

BISHOP JAMES HANNINGTON (1847- 29th oct 1885)

Bishop James Hannington was an angelica missionary, saint and a martyr born on 3rd sept 1847 in Sussex, England. He left school at fifteen years to work in his father's Brighton counting house. at twenty, Hannington decided to pursue a clerical career at the university of St. Mary's hall oxford where he attained his first bachelor and on 1st march 1874 he was ordained a deacon consequently given charge of the small parish in Devon.

In 1882, Hannington heard of the brutal murder of two missionaries on the shores of lake victory and as a result, he decided to offer himself to the church missionary society (CMS) to serve the church in Zanzibar. However, crippled by fever and dysentery, Hannington was forced to return to England in 1883 till January 1885 when he made a fresh evangelical mission to Africa under the company of other missionaries like William Jones a Bombay African after regaining his health.

On 21st October 1885, Hannington together with other missionaries reached a spot near Victoria Nyanza unnoticed. Under the orders of kabaka Mwanga 11 of Buganda, Hannington with his companions were arrested by the Busoga chiefs and imprisoned for eight days and on 29th October 1885, these were killed with Hannington himself stabbed to death with the exception of William jones who escaped back to Rabai-mpya reporting the news of Hannington's death in Busoga, Uganda.

Hannington's last words to the soldiers who killed him were:" Go, tell Mwanga that I have purchased the road to Uganda with my blood". Bishop James Hannington together with other colleagues are reckoned among the first martyrs of Uganda and the church in England commemorates 29th oct as Hannington's day.

CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LED TO HANNINGTON'S DEATH

The unfriendly relationship between kabaka Mwanga and the missionaries in Buganda contributed to the death of Bishop James Hannington. Missionary teachings had for instance caused a lot of disobedience among the pages and chiefs in the courtyard a factor that disappointed Mwanga thus murdering James Hannington whom he expected had come to worsen the situation.

Mwanga's desire to stop foreigners from coming into Buganda also caused the killing of Bishop James Hannington. In 1885, foreigners especially European missionaries were entering Buganda in overwhelming numbers thus prompting kabaka Mwanga to murder Hannington hoping it would scare and stop Europeans from coming to his kingdom.

The protestants also caused the death of their own Bishop as they referred to Hannington as 'a great man' who was coming to bring changes into Buganda. This increased fears to kabaka Mwanga who interpreted this as political changes related to destroying his kingdom hence had to kill the bishop.

Bishop James Hannington was a victim of having approached Buganda kingdom through the eastern route that had been earlier prophesied by the traditional prophets as a politically sensitive direction through which the great enemy to Buganda would come from. Thus the coming of Hannington to Buganda through Busoga caused fears to Mwanga and Buganda hence leading to his death in 1885.

Bishop James Hannington was also responsible for his own death given the fact that he ignored the political hostile environment in Buganda under kabaka Mwanga. Besides, he failed to adhere to the advice given to him by Mwanga not to enter Buganda through the eastern route that was prophesied as apolitically sensitive route.

The uncompromising character of Mwanga was responsible for the demise of Bishop James Hannington. Mwanga was such a king who could not easily change his minds in that, even when some pages like Joseph Balikudembe pleaded with him not to kill the Bishop, he refused to change his decision and went ahead to condemn Hannington to death.

The Arab Muslims in kabaka Mwanga 's courtyard also influenced Mwanga to kill bishop Hannington. These continuously misadvised Mwanga against the Christian missionaries as imperialists and a threat to his leadership hence causing fears to the king who hurriedly killed the Bishop in Busoga before he had penetrated deeply into Buganda.

kabaka Mwanga's desire to assert his authority over all sections of people in the kingdom including foreigners could have probably led him into employing excessive force by murdering bishop James Hannington to attract loyalty from his subjects.

Bishop James Hannington was also a victim of the autocratic(dictatorial) nature of kings in Buganda. Kings in Buganda had absolute powers with their words being unquestionable thus this led to the king of the Bishop by kabaka Mwanga in 1885.

