At the heart of the Great Commission, the 3rd of the 7 Mandates is the command 'Witness!' Because living as a witness to Christ (NT Greek martyr) often resulted in persecution and death, by the end of the 1st century AD, martyrs had taken on today's connotations of the 'martyr' who witnesses to Christ by his death.

Table 2-1 (A statistical overview of world evangelization) includes 3 columns that describe the whole extent of Christian martyrdom and its martyrs—defined by 5 criteria: believers in Christ, who have lost their lives, prematurely, in situations of witness, as a result of human hostility. These results are based on a 30-year research investigation into the extent of martyrdom in Christian history up to the present day, in every part of the world, and across all traditions of Christianity. The diagram sets descriptive data on the phenomena of martyrdom onto a background diagram (in gray print) showing the expansion of Christianity in all its traditions over 20 centuries. This background diagram is explained in detail in the text notes describing Global Diagram 70. And Global Diagram 12 shows how statistics of martyrdom relate to all other causes of martyrdom deaths. History's 76 worst situations of mass martyrdom (over 100,000 each) are then shown as black crosses or dots, the latest being Amin's Uganda massacres in 1971, the Sudan holocaust of 1963-1999, and the Rwanda genocide of 1994. Numerous other equally dangerous situations have been averted because the perpetrators have been alarmed by the prospect of international opprobrium.

Although 'martyr' on this page always means exclusively a witness to Christ, the one exception is a single table below which puts Christian martyrs in the context of all persons regarded as martyrs by their own religions—Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, et alia. All such martyrs share with Christian martyrs in this greatest of deprivations of human rights.

The effect of Christian martyrdom on evangelization over the centuries has been profound. Naturally, Christians have almost always insisted that martyrdom should not be deliberately sought for; but when it happens, the news spreads widely, and unbelievers including persecutors are converted. Martyrdom can be termed the final witness, the ultimate personal statement of faith in Christ, the ultimate proclamation of the gospel.

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