to discourage them from following Christ. For those who could not withstand it, they backed out and went back to their former religions.

From the foregoing therefore, it is clear from this study that persecution is part of Christian experience wherever it exists. Jesus had prophesied that His disciples would be persecuted as can be seen in Matthew 24:9: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated for all nations for my name's sake." Since Christians cannot completely avoid persecution, they can mitigate or lessen it. One of the ways to do this is by being involved in apologetic writings to explain Christian faith. Public seminars can be organized where dialogues on religious matters will be facilitated. Christians could also make use of social media to explain Christian faith. Prayers can also be organized to avert the impending persecution particularly where there is a government with ungodly policies. The onus is on the believers to guard their utterances so that they do not spark up the fire of persecution.

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