Mwanga's desire to consolidate himself into power against any other external interference might have also inspired him into killing Bishop James Hannington who was referred to as a great man by the early protestant missionaries thus mistaken to have come to overthrow kabaka Mwanga and probably colonize Buganda kingdom.

Kabaka Mwanga's desire to show his loyalty to the Catholics whom he was too much close with inspired him into murdering a protestant Bishop in 1885 to probably reduce on the competition created by Protestantism against Catholicism in Buganda kingdom.

Bishop James Hannington was also a victim of the earlier prophesy made by the traditionalists in Buganda about the Eastern route. The fact that majority Bagandas believed in the prophesy of the eastern route into Buganda, kabaka Mwanga was believed to have murdered Hannington simply to impress the Baganda and probably to show is loyalty to the prophesy.

The death of kabaka Muteesa 1 in 1884 partly contributed to the death of Bishop James Hannington. Muteesa's death created a leadership vacuum in Buganda kingdom that led to the unfortunate rise of a young and inexperienced king Mwanga in 1885 with inability to make mature decisions thus leading to the killing of an innocent Bishop.

Bishop James Hannington could have also been ignorant of Buganda's prophesy about the eastern route as being a politically sensitive direction thus subjecting himself into a brutal murder by kabaka Mwanga in Busoga in 1885.

He was also killed due to the ill advice given to kabaka Mwanga by some of his officials in the palace including the prime minister (katikiro) Mukasa Balikudembe to expel all foreigners from Buganda. This misadvised the king for selfish reasons such as wining favors from the king and probably to protect their leadership positions.

Bishop Hannington was murdered because he lacked adequate protection against the hostile environment in Buganda by then. The church missionary society (CMS) under estimated the powers of kabaka Mwanga given his young age and thus failed to grant Hannington maximum protection against any eventuality hence leading to his arrest, imprisonment for eight days and death in Busoga like "a chicken thief".

The disloyalty of Mwanga's pages such as Andrew Kagwa and Joseph Balikudembe against Buganda's culture caused Mwanga's untamable cruelty and hostility towards the missionaries and their converts. The pages concentrated on religious matters than their palace duties thus making Hannington's coming into Buganda unfortunate because Mwanga was already determined to do away with missionaries and Christianity in Buganda kingdom thus causing his death.

THE EFFECTS OF BISHOP JAMES HANNINGTON'S DEATH ON THE CHURCH

Hannington's death on 29th Oct 1885 had both positive and negative impacts onto the church.

A. Positive effects on the church

Hannington's death paved way for the death of the Uganda martyrs between 1885 -1886 under the commands of kabaka Mwanga, whose blood became a basis for deepening and spreading Christianity in Uganda and East Africa in general.

Hannington's death attracted more missionary groups in Buganda with motives of defending Christianity and providing support and courage to their colleagues in Buganda kingdom thus attracting enough manpower which gave Christianity an opportunity to grow faster.

His death also increased hatred among different religious sects in Buganda resulting into the outbreak of religious wars between 1888-1893 that scattered Christians to different areas outside Buganda for fears of Mwanga's brutality hence spreading the gospel of Christianity in places where they finally settled.

Hannington's murder increased on the protection of missionaries by their home governments specifically Britain against further persecutions by kabaka Mwanga. This increased on the safety missionaries in Buganda thus favoring the rapid spread of Christianity without fears and threats.

His death led to the eventual overthrow of an autocratic(dictatorial) kabaka Mwanga by Britain out of Buganda's leadership in 1890.This restored peace and stability in Buganda hence giving Christianity an opportunity to grow faster.

Hannington's death also became a basis of Christian teachings and preaching in east Africa that attracted more followers into the church. His death for instance taught Christians of endurance and giving up with early life for one to inherit God's kingdom thus winning Christianity a big number of converts.

His murder in 1885 made missionaries to clearly understand kabaka Mwanga's characters for example as unfriendly and a dictatorial king. This as a result, made them become more careful and critical while spreading the gospel in Buganda kingdom hence leading to the spread of Christianity.

