



JOHN O. B. ACBAJE

PROPHETIC
FORCE

A Demystification of Eschatology

VOLUME ONE: FROM CREATION TO RAPTURE

P R O P H E T I C
FORCE

A D e m y s t i f i c a t i o n o f E s c h a t o l o g y

VOLUME ONE

From the CREATION to the RAPTURE

John O. B. AGBAJE

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED **TO THE LABOURERS**

Who, for the lasting laurels
Of the unseen realms, in a distant world,
Scorned the fleeting glamour of the dust.
High aspirations and cherished ambitions
That once drove men, like slave masters,
Were subdued, sacrificed and spread
 To strew the thorny pathway
That traverses the deserts, hills and valleys,
 That swims across bloody seas
On rescue missions that, too often,
 Aren't as clearly distinguished
 From a 'suicide' expedition.
One end of the vein sucks in pains
 Bidding the other to be wide open
And ready..., should there be any need,
 To spill that red life liquid...
 As they groan, as they toil
Over the vast and fast rotting harvests,
 All in response of total surrender
To the all-conquering love of Him
 Who first gave His Best,
 And, indeed, His ALL.

FOREWORD TO THE VOLUMES

Our world finally staggered to the brink of collapse. All we see and read about today; chaos and disorders, diseases and disasters, violence and bloodshed, wars and bloody revolutions, deaths and large-scale destructions are only a tip of the iceberg of tragedies of immense proportion that will soon hit our world. These events are happening just exactly as they have been foretold by the Bible and will culminate in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth.

Prophetic Force is the outcome of years of meticulous study and research efforts by a son in the faith with whom I have been associated for about four decades now. As a committed Christian and thoroughbred academician, Brother Agbaje has aimed the torchlight on the heart of the Father who alone can explain the profundity of his inspirations and discoveries. The book, which is a loud testimony to his spirituality and intellectual sagacity, is a compilation of sound teachings on eschatology in the way that the Church has yet to have it; an all-inclusive coverage of the subject and potent armour of truth to withstand falsehood that has filtered into the Church from several directions on the account of the cloudy subject.

The depth of expositions and objectivity of his analysis of the Signs of the End, The Antichrist, The Nation of Israel, the Millennium Reign of Christ on the earth and his treatment of Hell are astounding. His handling of several burning, pointed references to the works of several religious and secular authors together with the vast amount of information stuffed in the footnotes to minimise diversion have all combined to make the book a minefield of treasure for all who want to discover the truth and live by it. The entire work has been laid out in a pleasantly readable style to stimulate interest, extract the commitment of readers to the course and, in the end, secure their positive response for a life of total surrender unto God.

It is my heartfelt prayer that God will through these volumes prepare His people for the much-needed re-awakening that will usher in the coming of His Son, the Lord Jesus.

Pastor Michael A. Adeoye

THE WATCHMAN

“WHY DIDN’T YOU GO WITH THEM?”

*What will you tell them
When they come with bangs on your door?
What explanation will you offer
For whatever may have chained you down?
Even if they give you the entire eighty-four months
It will not be sufficient for you
To tell your story.*

*For years you followed or led them about
You carried the Bible and preached it to others
You even spoke in tongues and boasted of power
So, people already reckoned you’re in the number
Then, at last, the long-awaited trumpet sounded
To fetch the saints away*

*There is ‘mass kidnapping’ in the air
Thousands just disappeared, mysteriously
Soon the rumour gains speed and spread
That Christians have sneaked away
Suddenly, they will remember you
That you, too, are one of them
Curiosity will drive them to your doorstep
Just to see if you too are ‘missing’*

*But let God forbid that you will fail to fly
Streams of shame will overflow you
People will discover the hypocrisy and deceit
You have covered up for years
With flowing garments of empty religion
They will fire darts of questions
They will remind you about those who have gone
At last, they will slam you with a daze
“Why didn’t you go with them?”*

*What will you tell them
When they bombard you with questions?
What explanation will you offer
For whatever may have chained you down?
Even if they give you the entire eighty-four months
It will not be sufficient for you
To bury your shame.*

— The Watchman

ENDORSEMENTS

***Prophetic Force** is classic! It is a product of many years of patient, pain-staking, careful, penetrating, analytical, objective, critical, comprehensive, comparative, scholarly and refreshing study of the Christian doctrine of eschatology. The author marshalled a daring effort which is yet reassuring to the seeker of truth in his approach to engaging a very thorny and controversial subject in a simple, lucid and direct manner, in unravelling the mysterious, the revelatory and the prophetic elements of the subject. He had processed this through a labyrinth of views, expressed through the lenses of a plethora of church dogmas and successive generations of scholars: preachers, bible scholars, as well as, academic theologians.*

Pastor Christopher O. OSHUN,

Former Professor of Christian Studies & Church History, Pioneering Vice-Chancellor, Joseph Ayo Babalola University (JABU) and currently the Provost, Christ Apostolic Church Theological Seminary

The book, **Prophetic Force**, is simply superb and classic, a thoroughly researched book on end times with sound logic and presentation. It is, truly, eschatology demystified, a one-stop shop for the course with an appeal to every student of Theology and Religion in the universities, a must-read for every seeker of truth about the end time, a lump of full meat, biblically loaded and highly relevant for our winding down era.

Daniel NWABUFOR

Financial Consultant and Teacher of the Word

*The literary talent of the author rang a loud bell across the University Campus during our undergraduate years, especially through his Wednesday With You weekly, a gospel-sharing platform. Reading through **Prophetic Force**, I cannot but commend the depth of his thoughts, the superlative engagement of his literary prowess and his intellectual fecundity. The well-researched book is a must-read for all those who have a predilection for quality books and a thirst for balanced knowledge of the subject matter.*

Shadrach O. OLAOYE

Pastor, The Gospel Faith Mission International (GOFAMINT).

The **Prophetic Force** series is a bold and successful attempt at bringing the researcher, teacher and student of eschatology to optimize the gains of their studies in this subject area. It is a comprehensive description of religious and socioeconomic imperatives and global political realities that will contribute maximally to the spiritual and academic development of the readers. The author employed lucid scholastic prose to arouse and sustain the interest of the reader to invest time and attentiveness in digesting a subject matter that is otherwise emotionally challenging to some people. The volumes are veritable tools for self-assessment by all who will find them to be irresistible.

Professor Sola FAJANA

Pastor and Former Vice Chancellor, Joseph Ayo Babalola University

***Prophetic Force** is a spiritual eye-opener to help the reader equip himself with Biblical facts and information that is needed for the Christian race and final reward. I commend the author for allowing God to use him to birth this beautiful and wonderful piece and recommend this book to all readers.*

David A.Y. AKINWUMI.

