



NIGERIA AND ITS **EMBATTLED** CHURCH

Charting the Pathway to the Realms of Combined Glory

John O. B. **AGBAJE**

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DEDICATION

**THE BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
THE HEROES OF OUR FAITH**

*...and their progenies who believe in and have keyed
into the divine project that Nigeria was destined to be
and have been investing time and sweat in their closets
to birth a nation of God's original dream*

FOREWORD

Nigeria and its Embattled Church by John O. B. Agbaje, a wayfaring comrade with rich Christian experience and testimonies, is a beacon of hope for our traumatised nationhood and a timely nudge for its beleaguered Church. It is an honest inquiry into the complexity of Nigerian domestic factors that have confused the best of intelligence and confounded the logic of the bookmakers with the vortex of inexplicable contradictions. Also, with analytical persuasions, the book delivers a sharp critique at the doorstep of the Church which has abandoned her role to be the bearer of the light for direction and solutions.

While God rules over the nations of the world and assigns to each of them its location, people and their unique endowments, Nigeria occupies a highly strategic slot in His scheme of actions. There are inimitable positions and roles He has built around its destiny in pursuit of a glorious agenda, especially for this twilight era of human history.

Notwithstanding the imbued power of the good to subdue the evil, what has played out in Nigeria, just like other similarly afflicted nations, is the irony. The worst part of this is how the mandate of the Church to represent heaven in the affairs of the nation has been pawned to the forces of diversion with high culpability in the creation of the entire mess. Consequently, Nigeria has been descending the ladder of a failed nation under her blind surveillance. The large-scale corruption that has grounded the governments and state institutions had caught up with the Church by which her 'Light' has blended with the surrounding darkness and her 'Salt' is now without a savour.

Historically, the Church was the mainstay of Nigerian social development and the foundation of its economic structure under the wings of both missionary evangelists and colonial adventurers. That was when the Christian elites dominated and influenced the politics and

policies of post-colonial African nations. Names like Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo, Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopoldo Sedar Senghor, Patrice Lumumba, William Tubman and others like them were leaders of thoughts of their eras. But she has traded off that role to become an object of mockery of banded enemies with hot persecutions of other contending religions. Today, she is now threatened by a subtle and sinister agenda that hides under a black blanket of time to silence her. The pursuit of wealth and vanity has resulted from a lopsided prosperity theology with empire building by church founders which are now an extension of their family estates.

Judging from these and other pointed concerns raised in this work, *Nigeria and its Embattled Church* is a reawakening tool to jolt the Christians, first out of their slumber and then unto the much-needed repentance. It is time for them to retrace their steps to the lost pathway, regain the respect of society and seek to remain relevant in the move of God and in His plan to rescue the world of this generation. Otherwise, darker days are ahead for Christians which the trends present and temperature of their faith will not be able to survive.

I commend the frank discourse and prophetic unction of the author and strongly recommend this book for every Nigerian, especially all the church leaders as a compass and their members who stand in dire need of courage and guidance. This will be especially because our God, the same God of the fathers of the olden days, still reigns!

Rt. Rev. (Prof.) Dapo F. Asaju

*Professor of Theology and Former Vice-Chancellor of Ajayi Crowther University Oyo,
Bishop Theologian, Anglican Church of Nigeria and Bishop of Diocese of Ilesha.*

PREFACE

I first met the author, John Agbaje, through his book, *Rebirth of Vision* that someone gave me to read. The language was so lucid, his analysis so thorough, the presentation was so clear and his logic so profound that I sought to meet him even though he mentioned me in the same book. In this book, *Nigeria and its Embattled Church* he continues his engagement with Nigerians and Nigeria about the challenges, issues and the way forward for a nation that needs a prophetic word of warning if it must escape the judgement of God for its sins.

The book is the outcome of this engagement and dialogue between his soul and his country. He has packed several things together within the pages of flowing prose written in a rare style so characteristic of the author. He has spoken of the issues and challenges before Nigeria: corruption, fraud, election rigging, fraudulent census, occultism etc. In the process he has engaged History (both Oral Tradition and Written) Theology, Logic, and a good memory thus he is writing as a Participant Historian since he witnessed most of these events or were told to him by the direct witnesses one of which was his father.

He has also highlighted the fault of the church for not taking charge of this from the beginning at Independence. These are serious issues he touched upon which I also have thought about at certain times in the past. Why did the apostolic revival of Nigeria in 1930 not culminate or eventuate in a political authority as it was in some other nations? So much can be said here but for space and I hope one scholar will take the trouble one day to find out why. Nevertheless, he foregrounds his propositions on the abiding goodness of God for Nigeria and the Hand of Jehovah that has kept this nation from chaos and secession. He sees the fingerprints of God in this. "The fingerprints of God have always been the boldest on the rising and falling of nations, kingdoms, and empires...by which he determines the terms jurisdiction and global impacts of each nation, including their geographical boundaries." One thing no one can deny is the Good Hand of

God on this nation despite her sins and wickedness before God. Happily, the author has chronicled those sins and failures.

The second part of this book is devoted to the Church and the hurdles she needs to scale. The author believes the omission of the church sowed the seed of the debacle which we are going through by not soaking the independence struggles in prayer. There are hard truths to find in this book and harder truths to swallow. But for those taught of God, it would be a confirmation. “Those winning our elections are not those He sponsored to office,” writes the author. I said the same thing in one of my Apostolic Messages. Most of the men who rule are only in the permissive will of God. They were never His choices for this nation.

The author also touched on the very important and vital issue of the *Place of Conscience and Honour*. This is commendable. Nigeria’s problem is not leadership or corruption, our real problem is the absence of a culture of honour. Corruption is merely the effect of the problem, not the problem. This book has gathered several issues together, issues that are so serious that each can form the subject of an entire book. It might have been better to focus on each of these items separately for specialization. The author carries a burden for national revival and reformation.

Although now adrift in the open sea of myopias, Nigeria is on course. We may not know how God will fix this for us or which way He is taking us through. But we are going somewhere and soon, like Paul’s ill-fated voyage to Rome, we shall escape safely to land. This is an interesting book which I heartily recommend to readers and researchers of Christianity, Church History and all lovers of Nigeria.

Apostle Moses Oludele Idowu

*Professor of Ecclesiastical Theology and Human Development,
Author, Researcher and Historian*

ENDORSEMENT

Brother John Agbaje in this book, *Nigeria and its Embattled Church*, conveyed a riveting account of the rudderless posturing of the Church in Nigeria and her inability to live up to the expectation of her celestial callings. It captures the larger tendencies in Christian practice in Nigeria that swerved away from ministering salvation to the people to mundane engagements with physical food; a supplanting of the “*righteousness exalts a nation*” principle with the get-rich-quick mentality of the miracle-seeking congregants, and a clear manifestation of mindless obsession with materialism.

The Church of Jesus Christ which is expected to be a harbinger of hope and redemption for a lost generation has been caught up in the malaise bedevilling the society. Instead of being the solution bearer, the larger tendencies in the church sadly gravitate towards being a part, if not a catalyst of the moral decay. The author belongs to the vanishing tribe of revivalists in Christendom in Nigeria that believes a recourse to righteousness is not only a desirable virtue but a possibility that should be imbibed. For being a ray of hope amid hopelessness and despair; for calling people of conscience in Christendom to self-awareness of the duty placed on us by the faith that we confess; this book is readily a ministerial manual to all who desire society and spirituality that command the attention of God, the Redeemer.

I heartily recommend *Nigeria and its Embattled Church* to all those who nurse an earnest desire for national revival and a genuine return to primitive godliness.

Professor Ayandiji Daniel Aina, PhD, FCIA, MNUJ

Professor of Political Science & Public Communication, Former President/Vice Chancellor Adeleke University, Ede, Immediate past Vice Chancellor, Caleb University, Lagos.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Only God and Him alone will continue to deserve all glory in all realms of existence. It was His grace and through Him alone that the project was conceived and seen to this conclusion. This work is only a part of His making to restore hope and sanity to the beleaguered Nigerian nationhood. I also appreciate all those who have served as His instrument and source of courage in the pursuit of this work.

Elder (Dr) Paul Olojede and Pastor Ayo Oluwatosin assisted in charting a good direction of the work with their comments, suggestions on the initial draft sometime in 2021. Pastor Dr Richard Ikiebe's had a sharp reaction to the initial title of the book that addressed and adjusted its object focus.

I sincerely appreciate Right Reverend (Prof.) Dapo Asaju for writing a foreword to the book in spite of his tight schedules. One of my mentors, Professor Bunmi Oshun had introduced and linked me with him. I heartily commend the contributions of Apostle Moses Oludele Idowu for writing a preface to the book. His laborious efforts at the comprehensive review, his editorial touch and constructive 'criticism' added a beauty to the work. Also, I acknowledge the endorsement of my former Vice-Chancellor, my leader and co-traveller, Professor Ayandiji Aina who impacted me while we flocked together with some of his rare stuff that will stick to me till the end of this 'wilderness' voyage.

The good Lord will continue to increase you on every side, multiply your blessing and keep you fit and going to the end of the race. Your rewards are waiting across the bridge.

JOB A (September 30, 2023)

Chapter 1: An Introduction

The push for this work climbed to its peak around mid-2018 when the persecution of the Church spread to more places and reached a distressing height. That was when she bled profusely from the darts of the forces that were on an unambiguous mission to sink her ship and rewrite her history. The warship of the herdsmen and hired terrorists had berthed in the Middle Belt where large-scale destruction was let loose against the local farmers and their rural communities. The camouflaged moves were those that anyone may intuitively suspect the Church and her members that dominate the affected terrains to be the real targets. In addition to the homicidal activities of the marauders, alarming information began to assemble to sound blasting warnings on the abyss into which the whole nation was heading with acceleration.

The violence of the herdsmen had been bolstered by their clandestine exchange of the goading sticks with which the generations of their forefathers were known for weapons of a full-blown war. Defenceless villages and communities of several parts of Nigeria became a theatre of bloodbaths with the killing of the men on the farmlands and the raping of their wives and daughters across various settlements. The ugly situations thrived under the debris of lies that the government and its officials laboured to sell to the citizens and the international

communities with vehement denial of a genocide agenda. While the attacks were leaving blood and tears on its tracks, the scenarios were being whitewashed as age-long and perennial clashes for resource control between the herders in search of pastures for their cattle and their host communities. Really?

At about the same time, the sneaking of Boko Haram's attacks out of its North East base where the terror group had held sway for years and their spread to other regions of the country began to make frequent news. We heard of their exploits in the Federal capital where they made government offices, police stations, motor parks, markets, churches and mosques their targets. Just before this, the nation had been reeling painfully with the blow of the thoroughly embarrassing action of some people who pocketed \$2.1 billion with which to procure military hardware to combat the terror group. A direct outcome of this horrendous crime was the increased slaughter of our prime youths who had enrolled in the military to defend their fatherland.

The initial concern for the Church that has lost her place and bearing in society to create the mess soon snowballed into that of the survival of the entire nation. This near-collapse security situation had combined with macroeconomic instability to hang a blanket of despondency over the nation. Those who peddled the enticing slogan of *change* to capture political power began to soft-pedal with a quiet reminder to the citizens, as if they too were just remembering, that the change they intended must begin with all of us. The only problem then was how easy it was to ignore that belated counsel. This is more because anyone who may be willing to pursue the suggested personal change for which no foundation was seen to have been laid at the authority levels is sure to feel lost with the worthlessness of his resolve. It would seem like asking a drop of water to make a change to the content of an ocean.

CHURCH PULPITS AND PEWS

No Bible student will flounder on the fundamental connection that the book has forged between a nation and the impact of its Church. In the situation where Nigeria now finds itself, only the Church with influence in the realms of the spirit where the control towers are located carries the mandate to make a lasting difference. That is where she can midwife the change that is beyond what politicians and their politicking may ever be equipped or expected to cause. This is especially true for a place like Nigeria where the seed of the gospel had taken firm roots for quite a while and Christians have become a chunk segment of its population.

The Church, constituted by a people that have been called out of the rots of the world to represent God and heaven in its affairs, is adequately equipped to stamp the authority of heaven on the nations and whatever may threaten the agenda of God for their citizens. Thus, it must be understood that irrespective of the failures that had waylaid the Church, God has not secured a substitute outfit that will substitute or bridge her gap in our nation. But while the Church may have been fingered as an accessory to our national problem, the blunt truth will project beyond that rhetoric about her being not just a part of the problem. As far as God is concerned, the Nigerian Church is the real culprit.

Many alarms have been raised about how the Church in Nigeria is persecuted and how the machinery of darkness is set to bury her alive. There is no doubt that the threats are real. It is just that they do not rank as important to God as the failure that Christians themselves have embraced in their diversion, half-heartedness and adulterated devotion to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Cross He endured. Persecution to the point of death has always been part of Christians' heritage from inception and the ones we are seeing in Nigeria cannot be isolated from what the saints of several places and generations have

waded through, even with assurance of the preservation of every strand of their hair (Matthew 10v30, Luke21v18).

The Nigerian Church now seems like a case of dual tragedy, for her segment to be confronted by persecution just at a time when she is not even pulling the required weight to justify her essence. She must now count on the mercy of God with His power by which He will deliver the few who are yearning and groaning for righteousness from the grip of evil. Large-scale repentance with the help of the Holy Spirit is the starting point in the move that will begin to open a new chapter both for us and the nation.

BROAD OUTLINES OF THE BOOK

The book has two divisions. The first one focuses on the culture of dishonour that has reduced our business arenas to the den of robbers. The second is the threats that confront the nationhood of Nigeria and the storms that continue to beat hard against it. Even though the section raises issues that may be taken as common or street knowledge on the challenges facing the nation, its dissecting perspectives bring forth their unfamiliar dimensions. It also confirms and illustrates how political and economic theories which have helped to move other nations forward had conspired to trace their graveyards to Nigeria. The hard-to-imagine level of corruption in our high and low places is only an aftermath.

The second one, a longer and more spirited segment of the work addresses the real culprit which the Church of Jesus Christ in Nigeria has been. That is a Church that has donated so much of her space to aggravate the rot that gave birth to national failures. It charges fiercely at the Church to outgrow the irrelevances and pettiness that has clouded her atmosphere to prevent her members from being partners with heaven to birth the will of God in Nigeria and the world of our generation. This is a process that will demand that individual Christians

respond to the wake-up call to draw closer to God from the outer court where many of them and their members have pitched their tents for decades to the inner court where she can wield the promised power.

Since Jesus Christ breathed His last on the Cross, the veil that separated men from the Holy of Holies was split to allow whosoever will to come to where the High Priest of Israel had only a rare, once-in-a-year access. The challenge that this work throws at the Church is the need to mobilise her members into deeper commitments to godliness and discipline that will transform them into God's battle axe and instruments of national transformation. Up till now, heaven has not lost its hope for her to be the solution she was called and ordained to be. When all will be said and done, when God will wade in to do that which He alone can do, not for any reason or the sake of anyone but for His name's sake, citizens will live to tell the story of His glory.

The book concludes its message on a high and bright note to serve the readers with great expectations concerning the glorious days ahead of Nigeria. It dangles a peeping and prospects that are difficult to imagine at these dark moments. The prophetic hints are not just disconnected from the realities of today, they seem to be laden with improbability. But they are all about the processes by which the Nigerian Church will yet cross her deep valleys, beam its bright lights to the world and serve as the bastion of the global end-time gospel revival in our time. On the economic front, the same process will see the nation becoming the preferred choice of destination for many citizens of the world, even from the most advanced nations of the world who will flock to it in search of fulfilment of their dreams.

It is possible!

Chapter 2: A Calculated ‘Mismatch’

The allegation that Nigeria is a fraud of the British government that merged people of incongruent ancestries and destinies with a tinge of recklessness predates the birth of many of us who are making loud music of it today. Basic factors that account for the homogeneity of people were seen to have been sacrificed on the altar of administrative convenience that would hang the fortune and future of a vast population on the uncertainties of political adventurism. For obvious reasons, the protests and the sentiments woven around them are driven by compelling evidence, especially among the southern populace of the country which the *marriage* has politically and economically short-changed for several decades now.

This is what the generations of Nigerians have been contending with. Like a typical Yoruba adage, “*Adie ba s’ori okun; ara o ro okun, ara o ro adie*” that is, “a fowl has perched on a rope, both the fowl and the rope have lost their comfort”. No one may contend that the secession plot of the southeast championed by Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu in 1967 lacked justification or determination. Also, the cancellation of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections that scuttled the mandate of Chief M. K. O. Abiola, the presumed winner of the election, cannot be assessed as an injustice of mean proportion against the southwest. These are just two of the

podiums on which those who are clamouring for the breakup of the country today now stand and why the drums of dissolution of the country have been louder in the recent years. The binding cord of the union is seen to be by force of subjugation instead of a sense of equality and mutual respect as regional partners.

There is a nauseating aspect of the whole narrative by which a cabal was infected with a 'born to rule' mentality over and against the interests of other people and tribes that make up the union. And, true to life, we see how the obnoxious conception has played out brazenly in the allocation of positions and resources of the polity for a very long while. However, those who may expect the political merger to continue to build on this fraudulent foundation of oppression that will make slaves of other people and tribes of Nigeria of the twenty-first century may only have lost the functions of their brains or transferred them from where God placed them to their anus.

Now, the people who hauled into the wagon of slavery by a misled clique are not just of the same status with them as fellow Nigerians. Even cursory assessment will reveal them to be more advanced in many areas that define the essence of life and criteria of its progress in this century. Again, while innate instinct would be ready and willing to submit to someone with a higher profile or superior ranking, anyone will resent the domination of another person who is touting an imaginary privilege that has no foundation whatsoever. This is why the agitation of the blocs to part ways that has been climbing to its peak in recent years will not abate until the nation by whatever means works out a basis for the establishment of truth and justice among its diverse people.

These are a few of many "*valleys of the shadow of death*" (Psalm 23v4) that Nigeria and its destiny have been wading through over the decades, and up to this moment. But the One who has the ultimate claim over the nations of the world and who has bought and brought the country

unto Himself has a superior agenda. His grand plan for the blessing of all Nigerians as a people of whatever tribe, ethnicity or region is the reason why He will be reluctant to bless any move by anyone or any group of people to divide the country on the grounds of any grudge¹. He will rather support our restructuring and other measures that will build the nation on the foundation of equity and true federalism.

Following the usual slacking and loss of focus, the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida had lost the euphoria that ushered it into office in 1985 to become a burden on the citizens. I cannot forget the loud sigh of relief and jubilation that swept across the communities of the people who were close to me with the 1991 coup spearheaded by Gideon Orka, at least for the few hours it lasted. In my thought, I suspect that the brazen contrivance of the plotters to ostracise a huge segment of the north of the country, a move that many Southerners welcomed with applause, could be one of the factors that nailed the coffin of their zeal to liberate the nation from the gang of political bandits that our leaders in both *khaki* and *agbada* had become.

Despite the arguments against the making of the nation, those who will bother to scratch beyond the surface are not likely to ignore the possibility of a Force that has kept the country as one even up to this moment. It is only a secondary matter that the seemingly unbreakable cord is also both unseen and inexplicable, a veritable fact that cannot be wished away, irrespective of whatever anyone may do or fail to do. Thus, the truth that even the most sceptical should bow to by now is that God remains the highest Stakeholder in the affairs of Nigeria which is not only a unique piece of His creation but a highly strategic instrument of global revival and spiritual transformation.

¹ Perhaps this may jingle a little caution to our brothers who are pursuing the dreams of Biafra or Oduduwa nations which, in all honesty, is not without a justification.

Beyond the screaming evidence of His six days' works of creation that bear eloquent testimony to the awesomeness of His being but which our scientists have cast their aspersion upon, even with great injury to their conscience, God has not stopped the pursuit of His agenda, the defence of His cause and the prosecution of His battles in the world, till this moment. The fact that He works in ways that do not forcefully prick the spiritually insensitive disposition of man with such a bustle that will provoke His dread or make Him a centre of gravitation does not make any difference. But salient as His works and hidden as ways may appear to be, He rules over the vast realms of creation, physical or spiritual, palpable or imperceptible. These are the realms where nothing will ever function outside the control of His omnipotence or interfere with the foreordination of His consummate agenda.

This is the God in charge of Nigeria.

NIGERIA IS THE FITTEST TO SURVIVE

The survival of Nigeria till this moment should puzzle the most critical minds across its populace. Citizens have remained heavily burdened by our drifting and political dancing around a vicious circle since independence which is the reason why opinions continue to bark at each other on the way forward for the turbulent polity. The gross injustice and woeful mismanagement of our commonwealth secured an addition of mindless killing of the people and the destruction of their properties at record rates. Meanwhile, we may all see how these maladies were foisted on the nation mostly by its virulent and power-drunk ethnic chauvinists. This is how there is no more cubicle where the majority may hide their resentment that it is time to part ways.

Sometime around 1981 during my days at the Enugu Campus of the University of Nigeria, I attended a public lecture that was delivered by Professor Ikenna Nzimiro. By way of introduction, Professor Nzimiro

was a highly celebrated scholar of international clout and one of the unsung heroes of the Nigerian independence struggle. That was an evening to remember, just as I still do very clearly even up to this moment. The event was held in a charged atmosphere of the campus hall which was overflowed beyond its capacity.

It was at a time when the government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari was working the hardest to nail the coffin of the Second Republic with its recklessness and gross indiscipline. The country had been set on a downward spiral just as corruption and corrupt practices began to reach new peaks to break records, records which have now been supplanted by the destructive minds in the corridors of power. The professor presented startling revelations and advanced arguments which he backed by authentic statistics to drive home his poignant points. The exact statement he made to conclude his session that evening which is still ringing a loud bell in my ears even up to this moment was “There is no hope for Nigeria”.

For those who have followed events in the country, the situation has only progressively worsened from the picture of the gloom he painted that evening. Those were the closing years of the country’s prosperity that we have been talking about; when it was as if Nigerians were residing on the moon. Professor Nzimiro had not seen the pervasive corruption of both the public and private sectors that would eventually ground the nation economically as we have it today. He did not have the dreams of the bloody rampaging of herdsmen, armed bandits, kidnappers and large-scale destruction that have become more like political tools of destabilisation. He was not even prophetic enough to see a group like Boko Haram that would come to swim in the blood of innocent Nigerians in pursuit of a religious mandate.

But, for those who have climbed to a higher run of the spiritual ladder to share the vista of God, Nigeria as a country will be understood

to be far greater than the sum of its constituencies and their clashing interests. This is a hidden fact that will yet be unfolded with irrefutable clarity in the years to come. Even where this revelation may be challenged to lack content or scientific support, something should still challenge the opinions of the bookmakers about whatever it may be that has kept Nigeria together up to, and through these periods of its turbulent history.

OUR GOD REIGNS

It has been one of the loudest arguments that Nigeria will eventually end up breaking up, that those who conducted our marriage did not mean well for us. The gist of the contention is that we are just wasting time to patch and mend the shreds of a marriage that was doomed to fail right from the very onset. But despite this, I can inform the reader that the expectation for the survival of Nigeria does not have respect for whatever the opinion of anyone may be. The making of this book has taken a few years from around 2018 and now up to late 2023. Those are years like never before in the history of the nation, years that witnessed events that assigned a zero probability to our survival as a nation.

Awful premonitions, frightening prophecies and dreams saturated the atmosphere. They flew kites of wars and destruction and were complemented by unprecedented instances of rampaging, kidnapping for ransoms, heavy destruction and bloodshed. It was the period that also came with high-profile corruption of bizarre dimensions to announce that it was all over for Nigeria. For any sane person to imagine or expect that there will still be a country called Nigeria in the way it has always been known, even as you may be reading this will transcend everything ordinary. It will lend a weight of credence to the claim that the God of heaven is indeed ruling in its affairs. With all these playing

out in our background, I should inform you that I have pitched the emphasis of this work beyond the storms of today.

The fingerprints of God have always been the boldest on the rising and falling of nations, kingdoms and empires, kings and emperors by which He determines the tenures, jurisdiction and global impacts of each nation, including their geographical boundaries. Old Testament portions of the Holy Bible dwell on the unequivocal bias of God for the nation of Israel as a people He chose to Himself of all the families of the earth (Amos 3v2). The extent of His involvement in their social, economic and political affairs has been demonstrated over and again, irrespective of how anyone may feel.

Going beyond the borders of Israel, we also note strategic incursions He made into the affairs of a few gentile kingdoms, sometimes through His prophets and their prophecies. Typical of this was His prophetically commissioning Cyrus through Prophet Isaiah several centuries before he was to be born as His mere errand boy to return the remnants of Israelites from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem. Ahasuerus was the majestic king of the Persian realms of over one hundred and twenty provinces from Ethiopia to India. But we read about how he was made to stoop low to champion the cause of Esther, a mere slave girl and her uncle Mordecai, a mere security serf, all in a clear demonstration of His boundless jurisdiction.

Even the regimes that were ruled by the wicked and most brutal men in the history of mankind who left scars of wounds and destructions on their trails did not bypass the knowledge and, maybe, His permissive will. Permit me to assert this in the clearest tone that none of the leaders in the political theatres of Nigeria who herded us into this political and economic dungeon got into office through the backyard of His all-inclusive vigilance. While He did not ordain their ruinous reigns, He knew everything about all things and all things about everything. As the

ultimate Ruler over all things and all men, over all the realms of existence and at all times, His counsel predates and encompasses the rising and falling of kingdoms. Besides, God does not only know the type of rulers that people may clamour for. He knows the ones they truly deserve.

Above and beyond this as it concerns Nigeria, God ordained the course of all men, including all citizens, from birth and mapped out their passage from the cradle to the grave. This includes the rulers and the ruled, the mighty and the lowly, the affluent and the peasant, the privileged and the deprived, and finally, the oppressors and the oppressed, just as it may seem to apply to our situation now. He knows everything, about everyone, in every place, every time and day through all dispensations. He chose the parentage, localities, cities and nationalities of all people on the earth. Nothing ever happened or will ever happen anywhere without His hands either working it out or signalling His approval, including the ones to a minus end.

Another way of hammering on this truth which should sink into the subconscious of everyone is that we have a God who reigns without a rival, boundary, jurisdiction and tenure. He is a God who is never in competition with anyone. The Lord's Prayer as taught by Jesus Christ stamps its emphasis on this fact: *"For thine is the kingdom, the power and glory..."* (Matthew 6v13). This revelation has embossed His seal of authority on every seat of power anywhere in the world, be it religious or secular, godly or ungodly, Christian or Islamic, communist or capitalist. This explains the reasons for the title of His being *"the Governor among the nations"* of the earth (Psalm 22v28).

Experience of the nations and events of history are elaborate proofs of how the interest of God in any nation is signalled by the extent of the attention He pays to and His involvement in their affairs. I earlier mentioned how this was demonstrated in the case of the Israelites from when they were constituted into a nation under the leadership of Moses

soon after they escaped from the grip of Egypt, and up to this moment. For example, the invasion of Uthman Dan Fodio redefined the religious and social landscape of the north to reinforce the institution of Islam, especially with the establishment of the first Caliphate on the territory that Nigeria would come to encompass. This is a similar way that the exploration of the British came to lay the foundation for the overall socio-political features of the nation.

Good and bad, pleasant and painful as these incursions may have been to the conventions of the forefathers of our various tribes or their traditional fads, they were not to be isolated from the explorations and expeditions that were parts of prevalent political adventures of those eras of human history. It is not only Nigeria that was explored by Islamic traders or conquered by their invading warriors. Also, the British quest for territorial expansion did not begin or end with their colonisation of Nigeria. The same group of explorers and invaders were known to have traversed territories and subdued other nations across the globe.

While protesting jingles continued to decry the colonisation of Nigeria by British ‘invaders’, there was no way a venture of that magnitude could have bypassed the watchfulness of God; even where His involvement may be denied or His consent may be questioned. After all, the massive baptism of Nigerians into Western education was one of how many came to discover their God-given potentials, define their goals and discover the pathway to pursue them alongside other citizens of the civilised global village that the world would soon become. This is one undeniable benefit of that ‘intrusion’ that has spelt a binge of social elevation and strategic leverage of no mean proportion for the nation. I agree, though, that this may not be taken as or equated to compensation for the losses from the British adventure.

God is forever committed to His agenda and He retains the final say concerning them. For all of His involvements in the affairs of man, He

has a fixed agenda of a time when His purpose will be manifest and His master plan will prevail. This is not only in respect of Nigeria and its political travails but also in anything and everything that involves mankind and the entire creation. We are only eagerly waiting today for His time of visitation when Nigeria will experience healing and revival of every good thing that is dead or latent. Just as Pastor Gbenga Efuntade put it in one of his teaching sessions, God is not just an Alpha and Omega, or A to Z in our English alphabet. He is fully in control of all things or events in the mileposts between B and Y.

A comforting conclusion on this segment is that, though He combines this unrestrained power with absolute authority and in undiluted measures over all things everywhere, God has never misused power! He reigns in truth and righteousness over and beyond all the realms of nature in a manner that bears loud testimony to His superlative wisdom. These are the characteristics of the reign He will endorse for and promote over Nigeria wherever He chooses to step into our murky situation. This will make our beloved country a prototype of the coming millennial reign of His dear Son, Jesus Christ on the whole world at the appointed time still ahead of humanity.

ALLEGED FRAUDS AT THE FOUNDATION

The lack of clear proof to establish wrongdoing, if it indeed occurred, will neither tamper with the fact of that occurrence nor erase it from the indelible pages of history. Agreed, that alleged manipulations of the British that breached the integrity of the then national census and first general elections are still waiting to be proved. But, except by sheer miracle, no one would expect a fraud of that magnitude to be officially admitted either now or in the future². We may just conjecture that, for

² Already, we have heard of those who sought to exhume the details of the sad

most of the time, smoke that wafts from sources that are difficult to ignore may be more than sufficient to signal the presence of flames, no matter how flickering or unprovable it may be.

Perhaps a revisit to our complex history may not continue to ignore or confine to the dustbin all that has filtered to the general public over the years on the frauds that were hatched against the southern protectorate of the country at the inception of our nationhood. Anyone can suppress or distort history by whatever means and for whatever aim. But to the extent that the hands of the clock cannot be made to rotate backwards as if to undo whatever has been done, no one can rewrite history or tear off any of its pages from the chronicles of events no matter how ugly it may be. Regarding the case of Nigeria at embryo, we have sniffed instances when hard bites of culprits' consciences bored holes that were open and wide enough to invite a peep into the can of the suspected census and electoral worms that laid the foundation of our lopsided political structures³.

With violent storms now beating against our nationhood, the bits and pieces of information that were classified for many decades may have found leaking points in the remorse of the collaborators. I do not know if there is anyone with a good conscience who will dismiss the 'rumours' just because the shady dealings have not been documented in

incidents but are being told that they will wait for another 50 years for them to have access to the files they need from the British archives to establish their case. But unknown to those who created this brick wall, this, at least, is one posture that may only have further heightened or confirmed the suspicion of foul play.

³ Geographical studies in several other parts of the world established that people tend to settle more in coastal areas than in arid lands or similar places. In the case of the United States of America, for instance, "Coastal counties... are home to over 128 million people or almost 40 per cent of the nation's total population, yet the coast towns are less than 10 per cent of the nation's land mass (excluding Alaska)". A similar African population also projected the large percentage of the south of Nigeria to be the most densely populated while only Kano areas were indicated with a similar symbol in the entire north.

the official Gazette. Neither will it be necessary to task people to offer proof of a loud suspicion. The lamentable aspect of it is that the stories of the shady dealings may now be scrambling for outlets only after it is almost sure that nothing can be done to reverse the damage that has been inflicted on the destinies of the millions of people who were the victims of a grand conspiracy.

The entire saga revolves around the selfish agenda of those who pretended to grant political autonomy to Nigeria but who also hatched a scheme by which they would remain in charge of its affairs. In effect, all that the funfairs of October 01, 1960 came to summarise was no more than a change of the colour of the skin of the political masters. There is a spiritual dimension of this fraud that I will dig briefly into shortly, together with how the slumbering of the Church of the era created sufficient space for the perpetrators of the evil scheme. This is as it related to the warnings that were communicated to Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church by which the country should have been put on red alert. We may recall that the progression of the ministry of this unsung national hero coincided with the period of the agitations of Nigerian founding fathers for political freedom and both reached their crescendo in the 1950s.

At this point, my claim of God being in charge of Nigeria may need this addendum to explain why He appeared to turn a blind eye to the scheme of the British. It is the Church that ignored clear warnings that were issued and went asleep to allow the enemy to strike a deadly blow for which she cannot turn around and blame God. The teaching of Jesus Christ helps us to know that “*while men slept...*” (Matthew 13v25), the enemy can capitalise on such moments to deal a fatal blow that will truncate even the best of plans and arrest glorious progression. That was when God would have needed human partners in the place of prayer in a partnership which He was inadvertently denied. We recall how God

did not block the incursion of the serpent into the Garden of Eden or prevent it from playing a trick on Eve following which He called out to Adam after generational damage had been done.

Jacob connived with his mother, Rebecca to scheme Esau out of the blessing of the firstborn. Pharaoh enslaved and maltreated the children of Israel for over four hundred years and was already pursuing a fiendish scheme to wipe their generation out with the killing of their male children. The unilateral intervention of God only stood against whatever Satan had targeted at His eternal agenda for the creation and redemption of man, the pursuit and ultimate fulfilment of which He had already pinned down to Abraham in Genesis 12v5 through Isaac and then to the chosen lineage that Israel had been.

This template also answers so many questions that people with only human instincts often raise about His dealings in the course of history. They are unable to fathom how a good, loving and all-powerful God allows bad events to overtake men while He has all it takes to stop those who are perpetrating brutality and visiting anguish on others. But God often exercises His patience with men to the time they will be paid back either in His intermittent visitation or in the event of the final judgement. A tip example is how Jacob reaped the full harvest of his deception in the miserable experiences he waded through in the deception of Laban, and how he was a victim of similar tricks of even his children. This he summed up in the autobiography he narrated to Pharaoh about how *“few and evil...”* the days of his pilgrim had been (Genesis 47v9).

THE MAKING OF NIGERIA

The amalgamation of 1914 masterminded by Lord Frederick Lugard marked the birth of Nigeria as a nation. As earlier stated, the merger has been identified as how people of unrelated natures and cultures were lumped together through which, instead of being a blessing to the nation

as must have been intended by God, they became a thorn in the flesh of one another. Truly, a reflection on what Nigeria has been through in the hands of Nigerians will not undermine the protests that have been mounting for its dissolution.

The nation continues to groan under a crushing burden that makes the amalgamation a keg of trouble with little or no benefit at all. But the emphasis remains that, as hinted earlier, Nigeria is not an accident of history because God had made His plan and called out the nation long before the invasion of the north by Uthman Dan Fodio or the adventure of the missionaries through the southwest. These are plans that predated the birth of Lord Lugard, long before he strayed into Nigeria in search of a greener pasture that led him into the employment of the British government where he secured the platform to do what he did. Thus, while the guy sought a more convenient and cheaper administration of two protectorates, God simply worked behind the mask of amalgamation to deliver a nation that He would bless and fashion into an instrument for His agenda in the world. And, just as the Church is a spiritual protégé of Israel, Nigeria may just be seen as its political counterpart for our generation. Take it or leave it.

It was God who drew the maps and geographical delineations of the nations of the world that also pulled together patches of Nigerian tribes and lands that combined to give us the map that we now have. *“And He has made all nations of men of one blood to dwell on all the face of the earth, ordaining fore-appointed seasons and boundaries of their dwelling...”* (Acts 17v26 (MKJV)). It was Him who discovered and sponsored the immigration of the ancestors of the tribes said to be over two hundred and fifty, including even the dreaded Fulanis, from wherever parts of the world they had immigrated⁴ with each of them in its original settlement in the territory

⁴ Several people in all parts of Nigeria have a history of where they migrated from,

of the nation. Every tribe of the three regions in which they are broadly grouped is important to God and His agenda.

Difficult as it may have been with Nigeria and Nigerians, we must still come to terms with whatever was in the mind of this God when He worked directly or behind the scenes to bring a mass of people together and stick the name *Nigeria* upon them, a name which has also been part of the contention. Thus, while Nigeria is neither a fraud of the British nor an accident of history, it is never efforts without a deep insight that may detect why God has put His stamp of ownership on the nation, perhaps more than may be traced to many other nations of the world of our time. Somehow, this is a task on which our protesting historians, sociologists, journalists and politicians who write about Nigeria have demonstrated their reluctance to invest their sweat.

As earlier hinted, the bloody war spearheaded by the first generation of Biafran agitators and the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections were two of the storms that rocked the ship of the nation to the point of capsizing. The gross injustice of the annulments to the southwest of the country was one event of the recent decades that only a very few countries, if any at all, could ever have survived by the remotest chance or a most astute diplomacy. Following the annulment, I recall one of the threats of Chief M. K. O. Abiola that I picked from news footage where he posited that what happened in Bosnia was about to be repeated in Nigeria. He drew a comparison between the ethnic tension that the country mismanaged with the injustice of the June 12 annulment that would lead to secession plot.

like most of the Yoruba tribes coming through Oduduwa who was said to have migrated from Mecca in Saudi Arabia (with counter versions), the Igbos from Igala community of the lower Benue (with counter versions) and Hausa from through Bayajidda from Baghdad (with counter versions) and Fulani from Senegambia region (also with counter versions)

At the same time, I also recall how Chief Uche Chukwumerije, the information minister of the era whose duty it was to sell the hurriedly packaged interim government of Chief Ernest Shonekan to Nigerians, urging them to ignore the threat of Chief M. K. O. Abiola. He had coined a one-sided slogan to counter the threat, claiming that “Nigerians are saying ‘no’ to war”. The truth, however, is that the ‘Nigerians’ he referred to here were just the political cabal who colluded with the military junta to cancel the election and the few who were being offered a taste of political power. His claim could never have represented the interests of major segments of Nigerians, to talk less of the southwest which was infuriated by the annulment. This shows how the fads and fancies of a negligible few in the corridors of power have always been packaged and presented as the wish of the general public in the wrappers of empty propaganda.

Again, if the sponsorship of General Olusegun Obasanjo to the presidency at the return of democracy in 1999 was meant to assuage the pain of that injury, the platform on which he sought and secured his ticket and those he collaborated with for his electoral victory were enough to make a nonsense of the intended aim. The annulment became a high point of protests against the North by the South, especially the West. Since then and up till now, the drums of the dissolution of Nigeria have been rising to their crescendo, even with reckless intensity.

More than two-thirds of the citizens now dangle between either a total dissolution or surgical reform of the polity that will return the country to its initial regional structure with a new federal constitution. This is what I will also advocate for later. The wanton killings and destruction perpetrated mostly by the Fulanis for some years now with suspected conniving of the government that would have called them to order have added fuel to acrimony. We do not have issues with the fact that Buhari is neither the source nor the cause of Nigerian problems.

This is because successive governments since the current republic have only been handing over political time bombs to their successors. The undoing of his administration is that, instead of being a solution with the change he promised and for which he was voted, he seems to have complicated matters.

As stated earlier, for a while we lost count of dreams and prophetic hints of war and bloodshed, especially as they hinted at a major clash between the North and the South. That is aside from the genuine concerns and related alarms being raised by social crusaders and political pundits as warnings, especially to the southerners who reside in the north of the country. Though I sensed and saw something different personally, no sensible person with a functioning brain would undermine the anxiety or tone down the gravity of the omens. I readily attest to the fact that most of them, including the one that was once shown to my wife, were well-founded to portend disasters.

But the truth is that if God had not been there for Nigeria, it would have ceased to be a nation long before the regime of President Buhari or the circulation of those visions and dreams. I recall how fear soared to a record height towards the 2019 general elections with widespread concern that the exercise would seal the doom of the nation. This coupled with the tribal instigations, threats, counter threats, and quit notices that various sections were issuing to those they have termed 'undesirable tenants' in their territories. Also, there were well-founded fears that the nation was sliding into Islamisation through the force of violence, a concern which mere rhetoric of paid government cronies sought to douse only in vain. This was especially going by the reckless activities of those who were fingered either as protagonists or accessories of a sinister agenda and the silent conniving of the rulers.

In the thick of paralysing fear that pervaded the south, more especially as it concerned the welfare and safety of the Church that is

predominantly warehoused in its regions, God spoke to us clearly during one of our prayer sessions, precisely in August 2018. He assured us that there would be neither war in, nor Islamisation of Nigeria, especially with the widespread fear about the highly dreaded elections of the following year⁵. This is how those of us who have learnt to take God at His word found peace amid corroding fear that fed fat on the peace of millions because of the uncertainties that hung over the nation.

Indeed, the peaceful conduct of the 2019 general elections was a huge lift to our faith when, despite the raging threats and the tension they generate, the year rolled in and spooled away, just like other years. The elections did not end our nationhood and Nigeria did not disintegrate by their skirmishes. It is mainly on the strength of this that I found the confidence to join others in spreading the message of peace and toning down the drumbeats of wars and destruction that have been spreading through social media. While I admit that many of the scary dreams and visions were from authentic sources, while they convey genuine warnings from the higher realms, they were not intended to make the agenda of the devil irreversible but to warn us against it.

It is not only God and His prophets that know about His plan for the nation. Satan too knows enough of it to trigger the countermeasures he has been sponsoring to undermine the peace and cohesion of Nigeria. However, God who ordained the country in pursuit of His agenda is the One who neither sleeps nor slumbers. That there will still be a country called Nigeria whenever you may be reading this book will have added to the pile of proofs of His invisible hand binding the nation together for good. It is also on this basis that I am making a declaration even with

⁵ At the same time, however, He also added to the assurance of a peaceful election He gave us that those who would emerge as winners would not be the candidates He was sponsoring into office. This helps us to separate the fact of peaceful elections from the emergence of credible, competent and compassionate leaders.

confidence that the plans of God for the country are not only fully on course. They are sure to prevail in the ultimate.

It is a fact of history that Islam had swept across many parts of the country, a feat that was consummated with the conquests of Uthman Dan Fodio in the nineteenth century. But anyone may think about what it would be like if Nigeria was not to be the one nation that it is today and the Christians in the south would have to struggle, almost certainly in vain, for permit documents to visit and pursue the mandate of evangelism in the North which presumably will be a closed country with Islam as the state religion. Going by what is known of many of the Islamic nations all over the world today, the chances are high that there will be no smooth sailing for such efforts.

That is aside from the fact that the business of preaching the gospel will be something at a far greater risk than whatever we may have so far seen on display. Such a venture will be cumbered with frustration and, in some cases, strong resistance. This is even though God does not love the Muslims in the north any less than He loves the Christians in the south and His plan for the salvation of mankind includes all men. Put in a clearer language, the soul of the professor emeritus of Christian theology in the south of the country does not command any greater weight on His scale of value than the soul of a seemingly hopeless Al-majiri boy on the street of a remote village in the north.

It is in the realisation of this that God will do whatever is required for His love to prevail and spread to all. Therefore, while those who have questioned or censured the amalgamation of 1914 have their version of arguments, they have not factored in the value that God attaches to the human soul. Also, many vibrant Christian movements with their roots in the north would have been at loggerheads with Islam and the implementation of Sharia even just as we currently see in some states of the region that have taken that agenda some steps further.

Today, because Nigeria professes secularity, ‘Christians’ have emerged as heads or deputy heads of government for some decades of its nationality. Despite this, we still have the level of persecution that goes on in some places in the north. One may just think what it will be like if the region is to become enclosed under the canopy of Islam by which the plight of the Northern Church will be left to only imagination. The truth that no one may whitewash and which I will discuss later is the reality of the Islamisation agenda which would have overrun the northern region with only minimal resistance. This is because of the animosity that Islam emits towards the Church by which the northern terrains will be a foretaste of hell for Christians.

Politically, the North was initiated into the mediaeval system of feudalism with a clear social and economic distinction between the servants and their masters. This northern disparity deriving from a mentality of acquiescence, the circumstances of upbringing, the definition of the essence and worth of life and the focus of its pursuits are factors that do not have any meeting point whatsoever with what obtains in the south. But the truth is that these differences do not avail with God who kitted every human being with an eternal soul. He places a paperweight on whatever may account for the pride of any region of the nation or the advancement of its people, regarding them all as things that will fizzle into emptiness at the end of the day.

This may sound rather sour. I agree that there are resources that our regional nationalities will have amassed and conserved for their exclusive benefit and that of their offspring. But if there is just one Nigerian whom our union will sponsor into the kingdom of God either in the north or south of the country in addition to what it would have been without the union, that one soul will always rank as of greater value to Him than the would-be reservoir of regional wealth (Mark 8v36). That is the reason why, despite all the sympathy and support that regional nations’ agitators

may attract nationally and globally, reference should still be made to the God factor which lay at the base of the entire bargain. The truth is that God has all it takes to bless the whole of Nigeria, from Lagos to Maiduguri, from Sokoto to Cross River and this is what He will ever be more disposed to do. Let us just watch out for the emergence of Nigeria of His dreams.

THE BIBLE CONNECTION

The message of this book builds on the foundation of the Holy Bible, on its revelations, authority and on the immutability of its counsel that project into the realms of eternity. One of the penetrating insights for this posture is the declaration of the psalmist: “*For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven*” (Psalm 119v89). Further, as this may concern the subject of our focus, we also read that “*The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*” (Psalm 24v1). This certainly includes Nigeria, its people, their ethnic origins, regions and religions. We also read that “*Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.*” (Psalm 135v6).

We must admit that the above are not claims of a flimsy weight, more especially as it will drive our voyage in the discourse about Nigeria. As we will see further, the Bible is faced with formidable opposition and damaging criticism by which only a highly negligible part of humanity is known to have bowed to its authority in their personal affairs or the conduct of their lives. But it is the neglect of the book that has progressively led our world to this brink of ruins today. We are digging further into the defence and relevance of the Bible in the world today.

SATANICALLY COORDINATED ASSAULT

The antipathy that continues to trail the Bible up to this moment is a thing of universal knowledge. But the solace is in the fact that God has

never made it a responsibility of anyone to defend the book or the process by which it came about as we know it today. The bitter fact about the Bible is how it has been a target of assault by nearly all the segments of humanity that has had anything to do with it. The Bible is often ridiculed by the intellectuals who see themselves to have outgrown its primordial appeals. We also have nations with other religions and those who have carried or are now carrying their secularity too far to have denied it a place in their public space.