Hannington's killing led kabaka Mwanga become too unpopular among his own pages, chiefs, other palace officials and the people of Buganda that saw no clear reasons of murdering an innocent Bishop thus giving missionaries and Christianity an opportunity of gaining popularity in Buganda.

His death also led to the colonization of Buganda in particular and Uganda at large by the British government which strengthened Christianity in the region. the colonial government for instance legalized all church activities like prayers, missionary journeys and bible studies among others hence granting the church an opportunity to grow.

Bishop Hannington's death won the church many sympathizers from Buganda and Uganda at large who joined Christianity just to show their solidarity with the church and also console it for losing an innocent Bishop thus leading to the growth of the church.

Hannington's death became a confirmation to the missionaries that the spread of the gospel was a very hard task that demanded endurance and commitment for it to succeed. Many as a result, sacrificed their own finances, volunteered to serve the church with no pay and abandoned self-pride thus contributing to the spread of Christianity in Buganda and Uganda in general.

The murder of Bishop James Hannington in 1885 was a clear confirmation to the people of Buganda, Uganda and east Africa at large that Christianity had taken a deeper route in Buganda hence the need for other people to join it.

Hannington's death also increased on the funding of missionary work in east Africa and Buganda in particular by the British government which led to the expansion of the church. The funds were for instance used towards establishing churches and feeding missionaries throughout the evangelical struggles thus contributing towards the spread of the church in the region.

B. Negative effects on the church.

Hannington's death in 1888 however affected the church negatively in the following ways.

His death caused much fears and threats to the already converted Christians who stopped preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ for fears of being heard and persecuted by kabaka Mwanga a factor that greatly undermined the growth of the church in Buganda.

Bishop James Hannington's death also led to the death of other Christians in Buganda for example Joseph Mukasa Balikudembe who was murdered over cautioning kabaka Mwanga's orders for the killing of Hannington in Busoga. This in a way reduced on the number of the church congregations thus negatively affecting on its growth.

Hannington's death partly contributed towards the outbreak of 1888-1893 religious wars in Buganda which great brought insecurity in the kingdom hence interfering with the spread of Christianity.

Hannington's murder in Busoga also scared other missionaries from coming to east Africa and Buganda in particular for fear of Mwanga's brutal killings. This affected on the missionary manpower in Buganda hence in turn causing a decline in the spread of the gospel.

His death negatively popularized the church as a faith that has a lot of conflicts and misunderstandings with kabaka Mwanga and Buganda kingdom. This made many people in Buganda to develop suspicions towards the church thus stopping others from joining Christianity and opting for Islam that had less conflicts with the king.

Hannington's death also made other missionaries who came to Buganda after his death to use distant routes other than the eastern route that was politically insecure, a factor that delayed the actual spreading of Christianity in Buganda kingdom.

The murder of Bishop James Hannington under the orders of kabaka Mwanga of Buganda further worsened the working relations between kabaka Mwanga and the missionaries which also interfered with the spread of Christianity in Buganda kingdom.

The death of James Hannington in 1885 robbed the church a great leader with the title of a Bishop who was bold and determined enough to push the church in east Africa and Buganda in specific forward.

Hannington's death scared some missionaries who had already determined to set off to Buganda for evangelism to instead go back to the coast. William Jones a Bombay African who moved along with James Hannington was for instance scared of Hannington's murder and went back to Rabai –Mpya thus denying the church enough manpower.

Bishop James Hannington's death also scared many potential Christian converts in Buganda from joining the church for fear of kabaka Mwanga's brutality a factor that greatly denied the church in Buganda and Uganda in general an opportunity to expand.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. Explain the circumstances that led to the death of Bishop James Hannington in Busoga – Eastern Uganda**
- 2. Assess the influence of Bishop James Hannington's death on the spread of Christianity in East Africa.**
- 3. To what extent did Hannington's death contribute to the spread of Christianity in East African interior?**