Retired Venerable, Yewa Diocese, Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion

Prophetic Force is a contextual and relevant book that proves the existence of God and the origin of man. Its message stands on the Biblical truth that serves as the undiluted revelation on eschatological events. It dug deep to excavate some challenges of many predictions of the past and offers a balanced position on those issues. To God be the glory. This book will surely shape the mind of many Christians on the truth about end-time events and assist many with reasons to come to Christ.

Joshua Maikudi KUSA

Pastor, Radio ELWA Jos.

Prophetic Force is a very well-researched book. From what I have read, the book is a major addition to our theology of the end times. It seems that the language of the book is more akin to the language of the academy than the pulpit and that is all right as long as both the Church and academic theatre can define the target audience.

Ode Eyeoyibo ANDREW

Pastor, Ezra House, Lagos State, Nigeria

*The author's ingenuity and his adoption of the Berean style are commendable. The thoughts are committed to diligent festooning, sincere interrogation, mind regulating and a good imagination to decipher the content of the scriptures and these are unveiled in the **Prophetic Force** end-time prophetic sanctions called eschatology. The book is quite compelling, written to assist the reader to cruise through his source and ponder his presence to accurately mirror his future. The languages are... high sounding and could best serve the intellectual mind of good scholars, with a systematic flow of thoughts in the entire work.*

Professor Samuel B. ADEJUIGBE

Pastor, Christ Apostolic Church, Chapel of Praise, Akure, Ondo State

The depth is enriching and very enlightening. The honesty with which **Prophetic Force** was written will make many to read with an open mind.

Abraham EKEBAFE

Pastor, Christ Apostolic Church, Light House Assembly, Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria

Prophetic Force is a well-researched, theologically sound and academically crafted piece. The events of the last days are a doctrine that has torn the Church and even the secular world into different camps. The book pitches the truth of God's revelations in Scripture against the futility of the utopian expectations of a worldview fashioned and driven by technology and myths. The content is potent. The author, whom I know very well since our university days has exhibited very exceptional scholarly skills. I recommend this book to both secular and theological research students and libraries.

Reverend Paul Josef ONWE

General Overseer, Whole Life Bible Church, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

PREFACE

The Church today is awash with innovative teachings and vibrant theologies adapted to address and amplify nearly every aspect of Bible doctrine upon which her existence is anchored. With the technological revolutions of our age and the endless possibilities that came with them, such teachings have been spreading with the speed of light to the remotest corners of the earth. Popular among them are those that seek to inject the Body of Christ with the kind of faith she needs to outwit the enemy and break his hold upon their blood-bought privileges. But it is also a pathetic irony that only a negligible few have exhibited similar zeal or strived to gain as much access to teachings about *the sure end* of all the struggles, of the ups and the downs.

This is why a generation that is supposed to be the most enlightened in the history of the Church may boast of no more than shallow appreciation of and damning ignorance about the last events. It seems as if there is an unwritten conspiracy by the leadership of the Church to discount eschatology in their teaching curriculums. If this is not deliberate as we have reason to suspect, the root of the problem may be the lack of exposure of the leaders themselves to sound knowledge of the delicate course and no one will blame anyone for not giving to others what he does not have in the first instance. The result is that there are millions of fine and refined Christians milling in and out of the church buildings today who do not know anything at all, to talk less of knowing as much as they should, about the important teachings on the end time which are supposed to be the pillars of their hope.

However, at the other extreme are scholars who appear to know it all, who have written volumes and propounded theories about various segments of eschatology. In fact, from my discovery in the course of this work, there is hardly any aspect of the subject that has not been explored to generate opinions and counter opinions, theories and rejoinders. Therefore, with the number and sizes of books that have been written, our generation is certainly parading the largest number of works on eschatology from both credible and specious sources and these have been competing for attention, and will continue to, in our vast market of ideas. Schools of thought have emerged, formed their camps, branded their theories and are making cases to infect others with their beliefs on one segment

of the course or the other.

The reality of today, however, is how prophecies are distilling into events and the erstwhile unthinkable is dominating the news headlines. Thus, at one end are millions in the Church who have no idea of the messages such developments are communicating. At the other end of the highly polarised Church are prophecy scholars who are busy reacting and compounding myriads of theories to explain them. In the midst of all these, our most rewarding effort will be to filter the urgent urge of the Spirit from the apathy of many on the one hand, and from the overreaction of scholars on the other hand so that those who have ears will begin to pick the signals which the events of our time are transmitting to the Church. These are the signals that these volumes seek to reverberate in an unpretentious tone. It also aims to bridge the knowledge gap within the Body of Christ so that those who ought to know will begin to know what they ought to know about the important subject of eschatology.

This work has woven well-grounded Bible doctrines, devotional thoughts and practical aspects of Christian day-to-day living around the subject of the last events. Without any offence or apology to anyone, our text of the study, the Bible, is held out as the only revelation of God to mankind, the foundation of all truths concerning the past, present and future of man; the authority and supremacy of which is held in *the* highest esteem by this work. If this jingles a tone of bigotry in a world that has been sold to the lies of Satan, especially in an age when everyone is going crazy with the project of unity of humanity, of its creed and faith, we take consolation in the fact that the foolishness of God will always be wiser than the wisest among men.

Thus, while there are intellectuals outside the Church and many theologians within its fold who may have ‘outgrown’ the primordial appeal of this work, it is sure to add strength and courage to the ‘fools’ and the wayfarers (Isaiah 31v8), to the “*strangers and pilgrims*” (2 Peter 2v11) on our cloudy pathway. Now to such a band, whatever may be scholarly omissions, crude emphasis, tilted conclusions or standpoints that seek to uphold the brazen and uncompromising stance of the Bible will not be construed as *an* intention to misinform.

While it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for any

work on eschatology to rise above the storms, contentious issues have been addressed with the utmost caution, unbiased mien and a deep sense of pastoral care. I also have taken solace in the fact that no author on the volatile subject will claim to know that which is not communicated even to the angels. Yet, concerning all that has been graciously signalled to the Church in the holy writs, *“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand”* (Revelation 1v3).

John O. B. AGBAJE
(30 June 2020)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The first book I read on the subject of eschatology in the mid-1970s was *The Beginning of the End* by Reverend Tim LaHaye who by the grace of God stood out as one of the glowing authorities on end-time prophecies of the Bible. He dominated that field of theological studies with his series of bestsellers for decades up to the time he passed away. *The Beginning of the End* undoubtedly sowed the seed of the passion I was going to nurture for that field of theology in years to follow.