But the worst assault that the Bible has suffered is its neglect by the vast majority of Christians especially the nominal ones who have reduced it to a mere decoration of their shelves, a part of their sleeping pillows, as if to invoke its protective power, or as regular Sunday morning pill. Greedy pastors, uncouth prophets and fake miracle workers are known to have turned it into an instrument of commercial exploitation. The same Bible has also been cited as inciting the worst crimes that the world has seen in colonisation, exploitation, slave trade and war⁶. Somehow, the accusations are reinforced by the wickedness of many who claim allegiance to the book by which they have been provoking sour reactions from many who have written off the place of the book in our time.

CRITICISM BECLOUDING ITS ORIGINS AND COMPILATION

Adding to the foregoing are historical facts that have been marshalled against the copies of the Bible that we have in circulation now. We do not shy away from the fact that it was men with flesh and blood, with human faculties and frailties that were engaged by the Author to pen down its content. But those were the selected vessels ordained to be

⁶ Historians, sociologists, political scholars and other academicians, including genuine Christians have decried instances of this abuse in their many works. One of the strident voices here is that of Professor Patrice Lumumba who through his lectures has been urging the Christians to return to the path of sanity as charted by the book.

involved in the process of documenting the instructional manual that the Bible was to become for the entire human generations. Apostle Peter revealed how the Old Testament came about: *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake (or wrote) as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (bracketed mine)”*.

The logic of the Author for His choice of man as instruments rests on the fact that, according to the revelation of the same book, our mammoth, and indefinably immense God has expressed His utmost delights in him, first as the crown of His creation, and secondly as a worthy partner He can relate with at any level. It is in furtherance of this that He has chosen the hearts of the believers as His dwelling place on the earth. Those who are His true children are credited with the same spiritual status with Jesus Christ, the first Begotten of the Father (Hebrews 2v11) who is the Mediator of the new covenant. This is why the Bible even as we have it now has been its own strongest bulwark against the combined oppositions of men. Matthew Henry called it “the book of books, shining like the sun in the firmament of learning, other valuable and useful books like the moon and stars borrowing their light from it... perfectly pure from all falsehood and corrupt intention...”

An attempt to answer all the questions fluttering around how the Bible came to us will be a major diversion from the focus of this work. This is apart from the act that such efforts will raise more questions than whatever answers that may be sourced from them. The following are three of the loudest controversies that continue to trail the book:

1. Was there anything like the original version of the Bible and what happened to it over time? We learnt from history about events that led to the different Church movements in several regions of the world having to compile or embrace different versions of the book specifically for the use of their sects and circles.

2. Why were old notable scripts like the books of Enoch, Jasher, “*Nathan the prophet, and ... Gad the seer*” (1 Chronicles 29v29) and others excluded from the final compilation of the Bible?
3. The loudest of the controversies relate to the impacts and contributions of the Nicaea Council of 325 AD to the book as we have today and also the process of canonisation that spanned through the second and fourth centuries that picked the books that finally found their slots in the Bible.

There are inexhaustible responses to each of the issues above, most especially on the role of the 325 AD Council that birthed some tenets for the Church. One of the most popular of these is the question of the Holy Trinity for example. The Bible as we have it today emerged around 400 AD. But the business agenda of the canonisation was meant to be defined and guided by one central theme of the redemption of mankind. Even today, it is only in the Bible that we can have full account of:

1. The origin of man
2. The impact and dreadful consequence of his fall in the Garden of Eden
3. The choice of the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (who became Israel) as the bearer of the light to the world and through whom the Lord Jesus Christ would come in the flesh
4. The full story of redemption through the Blood of Jesus Christ; His purchase of forgiveness and full salvation that became the lot of all men through His death on the tree.

With these central themes in focus, the Bible has remained a closely knitted book despite that it was written by several people of varying background and status and through a fairly long period of time. The Bible remains what it claims to be, the written word of God, “*a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*” (Psalm 119v105) for every man to navigate the spiritually dark terrain of our world.

THE FAITH THAT BRINGS SALVATION

The faith that saves the sinner has never been the one that secured answers to all the questions that intellectual curiosity has triggered about how the Bible came about (I Corinthians 1v18-29). The child-like faith to walk with God is fully satisfied with the fact that He inspired those who wrote the book and the same unction did not bypass the fathers of the Christian faith who compiled it into what we have in circulations now. An important revelation is how the book has addressed virtually all the questions that may rattle a genuine seeker of the truth. Also, there is no basis to dwell on or buy into the claims about the missing contents of the book during its compilation. After all, only a minute percentage of the entire Church population in the entire course of history, including all that have ended their race in heaven may claim to have mastered a fraction of the revelations that were conveyed in its **sixty-six** books.

Assessing the Bible with all objectivity will attest to the fact that there is no book either on the earth or in the history of mankind that has authenticated its messages the way the book has done. Also, no other book can explain, let alone offer authoritative clues to the daunting challenges that have confronted every generation of man till this moment. This includes many of those who are hibernating in the corridors of time and waiting for their turn to burst upon our world today. Thus, as the hinges of time cramp to close the door of the human era, even as the certainty of an end is staring man in the face, the Bible which has occupied the bestseller slot for many centuries will yet be the most sought-after book in the days ahead.

The book is not just one of the credible and most profound sources of ancient history. It is the only book with authentic prophecy and exegesis for the perplexing dramas that have begun to unfold in the

theatre of our world⁷. It was given to guide men, people and nations with useful instructions from their cradle to the grave. With universal impacts and generational patronage that the Bible continues to enjoy, therefore, whatever it may be; political or colonial, exploitive or liberal and by whoever or whichever agency that will empower the people to be able to read the book and discover the truth it conveys first-hand cannot but be paramount in the agenda of its Author.

HISTORICAL ROLES OF THE CHURCH

The message of this book is strident a call on the Church in Nigeria to rise above her challenges and pursuit of the mundane. But it is not only the stories of failure that the Church has to peddle. There were cheering aspects of her chequered history by which Christians in Nigeria do not need to hang their heads, a history that can neither be rewritten nor be wished away by her present travails and outbursts of her distractors. In other words, no critic of the Church in Nigeria will toy with the modest achievements and positive impacts that she has recorded over the years. It is difficult to imagine what Nigeria would have been like if those who floated church projects in Nigeria had folded their arms and left everything in the hands of political marauders and hawks who kept their eyes mainly on our resources.

The Church in Nigeria has been in the vanguard of the struggle for social justice and humanitarian cause, just as she is to be credited with laudable contributions to the realisation of our dream for political independence. It is not only the Church that prosecuted the independence project became this was a collective agenda and the pursuit of the emerging elites on Nigerian political activism of the era. There

⁷ The subject of the end time is the focus of my other book, *Prophetic Force* which is in four volumes covering nearly all Bible teachings about the origin of man and its link with the end of his sojourn.

were many others across the religious and regional divides of the country, mostly among young professionals and academia whose names cannot be listed in a work of this focus.

But on the spiritual scene, the Church was the instrument of God to dispel the chilling grip of darkness that reigned in many places to hold the various clans in captivity. Blended with many beautiful aspects of our inherited culture is the institution of witchcraft by which the demons reigned without restraint. It took evangelistic campaigns and headlong confrontation with the negative powers by anointed leaders of the Church who sometimes had to pay dearly for their daring. Even now, whatever agenda God has carved out for the nation is on the lap of the Church that He has arraigned in the forefront to birth its fulfilment. Like Israel to all the nations of the world, the Nigerian Church remains His main point of contact, not only with Nigeria but, as we shall see later, with several other countries of the world today.

The claim that the white missionaries came to Nigeria as extra luggage in the waggon of colonisation and enslavement agenda of the British does not call for contention. This is a piercing point that a segment of Nigerian academia has used for many years as vociferous castigation of the economic exploitations in the cloak of religion by the whites. Professor Ikenna Nzimiro revealed this during his public lecture I referred to earlier about how the British came to us with the Bible when we had the land and its resources. They then asked that we should close our eyes to pray. By the time the prayer was over and we opened our eyes, we had the Bible and they had the land.

It is just that this criticism did not tally with the roles of the members of the same Church as a core of and a force in the struggles of that era for political emancipation. Barring distortion of history that has become very common in our days, a compilation of those who fought to secure our independence may only be spiced by those who were not to be traced

to one church setting or the other. This is in despite of the fact that our early elites were equipped with an education that was administered mostly by the same whites who were missionaries. Thus, the feat of the Church in the educational development of the country by which many came to pursue their life's ambition is not to be compared with those of any religion in the country. Sadly also, I am aware of the obstacles that were mounted by some of our traditional rulers with their initial vehement opposition to Western education. *Boko Haram* did not just start in our time or on the Maiduguri axis!

We cannot stress any less the impact of the early missionaries on our health institutions with various hospitals and specialist medical centres, some of which are still standing in many places of the country. Many diseases that superstitions have robed with the garments of mysticism were discovered to have physical roots that drugs that are scientifically compounded could either cure totally or ameliorate significantly. It is also on record that Mary Slessor, the Scottish Presbyterian missionary sacrificed her entire life on the altar of service to stop the killing of twins in Calabar. While the above are on indelible records, the place and impact of the Church of our time have come under scrutiny and we must objectively address the forces contending against her.

SUCCEEDING WITHOUT RELIGION

The fact that the message of this book builds so much around God, the Bible, Christian virtues and prayers calls for clarification. This is particularly true as it will be seen towards the latter chapters that heap much emphasis on the exercises of these accessories of faith, with an urgent urge on Christians to rise and confront the challenges of our nation with prayers. I here tout an oblique revelation concerning a large number of nations that have attained greatness that cannot be traced to any deity or interceding saints. This teaches us that, in addition to his

resolve to achieve success, man is also imbued with the ability to plan, muster his energy to pursue the plan and achieve laudable goals. Those who conceived the grandiose dream of the Tower of Babel were unstoppable until there was divine interposition.

Officially and up till now, China has no place for religion but it has gone to space and also attained the status of world power at a time when Nigeria could not generate minimum electricity to light its homes and power its comatose infrastructures. This has established the fact that a nation can convert every building on its soil to a place of worship and still be wrecked by poverty and backwardness. A large number of the nations that are said to be great have only tapped into the investments that God has made in their people and their locations on the earth. They used their brains to conceive good plans and applied their hands to the spanners in their pursuits.

This is what has made the difference between them and others who are bogged down by stories of failures. This is more so if they are fortunate to have selfless, conscience-guided and vision-driven leadership. It is a law of success that every diligent person and, by extension, every diligent nation can patiently look forward to a time when his soul shall be made fat (Proverbs 13v4). Though God pronounced blessings on the Jewish race, the people did not fold their arms and do nothing. They built laboratories and made use of the extra intelligence that was their lot by inheritance. Similarly, Dubai was not built by Muslims who spent more hours on their praying mats but by those who resolved to make a statement.

The principles of hard work for success and God's dispensation of favour do not operate based on colour, race, gender or religion. He is One who *"maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"* (Matthew 5.45). This is why protests have mounted against a segment of the Church in Nigeria for sponsoring

sprawling auditoriums, that they are not what the nation needs at this time of its history. They seem to speak a bit of sense that we need more factories and not worship centres⁸. But let me assure the protesters that not many Christians are lamentably naive to believe that the anointing of their pastors will turn our waters into wine in Nigeria. We know that is the role reserved for well-managed factories.

Furthermore, I have to admit numerous dimensions to the race of life with direct involvement of forces that do not yield themselves to any cheap explanation on one hand pairing with equally inexplicable divine prerogatives on the other. There are inexplicable forces that make a significant difference between whoever has been programmed to be or not to be great, each of whom will eventually arrive at a predetermined destination, and not necessarily because of whatever efforts they may invest. It also has nothing to do with whether someone is a Christian paying his tithe or sowing his seed into any church or ministry. This is a phenomenon that cuts across the entire realms of man irrespective of his religion, including crude idol worshipping.

Joshua and Caleb were credited with the same heroic feat of faith. About forty years later, one rose to international fame with military accolades on his cap while nothing much was heard about the other. We do not have any means to establish that Joshua did anything extra, nor can it be proved that Caleb left anything undone. This is part of the truth that many of our pastors keep away from their members when they hold the microphone to pronounce abundant wealth on thousands of people at their prayer meetings, perhaps in expectation that what has worked for

⁸ It is too obvious that we need the factories, even more than the number of them that adorned our industrial layouts when our Naira was stronger than the US dollar. But the truth is that, especially with the coming revival, we will still need more church buildings to accommodate more worshippers. This is what the Lord will do at His own time and pace.

one will also work for the rest. Therefore, the way to free ourselves from fretting and stress is not to dwell on what we have or lack. It is in the assurance that we have not embarked on any course that may frustrate the counsel of God upon our lives by which we may have hindered our progress. Now, bringing this summary to the perspective of this work, I have reasons to harp it loud that Nigeria is destined for greatness and nothing will tamper with this prospect.

Chapter 3: Magnet Of Persecution

Nigeria is a nation of paradox in a measure and pattern that defy all logics, parading everything good and everything bad to the extremities. Nigerians are not only among the best of brains; they are also the worst of crooks that require the best of brains to be. The nation is one of the richest in terms of natural resources as bestowed by providence and also the worst in resource management and utilisation. While Nigeria will boast of being among the most religious countries on the planet, it is also home to the most bizarre vices, even the ones that have no name or are homemade. Nigerians have been identified to be among the most brilliant scholars in advanced countries, especially in the United States of America in the place where they are also known as the worst of the fraudsters.

Nigeria has proven reserves of crude oil that require minimal efforts for exploration while we also rank among the countries where the price of its refined outputs is disrupting their socio-economic lives. The country has the best arable lands with the most conducive all-year-round weather. But citizens who cannot afford imported food that floods into the country through legal and illegal borders are pinning away with hunger. On another note, with the vices that have combined to give the country a bad name and make our passports abhorrence at nearly all ports, Nigerian Christians are the ones that have been at the forefront of

global evangelism with the most visible and vibrant churches in many countries of the world, especially in the west that first brought Christianity to our doorstep.

These extremities can only be traced to the making of higher powers. While God rules in the affairs of the nation to promote everything desirable and noble, Satan is not leaving any stone unturned for the corruption of our destinies and destruction of our future as a nation. This is why those who lend themselves out as agents of Satan have only become more vicious in their resolve to ground the country, even when they lack any sane explanation for the endeavours which they pursue with the most ardent vigour.

THE RULING CABAL

We have heard, over and again, about how the Fulanis had boastfully laid a claim of ownership to the country. One of their loud slogans harped on how Nigeria was bequeathed to them as their sole inheritance by someone whom they believed owned it. At the same time, and in keeping with the absurdity of Nigeria and Nigerians, accusing fingers are fixed in the direction of the same people for atrocities that were targeted at sinking the ship of the nation⁹. Someone may then be curious to ask how the destruction of the country should define the aim or complement the agenda of those who are laying claim to it at the same time. Should God let them have their way with a monstrous plan, one is unable to imagine what the Nigeria of their inheritance will end up looking like.

Around 2021, I saw many clips of the dress rehearsals of planned large-scale carnage, with a few of them retained in my electronic library (until I lost them to bad file management). Most of the ones I watched

⁹ Perhaps this is in a misinformed hope that forces of violence destruction will be needed to deliver the country on their lap

could not be mistaken as a Nollywood rehearsal. They conveyed scenes too gruesome for me to watch the second time after their downloads and the only reason why I sought to retain them was to answer anyone who may think I am exaggerating the story here. All these were even though, so far in nearly all the years of our nationhood, instruments of governance and allocation of resources together with juicy positions had circulated among their elites perhaps more than other tribes.

The question of religious domination is still contested as Christianity and Islam keep accusing fingers pointed in the direction of each other about who is dominating the land or suppressing the other. Attention is given to this in the discussion of the incursion of Islam into our public space. Meanwhile, an unfortunate aspect of the mismanagement of the cabal may be seen in their selfishness that has condemned the multitudes of their people permanently to the back end of development and economic indices. One may see a sizeable population of their children and youths that has remained an embarrassment with many of them roaming the streets with plastic bowls to collect food leftovers. The worst aspect of this is how their camps have always provided a rich pool from which criminals and men of the underworld are recruited.

PREDICTED IMPLOSION

We may recall, just as I earlier wrote, how it is not in the reckoning of the bookmakers that Nigeria will still be standing as a nation by now. The prediction of America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was that the bombs would have been triggered to lay the nagging headache of Nigeria to rest. We are not unmindful of the fact that those who issued the dark prophecies and a number of those who bought into them are not among the uninformed whose opinions can be dismissed at no consequence. They are experts of history, diplomacy and global trending who gather authentic facts that lay beneath their predictions and at the

altitude where sentiments do not have much role to play.

Thus, their expectation of the implosion of Nigeria was not a baseless guess. That was even before the regime of President Buhari, at a time when everyone could not foresee the pervasive recklessness of the leadership, the growing resentments of the followers and serious security lapses that became a major issue of concern across the length and breadth of the country. To imagine that Nigeria will still be standing as one nation seven years beyond the calculation of the intellectual ‘timber and calibres’ of our time may not just be taken as a mere coincidence. Even as this work is being released, dark clouds still pervade the atmosphere of the nation with alarming cases of insecurity.

News and rumours about how porous our borders had become and how weapons were flooding into the country filtered into the public space since around 2012. The only people who treated them with apathy were those who were supposed to act and curb it. I also recall how no government agent was ready to own up to this problem, let alone suggest or seek a solution to it until the situation festered out of control. A few officials who reacted to the issue only sought to play down the threats in a way that seemed to expose either their ignorance or hidden conspiracy. That was how dangerous weapons flooded the country and circulated freely to the dens of herdsmen who, shortly after, stepped into full terror activities and reigned without restraints with the decimation of villages. That was quite a while before the inception of this administration which added its bits to inherit the problem in full measure as has been seen in recent years.

IT IS NOT A COWARDICE

The endurance of Nigerians to weather hardship is stunning. I have picked some remarks by a few radicals that the youths are docile, that they should have put their lives on the line for a bloody revolution and

launch full-scale attacks against officials of successive governments that have conspired to filter their destinies away. But I strongly opine that the seeming docility should never be construed as cowardice as many people have been tempted to see it. It all stems from the same restraining power that is difficult for bookmakers to unravel.

The pain is there. But somewhere in the remotest corner of the mind is seated a quiet nudge by the same restraining force that is speaking not only of peace but also of hope of a better tomorrow. I cannot forget how a number of our popular musicians stormed the studios around the mid-1980s to release one song after the other that echoed their expectation of a better tomorrow for the country¹⁰. That was at a time when they could not imagine that the suffering, they were counselling and comforting people about had not even reached its introductory phase. On another note, even many of those who do not give any room for religion are forced to bear with the protests of their conscience on their moral failure by which none would have any basis to rise against the system to which all of us have given birth.

The Arab Spring erupted from the self-immolation of a frustrated Tunisian, Mohamed Bouazizi, in protest against “police corruption and ill-treatment”¹¹. The truth is that thousands of Nigerian youths have been subjected to a myriad of pains and injustices he protested against and at times too many to count. The time we were any closer to what would have led to revolution was during the Lekki saga in October 2020 when they banded together to protest the brutality of the same police. While any of such instances should have induced anarchy and made the

¹⁰ There are a few of their popular renditions which I can still recite and even sing.

¹¹ If this happened in Nigeria, the person would just die, and die for nothing while nothing will follow. What the Tunisian did was close to the adventure of a man who set himself ablaze in Ondo State in January 2023 on how failures and frustration had dragged him in the social mud among his people. Lekki shooting of 2020 will not be forgotten in a hurry.

land ungovernable, somehow, the tension died down and fizzled away as if the grievances had been addressed.

A study of the atrocities that have torn many countries into shreds will not provide just a hint of what has been visited on Nigerians by the ruling class. The roots of the bloody wars that were fought in Liberia, Congo, Sudan, Rwanda and other places can be traced to skewed resource allocation, political subjugation, electoral frauds, tribal and religious tensions that were mismanaged. For instance, mutual suspicion and hidden animosity are two of the problems that have remained rife in the country, especially between the three major tribes of Nigeria. This is not to mention bloody wars that had reared their heads, over and again, even among supposedly homogenous people¹².

Even though this work is on at a time when the tension is still rising and the drum of war is beating from different corners, with preparations for general elections that were fielding questionable characters, the chances are very high that, with the intervention of God, the nation will survive. The only thing we are sure of, however, is that survival will not be built on the foundation of injustice but on a platter of freedom from oppression and wickedness. We need to address our lopsided socio-political structure by which too few people have everything and too many people have very little to nothing, as once protested by Jimmy Cliff, the Jamaican soul musician.

At the same time, it nauseates more to see how brazen thefts in the amounts that can inspire insanity are robed around top officials of the government for whom the arms of the law have been deliberately amputated. These were happening at a time when the hopes of the citizens were sagging to the lowest and our wobbling education system

¹² Those who are old enough will not forget the crisis that tore Ile-Ife and Madueke apart and the one that pitched the Ijaws against the Itshekiris some decades ago

was near total collapse¹³ and infrastructures plummeted to their lowest state. That is when it began to seem to everyone as if we have no provisions in our statute books to criminalise corruption and strange social vices anymore. The way blind eyes are turned in the direction of the perpetrators will indicate how the common man on my street is condemned to perpetual hopelessness.

‘OMINIRA’ (FREEDOM) OR ~~OM~~‘INIRA’ (HARDSHIP)?

Discussions about the Church and the hurdles she needs to scale through are the focus of the second section of this book. It is only necessary to mention here how her typical insensitivity and omissions may have significantly contributed to our present economic ruins and political logjam that became the lot of the nation, especially since the so-called independence. Just imagine if the Church had heeded the warning of the Holy Spirit through Apostle Joseph Babalola to soak our struggles and preparations for the event in prayers for the troubles that God had foreseen to ambush the noble project.

My father was one of those who thronged around Apostle Joseph Babalola during his rising and revival programmes. He quoted the prophet to have said that while the yells of ‘*Ominira*’ saturated the atmosphere of the nation in its yearnings for political independence, what he was hearing was the direct opposite. Instead of *Ominira* (Freedom), Apostle Babalola said that he was hearing *Om-Inira*, a twist of the pronunciation of the word that rendered its first two letters dormant to shorten it to **Inira** (Hardship)¹⁴. But the Church traded that

¹³ Year 2022 is one of the most traumatic for students in the recent history when ASUU embarked on strikes that lasted over eight months and everyone could see how the amount they demanded were being squandered either through outright looting or in gross misapplication of funds and misplaced priorities.

¹⁴ This is one of the few statements my father picked directly from the lips of Apostle Babalola. *Ominira* is the Yoruba word for *Freedom* while *Inira* means *Hardship*.

warning away on the altar of indifference!

Contrary to how the sceptics and irreligious folks might want to twist that warning, it could not have been delivered to suggest that Nigeria should abandon the independence project. Rather, the warning was issued so that the Church, especially in the south of the country where she had grown firm roots by then, would pray to sanitise the pathway and diffuse the political bomb that independence project was waiting to become with time. The searchlight of God had exposed how the wickedness of those who pretended to be handing over power would combine with the deception of our founding fathers. The ominous sound of the prophet simply revealed how events would eventually play out to destroy the collective destiny of a people in the decades to come.

Thus, while Nigerians would generally want to lay all the blame for the amalgamation and political travails of the nation at the doorstep of Lord Lugard, God still made provision by which His good plans would have sailed through instead of the temporary stillbirth that Nigeria came to be. This revelation is one of the dins that would continue to taunt the Church for her short-sightedness and narrow-minded agenda. Today, the masses of the country, especially its southern populace which Nigerian union has grossly shortchanged can tell whether it is freedom or hardship that political independence has spelt for them since 1960!

While it is true that God made the nation of Nigeria unique in many respects, He did not forget to factor in how it would encounter the forces of darkness that would mobilise against its destiny. Paul counselled believers to pray for political leaders as part of our Christian duties in addition to preaching the gospel. But this mandate has always been sidestepped by the shallowness of those who hold microphones to lead prayer sessions from the pulpits of many local assemblies. It is only during special times or events that prayer for the nation is rarely heard. Even in most of such cases, prayers for Nigeria often come after all the

sermons and prayers have been said and the recessing grace was to follow. The failure to engage in prayers for the nation and arrest the drifts is the reason for which successive Nigerian governments have proved to be nothing but an instrument of oppression.

AGENDA OF GOD: A MAGNET OF PERSECUTION

Here is the core of the whole issue. The message of this book does not have any apology to those who deny the reality of the spiritual realms and the two kingdoms that are continually at war within them. Usually, the world and its educational systems will appear to have gotten many things right until it comes to the question of the impalpable realms and the influence they exert on the physical world. Usually, a large segment of our society will continue to deny any reality other than what they can sense with human antennas or prove in their laboratories. Others who believe in the active interaction and collaboration of the realms of the spirit and physical differ on which one of the two is controlling the other and by which means or to what measure.

The overall truth is that Nigeria would never have attracted a fraction of its present woes without a cause for which the hosts of darkness have targeted the nation for a showdown. No layman may contend that Satan and his kingdom are pitched against everything in which God has signalled His interest in the world. As a highly strategic, experienced and sharply focused fighter, the devil does not engage nonentities or dissipate his energies where his stakes are not very high. His hard struggles to destroy the glory of Nigeria through those who have deliberately or ignorantly lent themselves out to be his collaborators fit perfectly into the pattern of his viciousness.

Thus, agents of destabilisation especially as may be traced to major religions, tribes, various leaders of opinions and their followers in Nigeria have been copiously recruited and positioned across its political divides

and social strata to poison its streams. One may see how the beautiful plans and utmost care of God for Nigeria and Nigerians contrast sharply with the suffering that has been unleashed against the masses by successive leaders who have only seared conscience to peddle around the corridors of power. No one may proffer any explanation whatsoever for the level of debauchery that has been traced to the political theatre of the nation with a rare capacity to inflict pain.

On one hand, the blame for the massive rots of the two-term rule of President Muhammadu Buhari converged at his doorstep because he reneged on his promise to fight corruption. This is not to forget or deny his spirited effort at the inception of his administration. Conversely, too, those who are sincere enough will sympathise with him on the fact that the man, or any man for that matter, lacks a fraction of whatever was needed to fix Nigeria or contend with powers that have declared war against its destiny. His real blame was his addition of glaring deception, docility and furtive backing of his kinsmen who were mostly fingered to be behind the devious and violent Islamisation agenda. This is how the man and his team sold themselves out as instruments of degeneration to become a major addition to the problems he had campaigned against and which he was elected to solve.

Thus, even though the trouble confronting Nigeria is bigger than President Buhari, we do not know where to draw the line between the battle against the destiny of the nation which he inherited and where he is to take full blame for his active conniving with evil. After all, it takes Nigerians like him who are supposed or pretend to have whatever it takes to wade through the murky waters of our savage politics before jumping to the campaign podium. This is why God once revealed that those who have been winning our elections were not the ones that He sponsored

into office¹⁵. The real question is this. Except heaven would just intervene and impose its agenda on the nation, which of our politicians who have been drinking or swimming in the blood of fellow human beings would expect God to work with him?

In a nutshell, it will just be enough to state that Nigeria is highly strategic in the agenda of God for this era. The nation has been programmed and destined to be one of the arrowheads of His global end-time revival exploits. This is a movement during which we will see men in their billions; mark my words, in their **billions** across the nations of the world trooping to the feet of the Cross to seek the mercy and secure the salvation of God for their eternal souls. There is no fool anywhere that will expect Satan to be comfortable with such plans that are ordained to sponsor his open disgrace.

While Satan knows what he is doing, it is the blind allies he has recruited to become thorns in the flesh of the nation and fellow citizens who do not know what they are doing. This is why Jesus Christ who has the deepest of knowledge employed His extraordinary grace to pray for those who inflicted excruciating pains on Him. Till today, God retains similar capacity and provisions to forgive, restore and save those who have pursued the agenda of Satan in the blindness of their spirits. It thus becomes part of the message of this book that such fellows, irrespective of the religious or tribal divides they may be, will find sufficient grace to retrace their steps in the spirit of repentance.

One truth that the leading stories of the Bible have furnished is how God had mapped out the voyage and plotted the ultimate defeat of Satan from the very beginning. This has incorporated all his schemes and aggressions from the moment he lost out in heaven down to when he

¹⁵ The blunt truth about the 2015 general election was that none of the two contending candidates was to be better than the other. That was when it seemed that God wanted to pay Nigerians back in their coins (Isaiah 43v28).

will embrace eternal torment. It is just that the plans of God and the method of His operation are usually shielded away from him as he blindly goes about with empty boasting of frustrating the move of God. A good example was his tragic blunder when he instigated his cohorts in the corridors of the Jewish temple to persecute Jesus Christ to the point of death. That became an error for which he later embraced huge regrets as the Cross became his greatest undoing (1 Corinthian 2v7, 8).

While Satan sought to destroy what he thought to be the kingly ambition of Jesus over Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, he instigated those clad in the garments of empty religion and their political collaborators in the corridors of power at Rome. But that persecution became the means for the same Jesus Christ to acquire a name that is above every name (Philippians 2v5-11). All that Satan will do can never be more than to attack the plans of God in a way that will make him an unwilling instrument to promote what he seeks to frustrate. God ordained all things and determined the course of all men and their world. He is the King who, though invisible, has His fingerprint stamped upon all that there is and will ever be from the first foundation of all existence to the last end of humanity and all its endeavours. A revelation of Apostle Peter during his encounter with the house of Cornelius in the early Church reveals it all; *“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world”* (Acts 15v18).

Chapter 4: Dark Corridors of Power

Apart from the certitude with which the Bible presents divine truth about the realms outside the reach of human senses, objective academia also has gathered enough reasons to adjudge the book as a credible source of ancient history. Just like it treats every subject into which it wades, Bible records have much to say about the activities of the kings and kingdoms of the ancient world in its chronicle segments. There are abundant revelations of how the corridors of power have always been, on the one hand, submerged by rebellion against God and on the other, by wickedness and brutality against vulnerable citizens and weaker stratum of the society.

THE CONCEPT OF GOVERNMENT

Government is a system by which a group of people exercises political authority and provides leadership for others in a given territory, usually a country or nations. The individual or group may be selected by consensus, elected by democratic process or simply by inheritance as we have in the monarchical system. Leadership vested in the government is what a father provides for a family, a pastor for a local church and a chief executive officer for a business outfit. It includes leaders in all layers of administration as may be appointed to show the pathway and maintain

law and order. In *Introduction to Theology*, H. Orton Wiley and Paul T. Culbertson noted that "...since man's moral nature is in disorder, his unregulated development must of necessity lead to unjust interference with the rights of other men".

As we noted earlier, God has demonstrated His keen interest in human government by which ruling powers are exercised by those so appointed. At the same time, He did not provide the ruling class with any operational manual apart from the Bible which the vast majority of such leaders have never shown any regard for or bothered to consult. It is thus less surprising that a major problem that has confronted man in several places and through the ages is the misuse of political power by those entrusted with it.

The cumulative effects of this abuse and gradual degradation of many places through the centuries are the only explanation we can proffer today as to why the only one world that God created and delivered to man is balkanised into the first and third worlds, into the developed, underdeveloped and forever developing ones. Nigeria is only one of the countries that have been struggling at the back rows of our world, rows for the nations that are condemned to misery because of political marauding and economic mismanagement. For many of them, the most potent instrument of oppression is the ruling class that has struck a pact with Satan to wreck the destinies of their people.

Even the chosen race of Israel did not provide any departure from the irrational pattern as this segment of the work has lessons that we can pick from their exhibition of madness at the corridor of power. Of all the kings that ruled the kingdoms of Israel, the reign of David still ranks as the best up till today. This is assessed from his outstanding military conquests, on one hand, and the geographical expansion, material prosperity and spiritual reawakening of the nation on the other. The portrait of David by Prophet Samuel as "*a man after his (God's) own heart*"

(I Samuel 13v14, Acts 13v22), testifies to the background preparations he had before stepping into the challenge of leadership. In addition to this, he secured the success of his tenure by his sense of justice, his embrace of the laws of God and his unwavering obedience to them. Notwithstanding this, his reign had its human side and dark spots of power intoxication in the story of Uriah and Bathsheba and ill-motivated conduct of the national census.

Even now, as it has always been, there is a cloud of mystery hovering over the political thrones of many places. With a highly negligible exception, the lineage of kings and rulers in the generations of men the world over has been operating under irresistible spells to pitch against God. This disorder is amplified by the revelation of King David himself when he wrote:

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed...” (Psalm 2v2)

Thus, apart from the blur of David as we just noticed, it is highly instructive to note that nearly all their other monarchs who walked on the side of God and left godly legacies also had dark pages of their tenures that testify to the fact of their humanity and insanity as accessories of the throne package. Solomon overtaxed the people and towards the end of his reign, got caught in the web of strange women who turned his heart away from God. Asa persecuted the prophet who reprimanded him for his error, oppressed some people of his domain and stubbornly refused to reconcile with God even when that became the only way to secure healing of a putrefying sore.

Jehoshaphat tainted his brilliant career with ill-advised diplomatic relations with Ahab and Ahaziah his son, the ungodly monarchies of

northern Israel. The blunder of King Hezekiah was cited as one of the root causes of Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 20:12-19). King Josiah whose religious reforms compared to only the ones of Prophet Samuel and King David blocked his ears to the warnings of God and meddled in a warfare that did not concern him. This terminated his life, his reform agenda and glorious career rather abruptly and, at the prime of age thirty-nine, (2 Kings 23:29).

God was far ahead of those who coined the popular saying that power corrupts and absolute power, especially the type that was wielded in the days of those kings, corrupts absolutely. He knew the temptations to which the monarchs would be exposed and gave them His prescriptions in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 by which they were to succeed. But most of the kings and rulers of the ancient kingdoms and those of the modern days would rather pay dearly to consult fake prophets, fake Imams, the marabouts and charlatans who posed as wise men. Even when they know or ought to know such people to be either satanic or uncanny, it is the Bible, as the pristine source of divine guidance, that has no place in their hearts or shelves.

This is why those who understand the difference that godly individuals can make in the corridor of political power in a nation like Nigeria of today have been asking God to fish out His *Davids* for the nation from wherever they may have been dumped. Please note that such men and women will not necessarily have to be born-again Christians. I will show in later chapters how people of different religious persuasions have made and have been making a difference both in our polity and the ones of many other nations of the world.

TYPICAL RULERS ARE ‘BEASTS’

It remains a sad truth that the political masters of many nations, including a large segment of the ones that we have seen in Nigeria since

independence, are groaning under the heavy yoke of Satan to whom they have pledged their unbroken allegiance. Therefore, how God may bypass them to impose His choice will always be the exception that we may count on. No one is naïve who will need to be told how the seat of political powers at the national, state and local levels has been infested with dark powers who are often conjured by abominable rituals. Someone tried to venture into the local politics of his area and one of the questions that those he met on the ground asked him was if he could drink human blood raw!

Those who ignore this spiritual dimension of the ruling spirits over the affairs of their nations are blind to the real cause of the irrationalities of their political leaders. They are also those who are deceived to believe that national protests, a vibrant press and a movement of the people will make a shift to the orientation of the ruling class. The Bible provides the only answer to the absurdities that have been traced to the monarchs in the ancient world and the politicians of our era. In the book of Daniel where the features of human kingdoms were tabled with sufficient details, the term *beast* was employed as a symbol of the kingdoms that are ruling the world, especially their kings¹⁶:

These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. (Daniel 7v17)

For most of the perplexing questions that are thrown up on why the

¹⁶ There are a few exceptions to this like we have in Revelation 4v6 where the term was also employed for the beings that surround the flaming throne of God with weird descriptions. It is also known that different Greek words that should have been interpreted as *living creatures* were used for the words here translated as the *beast* in the English Bible. Even at that, the term simply conveyed the dreadful features of those four creatures in the book of Revelation by which we know that, except those who are employed in the courtyard of the Almighty, a beast will always combine unnatural appetite with inhuman instincts.

leaders behave the way they do, it is because the frames they decorate with flashy costumes and flaunt before press cameras or on the pages of newspapers are borrowed. What they hide behind them is the craving of a beast. Though the case and impact of madness are more visible in Africa and other underdeveloped regions of the world, abuse of power is a universal phenomenon

ABSURDITIES, RAW LUNACY

In *Prophetic Force*, I illustrated the insanity of the ancient monarchs with two popular stories in the Bible. King Nebuchadnezzar would be remembered for his madness when he ordered the killing of his wise men because they could not tell him his dream and give its interpretation. The fact that he later “...fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him” (Daniel 2v46) confirmed that he was fully conscious of the impossibility of the demand he insistently made on his subjects. The other case involved the children that were born about the same time as Jesus in Galilee who were cut down at infancy and in their thousands by the rage of King Herod just because he saw Baby Jesus as a threat to the perpetuity of his throne. I will illustrate four instances of our situation as they concern *Contempt of The Press, Mental Patients in State Houses, Spiritual and Collateral Damages and Perhaps You Have Wondered...*

CONTEMPT OF THE PRESS

People of my age bracket and older folks will attest to the frustration of arduous attempts at checking the excesses of the government by the vibrant press that Nigeria has always been fortunate to have from the inception of the nation. While labouring under the burden of bridled mouths, I still remember incisive editorials, powerful commentaries and various columns by several old newspaper outfits, like *Daily Times*,

Tribune, Daily Sketch, New Nigeria, Observer, The Punch, Concord, quite a few of which I read over some time. Added to these are the ones of the new generation squads that include *The Guardian* and *This Day* among the print media that adorned the vendors' stalls across the length and breadth of our nation, especially the urban centres.

Efforts at the full compilation of guest columnists apart from the few on my list below will call for dedicated research in that direction. I just felt I should isolate the invigoration that the debut of *The Newswatch* Magazine brought into the sector when the trio of Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpu and Yakubu Mohammed, its founding executives, pulled out of the *Concord* newspaper to establish the outfit. Their quiet but well-defined aim to redefine print journalism in Nigeria had no hiding place. I am one of those who read through a number of its weekly issues. In the spirit of the vibrant press worthy of celebration, the magazine stirred huge waves with hard tackling and strident criticism of the excess of the government and its officials.

Like the hard-biting teeth of other independent news media of its era, *The Newswatch* charged fiercely at the dwindling virtues of the ruling class and the moral abyss into which the political class was fast descending. Its uncompromising stance over sensitive issues it sought to unravel earned its chief executive, Mr Dele Giwa a letter bomb which blew him up at his breakfast table in the early hours of October 19, 1986¹⁷. No idea is needed to reverse our negative trends and transform Nigeria which our press has not canvassed to political leaders, over and again. No one may be able to catalogue strong protests with which Nigerians and its crops of intellectuals had sought to arrest the drifts of

¹⁷ Like it just happened yesterday, I vividly recall the heavy grief of the evening when Gboyega Adeseye, the newscaster at NTA Channel 7, Tejuoso broke the horror news to the Lagos television audience.

the government officials.

Nigeria has always been blessed with a crop of dedicated and highly professional press men and women and columnists. I can just list a few likes of Professor Wole Soyinka, so far, our only Nobel Laurel, Dare Babarinsa, Pini Jason Onyegbaduo, Alade Odunewu, Peter Enahoro, Tola Adeniyi, Chris Anyawu, Kunle Ajibade, Ben Charles-Obi, Niyi Osundare, George Mba, Femi Aribisala, Niyi Oniororo, Onome Osifo-Whiskey, Babafemi Ojudu and a host of others who battled the corruption and excesses of the ruling class with their pens but with little success. Many like Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, Apostle (Dr) Bolaji Akinyemi, Dr Reuben Abati, Rufai Oseni, Adeola Fayehun, Babajide Kolade-Otitolaju, Seun Okinbaloye and our historian and author, Moses Oludede Idowu who has added a Bible leverage to square up to the failure of the Church of our time which is a project to which this book is also committed, are among those still on the battle line.

The aphorism in my growing years was that the pen is mightier than the sword. But this is predicated on the expectation that the political power which holds the sword would bow to the screams of reason to tame its carnivorous instincts as counselled by the pen and those who wield it. To some extent, the Nigerian press would appear to prove this point until the dark intents that ruled the hearts of our politicians reared their heads to suggest that they had no apology for the abuse of office. The consequence was that the more we saw of those intellectual aggressions that were meant to pilot the voyage of power to the path of sanity, the stronger the monster of bad governance seemed to grow.

Then comes the ugly development of the whole story in our days with the infection of the press with greed. This is how the sword has now proved to be mightier than the pen with its ambush of inducement for which a great number of blazing pen bearers have placed their professionalism on the gallery for the highest bidder. This is how even

the most notorious politicians will always have a segment of the press they can recruit, not only to defend their cause but also to be ready to peddle lies and half-truths to repackage the image of their paymasters. The challenge of bad governance confronting our nation is rooted in the realms where weapons of protests against evils, no matter how pungent they may seem, may fail to register the needed impact.

MENTAL PATIENTS IN STATE HOUSES

Apart from suspected bargains they strike with Satan in the covens, numerous misdemeanours of political elites smell stark lunacy that more often may be traced to or aided by the abuse of forbidden substances, like drugs for example. This could only be a justification for an internationally acclaimed psychiatrist and a former director of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Late Professor Adeoye Lambo who at a time prescribed psychiatric tests for those who were aspiring to political offices in some parts of the world. His specific reference derived from what he had observed in Nigeria and other notorious countries in Africa where madness has been traced to the corridors of power.

From all we know, the late professor was a rare-bred professional with a clear mind that no one may accuse of political biases. His counsel projected out of deep yearnings and genuine concerns for the fate of the citizens with political leaders whose diligence and hardest efforts may be seen only in their unabashed aim to ground the country with spates of recklessness, wickedness and moral failures for which no explanation may be found. He must have wished to see that those who aspire to the position of leadership still retained their sanity at least before they assumed office. Echoing the same opinion some years later during a public lecture, eminent scholar, Professor Tam David-West stated:

. . . only a psychiatric invalid of a leader could feel comfortable having billions of money (Dollars, Sterling etc) when most of . . . the

conventional ordinary citizen cannot afford a good meal each day, . . . only a mentally wreck of a leader could go on smiling in self-satisfaction in his fantasy mansion when most ordinary compatriots have not even shacks to live in with their family

The platform of resource management is where the traits of the *beasts* have registered the most devastating impact on the people. Because of the access to the public purse provided by political offices, massive assault is unleashed on the fortunes of struggling nations through ineptitude, wastage and worst of all, outright stealing. When one reflects on the mien of the ruling class and the hardship they inflict on the people, nothing but the revelation of Prophet Daniel that portrays them as a bunch of beasts may bridge explanation gaps.

Policies emerge to deliberately widen the gap between the rulers as the thin gods of the land and other citizens as slaves who are supposed to worship them. You have millions who live in shambles and squalors, who go to bed with empty stomachs for the greater number of their evenings. At the same time, you find the leaders whose only source of fortunes is access to political offices and their buddies cruising about in the most expensive automobile as they shuttle between their palatial mansions and the presidential suites of five and seven-star hotels. Those are the places they resort to for pastimes whenever they are not on lavish overseas trips.

The next chapter will focus on the familiar challenge of corruption in an unfamiliar style. People always get leaders after their kind. With citizens that have lost their bearing, the honest leaders they clamour for will not descend from the band of angels. In Nigeria where a huge segment of the citizens is sold out to corruption, only a combination of large-scale repentance, spiritual reawakening and complete social reorientation may secure our release from the clutch of evil. The leaders

we are all grunting about are only a representation that is parading the traits and mentality of the rest of us.

Our political leaders have found fertile grounds to nurture their greed on one hand and have also been instruments of chastisement by God which bad government has always proved to be for any people. Isaiah hints at how God permits men of questionable characters to step into leadership roles as the harvest of the people's disobedience. *"Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches."* (Isaiah 43v28). It, therefore, calls for no debate as to why our political theatre is submerged into such floods of evils that even many of the honest and refined few who would wish to genuinely serve the people are scared into their hideouts.

Several nations have transited through the experience of Nigeria but have succeeded in adding great value to their citizens. Most of them do not even have a fraction of God's endowment on or Christian population in the nation. We know a number of them that shared political and economic status with Nigeria at independence but have since achieved transformation to cross the poverty lines. Not so many of those leaders are even as religious as the ones that Nigeria has been unfortunate to have, nor can it be said that they lacked their share of malevolent tendencies like all men everywhere. The difference is how they learned to tame their avarice and put the interest of their citizens over and above personal interests and agendas. While it is true that Satan is pitched against Nigeria, he has found willing partners in its godless leaders.

SPIRITUAL AND COLLATERAL DAMAGES

There are several other means through which bad leaders bring calamities upon their citizens. In one bad example we earlier saw, David prevailed on Joab, his army general, to conduct a national census in a move that incurred the anger of God. God removed a shield of

protection for a plague that killed seventy thousand people in just three days. In another case, desolation was determined upon Jerusalem and its inhabitants on the account of the provocation occasioned by utter wickedness and idolatry of King Manasseh which God vowed to visit upon the ‘innocent’ citizens of the city (Jeremiah 15:1-4). From these incidents, we may not be able to tell the extent that the citizens of many countries including Nigeria have suffered collateral breaches because of the misdeeds of those at the helm of their affairs.

However, David possessed the heart of a true shepherd by which he prayed that God should spare the sheep and hold him and his father’s house personally accountable for his blunders. But very much unlike him, the bunch of the leaders that are parading many lands today will destroy the lives and destinies of the people they are supposed to serve and go about their routines as if nothing has gone amiss. Thus, as the masses are pining away because of the failures that the policies, personal greed and secret alliances of the leaders with darkness have engineered, you are likely to find them raising their heads with pride in public functions, posing before the press cameras and mounting the rostrum to read glazed speeches as written by paid cronies.

The sanctity that our leaders bestow upon human lives is less than the one a hungry cheetah may reserve for a gazelle. This is why in our parts of the world you find politicians who are involved in the most bizarre rituals which involve the shedding of human blood, sometimes on a very large scale just to secure or hold to power. In Nigeria, kidnapping cases are usually known to be rampant around election periods and hoodlums have been arrested many times with human body parts with confessions under pressure that they have been hired by one politician or the other to source for them.

PERHAPS YOU HAVE WONDERED...

Perhaps you have worried about how nations that were ordained to flow with 'milk and honey' got reduced to a barren wilderness because of the wickedness in high and low places as championed by bad leadership (Psalm 107:33, 34). Perhaps you have been disturbed by the syphoning of communal wealth to private accounts in manners that defy all logic and in flagrant neglect of the plight of the voiceless masses that the lootings have reduced to walking corpses on our streets. The stealing nowadays has gradually climbed to such amounts that neither the thieves nor their unborn children of many future generations may ever need.

