

Early Christians and the Plague

The early church historian Eusebius (A.D. 260-340) relayed a report by Dionysius (A.D. 200-265), a bishop of Alexandria, saying in part:

Most of our brethren showed love and loyalty in not sparing themselves while helping one another, tending to the sick with no thought of danger and gladly departing this life with them after becoming infected with their disease. Many who nursed others to health died themselves. The best of our own brothers lost their lives in this way – some elders, deacons, and laymen – a form of death based on strong faith and piety that seems in every way equal to martyrdom.

All things are filled with tears, all are mourning, and on account of the multitudes already dead and still dying, groans are daily heard throughout the city... There is not a house in which there is not one dead... [Despite afflictions] we [Christians] rejoiced in the peace of Christ which He gave to us alone... Most of our brethren by their exceeding great love and affection, not sparing themselves and adhering to one another, were constantly superintending the sick, ministering to their wants without fear and cessation, and healing them in Christ.

Donald