There are great insights from the works of foremost scholars and theologians, particularly Matthew Henry and Adam Clarke to whom this work is indebted. Other works from where I drew inspiration include *Introduction to Christian Theology* by H. Orton Wiley and Paul T. Culbertson, *Daniel's Prophecy of The 70 Weeks* by Dr Alva J. McClain, *Complete Bible Study* by W. F. Kumuyi, *Bible Dictionary* by A. R. Fausset and *Revelation Expounded* by Finis Jennings Dake. I also acknowledge the contributions which several online publishers that are forging a link between current events and prophecy have made to the work. *Prophecy News Watch* and *Koinonia House Online* stand out for special mention here. There are several authors and their publishers from whom I have drawn references and to whom adequate credits have been given.

Brother O. B. Ndukuba, an editor of a rare worth assisted in the volumes. Pastor Ayo Oluwatosin and Dr Dayo Osifeso perused some of the early drafts with valuable inputs. I place on record the outstanding efforts of Pa Enoch Ola Dare who in spite of his waning energy gave a facelift some portions of the draft.

My sincere appreciation goes to Professor Bunmi Oshun who, like a father and mentor on the terrain of Christian literature, stood behind me as a pillar of professional support since when he had contact with my other book, *Rebirth of Vision* which he volunteered to review in preparation for and during its launching. The interest he has demonstrated, the editorial inputs he has made and his invaluable suggestions for these volumes can only be matched by a plaque of gold.

I appreciate the sacrifice of my wife, Dolapo and children for the attention I denied them in the course of this work. Also, Pastor Charles Emmanuel became the instrument of God to finally birth the work for widespread access of the reading public. Finally, unto God and Him alone shall be all praise and glory forever for finally bringing something out of what would otherwise have been trashed!

-JOBA (30.06.2020)

Chapter One

ORIGIN AND DESTINATION

THE TRAVAIL OF MAN on earth has gradually climbed to a dramatic climax as his world races in every direction to the finishing lines. The long sojourn that began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden has seen his generations through tedious and tearful struggles against events and the powerful forces that dictate them. The concept of time and the apparatus of its measurement have combined to awaken every man to the fact that his world has starting and terminal points. Even while the old popular catechism may harp on the notion of a “world without end”, the fleeting nature of time and the certainty of an end to everything that has a beginning stand as a loud reminder that his sojourn on the earth is confined to an appointed time (Job 7v1, 14v5).

Time is the vehicle in which our world journeys from the terrestrial to the realms laying presently outside the grasp of human senses. Our pilgrimage on the hidden pathway, brightened by daylight and darkened by nightfall continues unbroken and leads to a sure end. In effect, whether consciously or otherwise, everyone and everything that

is part of our vast world cruises on the unseen pathway at a steady and harmonious speed that can neither be hastened nor interrupted.

The Almighty God who rules the dispensations, years and seasons is the Driver and the souls of men are the kernel of the all-embracing freight. Every tick of the hand of a clock, every step of a saunter, every distance covered by whatever machine of transportation, each dawn of the day and setting of the sun is leading us somewhere. It will not matter, then, if a voyage on the big ball is towards the north or south, to the east or west. The fact of existence has pinned down the journey of humanity in one absolute direction; from the conception of the womb through the bliss and toils of life, through its pleasures and pains to the waiting graves for many who will be fortunate enough to get a burial.

Life is characterised by irrational rations foisted upon us by forces that have so far proved to be too complex for cheap explanations. But whatever is our lot at any point of time; be it joy, sadness, success, failure, fortune or misfortune, they are nothing more than a blanket beneath which the speeding wheel of time is hiding. The geographical facts of daily rotation and yearly revolution of our solar system have become too widespread to attract argument even from those who may not have had the privilege of education beyond its basic levels.

However, since man fell into sin and his world will not be allowed to continue in perpetuity as was originally intended, there is a time that God has set apart to pursue His agenda with his generation, the commencement of which will be traced to the moment He ordered "*Let there be light and there was light . . .*" (Genesis 1v3). The cycle of each day, year and season subtracts from the preordained number and reinforces the fact that man and his world are firmly pinned down to the immutable counsel of God. Eternity lies beyond and the preaching of the gospel continues to dangle a choice before everyone as to what their portions will be forever. The decision to accept or reject Jesus Christ defines our spiritual status and bears fruits of our actions and inactions, of the contents and intents of our hearts; the harvest of which

we will reap in the day of judgement which is ahead of all men.

SHATTERED DREAMS

Vexed by an apparent drift of our world toward chaos as signalled by nasty realities we all behold today; people of thoughts everywhere are raising questions about what may be hiding behind the thin veil of time. Spiritual apathy that once pulled the woools over the eyes of many and served as the basis on which the reality of impalpable realms was spurned has developed into curiosity to compel the embrace of alternative thoughts. The futility of loudly harped expectations of better tomorrow has been starring the protagonists in the face to leave them without any more explanations for their failure. Sagging prospects for a world of peace and prosperity together with the frustration they engender have combined to erode the pillars of propaganda that once calmed the agitations of many minds.

As revealed by Professor Chinedu Nebo in his article, *Mission, Technology and the Millennium Phobia in Occupy*¹ “the much-vaunted utopia to be ushered in by technological breakthrough has proved elusive as an ominous cloud of despair and despondency overwhelms the human landscape”. Even those who scorn religions but share interests in the unfolding events may no longer pretend to be at ease with cheap explanations that strangulated media are told to proffer for them. This must be the reason why the subject of the end time now registers a louder appeal to a larger number of people², many of who are outside the Church and ordinarily would not spare any thought in that direction. It is becoming clearer that some inexplicable storms are gathering momentum to hit the surface from the backyard of our

¹ *Occupy* is a missionary frontier magazine of Calvary Production (CAPRO), Nigeria - No. 4, volume 18, 1999.

² A ranking of the bestsellers in the US for the year 2000 revealed that 3 books about end time prophecies are among the topmost of the listed 50, with 2 of the 3 titles written by Pastor Tim LaHaye. In fact, his *Left Behind* series co-authored with Jerry B. Jenkins was on the 150 best sellers' list for 141 weeks reaching overall 7th position at a point.

turbulent theatres. For instance, no ordinary folk on the street could have predicted what was ahead of December 2019 with the ravaging of the Coronavirus pandemic except the few to whom accusing fingers have been pointed as being the brain behind the plague.

Today, local and global afflictions have diffused on individuals as a result of which many people now groan under the huge burden that mere existence has become. Many have been chased out of erstwhile comfort zones to where assurance of the future may no longer be taken for granted. In my part of the world, ill winds have become a perennial migraine for the Church by which her sanctuaries have been turned into battlegrounds and fire-fighting arenas. Her relevance and programmes have been quietly redefined in light of the response they fashion to the challenges of displaced members. A missionary friend remarked that in the face of hardship and uncertainties of our days, any church that trades in prayers or sponsors programmes that promise any form of relief will continue to attract huge patronage.