Perhaps you are perplexed at the colossal waste of human capital and natural resources in some countries of the world, a fraction of which have launched citizens of other ones into stupendous wealth and a life of comfort. Perhaps you have wondered why the most sensible courses of action are ignored while the meaningless ones are pursued with the resources and vigour of the state. Perhaps you have asked over and again why almost everybody seems to know the right or next thing to do except those who have been entrusted with leadership roles. Perhaps you have asked yourself if the blood that runs in your veins has the same constituents as the ones in the veins of leaders who abused political offices, deployed stiff brutality against real or perceived opposition and pursued wicked policies that would only sell their fellow citizens and their unborn generations into slavery.

Let me cite a nauseating picture of our situation. Several protests have been raised over and again about the outrageous remunerations of our political office holders and their severance packages. This relates more to the ones of the legislative and, particularly, the state executive offices between which the bunch of our crooked politicians have been swapping seats. We can see how Nigeria, with its comatose economy, decayed infrastructures and grossly malnourished citizens has its

lawmakers earning salaries said to be among the highest in the world, even above those of many advanced nations. Worse still, it is the same legislative arm that would queue behind the governors to tell us that the economies of some states in the country cannot support the minimum wages prescribed for the masses¹⁸.

Rightly or wrongly, I have always thought that the regime that will begin to chart a way forward for the country out of our accumulated mess will be kitted with a legislature that will begin its official sittings from the reduction of its current insensitive pay package. Closely connected to this monumental fraud is the cost of governance in Nigeria which the press and several social watchdogs have always protested to be out of touch with what obtains in many sane countries of the world. What is sustaining this rot is the backyard conniving by which the looting of the executing agency is shared with those who should raise questions about the excesses and then plug the holes.

DECEPTION: AN INSTRUMENT OF OPPRESSION

In many struggling nations, tactless deception by the officials of the government is one of the most potent instruments that is used to perpetrate assault against the collective interests of those they pretend to serve. Since the world is ruled by the prince of darkness who himself is a father of lies (John 8v44), we know that there can be no free press anywhere in the world. Every information dissemination organ thrives on its loyalty to whatever interest it represents. So, it cannot be anything strange that the Nigerian press, just like we have in other places continues to groan under the burden of enduring padlocked mouth. It can only

¹⁸ While the number of workers in comparison with the politicians may justify this arithmetic, the right thing would have been to let their own pay also reflect the pressure on the national resources they fear, and not to keep their swollen purse while denying the right of the masses at the same time.

peddle a partial clip to prevent those who rely on its stories from seeing the full picture of the atrocities of the ruling cliques.

Over time, I was puzzled about the culture of deception in the public space, both historically and up till now, more especially with the way its game has been played in Nigeria. But that was before I came across the works of Niccolò Machiavelli. The portion of his work I read seems to exude sympathy for the political class on how and why it needed to use deception. From this, I came to see the need to face a blunt truth about how it may not be possible to find a government anywhere in the world that will be free from the practice of deception. We will need to look forward to such during the reign of Jesus Christ, on this same earth. However, in fairness to Machiavelli, it was not as if he stuck out his neck with his treatise to advocate for or defend the lies of the ruling class. He only anchors his treatise on the claim that the exposure of the citizenry to the actions and motives of their leaders whom he called *the prince* will pose a real threat to the stability of their realms.

As this scholar had secured the accolade of political scholars of many generations, I do not have any ground to challenge his authority. My only grudge is how he seemed to trivialise bad governance and its effects that deception, which he touted as the option of the *prince*, would be needed to cover up in the first instance. For rulers to have to resort to deception to secure the stability of their domains will mean just one thing; they have dipped their hands into deals that threaten the interests and welfare of the people and which must be covered up. If all they do at all times is that which will protect and promote the cause of the people that they were elected to serve in a way that even their worst critics will not be able to censure, there would never be any need to employ the instrument of deception.

Like many globally acclaimed theories that have worked to transform other nations but which Nigeria and Nigerians have made a huge mess

of, we may all see how the one of Niccolò Machiavelli has also been trashed. It is in Nigeria that the people hear reports of mind-blowing corruption which tear the veils of mere rumours and no revolt of the people is mustered even to check or challenge the excesses of the rulers. A fraction of the horror that the Nigerian politicians are known to have perpetrated in Nigeria has triggered unmanageable anarchies in many places. This is especially as it applies to the recent and current regimes which have heightened the game of corruption and deception to a level that has now disconnected them from the realities.

I guess that the resilience that Nigerians continue to exhibit in the face of the irresponsibility and blatant provocation of the leaders will prove to be too much for the Guinness Book of World Records. But, to me, this is only one side of the whole story. The other side of the issue, which was sufficiently hinted upon in the opening segments as to how Nigeria has continued to survive against all odds, has emboldened the spirit and message of this work, that Nigeria may be spared the bomb of bloody revolution before it will have to explode. Satan must have been the only force behind our version and practice of lies in *Delusion of Self-Deceivers, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Heavily Armed Herdsmen, The Boko Haram Saga and Botched Developmental Projects*.

DELUSION OF SELF-DECEIVERS

It is the practice of politicians to organise elaborate rallies and mount the rostrums to read sugar-coated and nerve-soothing speeches mostly to attract the ovations of those who can readily attest to the falsehood of the pledges they are clapping for. More often than not, and before the clapping has toned down, you find them sneaking to the back of the cameras to do the exact opposite of their speech in pursuit of self-aggrandisement in abuse of the apparatus of governance. The course of action they prosecute with any sizable zeal is the one that tickles their

fancies or those of their cronies.

That the politicians are deceiving the masses is no longer news as the least informed persons on the streets of the plundered nations have come to know that their leaders should never be taken for real. Distrust is a natural response to the successive years of failed promises by which their future and the ones of their unborn generations are continually sacrificed on the altar of their leaders' quest for orgies of the moment. A great number of the projects they pursue are those that serve as syphoning pipes that reroute proceeds of ungodly gains into their private pockets through backyard arrangements.

But there is a twist to this drama. It is not possible to imagine, even as pretentious and dubious as the politicians are known to be, that they can feign their ignorance about the fact that the people already know that they are being deceived. I have asked myself how many politicians are still there, especially those who rode into offices on the back of visionless cabals and notorious thugs as political godfathers, who issued promises that lack intention will still expect to be taken seriously. The masses cannot find an easy way of forgetting about how those who made similar promises in previous campaigns to attract louder ovations at political rallies only ended up compounding their woes.

Take this as an illustration. Our heads of government have retained the culture of giving a nationwide broadcast, especially during our independence anniversary and other notable days on our national calendar. I challenge our vibrant press, political researchers, experienced journalists and other interested bodies, even if it will be a pro-bono service to the people, to rummage through the speeches that our political leaders have been reading to us since 1960. All of them will be found to be glazed with words where you will never have the slightest hint of where exactly they were gradually steering the ship of the nation to with their greed, lack of vision and debased morals.

Those were high-sounding and nerve-soothing speeches painted with grammatical expressions as written by paid cronies but without a content of sincerity. It is the opposite intentions of those speeches year after year and regime after regime that have landed the ship of the nation to the brink of collapse where we now find ourselves. Except God will intervene on our behalf, especially since grammatical expressions can never be exhausted, more of them would roll in until we find ourselves in the trench. Since the 1980s for instance, the slang: “do not believe a story until it is officially denied” came to be popular among the journalists to caution themselves and those who patronise their news. An honest survey of our terrain will reveal how that abrasive counsel has operated as a rule more than exceptions.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF BIAFRA (IPOB) AND HEAVILY ARMED HERDSMEN

This is concerning situations that prevailed in Nigeria within and around the year 2021, being one of the eras that have witnessed the worst of our security challenges. Many times, it is as if those who fabricated deception into a tool of governance often fail to master their trade as they make categorical statements that contradict the facts that even the most unwitting of the citizens can see. I agreed, for example, that the movement of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), as an offshoot of the Biafran saga that plunged Nigeria into a bloody civil war, became a threat to national cohesion. But even when they were not yet seen to be close to this or known to be violence-prone, at least by many who may share that observation with me, the government carved a backyard route into the judicial quarters to brand them a terrorist organisation¹⁹.

At the same time, since around 2016 or earlier, and before the agitations of IPOB began to go scary, heavily armed herdsmen militia

¹⁹ An Abuja Federal High Court made the pronouncement on September 2017 on the account of its being threats to national security and cohesion.

were known and widely reported to have terrorised villages of innocent citizens to kill, rape and leave huge destruction on their trails. Many of those in the Middle Belt of the country were not spared to tell the story of the horror they went through in the hands of the terrorists. Thus, everyone could see and sense what the real threats to the peace of the nation were in the unchecked rampage of the heavily armed marauders. At the same time, people also saw how they were treated with caution, like the apple of the eyes of the same government.

While the genocide agenda of the killers was playing out, the cronies of the presidency and prominent officials of the Ministry of Information were busy rolling out stories and fabricating falsehoods to tone down the destructions and their irrational magnitudes. The loudest of the story had labelled the killings as a result of a clash of interest between the local farmers and the herders in their search for pastures for their cattle. No explanation was offered about the sophisticated weapons the assailers brandished while their victims were told to defend themselves by throwing stones. What the propaganda of the government defined as a clash was seen to be leaving severe pains, destruction and high death tolls only on just one side of the conflict.

Beyond this, the argument of clash for resource control breaks down when they extend it to the actions and motives of those who are bombing the churches and mosques and killing the worshippers. Failure to define a problem for what it really is will always be a major impediment to actions that may save the situation. Consequently, the refusal of the government and its officials to call a spade by its real name became the impediment to and graveyard of whatever drastic measures would have been required to address drastic situations in the community of sane people. It is then a little wonder that the brutality and horror of the herdsman and their mercenaries became something that looked as if there would never be a solution.

THE BOKO HARAM SAGA

Boko Haram is a terror group that has never been cultured enough to conceal its intention of eradicating Christianity in Nigeria right from its early days. The demand of the group has always been very loud that the only way they would allow peace to reign in the land is for the Christians to heed their call and convert to Islam. But we have had successive governments that have been issuing statements which redefined the aims of the group as if they knew better than the terrorists who have put their lives on the line to fight a cause they have not hidden from anyone. What the government chose to toy with was religious persecution and ethnic cleansing being rolled into one and covered with fabrics of political lies.

Agreed, that there have been very few instances when the group also attacked fellow Muslims or their formations by which one may stray into a line of thought that they were indeed common enemies of Nigeria. But who may rule out diversionary ploys as if to pull a wool over the eyes of the people, a trait which is not uncommon with the tact of such groups? Even in some instances when the group had killed fellow Muslims, it was with political motivation and also when the group had come out to accuse the victims of becoming apostates by collaborating with the 'infidels'. This was more noticeable, especially in the social aid activities where such Muslims joined others to provide humanitarian services to mitigate the suffering of people.

A Boko Haram combatant was captured and taken to the rehabilitation camp where others were supposed to pledge their 'repentance'. The guy openly denounced amnesty of the government and rejected the so-called de-radicalization programme. He declared that it was better for him to be killed than to be asked to change his mind. He insisted, based on what had been ingrained into them, that if he was released back to society in the name of amnesty, he would find his way

into the camp of the group to continue the killing of Christians. The high-sounding political jingles by the officials of the government about the group being a common enemy of all Nigerians will be smashed by the logic of a JSS pupil. This is a deception ploy among others which are known to be devoid of logic and conscience!

BOTCHED DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS

No regime in Nigeria has ever lacked a 'good' vision and the finest grammatical expression to convey them until when it comes to the time to implement them for the benefit of the masses. This includes the politicians that have been prowling the political theatres and warming up now to go and wreak more havoc, except as we believe that God will help the country and intervene. As earlier hinted, all past heads of government that led us backwards since independence to where we are today have saturated us with fine speeches to tell us about what they are doing or planning to do to move us forward. But the tool of deception has dug a wide gulf of distrust between the rulers and the citizens, breeding frustrations and resentment that sometimes find an outlet in violent reactions. Niger Delta militant crisis is an example.

Many of the development plans that have been floated for the country are not backed by vision and commitment and are only waiting to be aborted by brazen corruption once the budget for them has been allocated. Around the mid-1980s, the media was awash with high-sounding and hope-lifting jingles about everything good that Nigerians should expect to come their way by the year 2000. "*Education for all by the year 2000...*", "*Housing for all...*", "*Employment for all...*" and "*Health for all...*", were the loudest of the jingles. Frank Olize, our highly enterprising journalist and regular anchor of *Sunday Newslines* of Nigerian Television Authority with his velvet-toned voice was prominent among those who were hired to sell the expectations to Nigerians.

Beyond the colossal failure of the Year 2000 vision and their aborted dreams that many people of my age will not forget in a hurry, a few other development programmes have come and hit the rock the same way. It will not be necessary to dig into the list of such programmes that have failed, including the one of President Goodluck Jonathan which was to slingshot Nigeria into the league of twenty most industrialised nations of the world by the year 2020. Should anyone care to inquire into the failures of the exciting projections and the expectations of the people they have crashed, officials of the government will have a ready, exciting and grammatically sound excuse to peddle.

OUR PARODY OF DEMOCRACY

In its pure terms, democracy is conceived as a bulwark against tyranny, especially in nations where its ideals have been allowed to regulate political processes. The concept, as a form of government of, by and for the people, places every citizen on the same platform of one man one vote, with the right to vote and be voted for. The absence and abuse of its ideals and their consequences are seen in several countries that are yet to brace up for its values. Clear separation of power is to ensure that the rich and the powerful do not trample on the rights of those in the weaker strata of society.

Its glaring bane is in the fact that being a game of numbers, democracy will back the majority that is bent on the wrong choice and that is how a misguided mob may have their way against the good and the desirable. If indeed there have always been elections in Nigeria every four years and we have been seeing several of those governments that have demonstrated their lack of capacity, then something has gone awry with us as the masses that constitute the electorates. This will only serve to confirm how it is a subverted version of democracy that has been prevailing to make a mess of our political process.

Nigeria is fettered by fraudulent elections, not because it is not possible to conduct credible ones but because of personal interests that will always clash with and prevail over the wishes of the people. While election rigging is not peculiar to our country or continent, it is a social ill that continues to thrive in the corridors of power. For many of the times, those who emerge after elections are the direct opposite of the choice of the people or what the sound minds will have assessed that the polity requires to advance. Going by what we know of our situation, most of those who are running our political shows are a bunch of the misfits and the unfits. I have wondered many times how those who should display sense of decency or outright shame to shy away from the public space, going by what is known about them, are always riding high on the waves of misguided sycophancy and bewitched followership.

The jingle that elections should be free and fair has existed only in the dreamland because of the powers that will not let be. Nigeria is one of the few places where politicians who have led the nation from one level of degradation to another will openly boast of their assurance of winning the next election. This does not apply to any political party but to all of the ones that have been stemming our floods. In one of the elections since our return to democracy in 1999, we heard how the results that the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) announced for some gubernatorial blocs were written out for it from the Aso Rock. The sputum, “those who vote decide nothing but those who count the votes decide everything” that Joseph Stalin spit on the electoral process is a time-tested truth. As we will see later, and except in cases where God intends to overrule, electoral reform is one crucial area that He will need to step into for us to move forward as a nation.

Chapter 5: Seeds Of Miscarriage (1)

Despite the glorious agenda that God has mapped out for Nigeria, the nation has been battling with the other side of its destiny by which Nigerians are to be held accountable for all the troubles they have been wading through. This is especially true as we recall the link that even nature has forged between what we sow and what we reap. Man has always been held out, more often than whatever instigating forces, as the architect of his fortune or misfortune. The real trouble with him is his genetically ingrained aversion to taking responsibility for his actions by which his failure must be blamed on someone else. This is why it is a vogue for Nigerians to heap all the blame for their woes on corrupt leadership as if the leaders have not emerged from their corrupt bunch. A universal application of this is how accusing fingers for all the troubles in the world point in the direction of Satan who is held out as either the number one or even the only culprit.

I read about a man who drove his car under the influence of alcohol and rammed it into one that was parked off the road. While filing for insurance claims, he shifted the blame for the accident to the person who parked his car where he went to hit it. Escapism is the oldest craft of man by which Adam blamed Eve and Eve transferred the blame to the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Man, steadily grew this habit to where

his accusing fingers would rather point in the direction of anything and anyone that failed to prevent his errors or their consequences. Armed with this trait, even Israelites arrived at where they audaciously held God out for their sins: “O Lord, *why have You made us stray from Your ways, and hardened our hearts from Your fear?*” (Isaiah 63v17, NKJV).

This is how the spiritually ruined faculty of man dwells on a wild expectation of reaping the opposite of what he sows. It is just that we do not forget an extraneous dimension of this which dwells on where one person committed a crime and those who are connected with him, like his descendants for example, will share in its consequences. Connected to this also are instances when operations of inherited spells and the misdemeanours of the inheritor would combine to wreak damages. The fact that Africa as a continent has been chained down to miseries that have been traced to the interplay of forces provokes the need for us to scratch beyond the surface.

ESOTERIC DIMENSION OF AFRICAN GLITCHES

The curse of Noah on Canaan for the sin of his father, Ham, was held out as a reason for the retrogression of Africa which includes Nigeria. I queued religiously behind this theory until the contention of two respected scholars I shared the draft of this work with compelled me to do a deeper digging. That effort paid off to shift my stand to a middle ground, away from the extremities. It just remains a fact that cannot be sidestepped that the setbacks invoked by that curse are part of the forces that many parts of Africa have contended with. But beyond the curse of Noah on Canaan, Africa’s self-inflicted curses too have proved to be far more lethal. This is what I will dwell on more after a brief reflection on Noah’s curse and the extent to which it may have been connected with the plight of the continent and its people.

Efforts of several authors to forge whatever link that there may be

between the trio of Ham, the aggressor who contracted the curse, his son Canaan, the inheritor of the curse and the African race, especially its black people remain inconclusive²⁰. What has been commonly agreed upon, however, is that the three sons of Noah who survived the Flood repopulated the earth. Also, it is agreed that the descendants of Shem who came to define the root of Father Abraham, the Israelites and, ultimately, our Lord Jesus Christ settled in Asia. Africa, which was annexed to the southeast of the Mediterranean Sea, was home to the descendants of Ham while the concentration of the descendants of Japhet is traced to Europe and the West. The broad divisions here, nevertheless, have witnessed massive spillovers and intermingling of the races in the course of history.

The core of Canaan's initial descendants were the ethnic nationalities in the southeast of the Mediterranean Sea, the geographical territory that Israel largely occupies now. Prominent among the region's ancient people as listed by the Bible are Ammonites, Amorites, Hittites, Hivites, Gargashites, Jebusites and Canaanites. They were those who settled on the land that God was going to will to Abraham and his descendants that would come through the lineage of Isaac and Jacob who became Israel. Many Bible and secular authors do not contend the fact of history that the curse of Noah worked out the eventual dislodgement of the races to pave the way for the inheritance of the land by the Israelites.

The curse of Noah also was not understood to have extended to all the children of Ham but to Canaan, his last son. As to why Noah cursed

²⁰ What has been established beyond many contentions is that the features that mark out the peculiarities of the black and other races like the colour of the skin, the texture and colour of the hair, the shape of the face and other distinct characteristics in whatever combination even as we have across the human spectrum "must have been originally present in [Adam](#) and [Eve](#). The belief that the skin colour of black people is a result of a curse on [Ham](#) and his descendants is *nowhere taught in the Bible*." (Source: *ChristianAnswer.Net*)

Canaan and not Ham who breached a family protocol, the curse was directed at Ham by proxy. A few comments have it that this may be either because Canaan was considered to be Ham's favourite son or as someone who was an accomplice in the ridicule that his father, Ham, meted to his grandfather, or even both. Thus, apart from mute traits that will be discussed later under the subject of idolatry, we may not hold out on a wholesome scale that the curse of Noah is solely responsible for the backwardness of the entire continent.

Whatever it was, it made good sense that Noah did not attempt to directly curse Ham whom God had already blessed with the rest of the family when they exited the Ark. That wisdom was elaborated upon in a later story of Balaam who despite a desperate effort in his hot chase of material gains was unable to curse the Israelites (Number 22v12). At the nucleus of the revelation is how God blessed the entire humanity by which there is no justification whatsoever to establish the superiority of any race over the other²¹. With this, nothing may justify the suppression of one race by the other as we had in the awful business and perpetuation of the slave trade. Thus, irrespective of how the slave merchants may have applied the curse of Noah to rationalise their trade violates the spirit of the scriptures and dictates of good or even bad conscience.

While the foregoing is only in the peripherals, the whole problem is rooted in the utter depravity that resulted from the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Through it, Satan secured an opportunity to engrave wickedness in the core of man that can neither be measured nor fully atoned for except by the blood of Jesus Christ. That was why Noah who alone scored the pass mark of God among the people of his generation still indulged in the excessive consumption of wine and the rage with

²¹ This theory was tinkered with in my other work, *Prophetic Force* where I tabled the other side of this argument in the narrative in the chapter on "The Nation of Israel". The focus of this is on the special endowments upon the nation.

which he cursed his biological offspring. Both the laxity of drunkenness and the hot temper that apportioned the curse had been securely warehoused within his nature while the pass mark that God credited to his account was only a product of sheer grace and mercy!

This fact of Noah's humanity, despite the sterling qualities that singled him out for preservation, was fully blown open in the fact that the world he singularly populated would soon turn out to be worse than the one that was destroyed by the Flood in his days. Thus, what we have seen through the generations of man, most especially in places like Africa dwell on human depravity that often inspire man's inhumanity against a fellow man. This was amply highlighted earlier by the intense struggles of Apostle Paul to extricate himself from moral failures. The ways and how these have played out on the Nigerian political podium are issues that define the burden of this book. This is a background that may now be aided either for good or bad by extraneous factors, like the extent of the involvement of God in the affairs of individuals, people and races.

The subject of slavery is always coated with deep emotions, especially on the part of the victims of its horror. Yet, slavery or trading in humans as a social blight is neither new nor exclusive to Africans. The Old Testament has much to reveal about how thriving slave business was in its era. Father Abraham had those he bought with his money, just like other commodities from the market of his days. It was the same people that he constituted into the army with which he prosecuted the war to rescue Lot, his nephew. I cannot imagine the degree of rectitude that would make those people and their children share the same status with Isaac in the domestic settings of the patriarch. This is more as the man had to send even his other children through the concubine away from the same Isaac while he was yet alive (Genesis 25v6).

One of the most brutal slavery on record that lasted over a millennial was the Arab's enslavement of the blacks. Its barbarism was woven

around the incarceration of the male slaves to prevent them from mating with female slaves, a process by which many of them lost their lives. Also, as may be traced to the history of inter-tribal wars and struggles for domination, Yorubas too were recorded to have dealt in slavery and had sold and bought themselves as slaves.

But history still maintains that that the involvement of the West in the saga and the atrocity of the whites against the Africans were the darkest blot of the slavery era and phenomenon. We will forever be saddened by the reminder of the Atlantic Slave trade that accounted for the woes of the Africans and which is regarded as perhaps the greatest social blot in the history of mankind. Between 1500 and 1870, 12.5 million men, women, and children were put on ships from Africa out of which about 2 million people perished in the evil-laden journey to the US. We will further discuss the blight of Africa with the following outlines: *The Destructive Impact of Idol Worship, Evil Exploits of Traditional Institutions, The Scourge of Polygamy, the Collective Impact of Spells* and lastly *The Mercy that Saved Africa*.

THE DESTRUCTIVE IMPACT OF IDOL WORSHIP

Even without the curse of Noah, the sin of idolatry is a well-fortified stronghold that Satan has built against humanity to mortgage its future and wreak spiritual damages. Both he and his collaborating demons always think, plan and operate a highly strategic agenda. That is a proven approach by which they do not stop just at afflicting their victim in one generation until his subsequent generations are trapped. While we know, according to the Bible that idols are nothing in the world (2 Corinthians 8v4), the feat of idolatry is in the link that it forges between the worshippers and the demons inhabiting the shrines. It is through those demons that Satan secures the worship of man which has remained his paramount ambition that God frustrated when he rebelled in heaven.

This is how those who have held out the curse of Noah as the cause

of African woes may have secured a good mark for their arguments in this respect alone. We all know that, too often, causes and effects are knotted in a way that cannot be unwound without an honest and determined effort. I guess that no spiritually tutored mind may deny more causes to the retrogression, backwardness and poverty in Africa than may be traced to the incursion of the West in its affairs. These are esoteric factors that will not yield to a mere erudition. For instance, the famed Berlin Conference between 1884 and 1885 in which the West gathered to shave the head of Africa in the absence of the owner of the head has been painted in the darkest colour as being at the root of our woes. But whatever force, spiritual or physical, that sponsored such venture may be nothing more than the spillover of a force of curse.

There are questions that are begging for answers. Now, can the curse of patriarch Noah be connected with or responsible for the regression of the continent, and then that of Nigeria by whatever extension or in whatever measure? Can any link may ever be forged between the curse and the fatal attraction of the people on the continent to and their baptism into the crude form of idolatry which, even from the revelation of the Bible alone, attracts the curse that God Himself had pronounced on the idols and the abominations of their worshippers? Remember that I just hinted on the *cause* and *effect* that most of the time pose a serious problem of separation in most of human endeavours.

While reviewing the book, ***Africa: The Glory, The Curse, The Remedy...***, – *Biblical Perspective of the African Predicament* by Anthony O. Agbo, Yemi Adebisi gave an amazing insight:

The book traces the African family tree from the patriarch Noah after the great flood, through the activities of ancient Africans in Babylon, the rebellious philosophy behind the building of the Tower of Babel by the great African and acclaimed first world ruler, Nimrod; to Egypt, the heartland and

capital of ancient Africa where the pharaohs²² elevated themselves to the level of the gods and institutionalised idolatry and apostasy as state religion.

Agreed, that idolatry became the universal plague of the world following the fall and men grew into thicker and deeper darkness with their licentious romance with demons. It is only the people of Israel that had enough light through the unique calling of their progenitors of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to escape the snare. In addition to this, can we forge a link between the African type of idol worshipping and the practice of witchcraft²³ that dominates our continent with dark colouration of utter wickedness? Here we need not shy away from the fact that, typically like it happened in the case of Joseph the Dreamer, such attacks are too often targeted at the destinies of great children who were ordained to salvage struggling families and clans. Thus, while all humanity was sold out to idolatry following the fall, it is also a fact that its grip together with its variation and fiendish innovation has proved to be stronger on some locations of the earth than on others.

The heat of this problem is still exuding recklessly and relentlessly in several places in Nigeria, the continent and several other locations of the earth that share similar spiritual pattern. From general experience and feedback from the missionaries to which I am privy, you may be interested to know about places where the idol priests, typically as the mouthpiece of the demons in charge of their domains, are the custodians of the collective destinies of the trapped people. Thus, those idols and

²² The larger-than-life image paraded by King Pharaoh of Egypt has its equals in our parts of the world where paramount rulers wielded influence that are more enmeshed or rooted in idolatry than may be traced to any pure sources

²³ It is an empirical fact that many of the technologically advanced countries also have had and still have a deep romance with occultism and darkness. The difference is that their own witchcraft practice is not the type that has a strange fascination to destroy or perpetrate evil as has been traced to the doorstep of the uncouth ones that dominate our part of the world.

their inhabiting demons remain a spiritual irritation in the atmosphere of many places still today. It will amount to stupidity for anyone to think that whatever powers that the demons and priest may wield in those raggedy shrines would muster their muscles to assuage the curse that God pronounced on idols and their worshippers (Exodus 20v3-6). Thus, even without the curse of Noah, idolaters are already placed under an irredeemable curse, except they embrace repentance.

EVIL EXPLOITS OF TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Many scholars have continued to bemoan and castigate the disruption and incursion of the West into the genial culture of Africa through colonisation. Loudly harped alongside this is the argument that the embrace of Christian faith by the Africans, coded as a 'Western' religion is mainly or significantly responsible for the backwardness of their continent. But most of such arguments often leave out the spiritual depth of our culture and its horror by which most of such arguments stand only on one lame leg. The truth that will dwarf all facts is that Africans remain the architects of their misfortune and retrogression.

While witchcraft is not peculiar to Africa, the ugly repute of the one that is practised on the soil of the continent and its penchant for raw evil is best left to imagination. There is no one who may exhume the depth of the wickedness without a trace of mercy that warriors, powerful priests and ritualists visited on their fellow humans. Through idol worship, inter-tribal wars and romance with demons; their records of recruitment, exchange and treatment of slaves are dimmed with atrocities and dark spots. Those were eras when the weak and the vulnerable were stuffed in the backyards as the captives of wars and dregs of the society to compete in status and value with domestic animals.

Such people were stripped of their dignity, sold out for pecuniary gains, subjected to untold horrors, killed for rituals and sacrificed to the

deaf and dumb idols. Though I do not know how pervasive the practice was in other parts of Africa, many of them were often buried alive with powerful kings. The meaning of the barbarism was that they, as slaves that they were on the earth, would be the one to carry the highly cherished king to the yonder world and saved him the stress of the journey to his ancestors. They were often abused and killed like rats at the mere whims of their owners, even without the flimsiest justification.

Those who died without deserving to but as victims of violence by those who think they are more powerful must have departed with pains and rain of heavy curses on those who cut their lives short, the institutions they represent and the land of their habitation. The fact is that the blood that flowed in the veins of their killers is the same in composition, essence and spiritual potency. Just like the blood of Abel, their blood too must have continued to cry for vengeance to which the God of justice will not turn deaf ears. This is how it will take nothing short of God's mercy to forgive us and purge our land as a people for Nigeria to begin to get it right and move forward again.

I know a powerful herbalist who is related to me used to send demons on tormenting missions anytime he noticed that his big household was lacking in victuals. No sooner after his setting them on a rampage than you begin to hear distress beckons on him from the neighbourhood for help from sudden attacks. With this, his food store would be lavishly replenished from the charges he would dish out to the victims. We may imagine how similar wickedness pervaded many lands especially before the advent of Pentecostal Christianity and associated revivals that began to put a check on the evil exploits. I will dig further into this very important subject in another work by which I intend to show that many of the affliction of individuals, families and communities are rooted in the blood that has been crying against them for vengeance.

THE SCOURGE OF POLYGAMY

Closely connected with the above is the culture of polygamy. We are aware of the defence that traditional institutions and other religions have built around this practice. This couples with how the subject is one of the subjects now sparking new controversy in the Church of late and the one into which I do not intend to wade. This is especially to the extent that I believe that the New Testament portion of the Bible is known to have voiced an opinion that anyone is free to embrace or impugn²⁴. That aside, I have also seen enough in the experience of Christians and their homes to inform me, personally, how careful anyone should be in judging or dabbling into marriage matters.

One of the factors that fuelled polygamy in the erstwhile was how it helped men to raise large families which was then a symbol of status. The immediate benefit of this was the cheap labour for their business which was mainly subsistence farming. But what polygamy engenders is a domestic warfare that has afflicted many lives from this part of the world, being one of the places where the culture prevails. Many people have scars to display from jealousy-driven duels in which the rivalling women often seek to outdo each other, either to pervert the glorious destiny of one child or divert it to the other. A question will normally arise as to what is to become the lot of many such children whose destinies were trampled upon or hacked down in the wars of the mothers as they engage in a do-or-die battle in which spiritual help is often sought.

Many of the worst affected children are those who would have blessed and uplifted their fathers' households, their communities and their nations. I do not forget whatever may seem to have been the

²⁴ Not even the argument that women have outnumbered men in multiple will create room for the practice in the churches of the New Testament. It is just that, if we are to stop where the Bible is silent, no one is licensed to judge let alone condemn those who indulge in it. This is especially true if such people are not among those who hold or aspire to a high office in the assemblies (1 Timothy 3v2, Titus 1v6).

opposite of this in many such homes where the man of the house is on top of his game and is always ahead of the women. I am also aware of those who do not have polygamous homes but who have bumped into bitter troubles from the siblings of the same parents. Such instances are exceptions compared to the case of the majority.

Anyone may thus imagine the magnitude of damage that domestic conflicts through polygamy have foisted on Africans, including Nigerians. Quite often we hear about how burial grounds, especially the ones on the soil of Africa, are the richest spots on the earth. This is because of irretrievable treasures and glories buried with those who were blessed by God to bless their people before the diversion of their destinies by forces that pitched against them.

This is a cultural blight that many people can attest to within their domestic settings by which claims would easily be seen to transcend mere speculations. From the little we know of the calling and ministry of several genuine deliverance ministers; it was part of their mandate to set many trapped destinies free. It is also nothing strange to see how several problems confronting the victims often revolve around arrows they have collected from polygamous settings. Further digging into this will reveal how many people are stung either as first-generation victims or inheritors of its spillover in the subsequent ones.

COLLECTIVE IMPACTS OF SPELLS

How then can we treat all these issues in isolation and ignore their negative and collective impacts in terms of the fortunes and misfortunes of the citizens of the affected places? Or, more bluntly put, how may we claim that these offensive operations by wicked powers will not register their impacts on the target households, families, towns, cities and by whatever extension the entire affected nations, just as it may apply to Nigeria now? Those who will dig to the root of our hydra-headed

national challenges may not be able to escape the conclusion that the nation, like many of its African counterparts, is operating under wicked and highly networked spiritual forces as one of the major reasons we can proffer for our decades of retrogression.

The fact that some still managed to wade through these cobwebs is not the reason to downplay the seriousness of the issue. This is even as experience has buttressed the fact that, though with several exceptions, many of the ‘survivors’ of that duels who did not key into the power that Jesus bestows may only have been beneficiaries of the injustice administered to their advantages in the realms of the spirits. After all, we often hear about parents, especially mothers, who have transferred the fortunes of one child to the other, just exactly as it happened in the glaring case of Rachel, Esau and Jacob²⁵. I am a witness to a few instances of this within the confines of my personal experience.

One thing that is certain from this is that contrary to what obtains in the case of the family of Isaac which may be sensed to bear the fingerprint of God, no child will thrive on borrowed or transferred glory that will end up being what the original carrier would have been. When such forces are in operation on a large scale, errors, failures and disappointments that are difficult to explain will be playing out in the backgrounds of the lives of many citizens of a country. For instance, political systems and sound economic theories that have been tested and worked well in many places have resulted in colossal failure in places like Nigeria and many African states.

We may see how a few nations like France, Britain, America and others in the Western world whose founding fathers embraced the gospel and bequeathed it to their children have managed to have

²⁵ The fact that Esau suffered this blow from his very mother, rather than toning down the disruption of the divine arrangements in the families, only lend a weight of support to how tougher the battle may be in a typical polygamous setting.

successive leaders that catapulted their domains to greatness. This is one major factor that accounts for their advancement, a life of relative ease and abundance as a pact between God and the nations through the founding fathers who knew Him and did exploits for Him²⁶. This is despite the degeneration of their present-day children, their diversion into religious pluralism and their post-modernism which will not be sufficient for God to abandon them and turn His back on the pact He struck with their political and religious roots, just as we have with the children of Israel, even till this moment and tomorrow.

As an extension of the complication, for instance, how will it ever be possible to enumerate the damage that has been inflicted on the lives of ordinary Nigerians by those who bear rule over them? That is on one hand. On the other hand, how on earth will such oppressors and their children be extricated from the consequence of their greed that has ruined lives and destroyed the great potential of fellow citizens? Even where there are no pronouncements of verbal curses that may trigger ruins, what many did or failed to do is capable of invoking dark spells on them and their generations. The stand of the scriptures is that “... *curse causeless shall not come...*” (Proverbs 26v2) and this may spark spiral reactions that will hunt a family, a clan and their generations in what will create a vicious cycle.

It therefore makes no sense to disconnect the massive sway of the curses afflicting the lives of many individuals from the assault that has plagued our collective destiny. These are especially as may be connected with the destructive activities of the Fulani herdsmen and the affliction that their elites who had enjoyed a tighter grip on the politics of Nigeria have been visiting on the land. It is only a denial of reality that will detach

²⁶ As earlier mentioned, it is not only the nations that had praying saints at their formation that has progressed as we may cite places like Japan, China, UAE, India and several others as contrasts and examples of “what you sow is what you reap”.

our soar experience from the fruits of troubles that people in our distant or immediate history have sown. There can be no claiming that the arrows of our multifaceted challenges have only located us in error.

The other side of the truth is that the wickedness of the ruling class has condemned Nigerian masses to far more deaths than may be traced to even the loudly harped Fulanis and terror masterminds. Many citizens have died from ailments and medical conditions that should have been cured in well-equipped hospitals. However, the allocated budgets of all successive years have failed to lift the facilities out of the shambles as those in charge have continued to pocket them and falsify the records. Our roads are death traps and in most cases what was required to fix them, though allocated in the budgets, has been shared between those who are supposed to execute and those who are supposed to supervise the projects. It is nothing new to hear how many of our roads still in the zones of sudden deaths today have been fixed over and again in the records in various government offices.

Pensioners die as they queue endlessly for their entitlements which were either embezzled or invested to yield interest into the accounts of those who sit on them. Except for a very few of them who may have received the grace to forgive, the parting agonies of many of such people could not be anything other than curses upon those who maltreated them and made their lives miserable at such a critical phase of their lives. We have those who have condoned or connived with murderers to spill innocent blood through ill-motivated hatred against defenceless people whose only crime is that they belong to other tribes or religions. The inescapable conclusion here is how complex and hydra-headed our situation may have been rooted in the curse of Noah on the one hand or how they may be unconnected with it!

THE MERCY THAT WILL SAVE AFRICA

Many great African citizens are now being revealed to have made discoveries and inventions that were either ignored, suppressed, downplayed or fraudulently credited to the people of other races. Meanwhile, curses of any sort or magnitude, just like both good and bad prophecies, require the agency of man that the incorporeal demons will use as their vehicles for fulfilment. That was how it came to the turn of the other children of the same father to tamper with the destiny and future of Ham whose lineage was to grow up as a servant of servants among them. What is more? These are slave masters who, just like all humanity, carry their original share of a malevolent inclination, including even their progenitors who had foisted a master-servant agenda for the children of the same parents in the first instance.

We have seen how the two favoured brothers hatched a conspiracy by which the circumstances of master-servant would not only be achieved in their favour but sustained in perpetuity. This would invariably develop into bad scheming of their generations against the children of Ham with cobwebbed destiny. We note this in the evil-intentioned incursions into the politics of African nations which often continue with rude intrusion into their internal affairs even after the political independence they pretend to grant. The whole world is now a witness to the malicious communique of many erstwhile secret conferences to keep Africans poor and forever dependent. The horror aspect of this was the one that has targeted the continent in the plan to reduce the population of the world of our generation, as the species that can be wasted.

While God does not take responsibility for this evil, His omniscience was also not known to be aloof to every sinister agenda. Solomon informed us that *“the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good”* (Proverbs 15v3). Many people have been perplexed by many

questions that flutter around their minds about the situation. It is just that my attempt to dabble into this and offer opinion will amount to a diversion from the focus of this work. The summary I can volunteer here is the great news, that there are promises of blessing and a huge light that will usher the generation of Africa out of a long tunnel of darkness and privation. The healing process will be set in motion with a cure for the insanity of the political leaders in the continent.

Let us begin with and emphasise this fact. The initial glories and blessings that God packaged into the life of each of the three children of Noah who survived the flood with him remain intact. Thus, when God pronounced His blessing of fruitfulness and abundance on the generation of Noah, he did not exclude Ham (Genesis 9v8-17). Like I once hinted in this section, anyone who seeks to annex the glories of others cannot do as much with it except to waste the core of it. The other two children have had the opportunity to make a show of their innate greatness and glory to the world in one form and at one time or the other over the centuries. The pendulum may be shifting to Africa as the place where the events of the future will be dictated.

Essentially, what we are seeing here is a counter-offensive of the Holy Spirit against the rebellious project of the so-called New World Order with which the world is being turned upside down today in preparation for the takeover of the Antichrist. The upturning we dream about here is that one in which God will use the sons and daughters of the continent in the pursuit and projection of His glory. Africa remains relevant with a brightly shining hope derived from the role that God has pinned down on its people, a global role and noblest pursuit for which Nigeria has been chosen to serve as both the lead and a bastion. We watch out for this move of God in our time.

SELF-INFLICTED AFFLICTION

We come back to a seed of miscarriage on our soil. By choosing the path of insanity, Nigerians sowed the wind and there was nothing that would prevent them from reaping the whirlwind. The fact that the problems of the country have been rooted in and linked with the colossal failure of successive leadership is a song that has been written, rehearsed and harped, over and again. The problems of the nation that revolve around bad and visionless leadership became something that everyone in any part of the world became fully familiar with. The truth which is concealed is that the good and godly leaders we crave are rare species that do not reflect our collective composition as a people. Our madness has embraced and entangled us with everything that is against the natural laws and dictates of good conscience.

God is the ultimate Ruler of the kingdoms that ordains the rulers of all lands at all times. Revelations of the Bible attest to this in Psalm 22v28, Daniel 4v25, 32, 34 and 35. But then, He alone can explain why those He sponsors to the thrones most of the time are the basest among men (Daniel 4v17). On one hand, this is a phenomenon that may not be fully explained except by His wisdom. But on the other hand, we know that this must be because the inhabitants of many lands are corrupt and wicked. So, all that God does is to look for the best or, should I say, the worst of the debauched bunch to promote to their thrones since someone must be assigned the throne anyway. This is how Nigerians have been submerged by anarchism.

Corruption is a global and ageless phenomenon. But Nigerians have buried every sense of civility and traversed unimaginable distances with the vice. They have donated the throne of their hearts to the worship of mammon. The only question on nearly every lip is what they stand to make out of every opportunity, usually through falsification of records and fraud. Greed is holding sways, usually in the most embarrassing

magnitude, and typically like brazen daylight robbery that everyone, including the perpetrators, can attest to.

Just let us try to imagine what people go through in the hands of those who are to enforce traffic or similar laws in Nigerians. Often times, they are the ones that would set the traps to ensnare the offenders. This will create rooms for fake arrest and ransom negotiation usually for those who want to mitigate the prescribed fines for their purported offence or avoid distractions of the usually winding process for official settlement of the penalties. Ninety per cent of the ordinary folks on our streets who are blaming the leaders will be far worse than those they are castigating if they should have the opportunity to exercise power.

The question is how people who have sold their conscience to work abominations, polluted their lands with the blood of the innocent, called evil good and good evil and sacrificed everything good and beautiful so that the bad and ugly can thrive should expect good leaders. Where are such leaders going to emerge from? We know that life has been a push and pull, a continual struggle between the forces of good and evil. It is the factor of man, in most cases that determines where the pendulum will swing. This reality will not yield to any sermon until our evil and cloudy dispensations spool away. Barring divine intervention that we bank upon, you as a reader should lay this to the heart and know that the situation will not shift its ground until you choose to make a difference.

There is no controversy about the fact that Nigerians have been ruled by the type of leaders they deserve. Though we agree that it is not about all and everyone, the huge majority of Nigerians in various positions of advantage are wicked, selfish, self-seeking and self-centred. The main burden, or most of the time the only one that they carry to the office, is how much they stand to rake to their side while their tenure lasts. Perhaps I may be right to imagine that your conscience is pounding even as you read this or you have already stifled vitality out of it. The few

exceptions to this concern those who have escaped the grip of the spirit of mammon.

It often strikes me that most Nigerians, especially our ruling class in its usual self-deceiving mien are always unwilling to admit the extent of our moral descent. Professor Chinua Achebe²⁷, one of our award-winning novelists, respected nationalist and elder statesman of good repute wrote:

Listen to Nigerian leaders and you will frequently hear the phrase ‘this great country of ours.’ Nigeria is not a great country. It is one of the most disorderly nations in the world. It is one of the most corrupt, insensitive, inefficient places under the sun. It is dirty, callous, noisy, ostentatious, dishonest and vulgar. In short, it is among the most unpleasant places on earth²⁸

It is only Nigerians who have chosen to bury their heads in the sand will feel that his hammer is too crushing on our psyche. Facing the blunt truth of what our situation has further degenerated to since he penned this down to lead us to the present state of things and the direction we are headed, the comments are a gross understatement. We have since passed the stage where our hope for redemption can only be traced to the mercy of God and to His power that knows no limit and which, fortunately for us, is readily available.

²⁷ It should be recalled that the elder statesman has rejected the award of national honour, even twice in 2004 and 2011 as his protest against the way the government is being run, the wastages and massive corruption leading to the strangulation of the poor.

²⁸ (Hudgens and Trillo 914). Read more: <http://www.pressreference.com/Ma-No/Nigeria.html#ixzz6IihChGbC>

CRACKS IN THE FOUNDATION

Inspired by its inerrant Author, the Bible furnishes detailed facts about the fall of man, his utter depravity that resulted from the fall and the only remedy available to the malady. Again, just as God did not share endowments like financial capabilities and political weight within any polity equally among all the citizens of any country, the perpetration of wickedness by those in the upper echelon of every society against those in the lower run of its ladder has remained a ruinous feature of our world. This is especially true for nations that are forever developing while deliberately or inadvertently choosing to be underdeveloped or undeveloped.

Following the fall, therefore, the realms of man became a cacophony of injustice where peace, imagined or real, can only be sustained through the subjugation of one man to the caprices of another man. Now, there are myriads of irreconcilable religious tenets together with political and diplomatic interests that make the pursuit of peace and harmony a nonsensical venture. As I noted in *Prophetic Force*, the word *peace* has acquired many fluid definitions in our time that make it depend on who is defining it and in what context. What is peace to one is a tragedy to the other. For instance, it is the pursuit of peace which the religion of Islam is said to be all about that has set the terrorists on a destructive prowl and spelt disaster to a large segment of human society.

On one hand, there is a strong craving for, sweet talks about and efforts to achieve oneness of humanity where love and tolerance will locate everyone, especially to unite and collaborate in pursuit of common human interests. On the other are primordial instincts that have built a wedge of division between clashing values sponsored by twisted faculties of men that make a mockery of the unity project. His chance of ever staggering to the path of true peace either with God or his fellowman will never be more than a mirage (Isaiah 59v8, Romans 3v17). It is only

in the embrace of the salvation of Jesus Christ that humanity can ever find a levelling ground and this is where the Church finds her definition and roles as will be seen in further chapters.

Here I am not delving much into political science theory or its practical applications as we will seek to demonstrate the colossal failure of man in his effort to manage his affairs, irrespective of whatever learning or acumen he may lay claim to. It will be a means of showing how the typical leader in Nigeria is driven, not at all by the provisions of the constitution or any statute book but by corruption that broods over his spirit, the real man within his outer frame. It is the capacity of that individual alone that can explain how the Constitution, coined with the best of intent and grammar, has always been fashioned into an instrument of oppression to serve the opposite end.

In discussing this with empirical evidence, I have studied and analysed several raging issues to establish how the highly or lowly placed, educated or illiterate, active or passive, determined or acquiescing may never be more than a mere tool in the hands of the stronger forces that are bent on enslaving him. Someone once lamented that though man was born free, everywhere we find him in chains. Except God chooses to intervene, as we believe He is poised to in our case just for the sake of His name, the hands of the clock may have ticked beyond a point of redemption going by what we all know and see about the country today.

Just as I stated about Noah, even when God described him to be righteous, he ended up populating a world that was going to be more rebellious than the one that was destroyed during his time. This is a consequence of the fall of man that has been playing out in his incurable tendency to evil, a madness bound up within his nature that continually pitches him against the laws of God and the dictates of good conscience. This is a man who is struggling hard to govern himself but who has lost

every sense of direction right from his entry point into the world²⁹. The cries of Apostle Paul paint a clear picture of this fact as we substitute *constitution* for *law* in the passage to establish the misery of the man:

“...For the good that I would I do not but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (Read through Romans 7v14-20).

It will make no sense to expect man, including many who flock to places of Christian worship without the regenerating power of God by which they may be enabled to obey the laws of God and the dictates of the conscience required to yield to the provisions of the constitution.

Agreed, that a chunk of the political challenges of Nigeria has indeed been traced to constitutional defects. That is a basic truth that will be examined later. But another basic truth is that it is all because the instrument, like any law or statute, lacks the spiritual ingredients of love and embrace, honesty and integrity, mutuality and selflessness required to drive its implementation. Now and then, facts continue to erupt to the surface to remind us that man is neither ruled by the contents of any statute book nor by his sense of right or wrong. One may then see how the construction or reconstruction of the constitution in itself may not achieve much except it is built on the foundation of love and respect for each other as equal partners in the Nigerian project.

We know that the real man is the spiritual one on the inside but with body frames for physical contact. However, it is that inner being that rules his life and dictates the course of his actions. There is nothing

²⁹ We are aware of people and nations that have tamed their primordial instincts by which we know that human nature can be panel-beaten to conform, especially after many generations of struggling, tinkering and experimenting.

fundamentally wrong with either the parliamentary or presidential systems of government which Nigeria has experimented with so far in its mirage journey to democracy. The two models we emulated are the parliamentary system of the UK and the presidential system of the USA while military incursion was regarded as an aberration. None of the two nations we copied has had any cause to shift their political system up till now while it is the spirit that is ruling the hearts of our leaders that has produced our sour story.

THREATS OF ISLAMISATION

For a start, and judging from the arguments of those who may even be considered to be moderate Muslims, Nigeria is already over-Christianised. This resulted directly from the colonisation of the country by Great Britain, a foremost Christian nation and the stamping of its values on the various segments of our national life. Most of the customs and practices including prescribed dressing patterns for professionals and government institutions, offices and schools bequeathed to us may be seen to have ignored the culture of the Muslims. The arrangement of our working days and weekends that make no allowance for Islamic days of worship as it does for Christianity with the patterns of Federal holidays until the recent decades will sell the argument of how the nation was programmed to favour Christianity over Islam and other faiths.

These are facts on the ground that anyone may contest only in vain. It is just that the development has created and sustained situations that will require something like an all-out, Islam-centric government with drastic strokes for measures that may want to address the imbalance. At the same time, however, going by what Islam is known for and the hostility it exhales in the direction of other religions, most especially

Judeo-Christianity³⁰, the fear is well-founded that such redressing measures will not be contained within the cage of reason or bargains that will ensure a fair *give* and *take* at the end of the day.

In effect, those who want to prosecute a seemingly good cause will not know where to draw the line between the correction of inequalities of rights and privileges among the citizens and the imposition of abrasive tenets. This is a fact that abundant experience can buttress and those who will wish to contend it may only need to scratch beyond the surface of their conscience! The crux of the matter is that, as undesirable as the Islamisation agenda may seem to be for the majority of Nigerians, it is not a project that is standing aloof but that which must be understood in the context of a forceful global trend.

Many nations that are set on odious flame today by Islamic terrorism are those that have lived in peace with citizens of different religions for generations, including the same Islam. Millions of Nigerians have lived through a long period of exchange of harmony and mutual respect between the huge populations of both Christians and Muslims in this country. By the grace of God, I am one of them. Now, it will be hard to believe that we once had a leader like Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of Northern Nigeria who celebrated the 1959 Christmas with the community of Christians with the message here³¹:

We are people of many different races, tribes and religions, who are knit together by common history, common interests and common ideals. Our diversity may be great but the things that unite us are stronger than the things that divide us. On an occasion like this, I always remind people about our firmly rooted policy on religious

³⁰ As I wrote in another work, *Rebirth of Vision*, no one has said that it is only Islam that is persecuting Christianity or it is only Christianity that Islam is persecuting. The undeniable fact, however, is that Judeo-Christianity has remained a major target of Islamic brutality.

³¹ *Source*: Daily Trust of Sun, 27 Dec 2015. I do not have to dig into the statements of other political leaders that dwelt on our common heritage since a while now.

tolerance. Families of all creeds and colour can rely on these assurances. We have no intention of favouring one religion at the expense of another. Subject to overriding need to preserve law and order, it is our determination that everyone should have absolute liberty to practice his beliefs. It is befitting on this momentous day, on behalf of my ministers and myself, to send a special word of gratitude to all Christian missions. Let me conclude this with a personal message. I extend my greetings to all our people who are Christians on this great feast day. Let us forget the difference in our religion and remember the common brotherhood before God, by dedicating ourselves afresh to the great tasks which lie before us

Even our political leaders since independence up to the recent time, whether in *Khaki* or *Aghada*, were never known to play religion cards as a factor in the sharing of resources, offices or privileges. None of their regimes was known to bother about whether it was Christian-Christian or Muslim-Muslim tickets in the assignments of ranks and hierarchies³². The remnant of the experience of those eras played out in 1993 when both Christians and Muslims sought to install a Muslim-Muslim presidency of Chief M. K. O. Abiola and Alhaji Babagana Kingibe.

The current spate and tempo of Islam's pursuits are developments that should be put into its context for us to understand the root and trends, and as a phenomenon that will continue to drive the international system both into the future. Islamisation became a global agenda at some point in our recent history and the impact of this on Nigeria only confirms that the country is only a part of the global community. My discussion of this development will dwell on how and when Islamic terror became a subject of international concern it has assumed, especially since the early 1990s. I will explore these under *The Return of Israel, The New Mandate of Islam, Nigerian Creepy Islamisation Agenda, The Force of Prophecy* and *The Response of the Church*.

³² We actually had a few previous regimes in Nigeria that ran on a Christian-Christian tickets between the number one and two topmost political offices without any issue.

THE RETURN OF ISRAEL

The rebirth of the nation of Israel on May 14, 1948 is an inconceivable event that took the world by utter surprise. Thus, it has rocked the erstwhile wobbling ship of the Middle East, redefined global diplomacy and polarised the world into remote camps than any other event of the post-modern era. I have devoted a full chapter to this extremely sensitive subject in one of my other works, *Prophetic Force*, where it was exhaustively discussed and with a high degree of erudition, citing the Bible, the ancient and modern history. Here, it is sufficient to state that the *Aliya*, as the Jews call their ascendance to their ancestral homeland that had become the heartland of Islam for over one and a half millennia is an 'odious' miracle of extraordinary proportion and a bitter pill that no one may expect the world of Islam to swallow.

An offshoot of this development is a realisation of the hostile neighbours, especially since the six-day war, that the nightmare which the presence of Israel has become will not fizzle out as it had been anticipated. That was how the militant youths of Islam braced up for an asymmetric war of terror on the interests and formations of the West and their vulnerable citizens as a way to send clear messages to them and the world's policymakers. This was the foundation of many major terror attacks³³ that the world has witnessed since the late 1960s up to the 1990s, leading progressively to the one of September 11, 2001 on America. It is the same struggle that had spread out of the borders of

³³ Among many terror attacks of the era that will not be forgotten was the hijack of Air France flight with 248 people in July 1976 with about 100 Israeli passengers on board. It was diverted to Entebbe, Uganda to force the Israel government to free fellow terrorists that were incarcerated in its jails. General Idi-Amin Dada, a Muslim and the then dictator of the country served as an example of the international political support by Muslim devotees across the nations of the world in sympathy with displaced Palestinians.

the Middle East to nearly all the nations of the world that have large Muslim populations. This is one facet of the problem that Nigeria has been contending with.

THE NEW MANDATE OF ISLAM

Just like we have in many countries that are battling with security challenges, especially in the West African sub-region, there can be no denying the fact that the major force of instability of Nigeria will be traced to those who claim allegiance to Islam as a religion. This is more because there has not been sufficient evidence to detach most of our security breaches by the faceless gunmen or bandits and those in the kidnapping business³⁴ from what the Fulanis, who are mostly Muslims, have practised and openly boasted about. It is true that there are others like the Niger Delta militants in the creeks, just as we do not close our eyes to the activities of other belligerent groups, like what IPOB finally evolved to become at the time of concluding this work. But the ones perpetrated by Islamic adherents remain an issue of major concern

Islamism is a belief in the superiority and supremacy of the religion and it is driven by only one passion: its ultimate triumph and universal domination by whatever it may take. It quietly evolved into a new phase as heralded by its champions in the international system who have left no one in doubt about their desperation to realise their dreams in the shortest possible time. In *Prophetic Force*, for example, I had flagged Muammar Gadhafi of Libya and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran as two of those whose passion in pursuit of the agenda could not secure any hideout. It is now very difficult for anyone to distinguish between actions to defend the interest of the religion and the ones that may be

³⁴ The fact of the moment shows that miscreants from nearly all other tribes in Nigeria who are not known to be Muslims have found a goldmine in the business of kidnapping and joined the evil gang as an alternative to armed robbery.

seen as nothing other than desperate moves to expand its frontiers without any regard for the feelings of others.

I recalled how Pastor Bosun Emmanuel warned Nigerians about the looming threat of Islamisation of the nation sometime around 2012, especially as All People's Congress Party, (APC) was gathering its momentum. He also referred to the original communique of the 1989 Abuja Declaration, which was open to Internet users before the document was edited sometime around 2014, to buttress his warnings. That was how the real fear came to revolve around the salient aspects of that mandate, especially about its implementation by which the bonded countries were to be ruled, and all key positions were to be held, only by Muslims. Because Islam is propelled not just by the whims and wishes of the adherents but by a powerful force, it is not possible to see or expect how the protagonists would be able or willing to play the game in line with the rules, assuming there is any.

Thus, irrespective of the political explanations being offered about efforts that are ongoing to contain terror activities in Nigeria, about who has been arrested or prosecuted, we have a problem of terrorism that has a very deep root. For instance, the same problem may be the only explanation for the formation and thriving of terror gangs like Boko Haram and similar groups. It is the same process that has planted the seed of numerous armed attacks by herdsmen who may be seen as nothing other than Islamic frontiers. This is more because, even though they, like their Boko Haram counterparts, are known to have attacked Muslim formations, the joy of their exploits is the attack and displacement of the Christian communities and institutions.

For instance, we have heard over and again how the leaders of many such communities that came under the siege of terror activities would voice out bitter complaints about how the military that was ostentatiously positioned to protect them was sometimes in sympathy

with their attackers or sometimes covertly joining them to perpetrate their crimes. The connecting point between the terror activities of the field combatants in many of the frontiers and the drives of their elites in the corridor of political powers is in pursuit of the same global agenda. This is more so as there is no sufficient means by which anyone may claim or admit that the Islamic elites in the corridors of power have been purged from the sentiment of Islamism or discharged from the obligations it imposes on all Muslim faithful.

NIGERIAN CREEPY ISLAMISATION AGENDA

Even now, the denial of sour stories of subjugation of Christians who are treated as second-class citizens in their ancestral lands in the northern parts of the country with Islamic domination will be a vain effort. We see how the Church is trampled upon in the region with brazen impunity, with suppression and denial of fundamental rights. The posture of Islam, especially its utter disrespect for the freedom of conscience and worship is something that should never be discounted. This is why the sirens will not just blow, but blow hot and loud whenever the pendulum swings in the direction of its domination in any secular society. Call it Islamophobia or any name that anyone may choose; the fact is that there is a cause for concern.

No one may deny that millions of Muslims are humane, well-raised, well-cultured and guided by the dictates of a good conscience. Nigeria is blessed with many such great men and women who have excelled in their various fields of calling and scored score high marks in public space and achieved great feats in their private corners to portray a bright image of the religion. I have programmed this work to enable me to dwell more on this in the later chapters. At the same time, however, it will amount to sheer stupidity to ignore how the radical version of the religion to which some of its political elites have subscribed has been setting many

nations on fire today. Nigeria has had a bad taste of this in its many security challenges.

In contrast, the world does not have much instances to cite of any ‘Christian’ country where citizens are persecuted with political backing of a state or prosecuted for converting to other religions. It is this liberal posture of Christianity that Islam has been exploiting to become the fastest-growing religion even in many of the so-called Christian nations today³⁵. This is in addition to the spate of a deeper incursion into the national and social fabrics of both the United Kingdom and the United States of America by which Muslims and even those of other faiths have been worming their passages into high and sensitive political offices.

Islamisation agenda has been real in Nigeria and in a measure that no one may be stupid enough to buy the vehement denial of its sponsors. Actions in this direction do not just speak. In some instances, they have screamed too loud to make official denials being sold to Christians and other citizens as nothing more than garbage. In fairness to President Muhammadu Buhari, his regime did not start the agenda. It only came to its turn to take it to a new height while a number of his actions pointed fingers in this direction.

It has been easy for the government to deny the Islamisation agenda just because of divine brick walls that stood against it in Nigeria. The book of Job revealed how God “...*disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise*” (Job 5v12). Thus, if and where

³⁵ Data from religious census anchored by Gabriella Swerling and Ben Butcher published on 29 November 2022 by *The Telegraph* shows that in ten years between 2011 and 2021, the Muslim population in the UK rose from 4.9 per cent to 6.5 per cent (2.7 to 3.9 million). We may cite unabated immigration and the Muslim pattern of procreation to be among the aiding factors to this. But added to this is the tolerant posture of the country that make both immigration and procreation possible. This is a sharp contrast to the situation that confronts people of other faiths, especially Christianity, in the Islamic world.

the execution of an agenda is frustrated by whatever inhibiting force, those in charge will have a ground on which to anchor its denial while insisting that there was never an intention or attempt. After all, we all know how it will be many of those who were hired to deny the pursuit of the agenda at one time will nearly be the same set of people who would be hired or recycled to defend it at another time.

We may not have to task the brains too hard to conjure a few of the platitudes that will be rolled out to the public in defence of the agenda. The notional statistics that their radically-inclined elites have peddled that Muslims make up the majority³⁶ in the country will be loudly harped upon as the bedrock of the argument. They will remind us that democracy is a game of numbers where the majority will have their *may* while the minority is to be contented with their *say*. They will tell us the good intentions of the government for implementing the Islamisation agenda and how it would still protect the interests of Christians and others who will have been lumped together as the minority. All of us are already familiar with the familiar stuffs of the government and its officials which in countless instances come in wrappers that are too repulsive and porous to communicate any sense.

For instance, it is only a hidden Islamisation ambience that may account for the way the adherents of the religion have enjoyed some leverage in our socio-political space. We have heard empty ranting by a few radicals who have been bold enough to boast about how Christians may not be able to rise to some offices in our political settings again. We

³⁶ The argument that the Muslims dominate Nigerian population is a fact that can neither be refuted on the one hand nor be most accurately defended on the other. Even if it is to be anchored on the procreation pattern alone, it will continue to hold water. But the insincerity of the government to be fair to all or pursue credible census that will factor in religion will continue to rob all of us the clear picture, not only about population size of each religion in the country but the true affiliation, conversion cases and the fear of many who hide their Christian identities because of persecution, a fact which even the most moderate or aggressive Muslim cannot deny.

can easily ignore this because it contradicts both the history and future of Nigeria. But as if this is to subtly play out, I well recalled how those who were not publicly known to be Muslims before have had to dig out their long-dormant Muslim identities and dance to the tune of the veiled masters in search of an advantage in our political space.

I can cite three of our politicians as glaring examples of this, with two of them still making the waves, even now. This is what has surreptitiously been playing out in the theatre of politics in Nigeria. On another note, it is a fact that, except in the eastern part of Nigeria, Muslims have since risen to dominate our political theatres. But this is not to be debited to their accounts, nor were they to take any blame for the situation in which everyone was given room to participate. It all results from the misinformed aversion of the Christian populace to politics while a few of them who venture have too often proved to be from the fake of their membership without much positive impact.

Up to this moment, affected Christian communities have not backed down from the questions of why the Federal government decided to take over the mission schools during the regime of General Yakubu Gowon. The decree or whatever that was enacted to back up the takeover did not stop there but went further to ban daily devotions in the same schools which Christians built with their missionaries to build the faith and future of their children. The fact that forces of Islam masqueraded behind the shield of a Christian head of government to execute the plan could never have been more than a ruse. No one may fully understand the gravity of this infraction until he imagines what the aftermath would have been if Muslim schools had been taken over in that way by a governing body, especially where the moves or its driving motives are suspected to have the fingerprints of Christians.

It was not necessary to deny or defend the exposure of non-Christian pupils to Christian teachings and values in those schools, anyway. After

all, the intention of the missionaries to pursue evangelism through the schools they established was part of their intentions which were never concealed from anyone from the onset. Therefore, whatever were to be the Christianising postures in the curriculum of those schools was the standard approach to all who would patronise them and take advantage of the quality education they were known for to brighten the prospects and future of their wards.

While we are still waiting for convincing official explanations for the takeover by the government, it became quite obvious that the takeover was orchestrated to curb the growing influence of Christianity. That was the influence over which those who thought they were in charge of the country had lost their sleep. It also showed how the aim of the Christians to educate their children in the atmosphere of the faith of their fathers and in the schools which they laboured to build for that purpose was defeated. In pursuit of the agenda, nobody seemed to care about the many negative impacts of rude interference at such a highly strategic stage of character moulding and moral development of the children.

All these were even though the pupils of other faiths in those Christian schools were never forced to convert and many Muslim students who graduated from them rose to become eminent citizens in the society without disconnection from their Islamic roots. Two of the highly revered examples that many Nigerians will not crack their brains to remember are Dr Abdulateef Adegbite and Prince Bola Ajibola. While it may not be claimed with any evidence that their exposure to Christianity rubbed on them in any way, at least their cases showed the liberal posture of the administrations of those schools and the fact that their romance with Christianity did not ‘corrupt’ them, after all. It is only a fake Christianity that will force a conversion on anyone, perhaps as Islam and other religions will normally seek to do.

It will not be possible to quantify the volume of tragedy that this development has foisted on the country. As I stated in the *Prophetic Force*, most of the children who were shielded from the sound moral upbringing that Christian schools were credited with are the ones who grew up to become moral disasters in our various government institutions today. After all, no one may fault the claim of Abraham Lincon, one ex-American president who said that “the philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next”. While nobody has claimed that all the children who had good Christian upbringings grew up to be good citizens, it would be foolhardy to deny whatever the proscribed Christian moral education in those schools would have contributed to the sanity of our society today.

THE FORCE OF PROPHECY

Just as I wrote in *Prophetic Force*, the rebirth of Israel and its flourishing status together with the thick dust it has been stirring across the world is a move of God against which no one can lift a finger. Also, every one may see how the response of the nation to the hostility of the neighbouring nations which objectivity may rightly assess to border more on the self-preservation often overheats the international system perhaps more than any other singular issue.

Yet for those who care to know, nothing of these can be detached from the fulfilments of clear prophecies of the Bible that promised to make the nation and Jerusalem its capital a cup of trembling for others (Zachariah 12v2). Prophecies that are rooted in the Bible, spiritually tepid and insensitive as the world and its citizens may claim to be, are not in the class of those that can be impugned. This is because they were authored by the One who determines the end from the beginning and whose counsel is sure to prevail in the ultimate (Isaiah 46v9, 10). It is through the same prophecies that the world may look forward to when

its conspiracy against Israel will prevail and the nation will yet pass through its time of tribulation and unprecedented disaster for rebellion and apostasy that culminated in its rejection of Jesus Christ.

Meanwhile, the world, especially in its efforts to cast aspersions on the revelations of the Bible, has been rallying against the right of Israel with respect to the possession of the land that was willed to their forefathers by God Himself. It is not to be argued that Israelites, like every human race, has their abundant share of malevolent inclination. But that should not have blinded the world to a truth that is undeniable. Questions should normally be raised about how a nation that has witnessed the worst of brutalities in the course of history has been staggering back to its feet. Israel was twice uprooted from their inheritance which they won by military conquests; a pattern that was the norm in those formative years of the continents and their nations. Even with a zero chance of survival at its rebirth in May 1948, Israel has not only managed to overcome the extermination plots of the surrounding nations but gradually climbed to a dominating height in the region. Ordinarily, that is something that should trigger the curiosity of any seeker of the truth, just as I wrote in the *Prophetic Force* where I noted the following:

The extra-ordinary profiles of Israel of our time cannot be mistaken for a mere freak except by a deliberate choice anchored on a self-will. The profiles echo strident witnesses that heavens will someday blast out against a rebellious and reprobate generation. No signal is expected to be any louder and no truth would be any more undeniable than the fact of the connection between the people of Israel and their unique origin. The binding chord is the fact of a God who chose them unto Himself for blessing on one hand, and the authenticity of the Bible that furnish the details and rich history of that choice. As I stated in chapter two concerning the signs of the end that have been bursting on the world of our generation, the popular adage has always been “*seeing is*

believing...”. But it is quite possible for anyone to refuse to *see* what he does not want to *believe*, especially by a deliberate choice.

It should be a subject of great interest, therefore, that agents of destabilisation will continue to secure a cover for their blood-letting pursuits in the tenets and practice of a religion which, going by another prophecy of the same Bible, would become prone to violence (Genesis 16v11-12). It will not matter if a section of the world calls them terrorists or if their sympathisers and collaborators label them freedom fighters. As I stated in an earlier chapter, even the worst critics of the Bible may not be able to disconnect a major prediction of Jesus Christ on “*wars and rumours of war*” that would characterise our world as it wobbles to its terminus from the increased violence and bloodshed of our time. It will also not make any difference where such wars may wear a fine garment of religion.

THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

The response of Christians to the actions of Islamists in our public space and the incursions of Sharia into a constitution that is supposed to be secular should be contained within their understanding of the religious passion that is propelling the Muslims. But this is the measure of zeal with which the Church too should plead their case before God to make Himself known to those who are truly hungry for Him and the truth but have not discovered their place and provisions for the salvation of their precious souls in Jesus Christ. Just as a colleague once posited, Muslims deserve commendation for the aggression and tenacity with which they pursue their religion. To them, the triumph of Islam is all and everything.

There is no hint of any portion of the New Testament by which Christians may exhale retaliatory air towards their persecutors, whether they are Islamists or those in pursuit of other causes. The battle that confronts the Church has always been far more spiritual than social,

religious or political. The glad news is that it is a battle in which she has been destined for ultimate victory through the blood that Jesus shed at Calvary. There is no arsenal of darkness that will be able to extinguish the light of His gospel while Jesus Christ and His Church have never been in competition with anyone because they do not have any match.

Christians continue to groan beneath the burden of hardliner Muslims, especially in the North with the disposition of the violent wards to cause chaos and inflict pains even where a common sense may not see any need. The Muslims were not born freer, nor were the Christians born fettered and none of them has a monopoly of violence. The love and restraints that Christians respire to their persecutors are not because of acquiescence, cowardice or physical weakness. Rather, it derives from what their Lord and Master had instructed them to do: *“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”* (Matthew 5v44, Luke 6:27).

It is these injunctions that the same Jesus Christ, as an exemplary Leader and Teacher, and Stephen, His first faithful martyr demonstrated when they found a very rare grace to pray for their assailants even at the height of excruciating pains in their dying moments. Thus, while it may seem that the Church is weak or vulnerable because she does not employ the weapon of the flesh to defend herself or her interest in response to the assault of her persecutors, her protection remains formidable and impenetrable by any force of darkness. Jesus Christ declared, without an iota of doubt or any air of compromise, that the gate of hell will not prevail over His Church (Matthew 16v18).

The summary here is the challenge that the whole situation dangles to the Christians for them to share the kind of zeal that is propelling the Muslims in pursuit of their religion. This is more because they have the promise of the Holy Spirit to back up their efforts in assisting those who are blind to the truth and bring them to the feet of the Cross. The

awakening of the Church to this responsibility is holding the key to the fulfilment of great promises in a process that will hasten the return of the Jesus Christ and usher the redeemed into the realms of eternal glory. More of the issues that address the present flop of the Church, together with the way forward are the focus of the second section of this book as laid out starting from chapter seven and beyond.

Chapter 6: Seeds Of Miscarriage (2)

I suppose nobody should waste anybody's time harping on the subject of corruption that nearly every segment and generation of Nigerians has contended with for decades and which continues to make screaming captions of our news, almost daily. Facing the murkiness of our situation today, it will not make any sense anymore for the government to claim that Nigeria is fighting corruption. The challenge of the vice has zoomed beyond what the most resolute efforts of the government agencies can handle. This is why all we have seen in the theatre of anti-corruption campaigns has hardly been more than mere gymnastics of more motion and less movement³⁷. My digging into its discourse is to garner a basis of comparison between what the nation has waded through and the difference that the intervention of God will spell for it and its honest but traumatised citizens in time to come.

Sympathy with the government will inform us as to why it still pretends to be battling corruption in its usual self-deceiving style. It is all because it should at least be seen to be doing something about a vice that the world over has come to abhor as a major force of retrogression

³⁷ This is not to say that no effort is made on the part of mandated agencies. But the blunt truth will not deny that the incursion that corruption has made into the fabrics of our systems and national lives will continue to dwarf and mock any of our mitigating efforts.

among the nations. Even most of those who are commissioned to prosecute the battle in our peculiar situations know too well that the best of their efforts will rarely be more than a comic. Seminars, workshops and volumes of academic works have tried to unravel the damage that has been inflicted upon our collective destiny as a people by corruption. The reversion, however, is that while we pretend to be fighting corruption, we dare not pretend not to know how many of the officials at the forefront of the battle have been making dirty fortunes from their collaboration with those they were supposed to arrest and prosecute.

With high-level conspiracy to rape Nigeria and inflict pains on its people, our political class and their collaborators in government offices need only minimal efforts, if any at all, to commit and get away with financial crimes of any magnitude. All that is required is for the perpetrator to factor in the interests of all those whose duty it is to raise questions in the planning and execution of the breach. Whatever anyone outside their circle may be saying, including the screaming press will not matter to anyone³⁸. It is the doomed masses that continue to bear the brunt and groan under the yoke of bad governance. Unfortunately, they are the ones who are incapable of lifting a finger.

Therefore, whether a person holds political office or not, rich or poor, in the club of the mighty or confinements of downtrodden masses; depravity and selfishness define the content of the heart that drives his parochial agenda, the course of action he will pursue and with whatever amount of fervour or vigour. This is the portrait of the people that are emerging from the pack that we call leaders. The fact that many of them claim affiliation to one religion or the other in Nigeria has only made a

³⁸ A top official in one of the recent regimes was accused of over 100% inflation on a contract he supervised. When a reporter tried to contact him for his side of the story, he did not respond. It was one of his assistants who bluffed about how his boss would not be “concerned over publications from ‘small’ online platforms” which he (his boss) did not reckon with. And what audacity!

mockery of the tenets of such religions.

HYPOCRISY OF ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGNS

Corruption is now a huge monster that has kept the nation under its firm grip where the most determined efforts will be like scratching the surface of a huge rock with fingernails. Many times, we pick blares of scandals, purported arrests and recoveries of loot concerning one person or the other. But this is usually in negligible instances compared to the volume of transactions that are passing under the various tables daily. Even in such cases, it is either the cup of iniquity of an individual is overfull, or he failed to share the loot with those that matter and efforts to cover up the crime go awry. It is indeed a lamentable choice of our socio-political system by which our investigative press sometimes turns blind eyes to many alarming feelers³⁹. This is also more because, too often, those who should act to defend the cause of justice are fettered by active complicity by which no one knows exactly whom to trust.

Nigerians of reasonable age and exposure will know by now many sacred cows who were known to have plundered the wealth of the nation but who cannot be touched, and who may never be called to question. Instead of going after them, our law enforcement agents have found a diversionary ploy in their chase of yahoo-yahoo boys in efforts that sometimes involve the harassment of innocent youths. Their energies in this direction have, at least, served as a delusion to the public that the nation is not just throwing all the millions that annual budgets allocate to their offices into the drains.

Many orchestrated cases involving huge plunders have erupted to the surface and most of them were swept under the carpets of damning

³⁹ Here we dare not ignore the threats and danger that digging into some cases may expose the investigating journalists and officials to.

compromise. This is all because, more often than not, as an adage in Yoruba informs, *ti a ba fa gburu, gburu a fa igbo*, meaning that the pursuit of one corrupt person has a way of implicating others considered too sacred to be dragged in the mud. That is how the prosecuting efforts will eventually rotate to the tables of those who will bury the matter. This is the high-level conspiracy that has been marshalled against the destiny of Nigeria, against the fortunes and future of its massive population. The cartel of looters who bungled our treasury during their tenures at all levels of governance and put the gear of the nation in the reverse has grown legs that prove to be longer than the amputated arms of those who are supposed to arrest them⁴⁰.

With highly negligible exceptions, those who make the loudest noise about corruption in the corridors of power, who make official statements and organise anti-corruption workshops are the concrete pillars behind the vice in their privacies. This is also true for a number of those who were known to be loud voices against the vice when they operated on the sidelines. This has painted the complexity of our situation which is woven around the fact that most of the victims of corruption today will inflict more damage tomorrow if they get into the shoes of those they are criticising and cursing now. Pini Jason's law of corruption has split the majority of the Nigerian population into two groups: "the ruling wicked and the waiting wicked". He wrote:

...the farther the distance a Nigerian (African) and power-authority position, the higher the noise he makes against acts of corruption, the nearer he is to the position, the lesser the noise he makes and when in the position, the noise ceases completely

⁴⁰ A foremost newsmagazine issued an edition captioned *Provisional Looting Council*, to expose the corrupt exploits of a set of the nation's political office holders, something was like a castigation coined to reflect the appellation which the ruling body adopted.

Nigeria has consistently been rated badly by Transparency International⁴¹, a watchdog agency that compiles and compares corruption indices of the nations⁴². The quarrels of those who are paid to counter its report or tone it down in efforts to defend the Nigerian government do not make any difference. They claim that the agency often ignores the government's fight against corruption, a claim which is not meant to be anything more than empty piping by those who have buried their heads in the sands of self-delusion. But their conscience and the Nigerian populace can tell how our socio-economic space has become woven into one titanic network of like-minded criminals we call government officials, bankers and businessmen and how lower cadres of their workers have adopted corruption as their only lifestyle.

Corruption and corrupt practices often build on the foundation of impatience by which everybody in our rat race seeks to jump the queue and take advantage of others. On one side of the bargain are the corrupt officials who abuse their offices and positions of trust for financial gains. On the other side are those who are bent on inducing them with consideration to secure an unfair privilege over others in the allocation of scarce resources, services and opportunities. This fact, built on our huge population, is one of the things that have created a boom for those who will want to continue to use their official positions to exploit similarly impatient and corrupt folks. Eradication of corruption will

⁴¹ Transparency International (TI) itself will be adjudged to be an accessory to corruption. This concerns the Western countries it rates very high on its moral scale but is also known for their collusion with criminals from other parts of the world. Barrister Femi Falana (SAN), a human rights activist of note argued how Switzerland which warehouses most of the stolen monies from Africa, has never been listed as being corrupt by TI. The same goes for other countries which should have stood against the way their banking systems are used to aid financial crimes of corrupt leaders against many sagging economies.

⁴² If TI were to conduct its rating in early 2023 with a focus on our banking system during the cash swap nightmares, Nigeria would doubtlessly sink like a stone to the bottom of its table.

demand drastic measures from the gigantic networks of both the givers of inducements and receivers of bribes of whatever kind (Job 15v34).

Though we have carefully crafted laws against corruption with provisions for infractions, they are mostly paper tigers without any restraining bite. From what I came to know, the guiltiest of the offenders are the staff of an agency who are employed to enforce corruption laws. By the time you see cases that are being prosecuted with zeal and vigour, they must have involved culprits on opposition sides of political divides or those who are to be persecuted. There have been allegations of larceny involving mammoth sums that were swept under the carpets of compromise for offenders who realign themselves politically. Our fight against corruption has won a garment of hypocrisy by which those in the ruling camp often lure the accused in the opposition to cross over to their side for them to have their ‘sins’ forgiven.

CORRUPTION: THE SAME OLD STORY

Corruption is neither new nor limited to Nigeria. For instance, the report of Transparency International referred to earlier still rated Nigeria better than a few countries on the scale of affected nations, suggesting that our sour story may be much fairer than the experience of others. Also, the Anti-Corruption Brief published by the World Bank in November 2016 revealed that approximately one trillion dollars are paid each year as bribes around the world. The reports also highlighted how monies through illegal payment systems and transactions like embezzlement and fraud, bribes and kickbacks, extortion and theft have always found their way across borders to fund criminal activities, like terrorism for example.

EVEN IN OUR ‘GOLDEN’ ERA

Nigeria has a lorry load of stinkers about how the smoke of corruption in various forms and magnitudes engulfed and distorted our public space

in the decades before 1960. There were collusions of colonial masters with local operatives in some shady deals of the ministries headed by some of our founding fathers. One over-flogged quote that was credited to Tafawa Balewa, our first Prime Minister in 1950 had it that “the twin curses of bribery and corruption pervade every rank and department of government”⁴³. The situation just spiralled out of control to occasion the collapse of the first republic. That was in 1966 when Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogu led other officers of the Nigerian army to stage the nation’s first military coup on the accusation of massive corruption in the government. Unknown to them, the corruption they sought to check was not going to be more than a fingernail of the ones that would survive their revolution.

The annual industry value of the vice in Nigeria is said to be in trillions of Naira⁴⁴. Anyone who is in doubt may just pick any of our budget, padded or unpadded and find out the portion of its provisions that gets spent on budgeted items. Nowadays, news about bribery, thefts and funds diversion of outrageous proportions do not move or miff anyone, anymore. On one hand, we make whatever allowance we choose for false alarms and persecution of the innocent. On the other hand, no one may be fooled to believe that, given our peculiar situation, many such cases as are disputed or explained away are instances of smoke without traces of fire. While all the regimes have been fingered for corruption, the odious fact is that the tenure of the previous one is always

⁴³ Source: Professor Stephen Ellis’s book titled *This Present Darkness: A History of Nigerian Organised Crime* highlighted atrocities that will blow the average mind and confirm that the battle against corruption has been on for a long in Nigeria, long before our national independence.

⁴⁴ Those who follow the news must have heard of unprintable deals that go on behind the scenes in Nigeria and mind-blowing figures that change hands as bribery, diversion and embezzlement, particularly in the shady oil and gas sector where no one may imagine magnitudes of frauds without losing his sanity.

adjudged to be saner than the next, suggesting how we keep descending on the ladder of insanity.

There were hundreds of factories and business enterprises I grew up to know from the 1970s up to the late 1980s in Nigeria. Many of them were private foreign investments which performed well and prospered until it came to the turn of Nigerians to infiltrate their management cadres. They were those who came in to abuse every opportunity they had to loot the establishments dry and nail their coffins. The list of such companies that were the mainstay of our economy when it competed favourably with the advanced ones but which have either totally collapsed or relocated to other places will be a major diversion here.

BRIBERY AND EXTORTIONS EVERYWHERE

Except in very rare instances on the lower rung of the ladder and for those who may be called 'Johnny just come', everyone who has just any service to solicit for in government offices, from the federal to the ward levels does not need to be tutored about the premium that must line the official palms in addition to the prescribed fees for files to move. Contracts awards, promotion of staff, administration of justice and similar courses with nearly all the offices and arms of the government are running on the wheel of gratifications.

The conniving of those charged with oversight or supervisory functions together with accounting records in many government offices has added a dimension to the challenge. As I stated earlier, it is also on account of this that the public projects being executed in Nigeria have been classed as among the most expensive in the world. This is all because of the numerous palms that must be oiled before the 'highest bidder' will sail through. In the 1970s, we were known for ten per cent kickbacks and ninety per cent for the project which would still leave modest returns for the contractors. That order has been inverted in

many quarters to leave little to nothing for the project. The present trend now uses borrowed stationeries for a fee to a collaborating ‘contractor’ just to fill the record gaps.

OUR REVENUE MISMANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Away from stealing and embezzlement that continue to bore holes into the purse of the nation, tax and tax administration call for emphasis. The greed that has infected every modern society from the era and culture of the Bible days is still a major sponsor of corruption in Nigeria, even today. The notoriety of tax administrators in their revenue management duties anywhere in the world is bedevilled by inaccurate assessment and falsification of records. Thus, apart from the stories that fly around about mind-blowing embezzlements of the funds that manage to wriggle their way into the treasury, very devastating leakages have wreaked havoc on our commonwealth.

Various taxes and levies ranging from tollgate passes, personal and company income tax, tenement rates, custom duties and payment for services at various government departments have suffered distortions and leakages. There are over-assessments by which the tax officials steal the excess or as a means to punish the uncompromising taxpayers. There are under-assessments by which they share the undeclared sum as loot with the collaborating payers. The focus on tax issues is because, as will be seen in a chapter ahead, it is one area where Christians may exhibit their virtues to the larger society, either as government workers who are collecting or as citizens who are paying the levies.

Apart from a very negligible few who have maintained functioning consciences in and across religious groups of Christianity, Islam and traditional ones, we have all missed it. The consequence of this is the lip service we have been paying to the battle against corruption and open letdown as the only harvest that successive governments have been

reaping from their self-deception. Today, the perpetrators are armed with impunity and have no one to fear anymore. Whom and why should they fear, anyway? Even those who lack political clout are emboldened by the understanding that it will require only a fraction of what has been stolen to settle those who may want to bark against their crimes.

CELEBRATION OF CRIMES AND CRIMINALS

As one of our peculiar ways of encouraging corruption, all past leaders at all levels who were known beyond mere speculations to have ruined our economy, plundered our treasury and grounded the nation during their tenure have their names still adorning the high-brow streets and various monuments of our glamorous cities. This includes the ones whose loots are still being chased here and there with recovery efforts. The fact that they were aided by whatever fate to have ascended to high political offices, especially through coups and flawed elections alone should not have been sufficient to retain the label of honour on those who should have been prosecuted as common criminals. One loud message we have been transmitting to our youths and the generations following is how integrity or dishonesty does not make any difference.

What the tenures of most of them would be remembered for is the retrogression they sponsored against Nigeria while in the office with spatters of dwarfed achievements that were only a gross mismatch to the resources that accrued to the nation under their watch. Evidence of their failure as leaders is stamped on every aspect of our national life, including how their actions and inactions have sold their fellow citizens, especially our street-roaming youths into economic slavery today. The most disturbing aspect of the problem is how many of our youths may only be waiting to wreak more havoc because our generation has taught them that corruption is the only way to move ahead.

The fact that corruption cannot fight corruption has introduced

complexity to our vain struggle against the vice. This is why till this moment, with all our claims of fighting corruption, there are only a few government offices or institutions in Nigeria that offer worthwhile services where the vice has been curbed for people to secure such services as and when due without gratifications. Our politicians have only been making empty promises of improvements to their lives which they lack the intention to fulfil. Even where intentions to deliver are tucked in a corner of their minds, the alliances they have embraced with Satan will forbid them to honour their words.

STINKING VOMITS

Apart from financial crimes, other types of corruption have submerged our national psyche. Stories abound of how shameless parents seek exam expos and arrange special centres for their children to rake in high scores in WAEC and JAMB examinations. I heard about such children who cleared their papers with a string of 'A's and could not write "*original copy collected by me*" when they went to their schools to pick up their results. Randy lecturers whose cups were full are seen being disgraced by female students who trap them in their 'sex for marks' scandals that have made a mess of our university systems and turned our campuses into glorified brothels. Others are those who have monetised their awards for various grades of marks in their courses.

A ward councillor in the southwest was said to have bragged before an audience just to show that he too had arrived. He proudly announced: "*Gbogbo yin ti e so wipe mi o ka'we, oju ti ti gbogbo nyin. Mo ti ni HND bayi. OND lo ku*", meaning: "*All of you that are mocking me that I did not go to a higher institution has now been put to shame. I now have HND and what remains is OND*". Nearly everything worth something has fixed prices attached to them in government and private offices. Wading into piles of cases involving the Nigerian Police Force, Nigerian Customs, Power

generation and distribution companies (through its electricity generating and billing entities) and similar others will be a major diversion from our focus. For those who have covenanted their souls to chase money, the more part of which involves financial crimes, not even death sentences against offenders may deter them⁴⁵, to talk less of the kid glove with which successive governments in Nigeria have been handling corruption cases.

Upon coming to power, the acceptance-seeking regime of General Babangida threw the carrot of a referendum to the citizens on whether or not Nigeria should take a proposed loan of N3b from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to salvage the crumbling industries and save millions of jobs. For reasons that should not divert our attention here, the citizens prevailed to stop the loan. Few years later, a massive extra-budgetary windfall of \$12.4 billion accrued to the nation which would have been used to lift the same industries in multiple folds and chart a new economic direction for the nation. But this time around, there was no referendum or consultation with the same members of the public about how it was to be used except those with whom the money was shared⁴⁶.

Those who retain their sanity may never be able to fathom the psyche of our security chiefs who shared \$2.1 billion that was voted to procure

⁴⁵ Nigerians are aware of capital punishment for smuggling hard drugs through the borders of some strict countries and they still indulge in it, even with full knowledge of how those that were captured before them had suffered hard fates.

⁴⁶ Perhaps many older citizens may recall how, after some public outcries, one investigative edition of *Newswatch* magazine attempted what was to be a mock report to account for how the money was spent on some projects, most significantly in the development of the Federal Capital Territory. From the surface of the account which I read myself, anyone may see the sarcasm of a reporter who quietly raised more questions than answers he pretended to be offering. Anyone with a sense of value would see the expense figures allotted to some listed projects to be nothing but a rape of the intelligence of the public, an open scam and a cover-up of the fact that the chunk of the money was simply shared out in the pattern of other loots.

military hardware to combat the menace of Boko Haram. That was when the group had grown into a pounding migraine and many Nigerian youths who enrolled in the army to defend their fatherland in the military were dying in droves on the battlefield. That was when, for several years running, nearly all things that define human existence in the northeast of the country were beached to a halt. We will forever lack an explanation for whatever may have gone wrong with the brain and conscience of such people and what they intended to do with the price of blood.

Many sane Nigerians must have felt thoroughly embarrassed watching footage where President Muhammadu Buhari openly confessed to the fact of this crime before Christiana Amanpour of CNN fame. Let us assume that the case would eventually be prosecuted to a conclusion, an expectation that may be a mirage going by legal and technical hurdles that have often frustrated successful prosecution and conclusion of similar cases in Nigeria. The question is to know what will some years of imprisonment do to reverse the damages that had been inflicted on many citizens as a result of the sheer greed of those who chose to abuse their official position.

Innocent soldiers and citizens have died needlessly. Homes have been thrown into mourning and had their dreams and aspirations shattered as husbands, fathers and benefactors are sacrificed on the altar of the wicked desire of monsters who pose as our public officers. At least, going by the difference that military hardware of \$2.1 billion would have made in the fight against the terror of Boko Haram, one may just fathom the physical and emotional damages that were inflicted and the national disgrace that a single stroke of embezzlement has foisted on us as a nation as a community of civilized people.

It is a common knowledge that corruption cannot fight corruption except to abet and cover it up. Also, anyone who will confront the menace any further than I am doing here must be ready for battle because

the system is fully armed with heavier strokes of counter-attack. I know what someone very close to me went through when he tried to excuse himself from mark racketeering in his department at one of the universities. He did not even try to expose any of his peers or seek to sanitise the system which he had no power to do anyway. His only offence was his refusal to join the bandwagon. They rose against him for claiming to be more righteous than the entire system. It took God to preserve his life before he scampered out of the system.

DYSFUNCTIONAL BANKING SYSTEM

No economy like ours can stagger out of economic distress with the kind of system that Nigerian banks operate. The traditional role of the banks is to mass and move funds from where it was surplus to the segment of the economy that needed it for purposeful ventures. But the modest returns associated with that noble role has since been ditched by our bankers who have discovered a goldmine in fraudulent activities of cutbacks on loans, forex manipulations and other illegal businesses. There is a high-level conspiracy by the bank executives that has pitched them against the collective destiny and prosperity of the nation.

The banks have always had their hands soiled with every theft and funds diversion by political looters. Bankers are the agents they hire in their mediating roles to package the transactions that move the money that has been stolen from our shore to foreign lands. Also, the ones which the looters retain in their local accounts are often too jealously guarded by the same banks which have fashioned several clogs in the wheel of genuine efforts at investigations. The ground of their operations here is the customer-banker confidentiality clause, even when they are fully convinced of the fact that what they are harbouring are embezzled funds.

While our entire system stinks, corruption of the private sector especially by and through the banking systems has been discovered to inflict more devastating impact on the citizens, their aspirations and consequently the economy. All the enacted regulations to control their operations and ensure that critical and growth-stimulating segments of the economy are assisted to remain afloat are flouted with only a very minimal effort and, worse still, without any consequence. The distortion that the activities of the banks continue to sponsor in our fragile system is a major pillar of our under-development and economic regression.

HOW CORRUPTION HAS MANAGED OUR CORRUPTION

This is neither sarcastic nor comical. But it is a stretch of the imagination, though as it will also apply to many corrupt nations of the world, of what it would have looked like if corruption had not ‘helped’ us to manage our corruption and the authorities would have to prosecute floods of corruption cases in Nigeria. In other words, if according to the law corruption of any sort or magnitude is a criminal offence that should be prosecuted, our enforcement facilities will be a gross mismatch to a negligible fraction of the cases that the system will need to handle.

A mammoth majority of Nigerians; rich, poor, great, small, religious or irreligious from all tribes and walks of life will have been shuttling between detention and courtrooms. A large number of law enforcement agents, lawyers and judges themselves would be behind bars and few prosecution personnel would have been submerged. This is one ‘benefit’ of a corrupt system by which it is self-servicing and self-supporting, at least, to the extent it stems the tide of national embarrassment.

Can anyone imagine what it would look like if all those who stole public funds, collected bribes and falsified records to defraud their employers on our streets were to be dragged to the various courts to answer for their crimes? Except God will mobilise His innumerable

angels to enforce our laws, the multiplication of our prosecuting facilities in tens of thousands of folds will be a mismatch to address the situation. Even several places of worship will have only skeleton worshippers to parade while our already overstretched correctional centres will not be able to accommodate those who are waiting to be remanded or jailed.