This is how the widespread awareness of the approaching end among the people may now be taken for granted. The signs of the times which are fully discussed in the chapters ahead now jingle bells with an intensity that can no longer be ignored. At the same time, expectations of the adherents of the three foremost monotheistic religions that account for about half of the world's population are striking the same chord. Christians are waiting for when Jesus Christ will evacuate them from the world. Shia Muslim is working hard to set the world ablaze in his preparation to receive Al-Mahdi, the twelfth imam said to have been hiding away. They expect that he will emerge from his hideout to right all the wrongs of our world and establish a reign of 'justice and peace'. Following their rejection of Jesus Christ, the Orthodox Jewry too continues to await their promised 'Messiah' who will walk into their warm embrace one of these days.

Even the scientists who deny the fact of any existence beyond the material world cannot deny the perplexities of our time and from

which everyone is in search of a way out, or by which we are all simply waiting for the moment of inevitable doom. Many of the notions they embrace are indeed diversionary ploys of Satan built on falsehood with the example of how people once counted down to the moment of a major cataclysm that was to end the world on December 21, 2012. Also, around the middle of May 2012, a space weather expert raised an alarm about “highly charged particles from the sun” and some kinds of “damaging solar storms” which our world will not be able to survive was said to be headed “straight toward earth”. Maybe this is still on its haulage to plunging the major cities into global disasters.

More realistic folks in their camp are simply waiting for the time when our wobbling diplomacy will eventually hit the rock and situations will slip out of control. That is the time when the bombs into which various national resources have been sunk and which have laid dormant for decades will be triggered on the order of suspicious government officials. From another worrisome view, one atypical fellow may somehow manage to gain unauthorised access and acts on his whims to tamper with the sensitive armoury in a way that will lay the nagging questions about our turbulent existence to permanent rest, just like incidents of sporadic shootings that have been leaving many people dead have become more frequent in our days.

With the decline in the health of Pope Benedict XVI that brought his successor Pope Francis to the office some years back, the works of St. Malachy³, a medieval Irish priest who made notable predictions in 1139 A. D. about a hundred and twelve popes that would hold office up to the tribulation period was revisited. Rightly or otherwise, his prophecy dictated the pulse of a section of scholars and defined their expectations from the tenure of each pope for many generations. From the hint of his prophecies, the last pope that will encounter the great tribulation may be stepping into the office anytime soon, that is if he hasn't already.

³ Nearly, if not all his predictions about previous popes have proved direct and accurate.

But as a caution, I stand in resolute opposition to any attempt to speculate or announce any date for the event of the future. We are all aware of several failed predictions by both religious and secular authors by which spurious dates were fixed for the end of the world. From a website⁴, we have predictions of various dates from year 30 up to 1920 that have all come and gone and life continued as usual. Even going by what we may all recall, there have been several of such, particularly in the last thirty years involving one religious movement or the other fixing speculative dates, the loudest of this being the December 21, 2012 saga. What Satan, the grand deceiver, seeks to achieve through them, especially those who associate their predictions with the Bible, is to further deaden the sensitivity of man to the certainty of an end. Yet, the fact that we have had all these as his diversionary ploys does not cast a millimetre of shadow on the certainty of the events that are knocking on our doors today.

We can rest our conclusion on the fact that our generation is heading somewhere and the fast speed that now characterises nearly every field of human endeavour is only a means by which the time required for the journey is drastically shortened. It will not even matter if those who refuse to embrace the gospel continue to pretend that all is well and that there is no cause for concern. This will be the case, especially if they are counted among the few that are shielded from the afflictions of poverty and diseases. But whatever courage they exhibit will not discount the fact that they too, like all mortals, are hunted by uncertainties that invade their solitary moments. The futility of life constantly stares them in the face and the only thing that chains them to sin is their bondage to and craving for its momentary pleasures. The appeal today is urging decisive action in the direction of the stubborn truth that the word of God exposes to all those who care to consult it.

⁴ Detailed information on this is in a write up titled *"46 Failed End-Of-The-World Predictions That Were To Occur Between 30 & 1920 CE, But Didn't"* on www.religioustolerance.org

HUMANITY: ORIGIN AND DESTINATION

Resolving the age-long stalemate that beclouds the origin of man is central to the message of this book and other volumes of the series. A person who sees himself as no more than a moving log of wood or an accident of history is highly unlikely to share any conviction or concern about events hiding behind the curtains of his transient life. Yet, contrary to theories that have floated about for generations, nothing, as we see it today, could ever have come about by mere chance or a blind process. The Bible explains how the world and all that is in it came to be and lays a solid foundation for man's awareness about his identity. This has not only served to link him with his origin, but it has also charted for him a guide to his ultimate destination.

Genesis, the first book of the Bible, documents the beginning⁵ of all things except that of God. The silence of the book about His origin simply informs us that while all things are traced to Him, He – the immense, infinite, Self-existent and Self-sustaining God, “*the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity*” (Isaiah 57v15) – is traceable to nothing. Surveying the account of creation, we note that God concluded His work with the making of the man who is imbued with the same creative ability. All we see today will be traced to either the outcome of the six days of work by God or a derivative product of the similarly creative endowment He bestowed on man by which second-level creations are fashioned out of the original creation. Therefore, all that there is today has its origin while the creation which the Bible is candid enough to inform us as coming out of nothing could not have been traced to anything, after all (Hebrews 11v3)! The popular axiom is that “nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could”.

⁵ When the Bible says “*In the beginning, God created...*” (Genesis 1v1), follow up questions will normally be ones like “*The beginning of what?*”, “*Who defined this beginning?*” and “*Who is it that was there at the beginning, from where and doing what?*”. Those who spurn the idea of a God existing before the beginning of all things are sure to have issues with such questions. On the other hand, those who take the Bible as an inspired writ that bridges the gap between us and the origin of all things have saved themselves of many headaches.

Those who reject the revelations of the Bible concerning the origin of man and his world will still have to believe something in the alternative. But whatever they choose to believe will always be something of much less worth, something of an inferior authority. I cannot but agree that to such a profound revelation of the Bible that requires the conquest of the senses to explore the perception and expression of the innermost being, there usually will be no want of sceptics, either for reasons of unbelief or a probing posture of the academy that requires empirical proofs before it will yield its ground. Even the popular theory of evolution⁶ which has served as the tool of Satan to lead millions astray still rests on the same principle by which the revelations of the Bible could have been embraced.