Chapter 7: Nigerian ‘Mediaeval’ Church

This second part of the book from here focuses more on the cracks that have perforated the ship of the Church as a result of which she became a major addition to the Nigerian problem instead of a solution that God ordained her to be. It is not a history of Christianity in Nigeria but a sketch of the Church I grew up to know for two decades from the mid-1960s and up to the mid-1980s. That was an ‘old-school’ institution which was stuffed with more of treasures than the mud and ashes of the caricatures we now call churches today. The only thing she was ‘guilty’ of was the contempt she poured on the world and its allures by which the future aspirations of her members and their children were put at risk.

Teachings with strong focus on heaven by ‘primitive’ preachers of holiness were commonplace; pure and direct from the pulpits and everyone could see how most of the pastors lived by what they preached. Evangelism was with passion and aggression which led to the expansion of branch networks of the churches and ministries of the era. People were told and taught to place their all on the altar of the Lord as the

Owner and Custodian of what they are and will ever in pursuit of His cause⁴⁷.

THE MAINSTREAM CHURCHES

Much of what I will discuss in this chapter relates to the portrait of the Pentecostal wing of the Church during my growing years. But some facts are worth sharing about the roles of the earlier generation churches that were managed, first by the white missionaries and then by their Nigerian counterparts with their positive impacts that dated back to the time of their entry into our land. These in the main are established churches like the Roman Catholic, Anglican Communion, Methodist and Baptist churches. All of them had established various social institutions and programs that made great impacts on the populace across the country. However, it is also on record that their spiritual temperature was too tepid to handle the peculiar challenges of spiritism that infested the length and breadth of Nigeria.

The truth, however, was that the little light which their gospel sparked among the local believers posed troubles to darkness in some measures. It is on record that there were Christians, even before the coming of Pentecostalism, who confronted and subdued dark powers in their domains. People of my age who were born into the churches grew up to hear from, say, members of the Anglican Communion such popular slogans like “*Ayanngasi Oloogun, b’owo mi ba te Saamu*”, meaning

⁴⁷ It is during this era, precisely in 1976, that God laid the foundation of my Christian life in the Deeper Life Ministry. I am glad that the ministry is one of those that have not altered the landmark except for the need to deal with what a few of us then identified as extra luggage arising from the excesses of members that heaped undue emphasis on the outward display of piety. I believe it is those things that were taken to the extremes during those years that Pastor W. F. Kumuyi now seeks to address. This is why, to me, his moves should never be taken as backpedalling from the raw gospel which cannot be subjected to modernisation.

“To hell with anyone brandishing charms once I can lay my hand on the (book of) Psalms”. The book of Psalms was invoked as a sort of counter-charm. It was just the confidence that the believers had in its spiritual efficacy.

For instance, a grandfather of one of my close friends was a member of the Anglican church in his town who by accident bumped on a highly dreaded idol priest of his ancient town. There was a violent reaction from the priest. But the man, who was just a mere usher, neutralised an arrow that had reduced people to imbeciles for the rest of their lives, even without the involvement of any of his church leaders. It just happened that many of such exploits became confined to individual corners as darkness came to engulf the land and even several clergies were known to have curved back into darkness with involvements in cults and strange movements. Another downside of the priests was how they lost their grips on their homes and most of their educated children grew up to become the vanguards of atheism and cultism.

It should still be remarked, however, that the networking of spiritually inclined individuals within Anglican Church birthed the movements that God used to chart a new course for the Nigerian Church. That was a team that was groomed to know enough of the Bible, especially through their contact and affiliation with Faith Tabernacle Congregation in Philadelphia which was a holiness movement⁴⁸. The hands of God worked through them behind the scenes to commission them into an intercessory prayer movement under the name *Precious Stone* which later became the Faith Tabernacle movement in Nigeria. Their intercession for revival which lasted about

⁴⁸ Prominent among those who belonged to the Anglican Communion but were commissioned by God to play one role or the other in the eventual establishment of Christ Apostolic Church are Oba I. B. Akinyele (The Olubadan of Ibadan), D. O. O. Odubanjo, Joseph Sadare (Esinsinade).

a decade was an invitation for the visitation of God that led to the call of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola.

JOSEPH AYO BABALOLA: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

No space in a work of this size and focus can account for the phenomenon that the ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola represented to the world of his time and beyond. This is about Nigeria and, more specifically, to the southwest of the country. Many books are already on the shelves of major bookshops that delved much into his background, calling and ministry. While a complete history will testify to the fact that he was not the only one that God used before, during or after his era, he stood a bit tall among his peers.

On a note of caution, I suppose there is no informed author who has written or intends to write about him that would hold him out as deserving the credit for his exploits. This remark is to nail the coffin of any efforts to hold the man out as a special species or paint him in a colour that transcends his humanity. It is all about God who needed an instrument and mobilised the Precious Stone band to partner with Him in the place of prayer to spark the fire of revival in our land. Those are prayers that received answers in the calling and empowerment of a vessel that Joseph Ayo Babalola came to be.

All the glory belongs to Him who owns it all in time and eternity because no axe, like in the case of the apostle, may ever boast itself against the One that hewed with it. However, our point of sincere appreciation of the apostle is in his total yielding to be the vessel of honour, especially in the good example he laid with his life and ministry and in the commitment and personal efforts he invested to make a huge success of the call. Concerning the sweeping nature of his revivals that led progressively to the establishment of Christ Apostolic Church, I

remarked in a paper titled *Fractured Focus*⁴⁹ earlier referenced:

Apostle Babalola emerged on the scene when the power of darkness dominated the nooks and corners of our land and the few practising Christians needed reawakening. His revival programmes were therefore directed primarily at diffusing the chilling cloud of terror and wickedness and at creating an atmosphere of hope and freedom for the spiritually downtrodden masses. There were healings and deliverance. Thousands who were held captives were liberated. Idols were ridiculed. Witches and others with familiar spirits were silenced. The gospel was heralded with great power and a Pentecostal mission, Christ Apostolic Church was born.

An addendum to the above is the fact that the movement that the revival of Apostle Babalola gave birth to experimented with few names before it finally settled for The Apostolic Church which was affiliated with The Apostolic Church of Britain. Perhaps this could be assessed as a smart move to court the favour of the British that was in charge of Nigerian politics at that time. The revival movement operated under this name until a dispute on doctrinal issues, precisely on the subject of divine healing erected an insurmountable division. The stand of the church leadership that could not be reconciled with the pristine mandate of the Apostle on the subject of healing finally led to the parting of ways and official registration of Christ Apostolic Church.

There was something unique about the fervency of the spirit on the part of many who thronged the revival ground. Though they were mostly illiterates, the early Nigerian Pentecostals did exploits. Several people were known to have left his revival grounds for their various towns and villages to replicate exactly what they had seen and

⁴⁹ Full write-up is on www.jobsonlinepulpit.com

experienced at those meetings. I grew up to witness a remnant of this in a few that became God's instruments in various capacities. Though there was little or no education at all, the situation seemed like an unconscious bargaining by which what they lacked in education and Bible knowledge, they possessed in the anointing that worked upon their lives.

A consequent downside of the movement was that many people in my age bracket who grew into the system were not sufficiently exposed to the teachings that could launch us into a holistic Christian experience to sustain the fire, especially in the pattern that the New Testament had prescribed. The omission resulted from a lopsided emphasis on miracles and prophetic ministrations that many people of my generation have been sweating to correct in subsequent eras. The whole problem was rooted in the fact that the healing ministrations of the movement concentrated too much of its attention on mortal problems to the neglect of the needed total transformation of the total man. I wrote about this lapse in one of my books, *Rebirth of Vision*:

From its inception, CAC has been one setting that heaped excessive emphasis on prayer and fasting in pursuit of mundane causes, on drinking sanctified water⁵⁰ and the use of anointing oil to confront problems. An unintended consequence of this is the downgrading of the importance of the word of God that ought to have enjoyed similar or even greater priority of attention. Yet, it is a cheap fact that a hundred litres of holy water cannot assuage the lustful desire that is ravaging the mind of a typical youth, even during church service or purge the elderly folks of malevolent inclinations. The skewed emphasis shows how the quest for physical healing and deliverance came to undermine and mask away the real need for spiritual healing

⁵⁰ I should remark that I have not cast this away because of better exposure to the Bible. It is one of God's pristine pacts with CAC, a practice I grew up to know and which God continues to use to administer healing to me, even till today.

of the hearts where God proposes to dwell.

But there was no doubt in the foundation that was laid for us by which some of us were able to stand on the pedestals of higher morals. The story we grew up hearing was how various establishments of government and private business would consult with our leaders in the church for their qualified children to be employed to manage sensitive positions. We also knew enough of the workings of God and the power of prayers and those were not going to be taken for granted in the latter years when God began to visit us with personal salvation and deeper understanding. For a great number of us who found the grace to press on, it became a win-win situation for us and to the glory of God.

THE CHURCH OF OUR 'MEDIAEVAL' ERA

The story of the revival of the 1970s up to around the mid-1990s in the Nigerian Church will require a book of more than an average volume to be fully written. The attempt here is to show a contrasting streak between what Christian devotion used to be then and what it has turned out to be in our time. Though my narratives will concentrate on the southern regions, the peaceful co-existence of Nigerians in nearly every part of the country boosted cross-cultural cooperation and inter-regional cohesion of the Church. This is even truer among Christian youths in many tertiary institutions of learning with a liberal posture and inter-denominational leaning that later received a boost from the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme introduced by the Federal government in 1974.

Meanwhile, the bustling zeal and vibrant postures of the prominent denominations that dominated the north of Nigeria like the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) and Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) remain top-notch. Their do-or-die resilience and tenacity have proved

strong as they continue to wax strong even today despite the hottest persecution and destructive activities of the jihadists and political persecution that have been targeted at obliterating their identity.

Now concerning the events in the western part of the country, I have a good information base both from personal memory and also the stories of those I am close to. Similarly, I have tapped into the works of another author, Evangelist Emmanuel Oha who has a publication with rich information as it concerns the events of the same period in the southeast of the country. The unique and complementary narratives of the church in both regions dwell on the intense activities of highly motivated churches bearing the seed of an untainted gospel that produced unadulterated devotion in the lives of the believers of those days.

THE FOUNDATION OF 1970s REVIVAL

The posture of Nigerian early Pentecostals with the pure and primitive gospel they imbibed laid the foundation and charted a course for the revival of the subsequent eras. A prominent aspect of their devotion is how the craving for comfort in the present world was never part of their Pentecostal mandates. The main or only focus then was how to finish the Great Commission and shorten the days of their sojourn in the city of vanity that the world was known and taken to be. That was the Church that operated just as we have from the records of the Acts of the Apostles with exhibitions of virtue and agenda of pursuit that ceased to be popular in the subsequent era.

I admit that their forfeiture of various life opportunities to better their lots and one of their children was one area where they took their faith to the extreme. I also need not deny that the omission is more rooted in their lack of balanced teachings than in their devotion to the pursuit of heaven. So, their financial lack is not part of the things to be celebrated as a virtue. But the lack was never a threat to the peace of their mind

because of their level of contentment as believers. They lacked money like Peter and John on their way to the temple but were stinking rich in virtues, sound testimonies and exploits of faith.

That was the generation of believers that were fully equipped to face privation which became the lot of many of them resulting from imbalanced teaching, the activities of their persecutors and also, more often, as reprisal attacks of the powers of darkness they were raised to confront on a communal level. For instance, the bane of the present generation has been that, though the fathers did not know a small fraction of what we claim to know today of the Bible and its doctrines, we are yet to wield a fraction of the power they wielded, a few of which I grew up to witness. This was the foundation laid by the fathers and down to the time that believers of my age were teaming up for the Christian race,

Fast forwarding to the 1970s era, I am a witness to how the faith was practised during those eras. It was a time when there was nothing that smelled or smeared wrangling, competition and tribal sentiments that became an issue by which some churches now seem to wear various ethnic labels today. For instance, it would almost appear difficult to determine whether or by how much the population of the Yorubas dominated the composition of other tribes, especially the Igbos among those of us who clustered around Brother W. F. Kumuyi and his ministry in those days. The Church of the era was united only for the truth and the segregating postures that have since arisen to plague the churches were unknown.

The revival and the pervasive blessings it birthed will be further discussed in sections. The first will focus on the southwestern bloc of Nigeria as we examine activities on the platform of Christ Apostolic Church (CAC). We remember that this is where Apostle Joseph Babalola eventually pitched his evangelistic tent after parting the way with The

Apostolic Church . in the early 1940s The account will include evangelical crusades outside the fold of CAC through several freelancers that operated in the bloc during the period. The second will examine the ignition of the revival in the southeastern region. The third segment of the discussion will focus on revival exploits in Nigerian higher institutions. A summary will be shared on the fallout of the diversion of the present generation of believers from the pattern, the consequences of this and the setback it has sponsored to the Great Commission.

REVIVAL MOVEMENT ON THE SOUTH WEST BLOC

The ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola which had a major impact on the Pentecostal movement I grew into is where I will begin my discussion. The first-hand references I will lay on the table are to validate my claims. As earlier stated, both Christ Apostolic Church and The Apostolic Church were offshoots of the campaign of the Apostle and were part of the churches that God used to ignite Nigeria and some parts of the African continent with the Pentecostal flames. However, there are reservations in the next chapter where I raise strong protests. Most of the ‘revival’ prayers I grew into had a downside for which they focused more on the pursuits of material blessing and solutions to mortal challenges. This notwithstanding, the subject of holiness and the pursuit of heaven enjoyed no less passion within the limit of their knowledge.

Great awakening accompanied the ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola which progressively climbed to unforgettable heights in the 1970s. Some of the events are those that my memory can capture during my growing years even before the commencement of my Christian race within the fold of the church. Those were the years during which I served as a ‘worker’ in the choir department, especially as one of the few regular hands on the drums during worship sessions. For example, I still recall and can sing almost line by line a few of the anthems that were

rendered during both the regular children and adult harvest anniversaries in my home church from 1963 and some of the years from then.

Light of the World Society (LOWS), which was branded as the militant wing of the church, was led by our charismatic Evang. D. O. Babajide, a protégé and one of the closest associates of Apostle Ayo Babalola. Evangelist/Pastor D. O. Babajide stepped into his shoes as the General Evangelist of the church after the demise of the Apostle in 1959. As an evangelical wing of the church, God used the society in the 1960s and 1970s to establish many assemblies through one revival programme or another and it kept the fire burning bright into beyond the era under review. I recall the early 1970s when I joined the Lagos arm of the Society, then led by the trio of Pastors M. A. Adeoye, Alfred Sasanmi and A. A. Fayinto.

On another platform and at about the same time, God commissioned many of our highly endowed evangelists, prominent among whom was *Woli* (Prophet) T. O. Obadare, into great revival programmes and church planting works that extended to several places in Nigeria and beyond on the platform of the church. His most popular event, *Ko seun ti*, soon gained momentum and progressively led to the establishment of the World Soul Winning Evangelistic Ministry (WOSEM) with its base in Akure, Ondo State. One of his protégé, Lady Evangelist Bola Odeleke of *Kiibati* fame was also used by God after she had grown her spiritual wings under the grooming of *Baba* Obadare, as he was then well known.

We had Evangelist J. O. Dada who was then based in CAC, Ilorin before he went freelancing. It was from him that I heard the gospel message for the first time in 1964 when he came to my town for one of his open-air crusades. There were also moves of God through Evangelists J. T. Durojaye, the anchor man of the Blood of Jesus Ministry in Ibadan, J. A. Brown, S. K. Abiara who established Agbala

Itura, in Ibadan and other places and was later going to emerge as the General Evangelist of the Church. As I earlier said, there were others I did not know or who did not attract the publicity like the ones being listed here. These were itinerant evangelists within the church like Prophet Ayeni, Evangelist Adeleye (the man with accordion), Evangelist Olu Aromibose and Rev. Adjei from Christ Apostolic Church, Ghana, a man who was very mighty in words.

The debut of the Christ Apostolic Church Students' Association (CACSA) was at the University of Ibadan in 1970 with Pastor Olubusayo Arijesudade in the saddle during his days as a student at the institution. It had its initial base at the Abadina branch of CAC under the tutelage of Mrs Ogunranti and others. Though it paraded the name of 'students', membership was open to all members of the church who were hungry for God and His word irrespective of gender, age, race or social class. The group also engaged in prayers and the pursuit of evangelism.

Apart from those with their base in CAC with its dominant base in southwestern of Nigeria, there were freelancing evangelists with inter-denominational platforms. It is just that I cannot tell how many of them had a CAC background or a ministry base like Evangelist Isaac Adeogun and his Glad Tiding Evangelistic Ministry. There were Rev. Ogongo, Evangelist Balogun and Evangelist Moses Olanrewaju who paired with Rev. OmoobaJesu, another firebrand revivalist of the era who conducted some open-air crusades, including a massive one in October 1972 at Oke-koto, Agege, Lagos which I attended. We also have Evangelist Segun Ilesanmi (Still at Ijaye, Ogba in Agege), Evangelist Ayekooto and Evangelist J. K. Solomon of All Nations Disciples of Christ fame.

Others include and Evangelist Timothy Iyanda, formerly of CAC base who later established *Gò Yè* Evangelistic Ministry. Evangelist Timothy Iyanda was one of those who were popular for radio evangelism in the pattern of Evangelist Adeogun and ELWA in Igbaja, in today's

Kogi State. ELWA as a ministry cannot be forgotten, especially for its blend of inspired music and life-infusing messages that made the 1970s what the era was known for in the history of the Nigerian Church. My days in the east of the country also brought me into remote contact with the likes of Rev. Chris Mba, popular for his blazing ministrations with a music album titled *Maranatha* to his credit. Rev. Umma Ukpai with his evangelistic group is still making waves today by the grace of God.

We also have Wale Oke whose gospel work as an itinerary evangelist led progressively to the establishment of Sword of the Spirit fame in Ibadan, Oyo State. There were also a number of them who established churches like Archbishop Benson Idahosa with his Church of God Mission with headquarters in Benin City, Rev. Obiora Ezekiel, ably supported by his wife Rev. (Dr) Mercy Ezekiel with the headquarters of their ministry at Papa Ajao in Oshodi Lagos. Bishop Mike Okonkwo, the founding pastor and general overseer of The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (TREM), also had his initial base in Akoka before relocating to Anthony Village, Lagos.

In addition to sheer ruggedness, Archbishop Benson Idahosa had secured international leverage for his ministry with American connections which at the initial stage, he courted through Pa Elton to project his ministry into prominence among his peers of that era. It is not the focus of this work to dwell on whatever had become of many of these erstwhile giants by which the immediate past and present generation of Christian youths came to know from very little to nothing about many of them again. There is no doubt that old age will be a factor here. But the gap created by their exit from revival podiums had sponsored a distortion of history by which, for example, Archbishop

Benson Idahosa, who was just one of the privileged grand-children⁵¹ of the Pentecostal movement was held out as the father of Pentecostalism in Nigeria by the kwashiorkor and bed-ridden journalism that was fettered by laziness to dig just a little into facts that were not any far from the surface.

International evangelistic projects of the era also brought famed gospel preachers from America and other nations, notable among who were T. L. Osborne and the popular German evangelist, Reinhard Bonke to Nigeria who conducted many crusades in our public spaces. The Charismatic Renewal Movement, borne on a side wing of the Roman Catholic church, debuted at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in February 1980 and is presently headquartered in Owerri, Imo State. Part of the fire ignited by this ministry has birthed many soldiers of the Cross who are a great blessing to the Church. I will gladly mention Dr Ferdinand Nweke, a discipleship mentor and mission mobiliser that I know and whose Eternity Ministries is growing higher and glowing brighter to the glory of God.

THE REVIVAL MOVEMENT IN THE EAST OF NIGER

In the thesis, *Civil War Revival and Its Pentecostal Progeny* by Richard Hugh Burgess⁵² is a gauge of events in the east of Niger with an excerpt from

⁵¹ If Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola would be regarded as one of the founding fathers of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, it would be because he found the grace to be ranked among the founding fathers of the movement, many of whom, like Oba I. B. Akinyele, the Olubadan of Ibadan, Pa Esinsinade, Samuel G. Adegboyega and others who were old enough to be his biological father. Otherwise, the set of those that were listed here, including Archbishop Idahosa, would only be grandsons or even great-grandsons of Nigerian Pentecostalism.

⁵² *The Civil War Revival and Its Pentecostal Progeny: A Religious Movement Among the Igbo People of Eastern Nigeria (1967-2002)*: was the thesis by the author to the Department of Theology of the University of Birmingham for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in June 2004

oral commentary on this topic. It summed up the context of the move of God in the east of Niger in those years.

“People now became conscious of God. People now became serious in serving God, because everybody now was grateful to God for surviving. That is why the Pentecostal revival took place more in the eastern part of Nigeria, because we are the people that really tasted the civil war... In fact, the Holy Ghost came down fully on people. There was the manifestation of the power of God.

Nevertheless, another book from which this work has drawn significant materials, *The Catalysts of the Gospel Reflections on Revival and Reawakening, East of the Niger 1970-2014*, was authored by Evangelist Emmanuel O. Oha⁵³. In the book, and just like we have in the Western region, the author gave an account of the revivals in the East together with some key leaders that shaped the events. There were also outstanding roles of the Scripture Union in the region as a significant impetus for the spirituality of the era. The Union birthed the people into the doctrine of holiness and personal revival with a strong urge on them to spurn the allurements of the world. And, just as we had the likes of Christ Apostolic Church, Foursquare Gospel Church and later Deeper Life Bible Church among others in the west, there were churches in the east of Niger that played huge roles.

Prominent among the churches are Assemblies of God Mission (AGM), Qua Ibo Church (Now United Evangelical Church), Hour of Deliverance Evangelistic Association, Hour of Freedom Evangelistic Association and Riches of Christ Inc. The roles of these churches as instruments to the moves of God through the 1970s raised many

⁵³ Rev. Paul Josef Onwe is my old Christian associate from the east since our school days early 1980s. He is presently the General Overseer, Whole Life Bible Church, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State. He gave me a link to the works of Evangelist Oha.

Pentecostal preachers in Nigeria who established many indigenous denominations and ministries in Nigeria. A prominent leader who was credited with contributions to the revival was Rev. Dr M. O. Ezeigbo⁵⁴, the then General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God Mission . He was a great encouragement to the work and aspiration of the young people who were bristling with Pentecostal fire and fervour that would redefine the spiritual temperature of the region.

Similarly, Rev. Dr Augustus Asonye who was the first pastor and leader of the Assemblies of God Mission was a source of great encouragement to the youth movement of the era. We also have Rev. Dr J. M. J. Emesim, the anchor man of the Hour of Deliverance Evangelistic Association who doubled as the HOD of the College of Evangelism. The region also had a legion of firebrand pastors and men of God who played key roles in the move of God during the revival era. They include but are not limited to Bishops Godwin C. Nnaji, Edward Ezenwafor and Rev. Goddy Ekpe with their base in Enugu, Bishops Mark Udenka and Benson Ezeokeke in Onitsha, Rev. Dr Charles O. Nnaji in Nsukka. Others include Bishop Eze Anyim in Abakaliki, Rev Francis Nwogu in Port Harcourt, Rev. Greg Ani of Assemblies of God Church in Bendel State, Rev. Dr O.C. Dominic in Nnewi, Rev. Dr Tony Nwaizu and Rev. Dr Alex Obukaifedi among others.

Raphael Okafor, a former Anglican Bishop of Ihiala and one of the anchor men at the Hour of Freedom Evangelistic Association (HOFEA) was one of those that God raised in 1970 to carry the gospel to many towns and cities in Igbo land. We had Apostle Dr Chiedozie I. Mba on the platform of the Riches of Christ. There were revivalists including Bill Roberts and Very Rev. Dr Mike Oye who in July 1966 was appointed

⁵⁴ The only time I met him and fed from his table was in 1982 when he joined our campus fellowship to deliver a teaching on *The Will of God*. It was a night I can never forget. His point of emphasis that night was how most of the things that Jesus, His disciples and other Christians encountered as problems were part of *The Will of God*.

the first indigenous travelling secretary of Scripture Union in Nigeria, followed by Rev. Muiyiwa Olamijolu as the second Travelling Secretary of the Union. Much earlier in the 1950s Dr Dan Onwukwe, had joined the expatriate teachers to plant the Scripture Union in schools in the environs of Umuahia.

A prominent Christian leader, Professor Augustus Mbanaso was a campus crusader, a proactive leader, a revivalist and an outstanding youth minister who played a vital role in the move of God during the era on the platform of the Scripture Union. So also, Mrs Uche Okeke (Nee Amuche Obijiofor) was the first elected president of the Scripture Union Enugu Central Group and a pioneer member of the Union in the East Central State Sub Committee of 1970. Anthony Okechukwu Ewelike was the second president of Enugu Township Group (1970-sept.1975) and Rev. Isaac Nnaemeka (Onwudinjo) served as the third president of Enugu Township Group in the 1970's

REVIVAL IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

During the 1970s era, there was a great revival among the Christians across our higher institutions which I cannot account for either in full or as adequate as other authors have delved into this aspect of the revival subject. Two of the books I have read that addressed the events of those years are *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church* co-authored by Dr Gary Maxey, the proprietor of West African Theological Seminary in Ipaja, Lagos and Dr Peter Ozodo, a missionary veteran who with others teamed up with Brother Bayo Famonure to plant and water the seed of Calvary Ministry (CAPRO). The other book, *From Africa to the World* is a CAPRO Media Services production anchored by Brother Festus.

Though I have read both books, there is no drawing of materials from them that will compare with the need for direct contact of the readers with them. They are readily available through CAPRO Media.

The two books, especially *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, have a load of information about how the new faith movement and Pentecostal exploit that would have lifted Nigerian Church and nationhood to a higher platform deviated into materialism. While I have personal reservations about just a few sections of the work which I intend to address later with another work, it nonetheless hit the nails in the head about how the Church began to drift.

Permit me to reveal that I was privileged to be a part of the campus revival of that era between the late 1970s and early 1983 during my days at the Enugu Campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. I had the privilege to play some roles in the programmes of the Nigerian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (NIFES) with opportunities to light my little candle in my little corner. The spillover of the revival which we met was a good training ground for many of us in either Christian Union or Christian Students Movements where God groomed some of those who are still flying the banner of the faith today.

The narratives of revival on our campuses involving many Christian elites up to and including the mid-1980s cannot be written without a robust reference to the catalytic roles of Pa Sydney Granville Elton and the contacts he masterminded between American evangelistic ministries and aspiring Christians on the campuses. His contagious love for Nigeria as a nation and the zeal for the works of the ministry which he embodied birthed for him many protégés that included but were not limited to Rev, Dr Mike Oye, Mathew Owojaye, Francis Wale Oke, Barrister Emeka Nwankpa and Elder Emma Agu among others. I earlier mentioned his connection with Archbishop Benson Idahosa who became a colossus on the gospel podium.

His influence also extended to a great number of students with manifest spiritual aggression while his interactions with them probably led to the formation of some missionary agencies and similar

organisations. The only one I am quite certain about here is his involvement in the formative years of Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) which debuted in Jos and later relocated to Yaba, Lagos. As I just stated, that was the move of God in which Brother Bayo Famonure played foremost roles together with his colleagues⁵⁵ who later emerged as leaders of the ministry or its various departments in the subsequent years. That is a ministry that combined a solid foundation with the rare grace of God to become and has remained a beacon of cross-cultural missionary endeavours in Africa and beyond.

A notable chapter of the campus revival was the commissioning of Pastor W. F. Kumuyi sometime around the mid-1970s during his days as a lecturer at the Faculty of Education of the University of Lagos. His Deeper Christian Life Ministry operated from the faculty and this progressively metamorphosed to Deeper Life Bible Church. The ministry conducted a weekly Bible study programme which played a significant role in the revival of the doctrine of holiness in the Nigerian Church. I was both a participant and a beneficiary of the weekly studies and the entire movement from 1976 through 1978⁵⁶. It is during those years that God laid the foundation on which I have continued to build my Christian life and journey till now.

WHERE WE HAVE LANDED

A great number of those who witnessed the revival of that era when the Church was green and amenable to the Holy Spirit cannot but earnestly

⁵⁵ They are those I referred to as “crazy” gang in my other book, *Rebirth of Vision*, who chose the path of thorns and journeyed in the opposite direction of the rest of their colleagues even at a time when it seemed it was their turn to pursue the wealth and comforts of life.

⁵⁶ That was when I pursued a secondary school programme on a private arrangement which allowed me to join the programmes of the ministry with tenacity and commitment.

pray that she will retrace her steps in the spirit of repentance. It should not be strange to know that some of those who were like frail believers of those years are now to be counted among the giants that God equipped and has been using for exploits today. The cross-cultural mission agencies and a great number of their missionaries that God is proud of in Nigeria today are the chips of the solid blocks of that era. Christianity then had very little, if anything at all, to do with the pursuit of the world and its distractions. Many young graduates did not nurse any moment of doubt to step out and enrol as missionaries once they sensed the call of God upon their lives.

We may fully appreciate the steel hearts of that generation of believers who graduated during those years when we recall the economic factors of their era. That was when government institutions, banks and blue-chip companies flocked to the campuses to beg students in their final years with plum jobs. Firstly, for students of those eras, admission into tertiary institutions was a ticket to a new lease of life with a standard of living that is now best left to the imagination. That was Nigeria which was free from the economic mess that would soon divert her course. As one of those who schooled in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I saw and had a taste of this.

Secondly, graduating in their time was an immediate step into employment to which a jumbo pay was attached, and in many cases, with such perquisites as fully furnished flats and instant ownership of an automobile. Those were goodies that usually catapulted them to a new level of life and set them apart as privileged elites among the throngs of their clans and colleagues who did not have the opportunity of higher education. As I earlier remarked, even members of their churches placed them in a cubicle that everyone else looked up to in the congregation.

There can be no underplaying the commitment of those who jettisoned such privileges to answer a call that would relocate them from

the ease and excitement of the cities to remote villages in search of lost souls. Those were places where they usually would not have any assurance of when and from where the next meal may come. But that was a venture they embraced and pursued with enthusiasm, commitment and contentment. I am aware of the fact that such people are still being raised in our time through some churches and ministries that have kept the old bond. The main challenge is that their number has dwindled in comparison to what it used to be and the manpower needs of the various mission fronts today.

In those phases of the Church, there was not so much of the application of unwarranted logic to argue or twist the revelations of the Bible as they were dished out from blazing pulpits. The acquiescence of those years is more rooted in the disposition to the obedience of the old school or Generation X, as we are now taken to be than in the lack of sound or formal education by their majority. Time has bred worshipers now known as Generation Y who are ready to question many of the teachings that were swallowed hook, line and sinker by believers of that era. This is especially true in this era of internet and Google searches where the claims of the pastors no longer enjoy as much sanctity and are being constantly challenged.

I do not underplay the fact that many of the inquisitive youths we have now have read through the entire Bible, over and again, even in more modern and explanatory versions. I am also aware that a number of them have studied theology to where it has equipped them, at least mentally, to know better than some of the brilliant preachers of those years. The accessibility of Christians of our days to better exposition through the internet and other media on any passage and subject of the Bible than those that were available in the best of the seminaries of yesteryears cannot be toyed with. The development has not only birthed

great prospects. It also came with problems that have put the faith of our fathers in great jeopardy.

This is why the older generation of believers views the new revelation of the youths with suspicion and would stoutly resist whatever is coming from their camp. They always refuse to get carried away by what to them are more chaffs and less substances that are decked in the attractions of exuberance. The youths too, who should have seen the new insights that God is exposing them to as something that needs the foundation of the discipline and discipleship mindset of the older generation are ready to throw everything they met on the ground into the dustbin of the old school mentality. Despite the increased exposure and new insights into the Bible, we still lack the power that is needed to push out the souls from our individual and collective labour rooms.

A contrasting streak of our days to one of the old eras is where calls into missionary work no longer register much appeal to our teeming students and graduates. Consequently, one of the greatest challenges of missionary agencies and a major setback to their field operations today is the paucity of workers. Our graduates will prefer to roam the streets in search of jobs which are not even there again instead of lending their hands to missionary agencies within their reach or responding to their calling either as full-time missionaries or short-time volunteers. This is especially true as many of the agencies are battling with acute shortage of workforce in many professional areas. Would to God, that the Nigerian Church will experience a new wave of revival and restoration to those years of total submission!

Chapter 8: Traps of the Mortal Trial

One stubborn question that has refused to rotate from the front burner, especially in the last few decades is how the massive population of Christians in Nigeria has failed to register their impact on the nation and its social order. This has remained a bit of a puzzle for the concerned Church leadership, on one hand, and members of the public who know the difference that she and her members were supposed to make. Nearly everyone can sense the glaring gap. It is just that evidence is still proving sketchy to enable anyone to insert his thumb correctly. Despite the efforts of this work to address some issues, healing to the tepidity of the Church will come as God decides to wade in with appropriate solutions to the problems that He alone can fully define in the first place.

For believers who are of age, this has been a source of migraine about which many questions are still being raised. The expectations of Jesus Christ who introduced His followers, including the ones in Nigeria as the salt of the earth and the light of its darkness must have been foiled, over and over again. While evil is multiplying in leaps and bounds, and our hope of redemption seems to be waning, churches of various types, sizes and doctrinal emphasis continue to spring up to choke every available space

in the atmosphere of the nation, especially in the south of the country which has always been her base.

At one end are fire-spitting churches with hypes that often overcharge the atmospheres of their overcrowded meetings. At the other end is a sharp contrast of a socially disoriented society that is swamped in decay, especially with bands of reckless youths that are sold out to crimes, sexual perversion, drug addictions and strange vices. A feature of the picture is how the leaders of today's Church, with minimal exemption, are confusion-trapped. This lack of focus and direction of a Christian voyage across the passage of life is one ailment that accounts for her corporate let-downs.

What many call churches today dangle between a gross misrepresentation of what God called them to be or mislabelled social gangs. A huge segment of the members they proudly parade and boast about are empty chaffs who are not in the reckoning of either God for their duplicity or Satan for their commitment. There is a refinement of carriage and a display of seeming flourishing spiritual and social status, within and outside the premises of the sanctuary. But it is devoid of the content of reality. Several factors may be sensed to lay beneath the ugly characteristics but they may all be traced to where the Church began to lose focus, right at the early days of our Pentecostal movements even in the era that I earlier described as golden. The one that has become most glaring is the diversion anchored on the pursuit of solutions to many besetting mortal problems.

LIFE CHALLENGES, A BAIT TO DIVERSION

The privilege I have had to be part of the Church all through my life has placed me in a position to tell at least a little about her, her struggles and successes, the trials and triumphs together with her present bearing and future prospects. Also, because I have a biological father with a fairly

good memory, I can dig a little into the picture of the Church of the immediate past to an extent, more especially from the perspective of my denomination of Christ Apostolic Church. With him being among those who had the opportunity to hear from Apostle Babalola, I am privy to a few of the narratives and quotes he picked directly from the lips of the man of God.

Despite the cobwebs that have defaced the Church in Nigeria, just as I wrote in *Prophetic Force*, my other work, the Church remains what the Lord who purchased her with His precious blood has called her. She is the beloved of God and the beautiful Bride of His Son, Jesus Christ. There is no doubt that many ugly developments had combined to robe around the Church and her members to cast an aspersion and redefine the identity. No one who knows the mind of God and the extent of the rottenness of the Church will make an error of scoring her with an average mark, to talk less of a pass one.

Derailment is one tragedy that has always ambushed the best of ambitions and any endeavour, including powerful revival projects, can become its victim. All that is required is simply to lay by and take things just as they come with lax attitudes and with a mind that is blind to perception. The worst part of the tragedy is how there will always be a 'good' excuse for the resultant regression and failures. While all these may be true for the Church, however, it must still be understood that God has not found and will not even search for a substitute for the Church. Herein lies the hope that, at the end of the day, the Nigerian Church will emerge from the rubble to bring the counsel of heaven to bear on her domain.

There is nothing that happens by whatever we may call an accident or chance as all things maintain a link to a cause that may or may not have been intended and clearly defined. A step off to the sideway by the Church is what has resulted in the unconscious alteration to her mission

in the world, especially with the mortal challenges confronting her members on a large scale. But these are the same things that the Bible calls the light affliction of the present that is waiting to be exchanged for a weight of glory at the turn of events. Except for the ones we attract to ourselves, afflictions do not kill. They come and go and whatever we need to escape their grip has already been provided.

I narrow the narratives to the development on the podium of Christ Apostolic Church which I have studied and sought to master for over half of a century now. This covers a period since I joined church services as a ‘worker’, even before my enrolment in the Christian race. I connect this with what I came to understand about Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and what later came to define the preoccupation and focus of his ministry. The flip side of the revival movement is how mortal challenges snowballed into a fixation by which the church and its prayer grounds quietly transformed into a fire-fighting arena for supposed flames burning on the fuel of life’s harsh realities.

In a matter of time, the challenges of the people climbed to the topmost run of the ladder to ignite fake or genuine concern. This is how the relevance of the Church came to be redefined mainly in the light of whatever solution she can proffer to the problems of her members. The origin of and reasons for this diversion as I grew up to understand them within the setting of my church eventually triggered my alarm on the need for the Church to change our lopsided prayer pattern. It also sought to switch people’s focus to nobler causes.

INGRAINED DISORDER

It remains a nagging pain that the praying pattern I confronted with the work did not only continue unchecked. It had scaled over the walls of the church to infect several other Pentecostal settings to dictate their ‘warfare’ operations, especially the ones that took their roots from CAC.

That is how it became a popular thing to marshal earth-shaking prayers that may best be described as beating the air (Corinthians 9v26). This is how and why, till this moment, wherever there seem to be sparks of revival fire that promise miracles or deliverance, you find the people trooping in and out, mostly in search of what was not lost.

The reasons I advanced for this problem in that publication were:

1. Life is full of challenges and there is no limitation to their breeding or frequency, to their attacks or choice of victims which can be anyone, anywhere and anytime.

2. The problems inflict pains, cause displeasures and exert pressures that ignite a craving for a solution by any means that there may ever be, including aggressive, dangerous or 'acidic' prayers, most of which are anchored on a misinterpretation of the Bible.

3. It is on various record that the moves of God that accompanied the epoch-making revival of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola disgraced the institution of witchcraft, idols and their exploitative priests. A great sigh of relief from the oppression that was sponsored by the evil gangs became the lot of people and their trapped destinies. It is these people who banded together to constitute the initial Pentecostal movement especially in the southwest of Nigeria where it enjoyed a firm grip.

4. But it is equally true that a significant chunk of the problems that chase people to the revival grounds like, for example, poverty, some common ailments and similar others are recurring types that would not be eradicated by the one-time move of God. Thus, both the regular members and new invitees would breathe a sigh of relief from one situation only for another challenge to rotate to the surface in a matter of time. This conforms with natural phenomena and a generally accepted fact that a solution to one problem usually paves the way for another, though sometimes a more acceptable one.

5. The unintended consequence of the above is how a problem-hunting cycle devolved on the Church with prayer battles that would only begin at a point but without any hope of its terminating anywhere or anytime soon. It is in response to this that the sanctuaries of many churches quietly transformed into the arena of battles where members may fight to salvage their destinies.

THE PLACE OF MIRACLES IN THE CHURCH

It was not an error that the ministry of Joseph Ayo Babalola built its structure and expansion on healing and miracles. The pattern of operations by the Church that made the phenomena central to her corporate mission takes its root from the earthly ministry of Jesus and the events that were documented about the early Church. The testimony of Peter concerning this says it all: *“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him”* (Acts 10v38). The world is sick and deformed to where no effort to bring God into the lives of its traumatised citizens would gloss over the perennial issues confronting mankind. This is why it was a nonissue that nearly ninety-five of the recorded miracles credited to Jesus revolved around healing, deliverance and general repairs to the destinies of the multitude that thronged around Him.

This is why even in nearly all revival campaigns of our days, especially in places where the gospel seed is being sown and expected to take firm root, it must be kitted with the supernatural to announce the arrival of God in that domain. It was like that at the time of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. It has been like that throughout the history of the Church as she labours to spread her tentacles into many places. If the pattern did not change even up to the time of the generals of God of our time, including the great revival at Oke-Ooye in Ilesa in the 1930s, it will be so

till “*thy kingdom come*”. This is also why, till today, people always gather around wherever it seems to be happening live and direct while everybody in the arena is always on the lookout for the moment it will come to his turn to shout a loud *Alleluia*.

But there is a real danger in the large number of wolves who have exchanged their occult wands for the cassock to trap those who are badly pressed and who have demonstrated their desperation to have it by whatever means possible. We are in a generation where miracles or wonders are now rated to be far more important than whatever power is behind them. When this situation is weighed against the background that God never offer anyone a hint that our devotion to Him should be based on what we expect as answers to prayers, we may see how even the move of God in the miraculous should not have been intended to become a central attraction to Christianity.

Another factor that will put a check on reckless voracity for miracles is that miracles are nothing more than to serve as bait to draw men to the feet of the Cross where, following their arrival, they are to be groomed in the things of God that goes beyond a search for things that chase men generally from pillar to post. There is a huge difference between the thousands that crowded around Jesus Christ and the one hundred and twenty disciples that made the final list at the Upper Room. That difference is usually between those who settled for miracles of the flesh and blood and those who went ahead for spiritual transformation. God expected that those who were drawn in with the cord of miracles would press further to enrol in a higher calling, identify with His noble cause and become His representatives.

It is this latter group that many of those who came to embrace the gospel through Paul and other early missionaries, especially the newly converted people in the gentile world were to be fitted. They were the ones to whom the epistles of Apostle Paul and those by other saints of

old were written. They were the ones that became a pattern for us to follow in doctrines and deeds. It would therefore be very strange for those who became Christians in Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth or Colossus to dwell on and settle with the mentality of those who thronged around Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. But that is the level to which most of those who crowded our sanctuaries in search of miracles today have reduced themselves without any sense of abashment or responsibility to press on to higher ground.

THE PLACE OF THE MORTAL TRIALS

On one hand, no one will deny or toy with the reality of problems in the world. Neither will I imagine anyone reading this book who may not have waded through one challenge or the other at some point. Job conveyed the blunt truth when he revealed that “...*man is born to trouble, ...*” (Job 5v7). On the other hand, there can be no atom of doubt in the fact that God ordains His children for progress, success and a life of victory. Thus, God delights that His people should express and demonstrate their dependency on Him as they seek His face with their challenges and for the meeting of their needs, even daily. The major snag lies in the fact that both God and His children have different ways to address the problem and resolve every ensuing challenge.

There are reasons why huge volumes of prayers are not answered and will never be answered. I have seen innumerable instances in which I do not need to blink to know how many prayers prayed with so much rigour and vigour do not rise beyond the ceiling of the venues. Itemised below are the milage that hangs between what man is craving and crying to God for and how He, in turn, intends to deal with the vast majority of them according to the established principles:

1. God is committed to the needs of man (Philippians 4v19, 1 Timothy 6v8). But man is driven by his wants to bombard Him

with prayers and Bible confessions, for example with stuff like “what you confess is what you possess” (James 4v2, 3).

2. Man wants it hot and quick and God will not be stampeded to fulfil the wish of even the best and greatest of prayer warriors outside the fulness of His timing (Ecclesiastes 3v1, 11).
3. God has set a limit for everyone. But nearly everyone struggles for the extras. Deuteronomy 15v11 is one of the passages that people abhor, just as we have others who will robe the passage around those that Israelites would later conquer and enslave.
4. At times, God wants to meet our needs as they arise. But man wants it at once or in bulk, like that woman in John 4v15, so that he can save himself the trouble of having to continually bang on the door of heaven with “*give us this day our daily bread*”.
5. Man wants to receive, hoard and enjoy while all that God wants is to make him a channel for others to share with him.
6. Man wants to pursue his ambition and become rich so that, as they often put it, he can display or flaunt the ‘glory’ of God to his friends and neighbours. At the same time, God may be asking him to “*condescend to men of low estate*” (Romans 12v16).
7. With what is known of God that smells a tinge of ‘selfishness’, He always demands a priority of attention, even with the little He has given us or that which we think that we are left with (1 Kings 17v11-13). But man wants Him to first multiply the sources before meeting the demand of God, often with the assurance that something will still be left for him.
8. While there may be lessons of patience through discomfort to build the Christian character of man, man at the same time wants to raise his head high in a flowing *agbada* and hold the microphone to share a mind-blowing testimony of His goodness.

I agree that the Bible did not teach us to trivialise the challenge of life, be it material, physical or spiritual; neither are we supposed to sweep

the pressures it exerts under the carpet of indifference. The problem of poverty that afflicted many of the widows in the golden age of the Church led to the setting up of a welfare department that had Stephen and Phillip among its pioneer staff. It is also true that we are not called to live in poverty as a condition for us to make heaven. This is why I believe and teach that every believer should aim to prosper and have a taste of the joy in the yonder world while on the earth. It is just that this is never intended to befog the focus such that will make the chase of wealth or betterment of life a primary goal of believers.

SPECIOUS DEFINITION OF POVERTY

This is an addition to the complexities of our time as championed by the modern-day Church that has defined poverty as lack of financial means to meet all physical needs. This is how the urge by whoever is afflicted by it to fight with the last drop of his blood has always charted a pattern to the shadow-chasing by the Church. Truly, Nigeria is already lacking responsible leadership such that, apart from oxygen that is freely available to those who are not in critical health condition, there is no support from the government or any of its agencies that anyone may take for granted. It is because of this that life in our part of the world is fated to that of intensive struggles.

This is why nobody wants to be poor or depend on others, including even the welfare programme of the church to meet his needs. Spurring people to fight against a loathsome scourge thus became the easiest bait to shift the focus away from the road map. In such a fight, no one cares about whatever God may be saying about the situation that confronts the individuals as all efforts are directed at the need to make it by fire and force. But the truth is that no one who is truly born again can be or remain poor. Jesus became poor so that we could inherit His riches (Corinthians 8v9). Earlier in the same chapter (verses 1-3), Paul wrote

about how the Macedonian church had exhibited great generosity in their giving to the cause of the gospel despite their utter poverty.

Now to our lopsided case, the people that our pastors have blindly recruited into the rat race to fight poverty are those who do not know where to draw the line between the legitimate needs to which God is committed by His word and what may have mutated into inordinate ambitions or covetousness. Somehow, you wonder if such pastors ever care about the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 1 and 2; especially as they relate to the Smyrna and Laodicea churches with sharply contrasting financial and social status and how the same Jesus whom we claim to be serving today rated both of them.

Looking at the posters on the streets and the flurry of activities in the churches, one may easily be deceived to believe that the Pentecostal segment of the Nigerian Church is experiencing a revival. But the focus of the programmes on which the churches and their pastors spend fortunes to organise is a betrayal of their shallowness and moribund mentality about the place that God designed the Church to fill in the world of our time. What many people may not fail to take away from those programmes is that the only reason why God exists is to solve the problems of the church members.

Between November 2016 and June 2017, I conducted a mini-study on the prayer focuses of various programmes across the spectrum of Pentecostal churches and ministries in southwest Nigeria. The information I required to know the aim of the organisers was sourced from the flyers, posters and radio jingles:

1. The focus of the programmes (from the advertisement)
2. The expectations (Mundane or Sound) of participants from the event
3. My comments and conclusion on 1 and 2 above

Below is the data analysis and findings from 109 such programmes:

A. SAMPLE OF PROGRAMS (The first 10 on the list)

FOCUS OF THE MODERN-DAY PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES COMPILED FROM NOVEMBER, 2016 THROUGH JUNE, 2017 Programme Themes were Sourced from Posters, Banners & Radio Jingles			
SN	Stated Topic or Theme	M/S	Brief (subjective) Remarks
1	I refuse to die	M	Perhaps a prophecy had triggered fear of death
2	Access to Success	M	A familiar prosperity stuff
3	Prosperity night	M	A Chase of vanity
4	Make (2017) my year	M	A Chase of vanity
5	Unlimited God	M/S	Subject to whatever God's power is aimed at
6	Ase Irurun (Authority of Ease)	M/S	Subject to what the authority is chasing
7	Anchor your destiny	M	A familiar prosperity stuff
8	I will heal their land	S/S	Of spiritual barrenness? Then it will be
9	Complete restoration	M	Participants will still come back again
10	Deliver my destiny	M	Seek ye first

M/S=Mundane or Sound S/S = Seemingly sound (# A greater number of the rest are similarly ridiculous)

B. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Programme Emphasis (<i>From the advertised Themes</i>)	Frequency of event
Mundane and irrelevant pursuits	89
Questionable ones (Depending on the handling by Anchor)	5
Seemingly worthy cause (Also depending on the handling)	14
Biblically sound focus/pursuit	1
TOTAL	109

ILLUSION OF HANGING RESPONSE

It may be seen how the spell of the pastors has been playing a huge prank on the people who continually gaze to the sky for answers to prayerless prayers on which they are being made to burn their time and sweat. Yet going by what I have come to know and seen for years, the only news I have for them is how those earth-shaking and roof-piercing sessions may never translate to anything reasonable for many who continue to anchor their hopes on them. Even the cheapest of logic should caution many of those who have been shouting *Amen, I receive it* for years or decades only to see nothing that resembles what they have been receiving.

As a result of the pressures that hardship and society mount on Church members, they have been transiting from one prayer mountain

to the valley of another revival, spending years to chase vanity and vapours. But the Bible readers should embrace the fact that their desperation to rake the world and its allurements to their corners cannot compare with the demand of God on them to win their world for Him through their yielded lives. By and large, the pursuit of genuine victory will come, not by misguided prayers but by the extent to which we have chosen to partner with God in pursuit of His agenda. Failure to discover and align our lives with the agenda of God will only result in a vicious circle of motions without progress that has come to summarise the story of the churches today.

The fact is that the testimonies of the people have not rewarded the energies employed in the barrage of their prayers, either in the past or even now. Yet the failure does not have much to do with the limitation of the power that operates in the gathering of the saints where Jesus Christ pledged His presence once there are at least two (Matthew 18v20). Rather, it has everything to do with the social order which prayer warriors have been told to ignore as if they are no longer a segment of the citizenry. The silence of heaven to most of the prayers is a hint that the expectation of a miracle shift from the crowd was not supposed to become an issue of do or die in the first instance. One may therefore imagine how the expectation of a pastor to transpose his members from their various levels on the social ladder where the wisdom of God has placed them may only be illusory.

The Bible encourages and also provides us with a guide to the pursuit of advancement in life with elements of determination and hard work. Even then, all ensuing efforts must dwell on our appreciation of the ephemerality of most of the things that are blurring the vision of the people from the vista of heaven today. The struggle and rivalry for earthly possession in which the society and the Church are now knocking their horns and as a focus of prayers is an error of the Church leadership

that has trickled down to the members. I am not yet aware of the passage of the Bible which teaches that God has saved man to launch him into material or financial abundance that were not ordained to be his lot in the first instance. If there is any power that God will grant, it will be to enable each of us to be whatever His wisdom had ordained us to be.

A glaring exception presents another side to the foregoing for those that God has ordained for material blessing but who may have powers to contend with. There are Christians whom God has numbered among the financially afloat few but, for quite some of them, dark forces that are hyperactive in our part of the world have also vowed to the contrary. In this case, prayer warfare becomes the recourse of the carrier of the promises that will not cooperate with those who are bent on burying his destiny. The counsel here, however, is that engaging in a battle of such type must not be driven by covetousness to chase shadow but a striving to fulfil the plan of God for his life as it has been established "*from the foundation of the world*" (Acts 15v18) and communicated to him. This is aside from the fact that the Holy Spirit must lead him in the battle with appropriate scriptures with which to contend for his territory.

Chapter 9: Harvest of Blunders

The reason why God retains the believers in the world after their conversion is to involve them in the business of His kingdom. This is summed up in any activity that has anything to contribute to the bringing of others who are yet to know Jesus Christ into His fold. The pursuit of this mandate begins within the settings of a local church and extends to wherever human beings are found. As revealed by Paul, God intends to clothe the believers with His blessing and glory by which they will become an attraction to their world. *“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God”* and *“...the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe...”* (Ephesian 3v10, 1v19) are parts of the means He has ordained for the success of the assignment.

This divine expectation is the reason why the only institution that God may hold responsible for the rot of Nigeria is the Church which, as a spiritual catalyst, is ordained to make the difference, beam her light and show her nation the pathway. God does not have much with the politicians whom He has neither called nor equipped to serve His purpose. The expectation is that His children will wield their influence on them for His intervention in response to their prayers. It is either God and society exaggerated the expectation from the Church or the huge segment of the followership she has so far been parading in Nigeria

has simply let both of them down. This segment of the work will highlight the fallout of the accumulated flaws and failures of the Church.

But before plunging headlong into the aftermath of lopsided prayers of the Church, I need to clear some air concerning two of the postures which I have repeatedly castigated in this work. The first was already discussed in chapter seven on the place of and need for healing, miracles and deliverance in the churches, even today. Genuine miracles have always advertised God and bear testimony to His power in evangelism. This trend will remain as long as the world endures. Humanity is confronted with mountains of challenges that will not yield their grounds except with the intervention of the supernatural. Also, there can be no attempt to trivialise what became a dominant feature of the ministry of Jesus Christ during His sojourn on the earth.

The second issue demanding clarification is an impression that may have subtly seeped in from the emphasis of this work as an attempt to eulogise poverty or peddle suffering as an inevitable lot of Christians. It, therefore, becomes necessary to make it clear that nothing may ever be wrong with the saints to nurse worthy aspirations and pursue dreams of success and financial fulfilment. Indeed, a person who grounded his life on the shelves of apathy, docility and misguided zeal will have disappointed the expectation of God and inflicted more damage to the cause of His kingdom. The complete and balanced truth, therefore, will be to face a declaration that the prosperity message is not anti-gospel.

PROSPERITY MESSAGE IS NOT ANTI-GOSPEL

The poignant reaction of the 'Puritan' segment of the Church to prosperity messages is triggered by the posture of those who swung to the extreme to redefine Christianity mainly as a means to material wealth. That is the segment of the Church that reserves little or no space for cross-bearing and all that there is to their faith begins and ends up on the

earth! I leave more of this to the section ahead. But here I contend that there is no way to detach success and prosperity from the blessing of salvation. What has come under a crushing hammer as the prosperity gospel which is portrayed in a bad light is neither strange nor antithetical to the gospel of Jesus.

The salvation that Jesus Christ procured at the cost of His anguish, the one which God packaged and delivered to mankind through Him is stuffed with total provision to meet every need of every area of our lives; body, soul and spirit. Any version of the gospel that places undue emphasis on our future inheritance in heaven to undermine the need for our survival, success and comfort here on earth must be rejected. As a good Father that He is, God is interested in every aspect of our lives. This includes the need for us to invest in our future while we are still on earth and apply whatever means to fulfil the plan He has for us and the blessing He has attached to our transformed destiny.

The truth that cannot be submerged by lopsided piety is that the Church needs cash, in millions, and even more, of various currencies from every clean source to fulfil the mandate of the Great Commission. A missionary friend once remarked that while the gospel is free, the vehicle that will convey the preachers to the place of their assignment which includes the remotest ends of the earth will need to be fuelled. Agreed, that money is not and can never become the engine of the gospel train which the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the human vessels is. But there can be no hesitation to the fact that every human instrument that is involved in the business, no matter how anointed he may be, will need to add the wheels of financial resources to the train by which the anointing will function maximally.

The reason why finance cannot become an issue in the pursuit of the agenda of God is that He owns the earth and the fullness thereof. Also, just as He receives the offering from the widow in the temple, He equally

expects those with surplus cash to surrender it for the business of His kingdom. The truth is that, while the mite of that widow may score the highest mark for a reward in comparison to those who give from their abundance, thousands of it will not take the gospel far. Real and raw cash will be needed with other resources and those who will surrender it will, of course, be those He has financially empowered for such roles. This is no shying away from the reality that *“money answereth all things...”* including how to take the gospel far and wide. It is only a matter of natural order that those who will have the role to finance the gospel will also be expected to live in greater comfort than other Church folks.

‘ANOTHER GOSPEL’ IS THE ANTI-GOSPEL

But that is where the argument ends. The problem now is how the inordinate ambition of many has mutated into a craving that because the gospel needs money, they want to be rich so that they will be its big-time, real-time sponsors. However, no one may dictate to God or force Him to recruit them into the class of those who will support the gospel with finance at the backgrounds when the place He has for them is in the field as missionaries. He alone has the prerogative of who among His people is to function in which department of the vast project.

The blunt truth is that only God has the master plan for His agenda and, going by the way His wisdom has always inspired the pursuit of that agenda, it cannot be everyone that will have the kind of wealth they wish to, despite their ardent desire to sponsor the gospel with it. Just as common observations of life should teach us, it is not everyone who prays to be rich even for the best of intent or motive that will secure an answer to that prayer. The bargain of God with all His children is that because He is their Shepherd, they shall not want. This is irrespective of whatever opportunity they may have or lack or in whichever department of His programmes He has enrolled them.

The contention that the Church has invented another gospel different from the one that Jesus brought and which His apostles handed over to us is swimming in the pool of evidence. The Body of Christ is distressed by the damaging impacts of accumulated errors that have penetrated her assemblies. It even seems as if there is an unconscious banding together by the churches not only to indulge the errors but to institutionalise them. As I wrote earlier, the way the Church now seems to anchor its messages mainly around the solutions to mortal challenges of her members to the neglect of the call to cross-bearing bellies a redefinition of her mission in the world.

The clear command of Jesus Christ to His disciples was for them to go into all the world to recruit and teach believers “...to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28v20). But that directive had collapsed on the altar of her desire to raise moneybags who would finance the gospel of ease, buy the private jets and build the auditoriums. This is how she has unwittingly garnished beds of roses for her members including even those who may have been called to the rural ends in search of the lost souls. Apart from the few pastors that are still clinging to the ‘old rugged cross’, the trendy ones have watered down the need to suffer and “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2v3), even as occasions may demand.

It is in this generation that we have preachers who teach that Christians are not called to privation and that Jesus ended all our sufferings on the Cross. To them, life must be experienced and enjoyed on a platform that faith has garnished to propel them from the good to the better, the best and then to the overall best or whatever prospect that this may suggest. In nearly all such cases, the implied success is tied in the main to the race of this life, not necessarily to whatever exploits that may be ordained by God in the advancement of His kingdom. It is just that I do not deny a few of them who seek to balance their posture with

the fact that believers may suffer persecution especially as they take their stand against an entanglement with corruption.

PROSPERITY OF DIVERSION

The foregoing narratives explain the doorway to the diversion that has afflicted the Church today. Archbishop Benson Idahosa was a man of no mean spiritual and social calibre, someone I retained personal respect for and whom I always referred to as a one-man battalion during his lifetime. He rose from a humble beginning to dominate the gospel scene even after many of his peers were seen to have dismantled their podiums of revival campaign. The rage he mustered against financial lack in the body of Christ, particularly among the Pentecostals and the war he declared against it are among what has significantly altered the Christian landscape in Nigeria, both for the good and for the bad.

Pastor Abraham Olaleye revealed during an interview how “in those days if you go to a gospel church and with about 3000 members you hardly had three people who had a car”⁵⁷. I witnessed this in the early to mid-1970s when you could find many local churches without a single high-ranking individual in the congregations. In the church where I worshipped with hundreds of members, I remember that no more than three families had cars. One of them, perhaps the highest-ranking congregant we had was a middle-level police officer. Also, as it was with one of the remaining two, anyone with a university degree who strayed into our fellowship was likely to attract the treat of an enigma⁵⁸.

Over time, Archbishop Idahosa climbed higher on the stage to parade the image of a colossus and became a symbol of new

⁵⁷ Features Interview of Church Times Agency (Date unknown)

⁵⁸ The situation with orthodox churches like Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists and Baptist Convention was a contrast as most of them were children or grandchildren of elites of previous generations.

Pentecostalism. The influence he wielded especially on the youth segment of the Nigerian Church was an overflow from the American evangelists who did not see any dividing line between the acquisition of material wealth and the pursuit of holiness in the curriculum of the Church. The luring appeal was that we needed to survive and live well here on the earth before we transit into the one beyond. Just as it is typical of humans, a seed of major diversion was sown.

But the intention of the archbishop to rebrand the image of the Pentecostals in the comity of churches and larger society in Nigeria was carried too far by the majority who became entangled with a crazy craving for the things of the moment. The pastors changed their posture and pasture from one that could raise rugged disciples to one of sugary diets. People were told to concentrate on the positive and brighter side of life by faith in the finished works at Calvary, even to the jettisoning of the garment of temperance that earlier Pentecostal fathers had worn and bequeathed their disciples.

This was buoyed by a novel emphasis on the power of the words spoken in faith by which many were now told to create or recreate the world of their dreams. In the process and as a direct consequence, the emphasis of new generation churches became hooked on striving for “...*the things that are freely given to us of God*” to enjoy (1 Corinthians 2v12, 1 Timothy 6v17). Restraints were let loose. Discipleship mentality, the embrace of the cross, the value and place of suffering, the virtue of endurance and the need for patience began to fizzle out of the curriculum of the church workers who did not waste much time to shift their camps. A new era dawned in Christianity to herald a decline of commitment to the traditional principles and discipline of the faith of our fathers.

Most of the unbalanced faith confessions and unleashing of the creative power of the tongue that the Church now came to embrace revolve around how to make it either by whatever means. A worse

aspect is how this is a flagrant disregard of generally Nigerian economic realities in comparison to the one of the United States of America that was inspiring the new thrust of faith. The loud argument became woven around the fact that because the Lord is our Shepherd (Psalm 23), we must not want and that God did not promise to meet our needs according to the state of the economy but according to the riches of Christ (Philippians 4v19)⁵⁹.

This era of Archbishop Benson Idahosa joined with the discovery by the Nigerian Church of a new ‘Upper Room’ in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a development which has spelt positive and negative implications for her. On an impressive note, the Pentecostal segment of the Church, was rebaptised into the teaching on faith, exploits, miracles and healing the way that God would want His people to be groomed on the important subjects. Those were teachings and practices that were mostly touted as the exclusive preserves of few giants in the Church in our growing years now coming as great compliment to the one on holiness and pursuit of heaven. It is to the credit of the new faith thrust that the shackle of ignorance is broken and Satan and his agents are now relegated to the dustbin where they truly belong.

On another note, however, one may spot at least two snags to the developments. First, an uncouth and imbalanced demonstration of the faith may wear a nuance of subjecting the Holy Ghost to the directives of those exercising it. The consequence of this, like we used to hear of it in our growing years, is how a man of faith will not know or care to know when the submission of *“Speak, Lord for thy servant heareth”* (1 Samuel 3v10) will mute into the arrogance of *“Hear, Lord, for thy servant*

⁵⁹ The ignored fact is that most of the fulfilled saints in our part of the world may yet discover how millions of non-Christian citizens in flourishing economies of the world are living better lives than the ones on which people here are being told to build their expectations and testimonies as exploits of faith.

speakeeth...”. Secondly, my personal and greater antipathy with the movement is how the mountain-moving faith is shackled by the pursuit of the mundane things that often have their roots in the ambition of those who were instructed to exercise it. This, obviously is a carry-over from the narrowmindedness that has afflicted the older folks in the Pentecostal circles which I have repeatedly chided in this work.

Desirable and benefitting as Kenneth Hagin’s movement has been to the Body of Christ, it has burdened the Nigerian Church with a generation of suckling Christians who are deliberate in their efforts to disown even a few of the good traditions that were delivered to us by the forefathers of the Christian faith in our parts of the world. Instead of sifting the bad from the good, and spotting those that may be improved upon, both the good and bad were discarded in preference for anything foreign, especially American, in the atmosphere of their worship. This is a mismanaged aspect of good education that has equipped our children to be part of the global village which the world has since become.

Most of the church services by the Nigerian youths in the arena of new faith movement are now conducted on the ‘foreign soils’ of the Western nations where they migrate to during service sessions. In several such instances, many of the hymns and our indigenous music even with their rich and spiritually lifting lyrics are conspicuously denied any space. Yet, just a little digging may indicate how it is not all the new revelations and copied worship systems that God is exposing to the youths that are meant to erode the patterns and spiritual values that the local fathers have handed to us. The problem of the Church is now condensed to her inability to distinguish between what God is adding to the Church through the new movements and the empty routines and setbacks of the old systems He is replacing.

A MOCKERY OF THE CROSS⁶⁰

Dr Tai Solarin, the proprietor of the Mayflower School, Ikene will need no long introduction to those who are of reasonable age. I am picking on him to the extent that I consider his life to be a sharp rebuke to the pastors and churches of our time. The message of his life is not only for Christians but for our generally lax society which prefers shadows to the realities and shortcuts to success as a substitute for the tenacity of purpose required to build an enduring legacy for a better world.

Also, this has nothing to do with the ranking of his rectitude before God, the existence of whom he had openly denied anyway. There is no doubt that his actions were driven by an overriding aim to impact humanity and impress his fellowmen. Despite this, the spirit of his admonition and prayers cannot be impugned in the light of the revelations of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes which is one book of the Bible that conveys the realities of life to us in this vale of shadow

Dr Solarin led an ascetic life of self-denial which he combined with intense struggles against all forms of social injustice. He wrote what looked like a prayer “May your road be rough...”⁶¹ and, before anyone would cast a stone at him, he followed the prayer with a quick rider to explain himself and, possibly, attract the ‘Amen’ of his readers. “I am not cursing you; I am wishing you what I wish myself every year...”. That was his tough but honest wish for the readers of his regular column as the hand of the clock rotated to the start of a new year. Though the prayer was not directed to any deity, it nonetheless conveyed hard facts

⁶⁰ The “cross” as applied here is a symbol of suffering and death of ‘self’ to the world as taught by Jesus and in the epistles. It has nothing to do with raging debate of whether Jesus Christ died on the **cross** or on a **pole**, a distinction that makes no difference whatsoever except to the Russelites (JWs) in their separatist ideology by which the sign of the cross was labelled as Christian paganism.

⁶¹ The write-up first appeared in the *Nigerian Tribune* edition of January 01, 1964 and I had my contact with it through a literature session during my secondary school days.

about the harsh realities of our world and the kind of rocky mentality that will be needed to wade through them.

But it is this same tough spirit that have been prescribed for the disciples of Jesus Christ for them to scale through the many barriers to a successful Christian race. While no one will tie success in the Christian race to an outcome of human efforts or struggle, the kernel of Dr Tai's wish will easily be traced to several passages of the Bible, the foremost of which is Ecclesiastes which has been described as the script that conveys life's naked truths. It is also in tandem with some writings and lifestyles of highly successful saints of old, like the Apostle Paul. That, for example, was the apostle who counsels Christians to embrace hardship as soldiers of Jesus Christ while Dr Tai's work dwelt on the same ruggedness that everyone should embrace as may be needed to tread the path of the old saints.

His hard posture also mirrors the teachings of Jesus Christ Himself, especially what He had to say about bearing our cross to follow Him daily. Though He had no sin, Jesus had His Cross which He carried and on which He eventually died at Calvary. We are instructed to follow His step by taking our cross to our individual Golgotha where the self, its bloated ego and all the dross that stands in the way of God in our lives will be crucified. Jesus had counselled us to count the cost of discipleship before embarking on the race to heaven that demands nothing short of our totality on God's altar of self-sacrifice. The atheist here did not deviate much from the urge of Apostle Peter for believers to see themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, a stance that did not leave too much room for the pursuit of the dross and life of ease which has come to dominate the focus and prayers of today's Church.

There is no doubt that the motive of his prayers is self-promoting and self-vindicating. But, like I earlier stated, his intention to baptise his audience into the naked truths about our world which many pastors are

shielding their ‘bread and butter’ congregations away from cannot be mistaken. It will not be strange if you find many pastors today who will berate his stance and caution their followers to distance themselves from his prayers⁶². This of course will be the tutorials of those who have showered greater efficacy on their confessions and teach that one will have whatever he says, even where their claims have neglected several other portions of the same Bible.

But whether or not we are prepared to reason with Dr Tai Solarin, the truth of his stance will continue to burst upon all that is born of a woman at one or some times during their sojourn here. This may come in forms of sickness that may inflict considerable pains, bereavements of and mourning for a loved one, loss of a precious possession, disappointment at the edge of a breakthrough and similar indigestible experiences that may rotate to the table of even the most pious saint. Sooner than later, one after the other, we will all come to terms with the fact that God is not as committed to our comfort as He is to the pursuit of His agenda in the world. We will also come to know that He will not break His protocols to pander to the aspirations of the misguided people who fill up most of our sanctuaries today.

The blunder into which a huge segment of the Church has been baptised has led us to where we are today. We now parade so many Christians in many church settings that are not in the reckoning of heaven or hell. As I earlier admitted, most of our fathers went to one extreme by which the future of many of them and their children were confined to the shelves of tilted consecration. Now, God has opened the eyes of the Church to this omission and the need for believers to

⁶² For instance, I have heard about how some pastors, one of them in the high hierarchy of my church have cautioned members of their congregation against singing the popular hymn, *Jesus, I my cross have taken* (CACGHB 732) which is one of the finest hymns that many of us grew up to hold sacred in the church with messages that beam the light on the end of the toil and trials of the Church and her members.

know that they can desire and pursue success and progress in life. But this would not have been intended to birth a kind of shift that would discard the ancient landmarks of holiness and of keeping heaven in view as the ultimate goal of our lives. This lapse of the faith movement is one of the things that has labelled Nigerian Christianity today as being “three miles wide and one inch deep”.

As we should know, God will never be interested in quantity at the expense of quality and this fact has belied the problems of the swarming multitudes who mill in and out of our sanctuaries. The Church as an institution is meant to serve as a barrack to reel out soldiers that, having cast the world and its allurements behind them, should bring their generation to its knees before our all-conquering Lord and Master. But many pastors have turned her meeting venues into dispensaries, even with a high mortality rate. All these have combined to place the blame for the noxious state of our nation squarely at the doorstep of the Church. It may then be seen how the large population of the Church in Nigeria has failed to pull its huge weight to make desired impacts, a fact that is starring all of us in the face now.

Just by what may seem like either a repetition or overemphasis, let us post a few questions to those who have stayed long enough in the churches to volunteer honest answers. How often do we hear sermons that are tailored around subjects like the vanity or emptiness of life, fear of God, the day of judgement, the extreme beauty of heaven and the extreme horror of hell with other topics which were regular menus from the pulpits in the 1970s? How popular are the messages that reinforce the fact that man with all his successes, acquisitions and glories is a perishable grass with no lasting value if he lacks the gift of eternal life and the grace of holiness or if he trades any of them away in the process? Today, how popular or regular are the messages that warn their audience about the awful consequences of wrong choices?

LABOURERS, NOT (BUSINESS) EXECUTIVES

God did not set up the Church to raise moneybags or captains of industries as such ambition may only be traced to individual churches and their pastors. Instead, He seeks to recruit rugged disciples and rare-bred soldiers who will bear the seed of the gospel and traverse the toughest of the terrains with it. As earlier noted, it is expected that a few financially successful people will emerge within the Church and this will be just as it may please God to bless them because of what He wants to do with the resources He is placing at their disposal. Even the life of comfort and luxury that such resources will bestow on the few chosen vessels will never be intended to lure them away from the centre point of their cross and whatever that may suggest.

While it is true that God owns the earth and all the treasures therein, He maintains a disdainful and damning posture to materiality as an object of pursuit. This is why He has never made wealth a point of attraction or a source of distraction for those who will diligently seek Him. But this is the goal that may summarise the junk that many pastors, knowingly or unknowingly have been stuffing their members with. This is either directly from what they preach or how they should expect their audience to interpret or misinterpret their messages.

In effect, those who may want to put their lives and future on the line for the needed desperation to reclaim the lost have dwindled in number from our sanctuaries. This is the sad reality that the missionary agencies have been contending with as they shed sweat and blood at the altar of prayers for God to send them the labourers. Furthermore, the reason I have had to be this hard on the Church, especially its new generation segment is because, as I have repeatedly signalled through this work, the failure of Nigeria is almost wholly the failure of the Church that has shifted its focus to the pursuit of vanity and vapour.

A mission resources mobiliser, Dr Ferdinand Nweke said that while Jesus is grieved that the labourers are still few, our church auditoriums are filled. This is a glaring sight to behold, especially during special miracles and bondage-breaking services. The clear message from this is that many people that the churches are parading as members are of no use to God in the pursuit of His agenda. I agree with the fact that, perhaps, our society would have been much worse if most of such people did not belong to one church or the other and the so-called brothers were to swell the lists of criminals, and the sisters the gang of street prostitutes. While this may be true to an extent, dwelling on it may also mean that we have chosen to pull the wool over the failure of the Church.

DRIVES OF THE TRENDY PASTORS

In the discourse of Apostle Paul with Timothy, the first bishop of the church at Ephesus, he counselled him about what he should form the template of his ministry. The whole counsel revolves mainly around a caution against the Christian chase of wealth or fame:

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” (1 Timothy 6v6-8)

It then becomes a tough task for anyone to explain the crazy craving of today’s trendy pastors for possessions in the light of what Paul has offered as a modest bearing or state of mind for the believers. This is a major offshoot of what I have described as ‘another gospel’ that has no resemblance to what the apostles handed over to us.

Earlier, the same Apostle Paul whose entire life had been established to mirror all his teachings to the Church, had addressed the Corinthians concerning their desire for advancement in life with the utmost caution. One of his blunt revelations; *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Corinthians 15v19) was to drum it loud that

Christians have no business competing with the world over nothing. With such a statement from a paramount teacher of the New Testament Church, one cannot but wonder how is it that all that seems to engage the attention of the believers in Nigeria today is mainly the chase of the world and its acquisitions. He wrote to them:

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:” (1 Corinthians 1v26)

Here we note, in fairness to Apostle Paul, that he did not say “*not any*”. But he cautioned; “*not many*”. It follows then that Christians with endowments for greatness can rise into the club of the “*wise...*, *mighty*, (and the) *noble*”. So, while it is not “*not any*” tycoons or the movers and shakers of our society, it is also “*not many*” that may chase such status. Christians who are well-raised know that it is wholly at the discretion of God to recruit whomever He wills into the list of the “*not many*”. With good understanding, there will be no need to create or nurse the impression that anyone who is armed with strong faith, commitment and powerful confessions may pressurise God for a slot in the selection process. They will also understand that the same God they are bombarding with requests to take them to ‘high places’ may have, in His unparalleled wisdom, prepared them for fruitful services on a rung of the ladder that may not be as glamorous.

We know that genuine miracles, like the ones that are usually associated with upward movement on the run of life’s ladder, are to advertise the gospel and serve as an attraction to others on how good God can be in the lives of His children. But the temptation on the part of pastors and organisers of revivals or programmes is how they pray and make faith decrees to attach what is meant for “*not many*” to the destinies of many or the majority in their audience. Even if this is not

exactly what they intend, one is unable to gloss over that impression from the blasting of their microphones that is urging everyone to rise and take their place in the scheme of things, to transit from the tail regions of life and be the head as God has promised them.

In chapter one, I hinted at the advancements of Joshua and Caleb, the pair that exhibited rare faith with a minority report of the spies that Moses had sent forth. The narratives of the Bible concerning the two who were from the same stock of Israel, armed with the same faith of their forefathers and held unto God's promises for a glorious future of His people in Canaan land is enough to drum caution us about the prerogatives of God. It is also for this reason that the efforts and prayers of the pastors to raise more and more Joshuas in their congregations, which Paul said is not for "*many*", should never neglect the need to encourage the vast majority who are likely to operate in the categories of Caleb and who will still be required to light their corners and make their impact wherever God has placed them.

We are in a tangle where the means and the end are confused such that we do not know which is to lead to what. This is the major blunder that has confronted many great revival movements that Nigeria has witnessed in its decades of Pentecostalism. As I wrote in *Fractured Focus*, "the lens is cracked and the vision is fractured. The church objective has been coloured in the dye of materialism." Just as I may attest to the sincerity and integrity of a number of the revivalists whom I know a little about at least from a close range, the emphases have not been so much on holiness and how to get the crowd that has been pulled during revival events closer to God as they were to address their 'bread and butter' craves, the pursuit of success and the comfort of the present era.

During an interview, Austen C. Ukachi⁶³ noted how many people have argued, and rightly too, that “...the greatest need of the Church now is for revival and reformation. The past revivals brought growth to the Church but failed to bring about a moral reformation of the society. This was a great shortcoming of the past revivals”. This narration is true about many great open-air gospel campaigns we have seen in this country. It also applied to the activities of our erstwhile fire-spitting freelance evangelists I mentioned in chapter five about who once shook our Pentecostal podiums during their time. The failure to transition converts into disciples and instruments of further revival was only largely mitigated by the commitment and spiritual stance of genuine believers on our campuses that made a difference.

This is the cause of blind and virtue-deficiency Christianity from which the Church of our time has not been able to detach herself. What the enemy sowed into the unguarded backyard of the Church of our time has been aptly identified as the doctrines of the New Age. This is where and how the attention was shifted from total surrender to the will of God to the pursuit of self, self-plan and all about me, mine and my family. This is why today, even after conversion, Christians will make plans and ask God to bless the plans and help them to actualise them. As earlier hinted, the popular impression now is that the only reason why God exists is to do our bidding and solve our problems, and never the other way round. This is especially if once we can back our cravings with ‘mountain-moving’ faith and powerful scriptural confessions.

NEGATIVE TESTIMONIES

The lives and ministries of many pastors that have exchanged their pristine calling for the pursuit of vanity have aptly fitted into the caution of Apostle Paul to Timothy we saw earlier. Only the press and the

⁶³ Source: [Sunday Guardian](#) of August 26, 2016,

vibrant social media of our time may have the catalogue of the evil that pastors in Nigeria have perpetrated. This relates specifically to how many of them, in their blind chase of what was not needed, have “... *fall(en) into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*” (1 Timothy 6v9). It is interesting to know that it is not only fake pastors that have carved a slot in the list of breaches. Many who had genuine calls and started well have been stung to swerve into occultism and money-spinning gimmicks.

The castigation of the Church by society has met its match in her inability to pose any more threat to the forces of darkness, all of which are parts of the consequences of omissions. Members of the public are more comfortable dealing with people if they do not see them with the Bible or if they do not claim to be Christians. Today in some awkward instances, a person stands to worsen his chance if he dares to introduce himself as a pastor.

The Church got it wrong somewhere while she does not yet seem to have seen the need to retrace her steps. Stories of improprieties in the management of Church accounts and assets are not likely to move or miff anyone anymore as the circulating news beams their screaming headlines on many pastors who are battling with integrity challenges. Most of the indicted pastors are among those who have assured their members that they do not need to wait till they get to heaven to have the best. That is an end that will justify even the most awkward means.

I have raised the question over time that if all that Christians are aspiring to, praying about and exercising faith in God for are the things of the moment, who is going to be fooling anyone with lip claims that there are much better and more glorious treasures that man should look forward to in heaven? With collapsed Christian standards, believers indulge in all forms of bribery and corruption and join others in perpetuating all vices in pursuit of illicit gains in the marketplace. A huge

bunch of Christians in Nigeria are not known to operate any standard in terms of weights, measurement or quality of service delivery that is different from the ones prevailing in their wider world. In their quest to beat the rules, cheat the system and rake in more money, Christian businesses are just as guilty as the rest of their compeers in under-declaration of profits to evade tax liabilities.

Just as may be seen from many passages of the Bible, it is the perfect will of God for His children to prosper but with the definition of the term only in the context of the same Bible. Even at this as earlier stated, there is none of its passage, especially in the New Testament, where material acquisition should ever become a dream to chase around in the ways it has become today. True Christians will appreciate the difference between those who chase vanities of vanishing treasures as priorities around the prayer mountains, convention grounds or with the exercises of their faith and those whom goodness and mercy, as components of grace that incorporate all forms of blessings are supposed to follow about (Psalm 23v6). The instruction of Jesus for us to seek first the kingdom of God for other things to be added is one of those that heaven will not bend for anyone (Matthew 6v33).

The presence of Christians is to restrain the spread of evil in the world of corruption and darkness as she lifts high the lampstand and charts the course of righteousness. Jesus revealed that many are called but few are chosen. Also, since the fake and the bad will always outnumber the good in the gathering of human beings, the Church too has always been caught in that intricate web. But while God is not to be taken aback by the failure of the many that have been called, the real problem is where the chosen few are either misguided or not exposed to the kind of teachings by which they are to make a difference both within and outside their church premises.

Nigerian Church of earlier generation has abundant stories of how the government and business community would first knock on her door in their search for staff to be recruited into sensitive positions. That was when the Christians were groomed to shun avarice in the fear of God and in the discharge of their obligation to be good ambassadors of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our crooked society. Believers of those years distinguished themselves with the virtues that were embedded in them and the Christian testimonies they were raised to defend. These are part of the testimonies that several believers have swept into the drain of misguided aspirations.

Today, many in the hierarchies of the churches are as corrupt as notorious businessmen and members of the society while in some cases, they have been proved to be much worse. The gold had become vague, the light has turned dim and the salt of the Church now competes with the dust and ashes. That is even after the same Jesus who had likened His disciples to salt and light in the world was also quick to warn that light may grow dim and salt may lose its savour (Matthew 5v13-15). A cautious fact on this warning is that the salt and light metaphor will apply only to Christians who have been saved in the first instance and not the nominal millions who have only baptismal names to parade and will not even pretend to be born again in the first instance.

The snag of the Church, as once remarked by a friend, relates to many who grew to become men of God but who were never known to be His children at any previous point in their lives. They do not have personal relationships or contracts of employment with Jesus Christ and, yet, have floated churches with motives that cannot be traced to the cause of the gospel. The multiplicity of challenges confronting the people and their desperation to find where to anchor their hopes explains why floating churches will remain thriving ventures. It has thus become a matter of a secondary concern that many such 'promoters' are those

that are now swimming in scandals with narrations that continue to blow the mind of the general public and dent the image of the Body of Christ.

Financial recklessness is one of the most rampant issues in several parts of the world like Nigeria where the official machinery of the government for scrutiny and demand for accountability in the management of public funds is grossly lacking. There are times when alarms have blown and feeders sneaked from the bag of secrecy as pastors attempt what they do in Nigeria in sane countries. The situation has always bred a tinge of contradictions that furnishes anti-gospel detractors with weapons of insult on a wider scale. By now, it will amount to stupidity and self-deception for the Church to ignore the defamatory stories that continue to flaunt around her, especially with many of the fake landlords in her polluted altars.

DOCTRINAL FRICTIONS

The development highlighted in the last three segments of this work has sponsored a split of the Nigerian Church into two almost unrelated camps which, for illustration purposes, I will describe as those in the *right* and the *left* flanks⁶⁴. As it is known with all movements, those in the right camp still stick to the traditional Christian values with eyes on the old landmark while those on the left are the radicals who are driven by new revelation and knowledge. The latter group challenged all it met on the ground and, as earlier said, is prepared to discard nearly everything rooted in the traditions that churches of the past generations were known for. I look forward to another work to address the schism that this has sponsored in the Body of Jesus Christ, the need for us to mend fences and rigid postures by those on both sides of the divide.

⁶⁴ The split here has nothing to do with the division sheep and goats before the great Judge on the last days who will face their sentences as laid out in Matthew 25.

The golden oldies remain on the pedestal of the fathers with the strict codes of operations. Many of the traditional churches and most of the revival that broke out in many of the higher institutions are in this camp. It is from among them that many of the rugged missionaries at the forefront of cross-cultural ventures have emerged. On the other hand, and at the height of revival that shifted a focus to the new mandate, many have diverted into the gospel of ease to reject what they termed as the gospel of poverty and suffering. Torn between these two are a crop of vibrant youth movements and churches that were never connected with any Christian traditions or those that have lost touch with them by deliberately establishing a new pattern for their ministries.

It is in the second group above that we have those who got baptised into the word of faith ministry that revolves around the application of faith principles for survival and success in the race of life. Most of them operate with vibrancy and charisma that our teeming youths have found irresistible. As a result, some traditional churches that are still struggling to find their relevance have been lured to shift their ground even if only to salvage the drifting of their members, especially the youths. Going by the exposure I have with some aspects of their emphasis that I have embraced; the positive impacts they have made cannot be dismissed with a wave of hand. An unbiased assessment will reveal how they have bridged many voids that traditional churches with their outdated system have paid less attention to over the decades.

Again, it is not the focus of this work to explore the merits or demerits of their posture and whatever breaches that their brand of the gospel has sponsored into the Church. The denominator is the fact that both those who operate Kenneth Hagin's influence and many in the traditional church setting who would castigate or label them as *Pentecostals* are hunted by the same diversion I have been protesting against in this volume. The emphasis of both camps has converged on the same

narrow and shallow objective which is to pursue and enjoy the best of whatever is termed as divine provisions for them in the present world. But while the traditional Pentecostals still have a place for the doctrine of heaven, and hell. the new generation churches have feigned apathy.

“WHAT SEEKEST THOU...?” (Genesis 37v15)

The Yoruba interpretation of the question above, “*Kini eyin nwa?*” titled the address of Oba Isaac B. Akinyele, the Olubadan of Ibadan and the first president of Christ Apostolic Church to the convention delegates of the church in 1944. It was a challenge to self-examine the goals they had set for their Christian race. We know that since man lost access to the original provision in the Garden of Eden, searching for everything that means anything to his existence has become his most pulsating activity. This is why Christians should be taught to appreciate God as the Anchor of their existence and serve Him for who He is and not because of whatever material blessing they want to grab and enjoy.

Just look at it this way. Let us assume that general well-being, career success and material wealth are to define the essence of Christianity. Let us also assume that they are to be earned and visibly owned by those who will embrace the gospel, make their positive confessions and follow the kind of prayer that has now been screwed into their subconscious. In this case, no one will need to be motivated by faith to become a Christian. The booties and goodies that everyone will see accruing in the direction of those in the churches will be sufficient to draw in far more crowds than the ones that the most anointed evangelist may ever be able to win.

For lack of sound teachings, and just as we still have it today, a great number of those who migrated to revival venues who later constituted the membership of the early Pentecostal movements in Nigeria set a myopic goal. They were not taught about how to tap into the provisions of the Cross and embrace life on a higher spiritual pedestal to live above

personal limitations apart from what they can see and grab physically or as responses to their prayers. An extension of this malady is what has cowed a huge segment of the Church to make the prayer battle against forces of retrogression a recurring fascination.

Succumbing to the pressure that problems exert, even without much effort on the part of Satan, will be enough to derail an unguarded focus of the Church and her members. We will also need to remember that the demons that chased people to the revival grounds are not to be evacuated from the world anytime soon. The worst aspect of this is how people were not equipped to live above pettiness and compromise. Thus, the spirits that were once driven back at the revival grounds often secure the means of sneaking their way back to afflict the people, often with worse malaise (Matthew 12v43-45).

“What seekest thou...” of Pastor I. B. Akinyele will be more pointedly directed to the entire Church of Jesus Christ on the earth by which they are to define or redefine their goal in the Christian race. I have mentioned how heaven was main in the focus of the erstwhile believers in Nigeria. While this was not intended to jeopardise noble aspirations, all such ambitions were tucked inside the pursuit of heaven, and never the other way round. Paul noted this about the Corinthian Christians who came “... *behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 1v4-8). Even the exercise of our gifts and faith which inspires our physical and spiritual activities finds its fullest expression in the constant expectation of when the trumpet shall sound.

Someone once said that the more of heaven in our lives and focus, the less of the earth we will covet. But the pastors today have shifted their attention and one of their members away from heaven. It is as if no appreciation of or preparation for the place on the part of their members is obligatory. This is why we may have a good ground to question the mandate of a pastor who will preach fifty-two sermons or

more in a year without any of it to make his genuine members salivate for heaven or warn the hypocrites among them about the pangs of hell.

Jesus Christ did the two. He assured His followers about the place He was going to prepare for them. He warned His audience against the path to hell (Matthew 5v29,30). He wept sore over Jerusalem in a loud warning to the Jews about the disaster that lurked around all that accounted for their national pride. Paul laboured the hardest in the gospel to “*persuade men*” and shift their grounds away from the terror of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5v11). His blazing passion for the souls of his kinsmen made him wish that he could be accursed (lose his salvation) if that would save his Jewish brethren from their errors (Romans 9v1-3).

Agreed, that there are incentives for holy living, one of which is the avoidance of recklessness that jeopardises our health. But there is no urge to live a holy life that compares with the desire to make heaven and escape the horror of hell at the last. While it is true that the foundation of those expectations is rooted in the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary, there may still be grounds to question those who will take everything about heaven and hell for granted. This is especially true as the same pastors are known to be preoccupied with recycled messages that promise them and their audience every blessing on the earth.

The fact that those who went before us left us with a pattern, we need to examine the following with an open mind:

1. It cannot be a vain exercise to comfort the troubled believers with the assurance of a better place in the end. Neither can it be an unfounded effort to warn the wicked about the danger of hell.
2. Some of the epistles of the Apostles portrayed the beauty of heaven and drummed the horror of hell to their readers.
3. There is no aim for the Christian race that may ever compete with the need to enter heaven (with or without the reward that

our works on the earth will earn for us) and escape from “*the wrath to come*” (Luke 3v7, 1 Thessalonian 1v10).

4. Just like I wrote in the *Rebirth of Vision*, it is highly unlikely for those who lack the focus on heaven or who may have lost it to serve as an instrument of God to prepare others for the place.
5. The fact that the central teachings about heaven and hell have been eroded from the pulpits of the churches today while all the time and energies are burnt on other things is indicative of how far out of course the Church of our time has derailed.

Today, except during the wake-keeping and burial services of some Orthodox churches, nearly all the exciting hymns and choruses about the beauty of heaven that the Church used to sing in my growing years with great excitement have vanished from the church music departments. I cannot recall when any one of such songs about heaven that adorn the pages of several popular hymn books was featured in any regular service for many decades now. But the older generation of believers whom God inspired to write those lovely lyrics and those who composed beautiful and befitting musical notations for them were all understood to have enrolled in the same race that we claim or pretend to be running today!

Chapter 10: Strategic Warfare

This is a passionate advocacy for overdue massive reorientation of today's Church about prayer. It is not just enough for Christians to appreciate the power of prayer which is limited only by whatever God cannot do and which, up to this moment, does not exist. It then becomes a shared knowledge that once Satan succeeds in making a mess of the potency of prayer, he will have secured the most strategic victory over the Church and whoever may think he is contending against him and his evil agenda. As I hinted earlier, the misadventure of prayerless prayers did not start with the Church of our time. But it is my ardent prayer that it will find its grave as we consult the Bible to disembark from the voyage of empty ventures.

Almost everyone has come to know that life is warfare and those who take it as funfair will end up as casualties. Everyone born into this world is continually arraigned within the firing range of the enemy. At the same time, those who are well-taught know that the most assured force against the assault of the enemy is the weapon of prayer that is rooted in the scriptures. It is only through prayer that man can bring the hands of God to bear and achieve the needed change in everything that means anything to him. At the same time, prayer exercise is not about our narrow or petty selves but about what God wants to do, first in and

through our lives and more importantly, in our world for which He seeks the partnership of His children in the place of prayer.

This is why it will be a tragedy of no mean proportion if the force of prayer is rendered inconsequential by the ignorance of those who pretend to wield it. Somehow, this is a challenge I have sensed and shared with people over and over again with grave burdens through some of my past works. In this chapter, I harp on a few of the strategic burdens that should have driven the Church to her knees as deliberate alternatives to the prayers that have been polluting the atmosphere of her sanctuaries and by which we are now almost totally overwhelmed by the enemy. As a classic example, I mentioned in an earlier chapter how the Church filtered away the opportunity to disinfect the atmosphere of our struggles for political independence with prayers. Even today, just visit any venue where huge volumes of prayers are gushing out and you will discover how the myopic mentality is still driving the trend.

OUR BATTLE OR THE LORD'S BATTLE?

The members of the Church have rarely, if ever, been awakened to the fact that the God of heaven and earth, the Omnipotent Creator of all things, the One who reigns without a rival, tenure or jurisdiction also has His cause and battle which He expects His people to own, and then prosecute in partnership with Him. Battles have been declared against Him and His interests in the world, reinforced by the powers that have sworn concerning Jesus Christ that *"we will not have this man reign over us..."* (Luke 19v14). That declaration is one singular agenda that has united many nations and religions more than any other cause in human history. And true to its intent and spirit, they are not shifting their ground.

This is a battle in which God, too, seeks to recruit His children as soldiers of the Cross for them to marshal greater spiritual force against the forces to extend His reign of righteousness in the world, even as it

applies to our believed nation. We know that our end-time age has a heavier dosage of life's challenges than may be traced to any previous period of human history. But the slacking of the Church has donated too much space for the enemy and his evil agenda to prevail. The truth is that while man *can* do nothing without God, God *will* do nothing without man! The plan and expectation of God, therefore, demand that he enrolls first as a soldier in His battle for the enthronement of Jesus Christ among the nations of the world. This is on the one hand.