CHARLES DARWIN AND HIS DESCENDANTS OF MONKEYS

The theory of human beings evolving from the family of monkeys was propounded by Charles Darwin. But both he and the worlds of scholars that had championed the theory in the course of history still lack incontestable proof⁷. This is because such proof as may be required to authenticate a universally adored theory of evolution should not be anything less than that which, according to the rule of the same science, "... is established by the outcome of a credible research, employing a credible process and conducted in a credible laboratory". In their vain attempt to address fundamental questions plaguing the theory, they compounded issues by dating the origin of man back to two million years in the form of an ape-man⁸ that became *Homo Habilis* and changed to *Homo Erectus* about one million years

⁶ Evolutionists are now insisting that the word 'fact' should replace 'theory' in the description of the phenomenon. They say the event of evolution is now something more of fact than a theory that is usually plagued by controversies. But whatever it is called, the fact or theory of evolution remains a major diversion of the human race from the truth of the Holy Bible on the origin of man and his world that will never be proved.

⁷ Mark my words. They have 'proofs'. But they are neither substantial nor incontestable

⁸ Ape-man is said to be the extinct creature intermediate between ape and man.

ago, from which Homo Sapiens emerged sometimes around thirty-five thousand years ago.

For centuries, debates continued to rage between Christians who champion the story of creation as recorded in the book of Genesis and scientists who insist on the theory of evolution. Today, the world population, particularly the domains of academia, is polarised into the camps of creationists and evolutionists. While it is not the aim of this book to exhume all issues surrounding the age-long contentions, it emphatically endorses the finality of the revelations of the Holy Bible and it is on that foundation that it builds its message. Indeed, for those who are well-tutored about the Bible, pairing the perforated theory of Charles Darwin on the origin of the world with it will amount to nothing short of a shocking insult. It is admitted that scientists have their grouse against the Bible. But an unbiased stance will highlight how their preferred theories about man and the foundation of his world have been plagued by contradictions far more than the ones they have marshalled against the Bible.

The theory of evolution as laid out in *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin and the latter Big Bang theory on the origin of the universe by George Lemaitre⁹ had combined to sponsor a diversion of the human race from the revelations of the Bible about the formation of our world and the origins of all things therein. Now, the fact that the two theories are the fulcrum of prevalent opinions of the science world concerning the origin of the universe, its cosmos and the innumerable species that have been found in them, we need to spare a closer look.

The Big Bang theory dated the origin of the universe back to sometime between 10 to 15 billion years ago and linked it with the explosion of a prehistoric atom. A complimentary theory linked the

⁹ George Lemaitre initially titled his work as *Hypothesis of the Primeval Atom*, and made allusion to a 'creation-like' origin. But that allusion had been drastically toned down in the course of time by those with sinister agenda while the aspects of his contributions to the science world had since graduated from the status of hypothesis to become a theory in support of Charles Darwin's evolution and form a united front against the Bible.

origin of life with the Precambrian explosion that occurred about 500 million years ago with bacteria as its earliest form. It is understood that the proponent, George Lemaitre had sought to balance his position as a scientist with that of a church priest and he was quoted to have said there is no conflict between religion and science. But those who propagated his work deliberately pursued a different agenda to apply its principles to fill unbridgeable chasms in the theory of evolution.

Charles Darwin had premised that everything that ever existed in whatever size or form is a product of a blind process; that all the variations of life on earth arose through gradual evolution by way of generational mutation, adaptation and intense struggle in which only the fittest fought their ways to survival. Explanations more complex even than the complexities of the theories he sought to sell were marshalled about how atomic lives went through a long and tortuous trail of transformations in an uptight progression following which some developed into apes that later evolved to become human beings.

Yet going by the analytical inquiry that science is known for, one would have expected this theory to generate more questions than answers it proffered to the origin of man. A comment in one of the science journals noted that although the theory was widely accepted, it probably will never be proved and, as it has always been, leave several tough questions unanswered. For instance, claims about the origin of the sun itself or the primaeval atom, the explosion of which is believed to be the origin of all the theatrical events are still lacking convincing evidence. Even while I do not contend my snag on the intricacies of science, I can at least infer that most of the scientists that bequeathed the world with the project of evolution lived at a time when their inventions and discoveries were in their most primitive phases, at such times when most of the sophisticated instruments we have today for sighting and analysis, for testing and measurement were not even developed¹⁰.

¹⁰ The Genesis Spacecraft launched some years ago was part of the seven-year scientific

This will establish that, even from the logic of laymen that make the majority, how Charles and those who have been propagating his work established the veracity of the events that took place millions or billions of years ago with the kind of assurance and sacredness they have bestowed on such works may only dangle between a pure mirage and reckless superstition¹¹. It is therefore nothing surprising that the theory has so far derived the best of its proofs from the conflicting claims of its protagonists. Because it is built on the foundation of a lie, inspired by Satan the father of lies (John 8v44), the theory of evolution will never be able to graduate from the confines of fallacies. That millions of respected intellectuals all over the world have built the structure of their knowledge on its foundation will neither confer sanctity on the theory nor invalidate the biblical alternative.

DEFENCE OF THE INDEFENSIBLE

As a way to side-step questions generated by a godless theory, the scientists will have us believe that we only have to wait for another million, or billions of years when the present species, including even human beings, may further evolve to the next phase of their development. But who can tell? Maybe this is part of the crazy ambitions that ongoing cloning ventures, genetic modification and cell engineering projects are seeking to pursue. The tenacity with which the scientists hold to the theory now and the sacredness they continue to bestow on it is enough to miff a suspicion that we are not being told

project aimed at drawing some cosmic particles from the space that may hold some information on the origin of the universe. A leading scientist involved in the project once remarked “What we’ve been missing is the starting point ...the first goals are to learn how the Sun and his family of planets originated and determine how the solar system evolved”

¹¹ If seeing and ascertainment of facts are basis for believing as the rule says, the claim of the scientists on evolution will be a gross violation of this as there is no correlation between whatever anyone could have ‘seen’ through whatever experiment or deduced evidences and the actual event of evolution. This has made everyone a believer of a sort and the only thing that makes the difference is what each person has chosen to believe or rebuff.

the whole story when it comes to evolution and creation. This will be more so since the latest efforts we hear about are those that seek to shield the theory from criticism on the ground of its global scientific accreditation.

In their *Introduction to Christian Theology*, H. Orton Wiley and Paul T. Culbertson noted concerning the theory of evolution:

Naturalistic evolution, instead of solving the problem of creation, merely pushes it back farther and farther in time. The question of origin remains unanswered. The theory breaks down at three vital points: (1) It has not been able to bridge the chasm between the inanimate and the animate. (2) It cannot pass from the diffused life of the vegetable realm to the conscious, somatic life of the animal kingdom. (3) It cannot span the gap from the somatic life of animals to the rational, self-conscious, spiritual life¹² of man.

Similarly, while reviewing *Java Man* by Gamis Curtis, Carl Swisher and Roger Lewin, A. C. Grayling¹³, from a purely secular standpoint, lent his voice to the inconsistency that has continued to plague the claims of the scientists on the origin of man:

There are few areas of science as fascinating and uncertain as an enquiry into human origins. Each new discovery of human-related fossil seems to change our picture of mankind's evolution history in dramatic ways, demanding revisions in the datings and arrangement of the family tree on an upper twig of which Homo Sapiens sits...