On the other hand, the battles that are pitched against us and our destinies by ancestral powers, lineage curses and enemies of our progress are an extension of the battle that Satan has declared against God. A yielding of our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is a process by which those battles are transferred to and owned by Him. From the abundance of my personal experience, I know the battle of destinies confronting very many Christians in our part of the world by which, after our conversion, we need special prayers and deliverance ministrations for us to enjoy the abundant life as promised by God. Yet this is not meant to become a source of major distraction that it has now come to be when God is now made to look like a competitor who is embroiled in a perennial battle with evil spirits over our lives.

The problem we have always had is reaching that point of total surrender to the warm embrace of the Father. God, as the overall Controller and "*Father of all spirits*" (Hebrews 12v9), has and knows all it will take to direct and assist our prayer efforts to defeat fundamental challenges. We see copious examples of this when God declared that the battles confronting His people are His battles. Such situations played out in the tough encounter to liberate the Israelites from the grip of the Egyptians, in the confrontation of the allied nations against Jehoshaphat and in the siege of Sennacherib against Judah. It is also in this respect that He pledged that "*I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary*

unto thine adversaries” (Exodus 23v22).

God does not expect any of His children to see any situation confronting him to be different from anything for which He has undertaken to be solely responsible. The last stanza of a popular hymn, *Through every changing scene of life*, reads:

Fear Him, ye saints and you will then
Have nothing else to fear
Make you His service your delight
Your want shall be His care

This also reinforces the counsel of Jesus for us to “*seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matthew 5v22) following which all our needs; blessings, victory and success would be nothing but mere additions.

It is the casting down of this precept that has thrown the Church and her members into the ring of fire-fighting against a trounced enemy. Would to God that we will begin to engage in worthwhile pursuits by which He will become an Enemy to our enemies. Beyond this will be His commitment to stand up to the corporate enemies of Nigeria and pilot its sailings to the harbour of rest. The nation will be extricated from the grip of the powers of darkness that have led us progressively to where we find ourselves since these turbulent years. Our political leaders who have been agents of satanic oppression on the one hand and God’s instrument of chastisement on the other would be re-orientated to become agents of blessing to the populace with the best that heaven has intended for us.

The Church cannot stand aloof and let God down. As I earlier stated, the concern of God is not about the unbelievers on whom He had never placed any responsibility or staked any expectation. God is

not concerned by the successive bad leadership that has been emerging on our political podiums. He is not even as bothered by terror gangs and their wicked backers that have made the Body of Christ their target of vicious attacks. On the other hand, He has always been disturbed by the Church that has lost her focus and abandoned her authority that is yearning for ordained impact at the altar of prayers. The time to wake up is now, just as His goodness and mercy are beckoning.

SOUTHERN CHRISTIANS' NEGLECT OF NORTHERN MUSLIMS

Many people, including blind Christians, have continued to bemoan the amalgamation just because they are blind to the purpose of its Architect. It is thus a failure of heinous proportion for the Church to have blinded herself to the plight of the people whose eternal destiny was tied to her spiritual apron by the reason of the union. Jesus Christ died at Calvary to pay the price of redemption for all men, including those in the northern part of Nigeria whom our strategic vision and prayers would have won to the side of the Cross. Please note that I have neither said that no effort was made by the Southern Church nor forgotten that there were indigenous churches within the region. It is just that I am driven by statistics, especially with the understanding that to whom much is given, from him much is expected to drive a conclusion that the Church has not pulled anything close to her full weight here.

The train of the gospel to the region was well-known to have suffered setbacks that called for nothing short of divine intervention and institutional re-strategising by the Church to make the needed impact. Again, the main component of that move was to be mainly targeted prayer to firstly soften the grounds of the hearts and then wet the seed of the gospel to achieve the penetration and saturation that has been missing in the region. But we may all see how energies are dissipated on

prayers that are very easy for God to ignore and which are still being ignored, especially by those who are supposed to have outgrown that level. After all, praying is not as important as praying right or praying according to the mind of God to achieve results.

It is wrong for us to assume that it is only we human beings who have needs that God must meet, and never the other way. The tepid disposition of the Church to the need for the salvation of the precious souls of the vast Muslims in the north, especially by those in the south where her force is formidable, is a blunder yet to be mended. We are all reaping the repercussions of the backwardness of the region and the security menace that its radical elements have constituted to the polity.

Among the prayers he compiled for the Lenten Season of 1959, Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola was quoted to have urged the Church, especially Christ Apostolic Church members to pray that God should visit the northern region with His salvation through indigenous ministers of the gospel who would be to the region what God had called and his team to the people of the southwest⁶⁵. Just as I wrote in *Rebirth of Vision*, it became a failure of colossal dimension for the Nigerian Church, more especially Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) to whom the request was originally addressed to have ignored that assignment and the opportunities that presented themselves for its pursuit.

Agreed, that several denominations with headquarters in the south have established their presence in the regions. But it is also a fact that many of the churches there operate typically like the synagogues of the Jews in foreign lands where their tribesmen in those places were the main people that constituted the congregations. My church, CAC, is one of those that have established its presence in several cities, towns and even villages across the north. However, a high percentage of members of

⁶⁵ This is from Dr Abi Olowe in his *Great Revivals, Great Revivalist: Joseph Ayo Babalola*

the assemblies are Yorubas from the south. Apart from missions that are well grounded in the region like Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) and Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), many southern-based assemblies do not have many services dedicated to the Hausa or Fulani communities. To worsen the case, interpretations are not even arranged to attract them or cater for their participation in the services.

On one hand, and despite the number of years they have existed in the regions, the churches were not known for any strategic programmes targeted at their hosts. Worse still, the missionary agencies who took it up to reach the unreached people of the region with the gospel have been largely ignored and starved of financial, logistic and prayer support from the churches. This neglect of the missionaries by the mainstream Church in Nigeria is still a biting reality, even up to this moment. There are only a very few Christians who have been tutored to make prayers for the conversion of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and those at the raw end of idolatry a duty of delight. The question of total submission, *“Lord, what will thou have me do”* (Acts 9v6) is the one that does not mean anything to most of those in our sanctuaries today.

For many decades, the entire north was peaceful and, to some extent, receptive while they waited in vain for the arrival of the gospel train driven by either Church corporate vision or evangelistic efforts of individual churches. But the Southern churches buried their heads with the pursuit of irrelevance and their members were kept very busy with everything but intercessions and aggressive evangelism that would have broken the chain of a crucial region. At the same time, heaven is yet to substitute these supreme tasks of the Church on the earth. The mere religion that Christianity had gradually lapsed into over the years has blinded its leadership from appreciating the value of the souls of other people groups that would command priority attention.

As one editorial of *Occupy*⁶⁶ captured it, those that we refused to reach at the time of peace have secured a satanic mandate from the antiquity of generational feud to invade our lands and forests with sophisticated weapons of destruction. Since we failed to give them the Bible that we claimed to have and by which a number of them would have embraced the love of God, they are making sure they do not fail to give us what they have in stock as the bestowal of their master to the world. If that omission is reprobate enough, we have its more disturbing aspect that is still hunting the Church of the southern part of the country. This is in the way she has turned a blind eye to the plight of many Christians in the north whose lives have been decimated by cycles of repeated violence.

The gross insensitivity that the Church in the south of Nigeria had exhibited to the plight of the brethren in the north and Middle Belt in the heat of their persecution which Brother Bosun Emmanuel once lamented is real. The situation by which tens of thousands of fellow Christians and other innocent citizens are crammed into refugee camps across those regions where they face shortages of food, water and medical facilities is still begging for attention at the time of concluding this work. The best of the efforts of our mega-churches do not seem to have measured up to what they are capable of to lighten the burden and relieve the pains of hunted fellow Christians.

Today the churches parade a huge population of church members who do not have the minutest idea of the purpose that the Church, as a living and spiritual organism, is ordained to serve in the world. Many of those who boast of exposure to better teaching on rudiments of Christianity have only combined heavy heads with dull spirits and blind eyes. For example, how can some unreached people groups be still traced to Nigeria which boasts of the most vibrant Pentecostal fires that

⁶⁶ *Occupy* is a mission frontier quarterly magazine of Calvary Ministry (CAPRO)

were ignited about one hundred years ago, especially with all the members and financial resources that the churches can boast of today?

God continues to search for those who will yield to His call to reach the nations of the world with the gospel. But the question is how many such people are being sent and to where from many of our posh and well-garnished cathedrals of many of our mega congregations in comparison to what is commensurate with their financial muscles and manpower resources. A number of the pastors in many of our cities have been identified as runaway missionaries who chose a life of ease over what God intended and called them to do. It is then to be expected that the only members that such pastors will parade may be mostly those who are settled on their lees and are fed continually with the gospel of ease that is averse to adversity (Jeremiah 48v11).

INTERCESSION FOR WORLD EVANGELISM

In furtherance to the foregoing, the shifting of the focus of the members of today's Church to whatever they can grab for sustenance and enjoyment has robbed them of the hunger for anything in the hereafter. Thus, while God is urging them to speed up the conclusion of the Great Commission and head for their heavenly mansion, the goal they have set for their big faith is to dominate the earth and make the world a better place for themselves here and now. While evil is increasing on all fronts and the hearts of men are growing more hostile towards God and His involvement in their affairs, believers are settling in a sinking ship with a tinge of false assurance and selfishness.

We have a model prayer in a burden conveyed by the unedited foreword that Brother Dondo Iorlamen, the International Director of Calvary Ministry (CAPRO) wrote to the International Prayer Focus (IPF) for the first quarter of 2023 to galvanise both the staff and partners of the ministry into a greater commitment at the altar of prayer:

As we read Genesis 18:20-27, we will notice that our world like Sodom, is sinking deeper and deeper into great iniquity, just as the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24:12 said, *“Iniquity shall abound and the love of many shall wax cold”*. What used to be abominations have come out unabashedly in the public! Witchcraft, human and animal sacrifices, killing of unborn children, Satanism and occultism, atheism, bestiality, cannibalism, murder, and all forms of corruption and worship of evil spirits are in public domain in our days. They are no longer clandestine activities. What a world!

Just like Lot and his family, some sheep are lost and trapped in the cities of iniquity; imprisoned by Satan. Many have become rebels and quite a number are in the cells of anti-Christ gangs. Some others are under cruel tyrants, who will not release them willingly unless they are forced out of their hands while breaking their chains. God is saddened every day by the wicked state of the world (Ps. 7:11). Friends, through this first edition of IPF for 2023 we have come to rend our hearts before the Lord for the lost in our world. May the Lord hear our cry as we call upon Him each day throughout this quarter.

This was forwarded to ignite the passion of every member of the Church and provide corporate, family and individual concerns to be unburdened before God in the place of prayer. Sharing it here is to illustrate its contrast to and departure from the loads of care that have been weighing down the Nigerian churches. For instance, the ministry circulates quarterly prayer briefs to which they solicit daily engagement by Christians and which cover various departments and areas of their labours, especially among the Unreached People Groups (UPGs) across the world which remain a huge burden to the heart of God.

CONTENDING AGAINST THE CONTENDING POWERS

That strange forces are operating behind our political offices is evidenced by manifest madness that has been traced to the doorstep of those who exercise ruling powers. I stated in an earlier chapter that many of our leaders are neck-deep in occultism and dirty rituals where they swim in

the blood of fellow human beings, either to gain access to or keep their holds on the office. They keep dark corners which the press cameras and even members of their families cannot access. This is how we know that they too are subservient to the powers from which they receive dark mandates for maladministration and oppressive policies.

Chapter seven of the book of Daniel offers the panorama of the world's kingdoms and chapter ten narrates the encounter of Angel Gabriel with the *prince* of Persia who had withstood him and delayed the delivery of his parcel for twenty-one days. From this, we may conjecture that there are designated princes of darkness that are stationed in charge of continents, regions, countries, nations, tribes and territories of our world. It is also obvious that all of them are operating under the command of Satan who, as the "*prince of this world*" (John 14v30), occupies the highest tower of the kingdoms. The documented experience of Dr Reuben Abati⁶⁷ from the days he spent in Aso Rock is verifiable evidence that cannot be ignored.

Also, from whatever may be known about some of our political leaders before assumption into office, we may need to separate the influence of the evil spirits behind the seat of power and the wicked intent that politicians smuggle to the office to assist the demons. For instance, there can be no argument that a man who must sacrifice human beings to win or successfully rig elections will not be seeking public office to serve or champion the cause of the same people. This is why the only time that our politicians know the best thing to do is when they vacate office or switch roles to the opposition. It is only then you begin to hear brilliant ideas on how to fix the economy and the polity, raising red flags that the current ruling clique can easily ignore, and justifiably too, as either a crying wolf or a ranting of envy.

⁶⁷ See *The Spiritual Side of Aso Villa* by Dr Reuben Abati in [The Guardian](#) of October 14, 2016

The powers operating behind the seat of political power are of two different but complementary types. The first is where the spirit of error and wickedness is rooted in the system of governance to be driven by corruption and misrule. This is what Nigeria has contended with over the years. Our cultures of failure and the use of deception to cover them up are monumental. It does not matter who may be elected or sponsored to the office, he is sure to mess up over time except he understands how to deal with powers that are hibernating in the government quarters.

We have heard how several of our political leaders have been consulting with and sponsoring marabouts and fake prophets who pretend to wield power. There is no way anyone may underrate their mission in obvious efforts either to establish one or reinforce another strange covenant around the seat of government. At a wider level of party politics, one may see how and why the two dominant parties in Nigeria cannot contend with the contention of those who describe them as two sides of the same evil coin and, as we all have seen, how none of them can ever be a better substitute of the other.

There is a power that many officeholders represent and by which they may not escape from actions that are outside the domain of sanity. Yet, no one may dare to challenge such a course of action because everyone knows what is propelling such actions. In the Bible, for example, we have the likes of King Pharaoh who required the matching of his force with greater force to do the right thing and set the Israelites free (Exodus 3v20, 11v1). We also have Eglon, the king of Moab, a man who from his mere description, could hardly lift himself to talk less about leading the soldiers to the battlefield. But even while he appeared immobile physically, he was an impregnable wall to his people. It took Ehud some tactics to gain access and eliminate him before his people could be subdued in the battle against Israel (Judges 3v12-30).

Also, we have a positive matching experience of the phenomenon

with the Israeli army who did not lose a single battle under King David, their foremost spirit-filled leader and military commander to date. It is noted that David narrowly escaped being killed on the battlefield. His lieutenants rallied around to make a profound statement by which we know what the King had come to represent to the nation and its military at that time. It was on that day that they swore to him that he would not be allowed to follow them into any battle so that he would not “...*quench the light of Israel*”. That was what the king had become over time in the realm of the spirit to his people (2 Samuel 21v15-17), just as we have many others who represent the opposite.

In modern times, those who may hide under the banner of democracy to call such people to question soon discover how they are fighting against an immovable force that will neither yield nor pander to the opposition. Rulers have demonstrated this trait during their political career, like Robert Mugabe who transformed into the president of his country after his first seven years in office as the prime minister. For thirty years between 1987 and 2017, he conducted many ‘elections’ which he was always winning, even at a time when the whole world could see a complete evaporation of every stem in his kit. We have a long list of the world’s brutal rulers like Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot and Idi Amin with at least one of their types in Nigeria among others.

A thought I have not been able to subdue is how Satan successfully executed the plan to sweep our collective fortunes into the drain through the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced by the administration of Ibrahim Babangida. It is just that individual members of that ruling clique were not to blame for the error that I believe, like others, was to be traced to the revival of idols in the country during the so-called FESTAC ‘77. It is those who trivialise the flaming jealousy of God against idols and any object of worship that will fail to see how the progress of the country may have entered into reverse gear by that event.

The time lag of about five or more years between FESTAC '77 and the beginning of the collapse of our economy is only a ruse of darkness for us to disconnect the two, especially with the gross insensibility of man who is known to be afflicted by short memories.

But whom do we have to blame between the community of fire-spiting Christians of the era who should have applied their prayer missiles to subdue the event, neutralise the evil grip on the nation and prayerfully diffuse the bomb that FESTAC '77 was waiting to be? I do not believe that there is any knowledge being shared now that may be said to be hidden from many of the gospel ministers of that era. All they would have needed was to close their ranks across church divides and then sensitise their members in a wake-up call to the spiritual implications of using the resources that God graciously gave us as a nation to promote idolatry in the name of the Black Art festival.

It should be understood that it is not those physical displays of art or artistic performances during the event that birthed our problems. The issue was the deities, principalities and spirits of the idols that were inadvertently smuggled in from the backyard of our spiritual insensitivity into the centre of our stage. I expect those who ignore the Bible to spot the 'irrationality' of this narrative. But those who knew what our spiritual atmosphere of Nigeria was before God began to deal deadly blows against many such local powers are not likely to buy a sentiment of disconnection between our sowing and subsequent reaping. The summary which has been hinted at in this section is the failure of the Church to arrest events in the realms of the spirit to diffuse our errors.

OTHER ISSUES OF CORPORATE CONCERN

The teaching of Jesus Christ on the importunity of prayer informs us that constant bombardment may be required, especially in some tough cases, until the enemy is forced to bow. But it is a matter of great pity

that the only prayers that the majority of Church members have been programmed to consistently pursue are those about their destinies, especially once they sense strange forces hovering around their aura. The fact is that, as I stated earlier, God too has His challenge for which, in His wisdom and for the reasons best known to Him, He has chosen to depend on those who will partner with Him to resolve.

One of His burdens is how to extend His influence to the political systems of the nations through the Christians who should plot the dislodgement of strange powers that lurk about their atmospheres. That is where they sponsor distortion and cause destruction, where the mustered forces of prayer of the warrior are needed either to dislodge or keep them under control. These are gang-ups that threaten the intent or interest of God on earth. Once prayer exercises are overconcentrated on the minors to the neglect of the strange powers that have been traced to the political doorstep of Nigeria, they will either have missed a target or achieved far less than they really should.

Pursuing personal agendas with prayers and in the spirit of dependence upon God just as we are enjoined is perfectly in order. The popular hymn; *“What a Friend we have in Jesus...”* and many passages of the Bible not only encourage this, they command it. It is just that I have often contended that our agenda and goals are simply too petty, narrow and shallow to deserve all the sweats that Church members have been burning to prosecute them. If this has an element of truth, it is made much worse by the blatant neglect of the real issues that matter to the heart of God. The agenda of God is far much bigger and more strategic than ours and each of us will find our collective and personal fulfilment once the will of God prevails in our world.

Our socio-economic rot which has taken a heavy toll on the downtrodden masses is a reflection of the failure of the Church at the corporate level. Just imagine how much an average middle-level

household may have saved from the acquisition, repair, spare parts and the cost of fuel to power generators if our electricity system should begin to work again. Imagine how much less will be saved collectively in our struggle to provide our wards with quality education if the educational system is to be effective and reliable⁶⁸. Imagine how the fixing of our roads will save a lot of lives and a huge amount that motorists spend to buy needless spare parts. Imagine how prices of many goods and services will crash if lip services are not paid to the developments of agriculture and our foreign exchange is to be well managed on the essentials. These are a few of the strategic issues that matter to God.

This is further on the issue of power generation and distribution in Nigeria which has been identified as the mainstay of economic revolution. The persistent failure of successive governments in their desperate resolve to solve the problem should have raised suspicion. This is especially true if we do not deceive ourselves into believing that the problems of the sector are only rooted in bad leadership. We can all testify to how colossal amounts have been voted and spent to purchase elongated or near-permanent darkness for Nigerians while accusing fingers kept pointing at government officials who may not have been more than tissue paper in the hands of the contending powers.

One of those who took charge of the power project was quoted to have boasted when he was in the opposition about how it should take no more than six months for a serious government to fix the problem⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ I am not unaware of the temporary dislocation that the developments here will register on the providers of the alternative goods and services. It will only be a matter of time for their capital and skills investments to locate other areas of the expanded economy which will be waiting to absorb them.

⁶⁹ The statement was said to have been retracted. But if it was ever made, such denial may only have been occasioned by the inability to deliver on the promise. We sense how the denial would not have been necessary if the boasting, which cannot be said to be an overstatement, was backed by the sincerity of the government on the one hand and the prayers of Christians for successful implementation on the other.

He meant well. But the fact is that it has been several years since the man took over and all his efforts for a solution are still scratching only the surface. If anything has changed in his tenure as a minister, it is that his boasting and good intentions have been deflated. With a lack of evidence for whatever may have been responsible for the failure of the sector, who can tell if prayers have backed the billions of dollars that have gone into this critical sector of our socio-economic indices?

The siege of terror, especially since the project of Boko Haram and its collaborators of the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP) was launched has torn several parts of the country into shreds. I wrote in *Prophetic Force* how most of those who are recruited into the terror gang are perfectly normal people, and with a conscience that could function well in normal situations. I have had reasons to contend that what most of them need is intercession by the Church to extricate them from strange forces that are using them to wreak havoc in the name of religion. Moreover, it should be understood that most of the global gangs of terrorists are only fronting for powers that are contributing their quotas to the predicted calamities of the end of time. After all, terrorism did not become an issue of global dimension until the last three to four decades and that period did not coincide with when we started to have Muslims that are truly dedicated to the course of Islam.

It is not that churches have not prayed at all. Many of them with pastors who appreciate that the nation needs the prayers do task their members to pray for Nigeria, especially before ending their meeting and dispersing. But that request often comes only after all the energies and time have been burnt on selfish prayers. So, intercession for the nation is in gross deficit when we compare what is required with what is delivered. Yet it is these issues of strategic importance that should have enjoyed more of the prayer efforts both at the corporate and family altars. Since no request that is made in the name of Jesus and according

to the will of God will ever be ignored, He has His agenda by which He will liberate the country and rid it of all satanic shackles once it comes to His turn to intervene.

Chapter 11: Call to Nation Rebuilding

The huge embarrassment that Nigeria has become to the world and the shame that this has rubbed on its Church call for drastic measures that will begin to arrest the mess. The blunt truth is that, besides the bloody activities of the criminals who hide under the banner of Islam and other non-Muslims who have joined their gangs, there is no vice afflicting the nation today that will not be traced to the doorsteps, and even the altars of many churches. On the one hand, and as earlier contended, the Church takes full responsibility for her failures to stand in the gap and bear up her light. On the other hand, she shares heavy blame even for the killings and bloodshed from which she may wish to be excused to the extent that she could have reined in on our security situation to avert many of the disasters.

Those who may sense the spiritual depth of Nigerian challenges and the enormous responsibility they have piled on the shoulders of the Church will offer just one prayer. This will be for her to find the grace she needs for mass repentance by both the leaders and members across all the denominations that seem to have conspired to make shadow chasing the goal of their Christian race. The Church has since arrived at a critical junction where further venture in the present direction may only lead to a miscarriage of mandate. Or, how else do we explain a situation

where Christianity is now being practised as if the Bible has been withdrawn from circulation?

“PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF...”

The efforts of the Church to work herself back to social and spiritual relevance in Nigeria must begin with a self-examination that will bring it face to face with her failure and the need for repentance. Foxes had crept in and ate deep into the bloom of her tender vines (Song of Solomon 2v8). Such foxes must now be confronted and repelled with the same resolve and forces that will match the enormity of damage they have sponsored, especially in the last few decades. It will not even make any sense to describe some of the ones that have plagued the Nigerian Church as *little* anymore as we had in the days of the Song of Solomon. Were the Church to suddenly wake up today, I pray she does, there are waters she will need to evacuate from her ship to prevent her sinking.

People have asked about what happened to the faith that prevailed among the Christians of the ninety-seventies and up to the mid-eighties. We noted how personal ambitions were jeopardised. But we also know a number of our leaders who tried to encourage us to develop our potential. A number of them were known to have sponsored many church members who lacked the means to advance their education and careers. It is just that as they encouraged us to pursue and record progress in life, they placed more emphasis on the expectant and holy living to keep us on our toes for homegoing. Thus, while the hope of heaven shone bright in their focus, the Church of today on the other hand is urging her members to rise and rule their world.

It is now as if the facts of existence beyond the grave have since ceased to be part of the same Bible. But then, many of those who are perpetrating corruption in the country will be traced to the members of these thriving churches and ministries, especially the ones with pastors

who have expunged accountability from their ethics. Someone exclaimed, rather sarcastically, that if Jesus can save, He should save the Church. But those who know what God is up to, especially with regards to the Nigerian project will nurse no doubt that He can. And He will.

As the history of the Israelites will testify, God may sometimes be compelled to sell His people into slavery for their disobedience and such moments of His winking have been seen even up to the present era. This is why a passage like *“Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price”* (Psalm 44v12) should not be taken lightly. Today, and in nearly all church settings in Nigeria, you see an abundance of half-heartedness, aloof attitudes and spiritual lethargy, all rooted in tepid devotion of the people with duplicity that one does not need any serious efforts to detect. It is only a reprobate mind that will deny the connection between these and the web of political confusion, economic recklessness and concomitant hardship of the last few years in which the Christians have been caught with other citizens.

Of all the responsibilities that God lays on the Christians is the need for them to demonstrate His power of redemption with their lifestyles. This has remained the most potent of all the magnets that He designed to bring unbelievers into His kingdom, even before our preaching and invitation to them to attend our church programmes. This is a cardinal prayer of Edith Margret Clarkson who wrote in her popular hymn *We come, O Christ, to Thee*:

So, fill our hearts that men may see
Thy life in us and turn to Thee

Supposedly as we have heard, and repeatedly too, that the only reason why God did not take us to heaven immediately after our conversion is for us to enrol in His service in expanding His kingdom and its influence in the world. Christians are to display the presence of Jesus and their hearts for the world to see so that they will praise and

glorify God. As we earlier saw, Apostle Paul captured this well when he wrote: *“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:”* (Colossians 1v27). Here we will consider a few of the responsibilities that God has placed on the Church not in any order of importance but just a sample of what the Church should begin to disseminate from her pulpits.

THE MINISTRY OF INTERCESSION

God who is known to be an embodiment and extremity of goodness, love and compassion, who is also understood to be *“slow to chide and swift to bless”* does not insist on having the majority of the citizens of any country belong to Him as a condition for Him to bless their multitudes. Saints of old have bridged intercessory gaps whenever duty beckoned on them. Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah at a critical moment. Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Ezekiel and others did it for the Israelites of their generations. This is what found its climax when it came to the turn of Jesus Christ as the Son of God to step into this role for the whole world with His supreme sacrifice.

Therefore, it is a fact that where God has the number of Bible-wielding and tongue-blasting Christians as He does in Nigeria, He has every right to court and count on their partnership roles in this crucial respect. It is our failure to adequately stand in the gap alone that can explain the setbacks and the confusion that Nigeria is wading through today. It is to be noted, however, that the influence that Christians can wield over any nation does not translate to their being the ones to dominate its political space. On one hand, the right of rulership is reserved for any bona fide citizen of whatever religious persuasion who is legally qualified to aspire to any office and, more importantly, it rests solely with God who decides who is to wear which political crown and at what point in time.

On the other hand, irrespective of whatever form of government is instituted or whichever constitution is embraced, a well-bred Church holds the key of authority to determine the kind of person who will become whatever, together with the control and tenure of his regime. Again, this can be achieved without compromising her pulpits, especially as it was seen in recent developments. The Church can prayerfully prevail on the citizenry to make the right choices during elections. The Church can and should pray against malpractices that often make nonsense of the electoral process and by which the chaffs and charlatans have been flocking to the corridors of power. The authority devolved on the Church places her in a position to operate as God's representative in the affairs of any nation.

Intercession is the number one social responsibility that Christians who understand the injunction of the Bible will not take lightly but pursue with all dedication it calls for. This is why pastors with this understanding often charge their members to pray for the country and its leadership, both individually in the seclusions of their homes or corporately during public worship sessions. This is mainly because the Church and her members are always the prime targets of Satan on which he seeks to inflict maximum damage whenever events stray in the wrong direction. The main problem with intercession as a prime duty of the Church is its huge deficit by which the vast majority of Christian citizens remain apathetic to its demands.

Thus, praying for the nation and its leaders is not something to be forced upon Christians who are taught to understand the need to partner with God to secure the peace of their realm. The nudge of Apostle Paul on this speaks volumes. He did not just urge us to pray, he gave a reason which makes us the primary beneficiaries of such exercise as citizens, a sort of motivation to be fuelled by elements of self-interest.

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our saviour...”
(1 Timothy 2v1-3).

Just imagine if Abraham had secured the minimum number of people required to spare Sodom and Gomorrah. The metaphors of salt and light which Jesus held out His disciples to be in the depraved world would have been best illustrated by the outcome of his efforts. Just six other citizens would have added to four members of the Lot’s family to complete the minimum of ten that Abraham had bargained to secure the mercy of God for the nation. At the same time, chances were high that such few people may not be listed for national awards by the rulers of the cities or have their pictures displayed in their hall of fame.

It is also possible that thousands of their citizens who would have narrowly escaped sudden destruction by fire would be unaware of the danger from which they had just been delivered. Also, the homosexuals that had compassed the land would have continued their repulsive business as usual because the bargains of Abraham did not include a demand for their repentance. We remember this is the business in which they sought to rape the angels on inspection who had the look of ordinary men. Even those who blindly argue about nations without praying saints may not be able to fault the difference that few righteous and committed people in their lands might have been making amid the multitudes of rebellious sinners. The fact is that whatever has or has not happened often prevents us from knowing what would have happened. Also, it is only when something has happened, like the eventual overthrow of the city, that we come to terms with what can happen.

WAR AGAINST CRIMES

Constituting Christians in various spheres of our national life where we have a number of them into a force that will begin to stand against corruption in Nigeria may have become overripe. And, of course, those will be the members who have not been part of the rot in the first instance together with those who have been corrupt but will henceforth desist from the vice. The main challenge here will now stem from how to identify such Christians who can be recruited to prosecute this battle. It is not prayer that lacks determined action that will confront the hydra-headed monster of corruption that has held the nation hostage. Just as I hinted in the earlier chapters, the battle against corruption in Nigeria has since gone far beyond what any social crusade or moral appeal can handle. It has grown deep spiritual roots that only serious members of the Church of Jesus Christ can confront headlong.

This will not undermine many non-Christian citizens who are morally upright and driven by good conscience, who know that what is right is right, and conversely. There are quite a number of them who have risen above primordial appeals of illicit gains that are driving people crazy. These are individuals outside the church buildings and across religious divides to whom I devote the next chapter of this work to celebrate. However, on a corporate scale, and because of the strong spiritual backing that the fight will demand, it is important to ascertain the readiness of the Christians who are the primary recruits of God to step into the arena. They will be those who will stand by the rules of the game in the public space and then complement that with prayers for spiritual redirection of the larger society in their closets.

PERSONAL AND BUSINESS TAXES

I mentioned in an earlier chapter that the administration of taxes and levies, either in their collection or in their remittances is where havoc is

wreaked against the system. Nearly all the revenue of the government from all the sectors of the economy including fees to be paid for government services by citizens desiring them is based on one tax law or other forms of legislative provisions. In almost all instances, the tax officials, just like the corrupt ones during the Bible eras earlier referred to, are always on the wrong side of the laws either for unlawful bargaining with the payers or pilferage of what is collected. Any Christian with roles in the processes of collecting and remitting or in the rendering of payment must be found to uphold the spirit of the law.

The majority of citizens fall into the category of employees on behalf of whom the finance and account departments manage the taxes for their establishments. Also, there are liability percentages prescribed by the law that graduate from one rate to the next level of income. Ordinarily, this does not involve any ambiguity except as it is always with deliberate distortion of the process to short-change the government. What I have seen in practice is that people, including professors of mathematics and even chartered accountants, often pretend as if they did not pass junior school arithmetic when it comes to correctly assessing the tax liabilities that are charted on straightforward calculations.

I have heard of where each of the principal officers of an institution was charged at N5,000 per month as their income taxes

. A review of the system with the correct application of prescribed rates as provided by PAYE law raised the monthly tax obligation of the same category to a whooping N85,000 each. Mental arithmetic will show how each of that category of staff had short-changed the government by close to a million Naira for each year the anomaly lasted. Of course, the staff that was involved in exposing this did not need to harp on the vilification that followed. The worst part of the story had it that it was the state tax officials who were supposed to spot and expose the lapses that sneaked in from the backyard to 'help' the system revert to the status

quo and nip the trouble that one *over-born-again* staff wanted to impose on the system.

The same goes for those who are self-employed Christians who have mastered the dirty system and have been exploiting it to their dishonest advantage. Going by the estimates that may be gleaned from the story in the foregoing, one may see how much each of the state governments that administer and collect Pay-as-You-ear (PAYE) taxes must have been losing to lying and deliberate corruption of the tax management system which are anchored mostly by corrupt officials that often turn the blind eyes. They are also the same people who often turn around to share the loot with the management of the defaulting institutions.

A vital aspect of the obligation of Christian self-employed that will uphold the integrity of the tax process will also demand lots of diligence, discipline and self-sacrifice. Those who want to swim clean will have to keep good and detailed records backed by every available evidence. One pillar of corruption in Nigeria is the advantage which absence of good records and transaction evidence often confers on corrupt tax officials to become the alpha and omega in the arbitrary determination of tax liabilities. With this, it becomes easy for them whenever they invade business premises to deliberately slam business owners with assessments that they know to be unrealistic just to create room for under-the-table negotiations. Good book-keeping ethos is one sure means by which honest ones may stand their ground to withstand their ploys.

Commitment to integrity here will also mean that the records that are presented to bank management to prospect for financial lifting for the business would be the same that are tendered for tax assessment. Separation of records for each such purpose is a fraud that no heaven-minded Christian should ever indulge in. We know that even with these measures, dubious tax officials will stroll in and talk tough in reaction to the loss of corrupt gains that criminalities have accustomed them to over

the years. But the determination of the citizens who will enrol in the battle against corruption and insist on doing it right will send good signals that Nigeria is on its way out of the wilderness of shame.

For the Christians, these measures will inform the prying eyes that the spirit of mammon has lost its grip upon them. This is the god that Nigerians have stooped very low to worship and create the mess that has pushed us to this brink of collapse. The measures will prove the distance they are prepared to cover to be exemplary citizens of the nation and also show them as children of light who are supposed to be models amid crooked and perverse people on their journey to heaven (Philippians 2v15). If we hold our ground with resolve, contentment and faith, God has all the means to show up for us such that we shall not lack whatever we need to live for His glory. We will continually remember that God stands by His assured bargain to “*give us this day our daily bread*” (Matthew 6v11) and to also make us “...*lie down in green pasture*” (Psalm 23v1-2).

Even with the worst that may come to be, genuine Christians will remember that their gift of eternal life is not one of the things that may be exchanged for any material or financial benefit on the earth, not even for the most basic means of livelihood, like food. Several teachings of Jesus dwelt on the need for everyone to exhibit the striving and tenacity of purpose required to make heaven at last. Besides, a huge majority of Christians in public and private offices who give bribes or collude with others to receive them are not those who desperately need such dirty money to survive because they have their salaries. Gains of corruption have always been for the dishonest and the discontented who either want to live above their legitimate means or build false empires that will fizzle to nothingness the very moment they drop dead.

THE LOOTERS AND THEIR PASTORS

A good number of companies, especially the banks and financial

institutions operating in Nigeria have Christians as their owners, chief executive officers and executive directors. But from what I hinted at earlier about the corruption in the banking sector alone, these people, most of whom are prominent members of many churches have joined forces with their unbelieving colleagues to unleash terror on the economy of the nation. One may just imagine the impact that those who claim to be Christians among them would make if they embraced the grace to play the business and banking games by their rule. That will mark the beginning of sanity in the crucial but misguided sector of our economy for a reversal of the negative story.

The hideous fact about those Christians is how they may have interpreted the clandestine support of their greedy pastors for their activities to be that of God as to have emboldened them in their path of error. This is more because it cannot be said that most of those pastors do not know either what the Bible teaches or the corrupt practices of their members in their various offices. But since those are the members who are picking up the bills of the churches, the role of a financier has catapulted them above censure or rebuke. Thus, instead of calling such members to order, the response of the pastors to their swollen envelopes in the offering bags is a warm, *God-bless-you* handshake.

Anyone, even a fool, may sit back and imagine how the millions and billions in various currencies from such people are the engines that have been powering the highly ambitious and gigantic projects of many churches today. We may also imagine how many churches may be forced to fold up if the purse of such people was to be pruned to the legitimate and decent income. But the life of opulence to which many modern-day pastors have become accustomed will continually make it impossible to call the spade of such members a spade or kick at dirty monies from polluting their treasuries.

Dr Omotayo Fakinlede in *Was Luther Mistaken*⁷⁰ wrote about how the sale of indulgence by the Roman Catholic which the reformation of Martin Luther rose against has since taken another form in the Pentecostal circus, especially the ones of our days:

While there is no formal canvassing and sale of indulgences as in the time of reformation, dubious rich men and women still find their way into the churches. Their money is not for building St. Peter's in Rome but for smaller churches, estates, jets and luxury cars.

I wrote in *Prophetic Force* that while Peter would yell "*thy money perish with thee*" at Simon and his likes in the early days of the Church (Acts- 8v18-20), many pastors today would collect their cheques and some would even prostrate in appreciation. Thus, rather than the money perishing with them, even the ones from the dirtiest sources have been buying them positions of influence in the churches. Part of the move that will begin to rewrite our story as a nation will be the one in which the pastors will need to face the blunt truth and then choose God over mammon.

CHRISTIANS AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS

I earlier mentioned that the way the game of politics is played in the country does not leave much room for decent people who may want to venture. This section is not a retraction but a nudge to ensure that those who will endeavour to have a clear lead of the Holy Spirit. The logic is that if genuine Christians and decent citizens continue to shy away from the arena, the same set of rapacious players with damaged consciences will continue to dominate the game. The position of the Bible is that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell in it (Psalm 24v1). Thus, where one senses a lead to venture, this will simply call for greater armour of prayer preparation for spiritual warfare.

⁷⁰ Source: Occupy, CAPRO's frontier magazine, Vol.17, No 1, 1998

The good news is that darkness can never prevail over light.

What may be seen now is how Christians may not continue to shy away but prayerfully identify their places or roles in our process of governance, purely in pursuit of a divine agenda for their nation. They will, after securing the guidance of the Holy Spirit, be driven with the aim and ambition that are the direct opposite of what we have so far seen. Such individuals and their involvements will serve as a rebuke to the negative testimonies of many chaffs that have paraded false labels of Christianity, just like the one official whose rot is currently exposed by another worthy citizen who is not even a Christian. Our experience of the last few decades does not leave room for much debate as to whether or not Christians should be a part of the political process of this nation.

Individual Christians do not have much to support the abandonment of civic duties on the grounds of not wanting to mix faith with politics which has no scriptural inhibition. What we dread is not because politics are evil but their practice and scary process with which many decent people are uncomfortable. But just like the comments that others have made, Christians lose their right to complain if decisions are taken that negatively affect them or their faith once they refuse to be part of those who make and enforce them. Again, it has been a disturbing irony that many Christians already in the field of play are not the sincere ones to wield the expected influence or represent true Christianity.

The reason for the corruption of the process is also a function of the type of people that have dominated the game thus far. However, the more decent people that come out of their shells to join the train, the more alterations to the rules of the game we will begin to see. The reality of today places a demand on those who have a calling to join the race to avail themselves of it. Praying on the spectators' bench is good. But present experiences teach those who care to learn that there may be no alternative to direct engagements when people are led by the Spirit of

God. Those who will venture will only need to sharpen their spiritual antenna and learn how to operate on the principle of contact without contamination, just as Rev. Peter Ayo Alabi put it in one of his teachings.

POLITICAL GAMBLING

This is a rebuke of the events that built up as the preparation for the 2023 presidential thickened and the churches, led by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) plunged mindlessly into the political sludge. The emissaries to the churches to ‘educate’ them on which parties and politicians they should or should not vote for became a violation of the right of individual members of the Church designed to deny them the chances to make their own choices. And what a switch to the extreme of its generational apathy to political process!

Truly, everyone who saw what Christians waded through during the regime of President Buhari, a regime that expired almost immediately after it was sworn into office will not underestimate the burden of CAN. While all citizens bore the brunt of the regime’s economic collapse, social disorder and mind-blowing corruption nearly equally, the churches, especially those in the Middle Belt region of the country, had a very unfair share of its security fractures. Many Christian villages in the region were decimated and taken over by the Fulani herdsmen. Thus, it is only a pure mischief that would misjudge the concern of the Church as expressed through CAN.

However, every challenge has its good and bad solution and the way the Church chose to go about this particular one is only a reflection of her flop and loss of focus which is a major alarm of this work. It so happened that while the CAN was fronting for its candidate, several other churches which are members of the same CAN were holding vigils to seek the victory for other candidates. Various churches openly traded the sanctity of their altars as they campaigned and organised vigils for

their preferred candidates in what became more like a show of shame than of solidarity. Legions of false prophets and their prophecies competed for attention to declare victory for each of the three front-row candidates depending on whom they supported. What a picture of discord that Nigerian Church sold to the world!

God did not establish the Church to play or pursue politics in a way that will flaunt her weight around any candidate among others who may be locking their horns in electioneering campaigns. The dust that false prophets raised during the general elections will not settle down on time. Even those who do not read the Bible know that they must have lost contact with the Holy Spirit who will never contradict Himself.

While Christians, including pastors, are free to join or even float political parties of their choice, the opinions they hold must be held strictly as personal opinions which must be kept far away from their pulpits. They should vote and encourage their members to do so but without any attempt to impose any candidate, even if it will be to preserve the sanctity of their pulpit from the pollution of politicking.

Chapter 12: Away With Empty Religion

The revelation of how the first parents of man fell for the deception of Satan in the Garden of Eden has remained one of the loudest religious stuff, even to those who continue to question the fact of creation as their origin. But whatever anyone may believe or think about the origin of all things is secondary to the fact that man did not just begin his sojourn on planet Earth somewhere. It is a fact of equal weight that he is heading somewhere. Nigeria is only a mere passage for all those who feel trapped in its present imbroglio. Yet the good news is that the God who condemned man to a life of misery following the breach of His original plan in Eden is not known to have abandoned us to the mess. He also provided a way out.

So much has been said about the reawakening of Christians in this work because of the crucial role that God has carved for them in nation-building. But now that everyone may see how religion has failed us as a nation, the quiet truth must be brought to the fore again. This is to correct how Christianity has been erroneously implied as a form of religion embraced by church-going and name-bearing groups of people. However, Christianity is not one of the religions in the common sense of the term. It is a means by which anyone willing may establish a personal relationship with God through the One who introduced

Himself as “*the Way, the Truth and Life*” (John 14v6). Jesus did not come to establish any religion at His first advent into the world, not even Christianity. He came to save every man born of a woman from the grip and guilt of sin and its awful consequences. He came to reunite man with God in an eternally rewarding Father-son bond.

The trouble we have always had is with many politicians and government officials who parade Christian names or belong to one church denomination or the other. They only hide under these canopies to tarnish the image of the Church as they lead or join others to perpetrate fraud and unleash their greed on the nation. It is the uninformed members of the society that sees them as Christians. The truth is that if they do not have a personal encounter with the saving grace of God, they are hopeless and rotten sinners who will always be as bad, and may even be worse, than anyone in the gangs of street vagabonds. Such fakes abound in the congregations and hierarchies of all churches. The Christians I have been referring to in this work are the genuine ones on whom God can count to make a positive difference.

THE PLACE OF CONSCIENCE AND HONOUR

We now arrive at the core of the issue. The conscience is a personal sense of the moral content of one’s conduct, intentions or character about a feeling of obligation to do right or be good⁷¹. From the Bible, and as we shall see shortly, conscience is kitted with natural purity that aligns with goodness and truth at birth. However, it is also very clear that it can be infested with evil to become suppressed, seared and dead over time. But those are just the responses of the instrument to the choice that its bearer has made. It is a noted fact that the conscience can

⁷¹ Source: Google (modified)

always be overpowered or silenced at every crossroads of our lives during every interrogation with it and through our routine interactions.

Though our landscape is flooded with religions and religious people, those who will deliver Nigeria from her present ruins and move us to our desired destination will be driven by good conscience, not by religion. The majority of official criminals who banded together to ruin our collective fortunes had taken oaths of office using either the Bible or Al-Quran because they knew it would be without any consequence. The explanation for this is summed up in Ecclesiastes 8v11 where we educated that *“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”*. But as a contrast, we have seen those who are not visibly as pious, who do not even subscribe to any of our popular religions but have demonstrated commitment to the dictates of their conscience in the service of humanity and, perhaps, as a mark of honour unto God.

Before the coming of Islam or Christianity, societies were regulated by a sense of good and bad as embedded in the conscience of every member. During my growing years, the Yoruba race was known to operate a high standard of morals by which anyone who stole would find no place to hide his shame to talk less about enjoying his loot. There is a folk song; *Kini ngo f’ole se laye ti mo wa?*”, meaning *“What will I ever do with stealing in my life?”* to show how stealing or embezzlement were anathemas in its old-style societies. It is one of the songs that were taught in nearly every primary school setting in my childhood days with a glaring aim to prepare us for a life of rectitude:

Kini ngo f’ole se laye ti mo wa / 2ce

Laye ti mo wa, kaka ki njale

Kaka ki njale, ma kuku d’eru

Kini ngo f'ole se laye ti mo wa

Meaning...

What will I ever do with stealing in my life /2ce
In the world into which I have come, instead of stealing
Instead of stealing, I would rather become a slave
What will I ever do with stealing in my life?

This is why Apostle Paul taught in Romans chapters two and three, that those who live without the gospel will be judged without the gospel. Such judgment, of course, will be based on the extent to which they have heeded or ignored the dictates of their conscience. This is also a topic to which I devoted major attention in my treatise on the subject of *hell* and those that will populate it in *Prophetic Force* as one of my major works, (Volume 4). It summed up how a large number of those who do not have access to the gospel conventionally as we preach it today will not be hauled into hell just on the account of where they were born or in the dispensation in which they were raised, both being factors that are outside the control of any human being.

Apostle Peter laid a firm foundation of how those who were not fortunate to have the gospel in a required saturation to enable them to decide to or not to follow Jesus would not be subjected to the strict codes of the gospel at the final judgement. He declared: "*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*" (Act 10v34, 35). This revelation, however, was never to extenuate the difference that the gospel is ordained to make for those who will be fortunate to have contact with it as we have in many parts of Nigeria. This was demonstrated by the experience of the

same Cornelius and his household who would not have been saved by religious activities alone.

The moral tragedy of Nigerians is the way they have patterned their lives to create the impression that God forgot to kit them with this sense of right and wrong, especially when their quest for financial gains rotates to the fore. The embrace of religion, therefore, has proved to have not really much or anything at all to do with preparedness to heed or shun the small still voice of the conscience. But from the Bible, just as I just hinted above, the power of this internal police may be seen in the fact that for billions of people who have traversed the earth without the Bible or gospel, it is the content of their character which was formed by how they have yielded to or ignored their conscience that will determine who will end up in justification and condemnation.

The application of this in moving our nation forward will identify a functioning conscience that we need to institute a sound political system and just administration. But this is differentiated from a surrender of life that can lead man to repentance which God demands from those who want to become His children. In other words, God can use those who are not His children in the pursuit of His political agenda for any nation. Most of those He has used to combine a good vision, sense of justice and equity with godly characters, even without any praying saints have succeeded in building nations of envy. It is just that, while such feats will have freed them and their unborn generations from the forces of oppression and retrogression, such noble roles will not secure a place for them in His kingdom in the ultimate.

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Persian monarchs of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes at one time or another extended their rule over Israel to do exactly what He had intended through them, either for the affliction or blessing of the people. Even today, it will not be anything strange if God should bypass genuinely born-again, spirit-filled and fire-spiting

Christians to sponsor traditionalists, Muslims or someone without any known religion to leadership positions in a new Nigeria. We remember that He is King over all men, everywhere and at all times.

God has blessed Nigeria with men and women of good conscience in such a number that He can fill all our leadership vacuums in all tiers of the government and across all sectors. These range from the Federal, state and local governments, wards and down to the levels of the Community Development Associations (CDAs). It is also good to note how He has spread such people across our complex religious and tribal divides. This fact, that there is no one that God cannot use to fulfil His political agenda for Nigeria, has made the question of tribe or religion either a secondary or totally a non-issue.

As I am sure it will apply to many people too, there are Nigerians I have encountered over time who have blown my mind with their level of integrity. Indeed, I am glad to reveal that at least one of them is a Muslim. The hullabaloo that greeted the Muslim-Muslim ticket of the ruling party in the wake of the 2023 elections and how a large segment of Christian communities rose to chide the move was not meant to be more than a surface scratching. It was the same people that once gave overwhelming support to Chief M. K. O. Abiola and Alhaji Babagana Kingibe just three decades earlier. Even while it is true that times and terrains have altered significantly over the years, the real truth that the protest camouflaged is not so much about the religious combination of the tickets but about the records that were available in public domains about those who held them this time around, pairing with the antecedents and misrule of the sponsoring party.

The nation groaned heavily beneath the pains of eight years of economic mismanagement and bled from the destructive agenda of those who were covertly aided to foist anguish on the populace. In a sane society where the electoral system has not degenerated into what

we call elections in Nigeria, there would have been no moral ground by which such a party should stagger anywhere close to the campaign podium to seek re-election or expect the votes of the citizenry except by a large-scale spell which, as I know, could not have bypassed the omnipotence of the Omnipotent⁷². It is this sham electoral process which has furnished the ladder on which the worst of the crooks and the most unfit have been climbing to all levels of political leadership in Nigeria that became the real trigger of public anxiety.

NIGERIAN HALL OF FAMES

Nigeria has seen the emergence of men and women of honour with many more who, with the backing of Christian prayers, both for scaling the election hurdles and sustenance of their tenures, would make a huge difference in our national affairs. Among our heroes who were in this class was Alhaji Aminu Kano, a celebrated friend of the *talakawas* or the downtrodden, who would have pursued the upliftment of Nigeria if he had had a chance. In pursuit of the triumph of merit over favouritism and an awkward quota system, he was quoted as saying “Nigeria will know no peace until the son of nobody can become somebody without knowing anybody”⁷³. His political mentee, Alhaji Balarebe Musa was a “true champion of the masses” who could not survive the onslaught of corrupt forces that were enraged to where he was chased out of office in ill-motivated impeachment, barely two years into his stormy governorship tenure of Kaduna State.

⁷² As people made their way to the inauguration of the Tinubu-Shettima regime on May 29 2023, I hinted at what God may be up to in a work titled *That Nigerians May Know That The Lord, He Is God* (Appendix 2). But I also warned that it should never be taken as a prophecy but as an exercise of the mind that is open to any possibility.

⁷³ I stumbled at a social media clip where Barack Obama may have ‘stolen’ and smuggled this quote back to Nigerians while appealing for sanity in the days leading to 2023 general elections. But our own elder statesman was decades ahead of him.

I earlier mentioned Dr Tai Solarin who, though an atheist, lived with the commitment and discipline that were very rare among many of those who brandish the Bible. I recall how many of my fellow students paid glowing tributes to the rare qualities of Chief Francis Akanu Ibiam during my school days in the East. Also, I read the interview of Professor Wande Abimbola, the *Babalawo* of Obafemi Awolowo University fame about how he was vilified for shunning avarice when he went to Abuja and came back clean. He is probably the only one I have heard of in Nigeria who descended from the height of the office of the Senate majority leader only to go about in the public transport of *danfos* and taxis, all because he would not take whatever does not belong to him. The same report informed that the man was living in the house his father built in 1918 and bequeathed to him.

Just imagine the difference that a leader like Chief Obafemi Awolowo would make if he were to rule Nigeria for just two terms of four years each. What the regime of Alhaji Lateef Jakande, his protégé achieved in Lagos State in less than four years and with fewer resources is yet to be matched by the subsequent ones that governed for two terms. Let us imagine, by whatever possibility, that the man, as a mentee of Chief Awolowo, should succeed him at the centre. No people of good age in Nigeria will forget what the regime of Chief Obafemi Awolowo meant to the Western Region between 1954 and 1959 or the legacy of Alhaji Lateef Jakande in Lagos State between 1979 and 1984.

We have in the corporate world the names like that of Christopher Kolade among those who distinguished themselves in our public space as public servant and later as a boardroom guru whose legacy remains a beckoning light to our generation in every office where he served. The

reflection of his deep thoughts (*Kolade's Canons*)⁷⁴ in three volumes compiled and edited by Dr Richard Ikiebe have much to reveal about how gracious God is to Nigeria for such intellectual giant and integrity icon to have traversed our soil. Also, while many shameless parents would seek for leaked exam papers or arrange special centres for their wards, I know someone very close to me and whom I referred to earlier on. He emphatically warned his children in my presence that any of them who would cheat to pass any examination would not do anything good with the certificate. Maybe someone will say that's rather too harsh... But those are the kind of parents and mentors that Nigeria needs today.

The sanity and probity that Professor Is-haq Oloyede brought to the management of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) blew the lid open on the magnitude of financial rapes that had gone on in it and similar Nigerian public institutions for many years. In seven years between 2010 and 2016, the agency remitted a total of N50.7m which is only about one per cent of N5b that the administration of Professor Oloyede remitted in 2017 alone. Since then up to 2022, over N30b was paid to the account of the Federal government. This is even after a reduction of about N1,500 in the cost of forms and e-Pin to the candidates in one of the years. He has also invested concerted efforts to arrest the situations where school owners collude with JAMB officials to aid candidates' perpetration of examination malpractices.

No one will forget in a hurry the huge impact which the leadership of Professor Dora Akunyili made on the National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration Control (NAFDAC) in our battle against fake and adulterated drugs. Similarly, the exploits of Major General Buba Marwa deserved all the accolades that they could gather. The retired general

⁷⁴ *People, Leadership and Management* (Volume 1), *Business and Economy, Nation-Building and Ethic* (Volume 2 and *Broadcasting* (Volume 3) are pieces of rare thoughts that everyone aspiring into the position of leadership in any sphere of our national life, particularly government offices should be made to own and dutifully study.

inscribed his name in our Hall of Fame with the height to which he took our war against the menace of drugs. I should also remark on how his administration of Lagos State some years back was marked by notable differences, especially from the tenures of those who preceded him. The state witnessed a touch by which, following the lift of the ban on politics, he was almost being tipped for a presidential race.

We recall with great testimonies the difference that the tenure of these patriotic Nigerians made at their duty post. It should also be noted that none of them was reported to have sacked the bulk of the staff they inherited from previous management to turn the institutions around for the better. What I seek to highlight with these narratives is to show how Nigeria is blessed with many great men and women of honour, the kind of people needed to switch the direction of the nation. They are those who will not sell their conscience for money, who will insist on the right thing to be done in the right way. The only choice we have at this point is to join our hearts and spirits to pray and sincerely believe that God will discover and promote those who will begin to rewrite our story.

Nobody is naïve to deceive himself and imagine that the task of rebuilding Nigeria will be easy because of the depth into which we have sunk as a people. Today, it is difficult to imagine or find any venture that spins any income where no one will not need to grease palms of someone on regular basis to cruise along. Even those who collect street wastes have area boys and fake ‘landlords’ to contend with at the disposing sites. From the gateman to the topmost boss of nearly all of our institutions, corruption is the language. But the task must begin from somewhere, just as we may all agree that it has to be now.

Chapter 13: Resetting Nigeria

The levels into which we have sunk will sap even the courage of the most courageous and mop up every trace of optimism for a better tomorrow. Professor Ikenna Nzimiro concluded the lecture I referred to earlier with an affirmation of a lost hope over Nigeria. That was even at a time when the worst kind of pessimism could never have imagined anything close to the recklessness that has been on display for several years now. But since the journey of a thousand miles starts with a step, those at the helm of its politicking should redefine their focus in the journey that will pilot Nigeria back to its land of fulfilment. Thus, apart from the need for the Church to wake up and do the needful, those who wear the crowns should begin to wield their sceptres to redirect our sailing. This concerns several issues that are beyond the Church and her venturing.

POLITICAL DIMENSION OF REFORMS

To the extent that we cannot dream of theocracy, many issues will remain outside the control of the Church and her praying members. It is just that since they are within the reach of God, such members can tap into the controlling force of prayer to prevail on those whose duty it is to address them. Below are a few of the areas we will need God to intervene to rewrite the story of Nigeria, especially as the tenure of President

Muhammadu Buhari wobbled to its terminus and the nation clamours for a way out of the ruins of his regime.

I stated earlier that there is nothing that was needed to turn around our sour story that our vibrant press and great intellectuals have not laboured hard to convey in the volumes of their past works. Most of the things on the list have been screamed through the decades but were ignored by successive regimes that have demonstrated a rare capacity for gross insensitivity to the wishes of the citizens in the corridors of power. Since the truth has no other version, it is the same issues I am laying on the table here as I examine people's constitution, regionalism and loose centre, judicial reformation, genuine electoral reforms, perennial herders-farmers 'clash' and pursuit and recovery of stolen funds.

TRUE CONSTITUTION OF THE PEOPLE

People cannot operate outside the constitution which has been framed to bind them together and regulate their union. With the magnitudes of frauds that have been traced to the current constitution and the hidden intention of those who contrived it, it is not the constitution that will midwife the birth of a new Nigeria or support its aspiration. I agree, just like I stated earlier, that no constitution may be coined with the best aim and grammatical expression that will curb the impulse of man to act in harmony with or contrary to reason. But where the document itself has created loopholes for abuse and manipulation of others, like where it makes it possible for one tribe or religion to dominate and suppress others, even the God of truth and justice will resent it.

Nigeria as a nation is far bigger than any of its constituting citizens, tribes or regions and no religious or political agenda of any section of the country should be allowed to govern the interest of others. For example, that the minority tribes have always been confined to the tail end of our lopsided policy implementation is an atrocity that cannot stand in the

courtyard of God. Those who are sharp-eyed may recall the spirited efforts by one administration in our current dispensation to extend a sense of belonging to some of those who were marginalised for a long time. But that gesture was not sustained because it was a petty agenda of an individual officeholder at that time which is not sufficiently honed by the constitutional provisions for its continuity.

Many who are not Muslims have continued to raise questions about how Sharia wormed its way into the pages of a constitution which is supposed to be secular. Beginning from Zamfara State in 1999, we recall the uproar that greeted its full introduction to some states in the North beyond what was in the spirit of Federalism. Pastor Bosun Emmanuel once raised alarm concerning the dual ideology that has bedevilled Nigeria through its constitution. For example, in one section of the document, we read about how “every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion...”. But other section(s) of the same document sell the provisions and implementation of Sharia that forbids the practice of another religion except Islam.

A section of the country has demonstrated how it owes no allegiance to the so-called constitution and the only thing that matters to it is the provision of Sharia. The initial contemplation of its sponsors was to have aspects of its provision for the regulations of civil matters like marriage, property management, inheritance and similar cases, and strictly for the Muslim community. But what we have seen, just like I stated earlier on the threats of Islamisation, is that it is pretty hard to draw the line which religious urge will not be able to trespass. Now we have been seeing the criminal application of Sharia laws while those who are not Muslims have been dragged to Sharia courts. An offshoot of these are extrajudicial killings which have their only defence in the provisions of Sharia. A few such cases that will hunt our psyche for a

while to come are those of Eunice Olawale and Deborah Samuel who suffered brutal executions.

The same flawed constitution has sponsored a rape of the generality of the Nigerian with the distribution of our commonwealth which has remained a contentious issue. So much political power and economic resources are concentrated at the centre to rob other layers of the administration of what they would have needed for effective functioning. Also, the alleged distorted census figure that lay at the foundation of our nationhood had furnished the minority with what should have gone to the majority, and conversely. Further to this, anyone may see how all the juicy positions and appointments in the country have remained the exclusive preserve of a clique which is not even known to be more diligent, resourceful or productive to justify that gesture as may be objectively assessed by any criteria. These are issues that may not remain under the carpet of acquiescence forever.

REGIONALISM AND LOOSE CENTRE

An expected outcome of constitutional reform will be the emergence of regional autonomy. Nigeria has been described as a country of many nations, with each being very unique in its culture, characteristics and capabilities. At the same time, one may see how God designed the landmass of the nation with clear delineation between the constituent regions. Though the regions also are conglomerates of nations within themselves, there are binding traits that separate the country into three clear regions that we had at independence and which agreed to work together and constitute Nigeria. One does not need to make any noise about this and, as I wrote in chapter two, it is only God who knows why He brought us together when each could have stood on its own with its nationalities based on clear regional homogeneity.

It would have been good for each of the regions to be strengthened

and supported by the centre to stand alone and be less dependent on the centre. That will be the expected destination. This will stimulate growth through a sense of cohesion on the one hand and promote healthy competitiveness between the regions on the other. The wisdom behind regional restructuring is in the fact that each region is blessed by the Creator with unique characteristics, diversity, economic endowments and marketable creativity.

The north is blessed with climate and soil for the production of many food crops that will not thrive well in the southern part of the country and with which the nation may be fed to leave a great surplus even for exports. In addition to the production of livestock, there is no Nigeria that will forget the groundnut pyramids, capacity for the production of some kinds of fruits, millets, tomatoes, potatoes and similar others of great commercial value that made the north of post-independence what it was. Rice, which the region can produce in great abundance is perhaps the number one staple food of not only Nigerians but about two-thirds of the world's population.

The East is blessed with creativity and ingenuity that no one can impugn without injury to conscience. This once prompted Chief Dele Momodu, one of the presidential aspirants in the 2023 elections, to promise that he would turn the region into the Silicon Valley⁷⁵ of Nigeria. The region, known for its impressive economic indices, was one of the business hubs of the West African sub-region and the one that first rode to prominence in Nigeria.

It is on record that the eastern region had a far greater number of cars registered within its enclave than we had for the other two regions put together around the independence era. It boasted of a formidable

⁷⁵ *Silicon Valley*, “the world's preeminent hub for technology... is home to many start-up and global technology companies. Apple, Facebook and Google are among the most prominent” – Source: Google

economy said to share parity or even with faster growth rate than many of those which became the giant economies in the Far East today, like Malaysia for example. It is the destruction of the civil war that set its gear on the reverse and arrested its rising profiles. But, with good leadership both at the centre and regional levels, the East will bounce back and be set on the path of excellence, especially with the ingenuity that its people have always been known for.

The Western region is known for its administrative acumen and technical skills with which it was associated even long before the days of our nationhood. The efficient administration that Nigeria had within the then central government was powered mostly by the workforce from the region. Following the visionary leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the West has produced a far greater number of academic giants and rare-bred professionals that birthed and anchored the nation's various professional bodies and which its people dominated even before and since the history of the nation. The West was also known for the cultivation of some crops with high commercial values for which the nation enjoyed a global reputation. For example, Nigeria was the second largest world producer of cocoa in the 1960s and 1970s before the oil boom began to lure the workforce from the farms to the factories in the cities.

JUDICIAL REFORMATION

Administration of justice is one of the areas where Nigeria has fumbled beyond description. On one hand, there are laws to address nearly every ill and friction of our society. But on the other hand, there seem to be far more loopholes to clip the wings of the same laws and frustrate their efficacy than we have to promote the cause and sense of justice. The slogan "justice delayed is justice denied" has operated more on paper than in the real world and this is not only in Nigeria. The consequence of this is that hundreds of thousands of citizens have been turned back empty-

handed at the doorstep of justices. One may just imagine many straightforward cases to address issues that should have been concluded within a reasonable time but which have taken ages, with many never reaching their conclusions.

I know instances in which wronged people choose to stomach their pain because they are not prepared to initiate a court action that may not be concluded during their lifetime. Prosecuting agents have a litany of cases that one technicality of the law or the other will hold down until the expectation of the aggrieved is gradually worn out. While bloody attacks, kidnapping and killing of innocent people on a large scale became the norm in our awkward terrains, we have heard about arrests being made for which everything has begun and ended only with such initial hullabalos. There were instances of bizarre crimes of national dimension for which we look forward to justice taking its course. Many times, and depending on whatever connection that the accused may have forged with the powers that be, we have also heard of instances in which prosecuting officials will receive instructions “from above” to let the accused individuals off the hook.

We look forward to how restructuring and regionalisation will address some peculiarities of the sections of the country with a touch of flexibility to the extent that they can be accommodated. I just mentioned Sharia⁷⁶ and how a typical non-Muslim who has enough reason to be scared by its applications should never be robbed of his fear. The trendy abuse of Sharia now is how the accusation of an innocent person with the sin of blasphemy often does not leave enough room for proper

⁷⁶ Apart from its Islamic colouration, there are provisions of the Sharia that are at home with the dictates of good conscience and the laws of other religions most of which have been assessed to be based on the Ten Commandments God gave to Israelites through Moses. But its imposition for infringement like death by beheading for apostasy, stoning to death for blasphemy and amputation of limbs for stealing or similar offences will continue to heighten the fright around it.

investigation before jungle justice is administered. All the Christians and Muslims who have fallen victim to this gross injustice in the name of Sharia justice will continue to stir sad memories for a long time. This is why no sectional interest or religion should be allowed to dominate the constitution that will be binding on everyone.

Directly connected with this is the need for the institution of true secularity that will guarantee religious liberty and freedom of conscience to anyone in any part of the country. Every citizen should be free to embrace and practise any religion of his choice once it does not infringe on the rights of others. The posture of Sharia that prohibits the open practice of any religion other than Islam is incompatible with the secularity status that Nigeria has deceptively laid claim to over the years. Wherever the dictate of a good conscience is allowed to prevail, there must be a way around such restrictions to ensure adequate social justice and religious liberty for all citizens irrespective of where they are.

SINCERE ELECTORAL REFORMS

As I stated earlier, the contempt that Joseph Stalin poured on institution and practice of democracy will forever be justified because of what the electioneering process, which is its major feature and attraction, has always been subjected to in many places like Nigeria. The desperation that many Nigerian politicians continue to exhibit either to secure or retain political offices is an irresistible temptation to do all within their reach, to rig and manipulate elections. Also, as a fact that can be attested to, theirs is a craving that is not tied to any desire to serve the people but for the access to the public treasury that the offices confer on them.

So far from what my memory can prove, there has never been any election in the history of Nigeria, not even the one of June 1993, that is free and fair without its share of bickering, accusations and counter

accusation of rigging⁷⁷. All political parties often rig with the aid of their thugs who perpetrate the act which ranges in magnitude. while the worst of our situation have always resulted from where the supper riggers are declared winners of elections.

Therefore, a cardinal focus of electoral reforms will be to mount the strictest barrier against any nuance that will confer contestants with an unfair advantage in the electioneering process. This should include the toughest sanctions against any form of rigging, the least of which should be an automatic disqualification. The laws against the use of money or considerations to induce the electorate or buy votes should be implemented to the letter by ensuring that culprits are made to face public prosecution and attract the prescribed sanctions that will deter others. This is aside from the fact that even the logic of a primary school pupil informs that those who indulge in such practices will not just stop at recouping whatever they have shared to win the election. They will steal in multiple folds when they get to the office.

Even with the regional restructuring of the nation, the fact of our grassroots complexities will not wish away the inter-tribal clashes of interests. It is only free and fair elections that will always be there to calm agitations at every level of our national political structure. The fact is that there is hardly anything that is not fully covered in the electoral laws we are currently operating. The problem is how sanctions against electoral irregularities have been reduced to paper tigers while the good leadership we envisage for the future of the nation will see them being invoked to ensure stability and satisfaction of the electorates.

PERENNIAL HERDERS-FARMERS ‘CLASH’

The security challenges that have ravaged the Middle Belt of Nigeria

⁷⁷ We recall that, though highly suspicious and questionable, accusation of irregularity of the exercise remained the only reason why the ruling junta annulled the election.

could easily be classified and ignored as a sectional issue. This is especially because the majority of those who have been reading the reports of the destruction of lives and properties in the place may not have directly or indirectly felt the touch of its impacts. But to the extent that it is engulfing a zone that binds the nation together, we dare not continue to take it with flippancy. The only reason why the carnage in the belt has remained unresolved is the half-hearted attention that has been paid to an issue of deep concern. The fact that the situation is intricately woven around religious and business interests has made it something of an extreme passion to compound its seriousness.

The operations that seem very much like a genocide agenda but which is whitewashed as herders-farmers clashes in Nigeria have created a security mess that is matched only by the destruction of Boko Haram. While no responsible government will play politics with the future it portends, at the same time, no informed mind will toy with the spiritual dimension of the problem and the limitation of the government in dealing with it. It is because of this that we may dilute the blame to apportion for the failures of its officials and the military. The problem is rooted in the wars and bloodshed that the Bible predicted will escalate as man races closer to the end of his sojourn on the earth.

However, to the extent that political and economic factors have combined to compound the issue, addressing such peripherals that are within the grip of the government will minimise friction. I had fiercely charged in one earlier chapter that it is grossly misleading to describe the killings as a clash when everyone can see a heavy stock of sophisticated weapons mainly on one side of the divide and what is counting on the other side are heavy injuries and death toll. Counterattacks by the weaker side of the conflict have been a gross mismatch to the magnitude of the destruction being visited on it. Also, attempts by the government or any hired mouthpiece to wash religious colouration off the carnage will

remain deceptive as long as everyone may see that those who are being killed and maimed most of the time are mostly Christians.

It will make no sense to bore anyone with a long history of the crisis on which academics and journalism have burnt thousands of hours to dig out. It is enough to state that political, social, economic, religious and ethnic issues have magnified to sponsor tension. They wear the colouration of accusation and counter-accusation between the Berom farmers and the Fulani herdsmen that have set Jos on fire since the 1990s⁷⁸. The increase in the population of farmers at the turn of the century led to their use of more land leading to the blocking of some of the grazing routes of the livestock. At the same time, and in what may be rightly adjudged as trespassing, is the indiscriminate straying into the farmlands by the nomadic and destruction of farm crops with their cattle.

For more than a generation now, the situation had gradually congealed into a time bomb that continued to tinkle, waiting for the destructive explosions that we have been seeing. The entire problems are rooted in the astigmia of successive regimes that failed to envision and proffer solutions to an issue of glaring national challenge. The insecurity we have been battling with now is a clear case of what you sow is what you reap. It is only a matter of course that the harvest will always be greater than the seed just as we have seen with many other issues of national importance that have unsettled our peace in the last few years.

Even now, the responsibility for lasting peace to the situation may only be traced to the doorstep of a responsible government. Measures are now required that will ensure fairness to each of the parties which has its catalogue of grudges and grievances against the other. However, a knotty aspect of the issue is where we are unable to draw a line between the legitimate fight of the herdsmen for the survival of their business and

⁷⁸ The interplay of religion and ethnic tension was reported to have been manipulated by the elites in pursuit of their selfish and political agendas.

a misinformed aspiration to forcefully capture Nigeria as an extension of their fathers' estate. The ambition which the loud boastings of the past by their elites have not been cultured enough to conceal may be the only explanation behind the illegal acquisition of weapons of war which are not required to goad the cattle but to prosecute a sinister agenda.

The fact that cannot be sidestepped is that Nigeria belongs to all Nigerians and acquiesce to this by all stakeholders in the Nigerian project is the starting point to our peaceful and prosperous co-existence. I do not know any major ethnicity in Nigeria that has not pointed one or more accusing fingers in the direction of other tribes. But the appreciation of these pluses and minuses of each tribe and the readiness to accommodate one another have been the building blocks of many great nations of the world. Nigerians need one another to be whatever God has destined each of us to be. The herders who tend livestock are as important as the farmers who provide crops and both the meat from the herders and food from the farmers are required to feed and build healthy citizens.

The situation on hand is a test of the sincerity of the government to establish an atmosphere of cordiality by which the two camps dominated by different tribes and cultures will coexist. I have read extensive articles about how the Herders' Association are being challenged to embrace and encourage a modern approach to their cattle business and upgrade the archaic bush-roaming patterns. I believe that where this is pursued, the future generation of the Fulanis will be filled with immense gratitude for their fathers of today who will sponsor such enhancement to their lives. The government should identify where interventions are needed for the businesses of farming and cattle rearing; namely, as they assist the cattle herders to build ranches while also assisting the farmers with equipment to mechanise their operations and enhance outputs.

PURSUIT AND RECOVERY OF STOLEN FUNDS

A sense of justice and fairness would expect to see how a chunk of our stolen wealth would be repatriated through a determined and sincere effort of our leaders. Firstly, a stop will have been put to the reckless looting and then, recoverable portions of what has been looted should be pursued. For many of the mind-blowing pillage that has been perpetrated, there may be only negligible instances in which those who were involved could have succeeded in covering their tracks without traces or leads. Where there is a political will, there is no significant theft that forensic accounting and sincere investigation cannot unravel.

I am aware, just like millions of other citizens, of how all the cases that have been so far reported about individuals are only a tiny fraction of the pillage of our national resources. There are very many people who diverted huge amounts of money but on whom no accusing fingers has been pointed, either by the press or any of our anti-corruption agencies. Such cases are deliberately confined within the flashes of suspicion and rumours. However, the truth is that, in most cases where there has been smoke, there must be fire. Further to what was discussed in an earlier chapter, our crime fighters have only been bogged with chasing the small thieves around while many of the big-time looters are largely ignored, perhaps on the grounds of their ‘sacredness’ or legal technicalities that cast hurdles on the path of justice.

Even today, going by what has filtered into the public through the press over the years, many citizens know those who have wreaked havoc against Nigeria. Unfortunately, the system has turned a blind eye to robe most of them with the garments of sacred cows that cannot be called to question. Where sanity should prevail, we soon discover that what accounts for their sacredness is nothing more than how we have always lacked the leadership that could cast the first stone. Honest investigations can dig out issues that will assist recovery efforts, even

with minimal distractions or witch-hunting.

The need to pursue Nigerian heavy looters and recover what they have stolen or hunt down their family members if they are dead dwells on the grand logic that such people and many of their unborn generations will never, ever require such amounts for any purpose. This will even include if they are to indulge in the worst and wildest of orgies that no human may imagine. Here we are talking about billions of dollars that can reopen our factories and rebuild our infrastructure. While God can do whatever He will have to do to reprogramme us back on track, we do not rule out how such recovery efforts may be an integral part of the effort to move the nation forward.

Chapter 14: And in the End ...

In keeping with the revelation in the opening chapters of this work, many prophetic declarations have gone forth to inform that it is not yet over for Nigeria, that God will yet arise on behalf of the nation to do that which He alone can do. He is not only keenly interested in the country and its affairs. All we have seen thus far affirms His commitment to seeing its project to the point of irreversible success. In all honesty, and going by the realities of today, it is only on these divine assurances that anyone may anchor any atom of hope for Nigeria to swim through its overwhelming floods.

This is why the earnest prayers of the people of my generation are that God will restore us to the days of Nigeria that most of us grew up to see in the country. This however is not to ignore the growing global decline of virtue and morals that has enveloped the world of this age. Also, it is hard for anyone to imagine how the recovery of our lost grounds may return our fortune to where a dollar may sell for one digit of our currency again. But before we dismiss the prospect, we recall that Naira used to be stronger than the dollar and at par with Great Britain's pound sterling. It is just that a dream like this may only be anchored on the combination of divine intervention, the change of the leaders'

bearing and general reorientation of the masses as stakeholders in building the society of their dream. Thus, part of the prayers of the prayer warriors will be for God to visit our nation and diffuse His spirit of righteousness that will exalt our nation

We are here touting a thought that only God and His power can bring to bear. I have deliberately chosen not to fly a kite of baseless optimism and this alone has compelled me to hold back several thoughts that have ravaged my mind on what God can be up to and what His visitation may spell for us. While a realist will have no issue arguing about impossible things, it is only those who climb to the vista of God who will see how the impossible will not only become possible but a reality. Here we are drumming an awareness campaign for the God who did it for the northern kingdom of Israel based in Samaria in the days of Prophet Elisha and who has lost His capacity to spring surprises again as He may deem fit.

DESPITE ODIIOUS SIGNALS

Professor Nzimiro recalled how he raised warnings about the spate of recklessness that were creeping into the camp of the Biafran warlords and by which he believed that they were going to lose the secession war. He mentioned this as he predicted the imminent collapse of the Second Republic headed by Alhaji Sheu Shagari. But we know too well that there was no frivolity in which Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu could have indulged himself in the heat of a crucial war or the one exhibited by the Nigerian leadership during the Second Republic that would compare with the ruins that our politicians have perpetrated in the last few decades now.

Irrespective of whatever provision there may be in our law against secession, those who are championing regional nationalism will continue as long as the move is seen as a way for people to escape deliberate subjugation and be evacuated from a sinking ship. The ship has sunk

deep and it is only those in the corridors of power and their cronies who have always played the ostrich that will fail to admit this, especially with their satanically inspired posture of lies. While the outlook remains dark, nobody will blame anybody for not seeing what is not visible or for not exercising faith and hope where every baseline has been eroded by decades of drifting. Anyone who peddles the theory of positive thinking to predict anything good for the days ahead outside the mercy of God will be a false prophet who will deserve nothing but a public stoning.

The odds are formidable!

BUT FOR GOD...

This book begins with how economic theories and governing principles that have worked for several nations have failed woefully in Nigeria. I also mentioned nations that have succeeded without prayer, without the Bible or praying saints though but with a caution that their cases are not supposed to furnish a universal template, especially for a country like our own. Still, we do not have sufficient ground to claim that the principles of hard work to earn success or the laws of sowing and reaping have been suspended for Nigeria. It is just because such nations of comparable status do not have the kind of spiritual challenges that our country has had to contend with. Also at the same time, you do not blame Satan who has pitched his tent against our nation.

This is how prayer becomes the only recourse that is open to Nigeria. The experience of many nations that have God on their side going by the prayer foundations on which they were built still speaks volumes. While prayer is not the only way to solve political and economic challenges, it has proved to be the most effective means if it is appropriately combined with other measures. Be it for individual or corporate, local and national concerns, prayer brings solutions. One alternative to prayer is the mass arrest, prosecution and execution of past

leaders and officeholders, like the one that Jerry Rawlings led the junior officers who seized power in Ghana to carry out against a number of past leaders. But that is the remotest idea that may cross the mind of anyone in Nigeria because of our complex context.

Thus, one of our high expectations as we call upon God will be for Him to personally intervene and give us leaders of His choice, men of charisma and vision who will step into public office with testimonies of whatever it takes to serve His purpose and in turn deliver service to the people. For His name's sake, and with a social reorientation of the citizens and spiritual reorientation of the Church, God will give us repentance and Christians will begin to wield their influence to arrest the spirits behind the rot of Nigerians. This is part of their kingdom assignment and contribution to social charity which, as we have already discussed, will begin within the walls of their over polluted sanctuaries and project to those on the outside. Nigeria's political and socio-economic space will be sanitised and nationals of many of the foremost countries of the world will seek identification with her and her fortunes.

It is presently difficult to imagine how our security architecture may be reconfigured to accommodate the dreams of a glorious future. Yet, that is an aspect of our national life that God will not leave to mere chances without His direct intervention. In 1983-84 set of my National Youth Corps Service, I worked as a traveling secretary of one of the evangelical arms of my church when it came to my turn to travel round the country, including to all parts of the North. That was when Nigerians could hit the road at any time on the clock without any fear, when I would fuel my official car at the remotest village at N0.20k per litre, even in the middle of the night.

The progression of this is when it will come to the turn of many Nigerians who had either fled from the harsh realities of the country or relocated in search of a better future to return as they take their place in

the task of nation-building. The combined teams of many such citizens who will return from their sojourns with the experience they have acquired in sane environments where they have operated and the foreign nationals who will flock to the country will offer us an opportunity to run institutions with the required skills and right attitudes to work. It will also promote and ensure first-class expertise.

This is how brain drain will translate to brain gain. A social and spiritual rejuvenation will permeate all aspects of our national life and there will be no room for shoddiness or anything substandard in the products we will make and the services we will deliver and which we will also export to other lands. Counting on God and His mercy, our ordeals will not last beyond the moment that God has chosen to step in. Nigeria will rise from its rubble to clinch and manifest the glory attached to its destiny and become a blessing to all citizens, Christians, Muslims, traditionalists and others alike. Major and minor tribes will yoke together in the spirit of love and harmony. The story of the nation that will come to prevail will be the direct opposite of whatever it has waded through at the hand of its tormentors to date. Nigeria will not only survive. It will also turn around to dominate the world of this generation, especially with the seed of the gospel it is bearing to the nations.

Corruption will be tamed as the fear of God permeates our socio-economic spheres. Crimes will be curbed and the few that will remain bent on the path of error will be subdued in a way that will see them spending the rest of their days in confinements. Other destructive traits like the making and circulation of hard drugs and addiction to them will be pruned down to the barest level. Good investments will pour into our economy from different sources, especially from where the fortunes of the nation have been scattered. Those who will manage our institutions will be driven by the spirit of excellence, with vision and passion to rewrite our story. As earlier hinted, closed factories will

reopen and more that are needed to enhance the economy and quality of life will spring up to usher in a time of abundance.

NIGERIA: A BASTION OF GLOBAL REVIVAL

Global evangelism is one ultimate aim that will inform the involvement of God in the Nigerian project. Nigeria and Nigerians were nothing better than or different from other people except that it has pleased the Lord to define His agenda and the way He will pursue it in the world which He created by His immense power. God does not only own the yam. He also owns the knife. He knows to whom He has assigned which roles and privileges with which He has kitted different people and nations of the world. This is according to His will and wisdom that no one may have the audacity to question. All the blessings He will bestow on this nation and the incursion He will make into its affairs are dictated by His desire to make Nigeria the base from where He will reach many parts of our world with the gospel.

This is not a new role that the Nigerian Church is just stepping into but the one for which God has prepared her members over the years. This, for example, has been a notable achievement on the flip side of the failure for which I have accused the Nigerian Church. For several decades now, Nigerian churches, ministries and individuals have sponsored the gospel of Jesus Christ to many places more than can be traced to many nations of its political stability and economic prosperity. Without flogging the issue, many Nigerian pastors are known to have been making waves and global impacts in one way or the other.

A compilation that once circulated across the media showed that Nigerians have established 2,684 churches in the United Kingdom alone. In the same report, Indians were reported to have 4,300 companies and Pakistanis 6,237 outfits that are pursuing various business interests in the country. The intent of those who compiled that statistics is to make it

look as if it is only churches that Nigeria had to export⁷⁹. But the beauty of the seemingly maligning report and its relevance to us here is in the fact that Nigeria has been discovered to be at the forefront of the nations that are propagating the gospel in the United Kingdom.

Added to the above, Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) based in Lagos has become one of the African foremost Christian mission agencies with missionaries now spread to about five continents. Similarly, and apart from the number of their parishes in the United Kingdom, Nigerian-based churches like the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Living Faith Church and Deeper Life Bible Church are prominent on the gospel routes of many countries across the world. Until the recent invasion of Ukraine, Sunday Adelaja pastored the largest church in Kyiv, just like in the pattern that we have in other nations, especially in the Western world where it came to the turn of the Africans, especially Nigerians to take the gospel back to those who brought it to us at first.

Even when I have issues with the lopsided emphasis of the churches in this work, it is a thing of rejoicing that the name of Jesus Christ is proclaimed by whatever means and for whatever motive it may be, like Apostle Paul (Philippians 1v18). Many members who appear to be warming the pews in many of our sanctuaries today are being quietly groomed and will be released to where they will begin to explode as pastors, prophets, evangelists and teachers of the Bible across the world. One may expect that our reluctant youths will receive an unction to respond to the mission challenges when God is ready to mobilise them. In the end, the salvation that has eluded many, especially in remote places of the earth will be brought to their fingertip by which they will embrace the glorious destiny that was ordained for them from the creation.

⁷⁹ The impression here is that the main business that Nigerians are doing in the country is to run churches. But no one should close his eyes to the fact that there are over 26,000 businesses either with Nigerian founding or affiliations in the country.

Without any iota of regard for however this may sound, the Church is still the ordained tool to spearhead the expected transformation of Nigeria. It is to her, as a key institution of the nation and as its point of contact with heaven, that the promise of the reversal of our national misfortune was delivered in the first place. It is also primarily on her behalf that the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be stepping in for our turnaround. If this submission jingles a tone of bigotry or insensitivity, it will be because it cannot be presented in any milder language, sacrificed on the altar of political correctness or be whitewashed in its damning pool.

But beyond all that, what will matter in the end will not be about who has prayed, played which role or on whose behalf God has chosen to act. It will all be exclusively to His glory and to the blessing of all and every citizen of this great country who will live to witness the dawn of our new era. Going by the pattern of His working that we know, the goodness that God will bestow on us as a nation will extend even to the most murderous jihadists or the remnants of hideous criminals. It will extend even to those who have been smuggled into the country from our porous backdoors to prosecute a sinister agenda. Indeed, it will be a double blessing for sinners who will repent to embrace a new life through the gospel. That will be a way to “give flower to the rebels who failed”, according to Os Guinness in his book, *The Dust of Death*.

The essence of all these will be for God to make a glaring show of His power, as the only true God who speaks and stands by His words. That was how He rolled out His promises to the triad root of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in their individual and collective roles as the progenitors of the nation of Israel. It is because of this God factor that the nation, despite its most brutal history and implacably hostile neighbourhood, is not just up and running till this moment but has continued to dominate the economy and politics of its region. It is the power and faithfulness

of the same God that we are counting on today to save and prosper our beloved nation, Nigeria.

AND, IN THE END...

I mentioned a revelation of the Bible about how God sought for only ten people to spare the whole of Sodom and Gomorrah which archaeology speculated to have a population in the region of tens of thousands at that time. That showed the superfluity of His bargain that would have spared a huge segment of people who had sinned beyond the point of redemption. To God, just a remnant is enough, like a pinch of salt that will season larger ingredients and a little light that will dispel the thickest darkness. That is even when none of them will need to make a click of sound, engage in any struggle or even seek to rake any attention to their corners.

By the operation of the grace of God alone, by the promises that have gone forth over our nation and by His eternal counsel that cannot be defeated, there will always be *ten* people by which Nigeria as a country will not just be spared. The nation will be galvanised to fulfil the purpose of its highly contentious nationhood which has enjoyed miraculous preservation up to this moment. **And, in the end**, no Bible-wielding Christian, no tongue-blasting prayer warrior, no faithful Muslim or a conscience-driven traditionalist or moralist will be there to share the glory for the success story of Nigeria with God. All will be for Him and to Him alone.

Amen!

Appendix

THAT NIGERIANS MAY KNOW THAT THE LORD, HE IS GOD

(I Kings 18v39)

“...to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth”. (Exodus 8v22)
(The only way the Presidency of Bola Ahmed Tinubu may secure the mercy to record a huge success)

A. INTRODUCTION

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth”. (Psalm 46v10)

I did not plan for this piece until the early hours of yesterday (May 29, 2023) while joining millions of other patriotic Nigerians to pray for the inauguration of the new government in Abuja which was just a few hours away. It felt like a strong nudge (mark my word, a ‘nudge’) about how God may (also note; not ‘will’) end up pleasantly surprising Nigerians even with a government whose legitimacy is drenched in controversy and its integrity seems to be stained in the odium of its helmsmen. The loudest of the protests now is that the administration of PMB killed Nigeria and he has handed it to the one that will conduct the burial.

But who can tell if all that will result from this bleakness is a process by which the citizens of this great nation and indeed the whole world of our generation will bow in awe and adoration to the fact that the Lord, is God indeed?

I am not issuing any prophecy because that does not fall within my areas of calling, although I have more than once ‘strayed’ into that office through my pen in the past. Again, I dare not dabble into or add to the mess that resulted from the abuse of ‘prophecies’ as witnessed during the electioneering campaigns. While this caveat will save me from being called to question for issuing a futile prediction, I felt a conviction to remark this on the issue of the moment. And, going by the mysterious way God does His own thing, Nigerians may yet be visited with a lift from the present quagmires.

B. GREAT HOPES BUILT AROUND MUHAMMADU BUHARI

It would be a waste of time for anyone to dwell on Buhari’s tragic failures. His sordid legacies stare everybody in the face like a naked live wire. He rode into the office on a very high crest of optimism by which the citizens had reasons to expect a “Messiah” in him. The grounds for such expectations are his antecedents and electioneering promises:

1. That was a man who knew and had catalogued all the ills of Nigeria he was coming to confront, who during his campaign had promised a new direction if elected. But that was until he began to let the ‘changes’ he promised out of the bags.

2. That was a man with credentials for integrity (or so we thought) and who was in the best position to arrest the drifts and corruption which was a major setback for the country, especially as not too many indictments were traceable to his doorstep before. But he ended up surrounding himself with thieves and rouses who stole anything that could be stolen, including even the monies borrowed for projects.

3. That was an ex-military leader whose earlier regime was known for a strong posture against vices and was expected to exhibit a broader approach to patriotism that would unite Nigerians. But this was before he divided Nigeria into two cubicles and apportioned larger attention, affection and resources to his kinsmen, even those in the Niger Republic government house, including those who were weaponized to kill and maim at will.

4. That was a man who, as if to cement our high expectations, picked a pastor as his vice and by which we expected a balanced approach to issues on the religious fronts. But that was until we came to realise that the appointment of a pastor was only to veneer the underlying rots and trick the Church to his side.

I am not too sure how many people will miss him.

C. BOLA TINUBU (BAT) AND HIS CONTRASTING PROFILES

The regime that held so many promises had turned out to be a disaster by which there is nothing on which to anchor any hope any more for the one that has no near credentials and who was the baron of the same political party that shattered our expectations. Please forget about the carefully crafted speeches that are flying around now and remember how the experience of past years will easily deflate them. It is perfectly normal for the millions of people, especially the youths who queued behind Peter Obi in the last election to kick against the outcome of events as we now have it.

Thus, no one will be surprised if people shut their eyes and ears to the newly inaugurated administration of Alhaji Bola Tinubu for reasons that even a good primary school pupil will easily figure out. The new president is enmeshed in the mires of spectral auras and moot credentials with regards to his basic personal data like his age, nativity, childhood days, educational institutions, health status, corruption allegations and drug cases especially as they may relate to the source of huge money that was suspected to have been on display throughout the campaign periods. All these made him and his prospects a sharp contrast to the ones that Buhari paraded before 2015.

It is also noted how the campaign of BAT was not known to have harped very loudly on whether or not and on how the fight against corruption would be taken further. This is because such promises from someone like him would be dead and buried in the moments of their delivery. In the draft of my book on the crisis of

Nigerian, Nigerian Challenge and its Embattled Church, which is currently receiving finishing touches, I wrote that in a place where the election has not degenerated to what we call elections in Nigeria, a party like APC and its officials would not stagger any near the podium to ask for the vote of Nigerians again, to talk less of expecting to win.

Nigerians are sceptical and apprehensive concerning the days ahead with the fact that nothing good may ever come from the same band of people who led us to the depth of degradation where we are today as citizens and as a nation. The damages are enormous and catastrophic.

D. THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

This is the other side of this coin and the crux of my message. For nearly all the times, the power of God comes to the best of displays where the hopes of men have been dashed to pieces, exactly just as we have now. God desires and is always jealous of the manifestation of His raw power and His maximum glory. Claims like “*I am God*”, “*I am the Lord...*”, and “*...that they (or ye) may know that I am the Lord God*” are phrases that litter the pages of the Bible. The gist of Psalm 46v10 ...” *Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth*” may have something pointedly for our present situation.

Now, we may consider the following as likely accessories to the foregoing:

1. Buhari has only served as God’s instrument of chastisement to pay Nigerians back in their coins and teach them lessons. Now, because of His love and for the sake of His name, He alone can (or may) pronounce us guiltless for His mercy to locate and prevail for us.

2. The ruinous years of PMB led Nigerians, especially the Church to raise prayers and cries that may have touched the throne of God, especially about these past failed general elections.

3. Just as He used Balaam’s ass, God can employ anyone with a breath of life in his nostrils to pursue His agenda.

4. Also, it is characteristic of God to use the weak, the rejects and the hopeless. (Please I do not attach these to the profile of BAT and Shettima or their government as to state in affirmative whatever we may expect).

5. Lastly here, BAT was side-lined for the major years of the PMB government and this is a fact that fairness will not suppress.

E. “THAT THEY MAY KNOW THAT I AM GOD”

God’s ways are not our ways. He does His thing in a way that often reduces us to our level of humanity so that He alone will be the ALL, and in ALL. We prayed and

even desired a candidate. It should not be ruled out that He answered our prayers, though in the way He deemed fit. At the end of it all, His firm grip on Nigeria will only prove Him to be God indeed.

Thus, just when the enemy of this great nation may think he has led us to the precipice, just when no one, except those who have chosen to deceive themselves, may nurse any hope for the resurrection of Nigeria, that may be when God will arise to visit us as a nation. Where God, therefore, chooses to follow uncharted trails or use the least unexpected instrument to work out His plan for Nigeria, no one will be there to raise a protest or reject the blessings He will bring. The only thing that will be on the lip of everyone will be to confess His Lordship, sing His praise and glory with a strong appeal to those who are still wandering out of His fold so that they may locate their entry points.

John O. B. AGBAJE
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