¹² *Spiritual life or component* of man involves his spirit and soul. Soul refers to the immaterial entity marked by sensation, feeling and will and it is also distinct from the term 'spirit' which, though similar to soul, indicates his immaterial nature in relation to a deity and moral order.

¹³ Financial Times January 27-28, 2001

The world, he further noted, has been inundated with examples of how “scientific ingenuity can make mountains of theory out of molehills of evidence”. And, let us trust Satan¹⁴. It will always be his duty and delight to furnish such ‘evidence’ as may be needed to scorn the revelations of the Bible, not only on the facts of creation but on every aspect of the dealing of God with man. By now, even science itself must have lost count of how many relics archaeology has exhumed to support spurious claims that man has existed in various forms for several millions of years¹⁵.

Coming to the stance of the scientists that vilifies the reality of the innermost force that controls the physical aspects of man, including the extra-terrestrial powers that dominate the atmosphere of his world; it is a balloon that is deflated by the irrepressible voice from their inner chambers. Whether or not they openly yield their ground is another thing that will not matter much to the truth. In his well-articulated opinion, *In Defence of Jesus, God and Christianity*¹⁶, Dr Cosmas Odoemena penned a pointed response to the altercation of the atheists and portrayed the shallowness of their posture. According to him:

Whether they like it or not, whether they believe it or not, there is still the infiniteness about our living, about our essence that cannot be answered conclusively by logic, science and reasoning. Even what is a scientific theory for many years can one day be disproved, and scientists and mankind continue the search, the endless search.

¹⁴ The denial of the existence of Satan and the impact of spiritual realms on the affairs of nature constitute a cornerstone of evolution theory, ranking as its greatest achievement.

¹⁵ For example, an addition to this list as reported by Daniel Estrin of Associated Press, is the ‘discovery’ by a Tel Aviv University team excavating a cave in central Israel which claimed to have found ‘human teeth of about 400,000 years’ in a cave.

¹⁶ Source: The Guardian, 12 April, 2012

In many parts of the world, we have heard about several university professors who join cult movements, visit herbalists and perform rituals, especially when they have to knock horns with other colleagues to secure positions of advantage in the systems. After they have done all that, usually under the cover of the night, they will ramble into the classrooms the following morning to tell their students that everything about the realms of the spirit is nothing but a myth.

This is why, even in places where rituals and appeasement of hidden forces are not as common as in my part of the world, the most potent argument that science may marshal against the ethereal properties of man will never be less ridiculous than the one that illiterate folks employ to deny the existence of programmed software propelling the operations of hardware just because they cannot see, feel or sense the former as they do the latter. Not even the fact that it is much easier to establish the existence of software behind typical hardware than it is to empirically or otherwise prove the fact of the spiritual component of man that motivates and directs his actions and inactions will diminish the spiritual imbecility that denigrates his hidden realms and undermines their verves.

As I noted earlier, by clinging to the theory of evolution, the scientists have exercised their faith in what they too have not seen or yet have an absolute or infallible proof for. That is the same kind of faith that Christians exercise when they submit their intellect to the revelations of the Bible as the source of absolute truths, especially the secreted ones. While scientists will imbibe all they read about evolution and supporting theories, while they will shut their eyes and minds to many questions hovering around the theory to which they know there will never be satisfactory answers, they turn around to raise myriads of objections and sponsor blind arguments against the claims of Bible concerning the origin of man and his world.

But, had they invested just a fraction of the devotion which they have showered on the theory of Charles Darwin to consult the Bible,

they will have come to appreciate the awesomeness of God together with the depth of wisdom and enormity of power that lay beneath His equally awesome creation. It is then possible, just like we have begun to see in recent times, that they would have discovered Jesus Christ as the source of all wisdom and knowledge they seek with desperation (Colossians 2v1-3). They would have embraced the unique harmony of their discipline and the Bible to quench their quest for knowledge that has chased them into the snare of the ‘fowler’ (Psalm 91v3). In the end, they would have come to understand that many of the answers they seek are to questions that would never have arisen in the first place.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN, A CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE

The truth is that it requires nothing short of deliberate effort, powered by equally stubborn will, to shut the eyes and minds to the wonders of creation, its highly regimented structure of modules, its entwined and yet congenial layers of existence that culminated in the making of man¹⁷ ordained to subdue and rule over it; all of which bears eloquent testimony to the involvement and mastermind of an intelligent and independent Force at work (Psalm 19v1-3). And our scientists have succeeded in that effort! Indeed, the number of such efforts as may be required to snub the creation story in favour of evolution theory is evident from the comment of Charles Darwin himself about those who will believe and propagate his works. He noted that:

...nothing at first can appear more difficult to believe than that the more complex organs and instincts have been perfected, not by means superior to, though analogous with, human reason, but by the accumulation of innumerable slight variations.

¹⁷ Even the same science has owned up to the fact that no machinery or gadget has been or may ever be invented that will compare with the complexities and capabilities of the human body either in design or in function, lending credence to the exclamation of David that “*I am fearfully and wonderfully made*” (Psalm 139v14). I guess the same fact extends to other living species.

This is one of the unresolved arguments, an ink blot of his ‘sacred’ volumes which informs us that his followers too will still have to ‘believe’ whatever he had to tell them, not necessarily because he had seen or proved them beyond all questions. The fact is that there was no single camera or any of the modern gadgets either at the scenes of evolution as penned down in *The Origin of Species* or during the creation process as recorded in the Bible. This will continue to deny man the certitude he craves in the inquiry into his origin and maximise the burden of faith in the unseen irrespective of which of the narratives he chooses to believe.

From the doubts he expressed and the cautions he waved, Charles exhibited sufficient courage to inform that those who would embrace his work; like those who believe the creation story of the Bible, will have to suppress the agitation of their senses for many questions to which there will never be satisfactory answers. This is besides the fact that his work has been presented in such a warped logic and highly convoluted and superb literary styles that are far beyond the grasp of the average scholar except for the similarly minded ones in the fields of philosophy and science. What a sharp contrast to how the mind of God was conveyed through the Bible, especially with various versions¹⁸ that are now available to make its message clearer!

Intelligent Design as a movement was conceived by a team of scientists, many of who were highly respected in their fields. We know that denial of the existence of God is a pre-set condition for them to be taken for what they claim to be, especially in the west which has since gone spiritually bankrupt. Despite the risk which their standpoint poses to their professional credibility, these scientists have gathered sufficient facts and courage, not from the book of Genesis but from

¹⁸ There is however the need to be guided on which versions of the Bible we should embrace. The reason is that many of the versions currently circulating, particularly those that are just debuting have been found to tamper with the purity of its messages.

the field of biological science to advocate Intelligent Design as an alternative to evolution theory in the academic curricula¹⁹. They had yielded their grounds with nobility to the incredible processes they discovered to be going on inside a typical cell with a vast amount of programmed information embedded in DNA molecules. This is a minuscule object with a composition which, under intense scrutiny and testing, was discovered to be laden with a high degree of specificity, precision and complexity that could never have occurred just anyhow, even by the remotest probabilities or be explained by a blind natural process except by the design and dexterity of an intelligent Worker.

There are now mounting discoveries of science that harp on teleological properties of our universe and its elements by which each of its species and the outcome of the creation process is connected with, and anchored upon the gap it is designed to fill in the configuration of the whole. It has also buttressed the fact that there is absolutely nothing in the whole world, not even in outer space, that is lacking logical explanation and purpose for its existence, a purpose which, as we earlier saw, must have been defined by Somebody.

Commenting on the infallibility of the Bible on the origin of man and his universe, a respected author and researcher, Dr Chuck Missler²⁰ noted:

Astonishing evidence has gradually accumulated in the fields of archaeology, astronomy, physics, and biology which confirm the scientific and historical accuracy of the Bible, the supernatural origin of its text, and the fact that it has been preserved virtually unchanged for over two thousand years. No other holy book on planet earth authenticates its message in these ways

¹⁹ Many higher institutions of learning, especially the faith-based ones operating within the powers of their charter have now tucked creationism into their study curriculums.

²⁰ Source: Koinonia House Online e-News—March 25, 2008 Edition

It is neither a surprise nor of any consequence that Intelligent Design as a movement has come under attacks which it may not survive to command widespread accreditation and applause that evolution theory has enjoyed in a world that is sold out to the lies of Satan. Despite the darts of criticism continually hauled at the concept, a great number of scientists are discovering God through the inquiry of their profession and are coming to terms with the truth their ancestors have scorned or suppressed for ages. This has made the embrace and propagation of creationism to be no more religious and no less scientific than evolutionism. This stance of the science world may be understood to have struck a perfect accord with the rule of its prestigious discipline which informs us that for every event of a change, like evolution in this instance, there must be a definite, sufficient and pre-existing cause.

Having come this far with the pranks of evolution, we brush it aside to fall back on the word of God that remains forever settled in heaven; ever alive and active (Psalm 119v89). It is a hammer by which many profane theories, like that of evolution, have been crushed and their frauds exposed for those who care to embrace the truth (Jeremiah 23v29). It is only those who choose to have their spiritual intellects darkened that will continue to ignore the amazing accuracy, time-tested and heaven-inspired revelations of the Bible. Its account of creation; that God made the world and “... *created man in his own image*...” (Genesis 1v27), is absolute. H. Orton Wiley and Paul T. Culbertson noted that “...the Bible does not speculate or argue; it reveals and announces divine truth with assurance and certitude”.

Charles Darwin flagged a caution and made a defence for the errors of his theory when he wrote that “no one ought to feel surprised at much remaining as yet unexplained in regard to the origin of species and varieties, if he makes due allowance for our profound ignorance in regard to the mutual relations of the many beings which live around us”. What a sharp contrast to the revelations of the Bible that have not only ushered man into impeccable truth about the origin of all things,

including his creation but which have also put him on a loud alert concerning the events of the days ahead! The grouping together and analysis of the prophecies about the future of humanity and his transition into the realms of eternity, scattered through its sacred pages, have defined the mission of these volumes.

Chapter Two

IN DEFENCE OF ESCHATOLOGY

Either by inference or reference, the subject of end time has traces to chapters and verses of all the major books in both testaments of the Bible. It will be clear, from this fact alone, that God did not just create man and make provisions for his redemption and restoration from the ruins of sin. He also deliberately charted for him a course to follow from the time of his creation to the end of his sojourn on the earth. The Bible is the only guide for man to know what he needs to know about the creation of his world, about his creation, how it all began and how it will all end. This fact alone has placed the book at the pivot of his life around which everything about his existence in time and eternity is revolved.

THEOLOGICAL BASES

The same Bible lays out all the truths we may ever come to know about the end of time, with our focus on its books and passages that directly or indirectly hold such information. The prophecies relating to the subject of eschatology are heavily perfumed with spiritual and physical contents and, accordingly, their outworking is expected to

impact the mystic and material worlds to varying degrees. For example, the rapture is presumed to involve the transformation and translation of the believers, living or dead from the earth to meet with Jesus in the air. The spiritual dimension and visible impact of this event have been conceptualised by popular interpretations of related Bible passages.

First, eligibility for the rapture derives from the spiritual conditions of the believers by which they are marked out as the redeemed of the Lord, sealed by the Holy Ghost, counted worthy and made ready for the experience. Secondly, there is the expectation that such believers will be evacuated from the material earth. Those who died in Christ will escape from the traps of their graves with a new body while living Christians will be transformed and detached from all material contacts and engagements in that same instant. This is the standpoint of the Pre-Millennialists who place their major emphasis on how the events of the end time will shake and shock our present world.

But there is a contrast to this in the opinions of many theologians of earlier generations most of who had a heavy orthodox leaning. Their version of eschatology casts heavy premiums on the spiritual implications of the prophecies while carving only a narrow window for minimal expression of the events and their impacts upon the physical world. The division of scholars into these two major camps derives from the contending arguments by which they have been branded as Pre Millennial theorists, or literalists and Post Millennial theorists, or spiritualists. A major basis on which they are identified as one or the other is the extent to which each group believes that the predicted end-time events will register their impacts upon our physical world.

I recall the two books I read on the subject by two eminent scholars while sourcing for illumination on the subject that best illustrate this divergence. *Revelation Expounded* by Finis Jennings Dake, a profound and highly inspired work on the book of Revelation holds strongly to the literal fulfilment of the prophecies of the end. Another work of extreme stance, *Exploding The Israel Deception* by Steve

Wohlberg²¹ deflated the expectations of the literalists, especially as they relate to the reconstitution of the nation of Israel, the human Antichrist and similar aspects of end-time theories.

There is also the difference in the timing of each group as it relates to the resurrection and rapture of the saints to the reign of Christ on the earth for one thousand years. It is along this contention that they are identified as either Pre Millennial theorists or Post Millennial theorists. The Pre-Millennialists, as the term implies, hold that the rapture that involves the resurrection and translation of the saints will take place before the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. They further distinguish between the coming of the Lord to first take the saints away and later come in glory and power to establish His kingdom on the earth, an event popularly known as Second Coming.

On the contrary, Post Millennialists believe that the present Church age is the millennial reign of Christ in a spiritual sense, to be followed by other events like the resurrection, the judgement of the nations and the destruction of the earth in somewhat quick succession. To scholars in this camp, there will be only one resurrection, both of the just and unjust leading to the consummation of history. We will see more on this in a chapter ahead on the theological basis as furnished by schools of ideas with regards to the reign of the Antichrist and the likelihood of his encounter with Christians before they will be raptured.

Within the camp of the Pre Millennial theorists, there are further divisions concerning how the timing of the revelation and reign of the Antichrist, generally regarded as the tribulation period relates to rapture and the first resurrection. Scholars in different camps believe that the rapture will be before, during and after the tribulation. Two leading figures in the Church of the immediate past are examples of those who share Pre Millennial persuasion but are divided on whether or not the Church will experience tribulation.

²¹ Steve Wohlberg is a Jewish Christian of Seventh-Day Adventist faith

Reverend Tim LaHaye who authored many books on end-time prophecies believes that the Church will be taken out before the eventful years of the Antichrist while another great scholar and revivalist, Oswald J. Smith asked the Church to brace up for a taste of tribulation. The meaning of this is that whoever is championing whatever school of thought should respect and factor in the standpoints of other scholars. One thing that has become very clear is that there will be no end to the controversies until the prophesied events begin to unfold while our generation is already witnessing the preambles of the events that will soon burst on the world.

ESCHATOLOGY AND CONTROVERSY

Eschatology is a branch of Christian theology that deals with the last events like the end of the world and final judgements that encapsulate rewards for the righteous and punishment for the wicked in their eternal states. Biblical citations and interpretation on the course have sponsored more divisions among Christian scholars than there may ever be on all other doctrines, put together. In some instances, the contentions are sharp to where questions are raised whether we have more than one Bible in circulation. At the same time, as if to compound the situation, most of the contending camps parade genuinely born-again, mature and spirit-filled Christians. This fact must have prompted H. Orton Wiley and Paul T. Culbertson to describe Eschatology as “one of the most delicate and controversial fields of theology” in their work.

Two of the most popular and profound commentaries on the entire Bible I have been familiar with over the years are the works of legendary Dr Adam Clarke and a more widely circulated one by Matthew Henry. No one in the Church who has had contact with these works will nurse a speck of doubt about the spirit that powered the authors, the depth of their inspiration and the tremendous efforts behind their outstanding works. However, despite all the accolades they truly deserve, I maintain a distance from their treatments of and

conclusions on some segments of eschatology and such areas of my concern are too numerous for me to cite cases.

I discovered that their works leaned heavily on the interpretation of Post Millennial school which held sway during their time. It seems to be fashionable for their generation of theologians to treat the subject of eschatology the way they did simply because, as it was typically human, they did not see what was building up behind the curtains of their era. On the other hand, especially for the two scholars and several others, it is noteworthy that all events that had whatever connection with prophecies and associated historical facts up to the time of their works attracted their most objective analysis and honest inclusion.

The need for the cautions I am sounding can be seen in a more recent work, *Revelation Expounded* by Finis Jennings Dake. By the way; Finis Dake was an outstanding Bible scholar of global sway who needs no introduction to the community of immediate past and even present generations of believers. In the course of his career as a minister of the gospel and a distinguished scholar, he was reported to have committed over 100,000 hours of his life to the study of the Bible²². Reading through his work under our reference, one cannot but be amazed by the amount of time and effort he invested to ensure the veracity of every conclusion he sought to convey. Despite this, if he is alive today to update the book, his standpoints on some segments of the work will differ, some even remarkably.

A glaring example will buttress this. Up to the time of his death in 1987, communism was a powerful instrument of suppression through which the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) maintained its grip on the countries of Eastern Europe. With this, all he could do was to predict war as a means by which some countries in that enclave

²² Finis Jennings Dake was more popular for his commentaries on the whole Bible; *Dake Annotated Reference Bible*, a scholarly masterpiece, an excellent Bible guidebook and a dream possession of many assiduous Christians, most especially during my growing years around mid-1970 to late-1970s... and perhas up till today.

would secure their slots to get them aligned with where he believed they prophetically belong in the bloc of ten kingdoms over which the Antichrist was expected to reign, a territory of the old Roman Empire which he termed Revised Roman Empire²³ in his highly informative book. Therefore, the facts that prevailed up to 1977 which was the last time he updated his work were that the Russian war was inevitable.

Like most of the brilliant scholars of prophecy and diplomacy of his time, he could not see how Russia would allow such countries to break loose from its grip on a platter of gold to embrace a political and economic ideology that was at loggerheads with its own and by which its interests and clout in the international system would be jeopardised. We remember that even though the superpowers were fighting a cold war during those years, fragile treaties that erected a thin wall against their confrontations were nothing more than what the thread of cross-carpeting of a core ally might be sufficient to rupture.

However, in just a little over a decade after his last effort at the work, precisely in 1989, the whole world came to witness how, without firing a single gunshot, the Berlin Wall crumbled and some nations that were trapped in the dens of USSR swam their passages across ideological barriers that had stood for close to a generation. Though we have seen skirmishes of uprising and faceoffs between Russia and some of its erstwhile allies in recent years, this is not to compare to what Jennings Dake had imagined or predicted in his work.

Similarly, when Iran was reported to begin a venture into a bomb project some years back, many authors wrote to roll out sizzling predictions that the world has finally arrived at the edge of predicted ruin. Some confidently stated the timeline of when Israel would be attacked by Iran to ignite the battle of Armageddon. I recall one such

²³ Reference page 246 of his book, *Revelation Expounded* under the caption: “Three Defeats of Russia”. This had followed his allusions to the coming European wars in the preceding page by which the 45 nations that presently represent the Old Roman Empire would be pruned to *ten kingdom* in preparation for the reign of the Antichrist.

book by a highly respected author which I read with a blend of doubt and caution. It gave a timeline for the completion of the Iranian venture and how they would fire the first shots at Israel to trigger the battle. Very truly, the book bears a hallmark of efforts which the author invested with the depth of his research and his widespread consultations with both military experts and top brass diplomats. However, with the vast evidence he accumulated to inspire his conclusions around 2007, nothing seems to have authenticated his expectations, at least, up to the time of my concluding this work. That was when even the prophesied seven-year tribulation period had elapsed, over and again.

There have been instances of overheated alerts about the rapture and end time and people have released books, videos and documentaries to announce dates when the world would end or the fulfilment of a particular segment of end time prophecy would hit us. But their predictions or timing have always been debunked, one after the other. Yet, all it would have required from such authors who are eager to announce spurious dates is to incline their ears to the warning of Jesus Christ: *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only”* (Matthew 24v36). This was meant to dangle a caution to every scholar, author or commentator on the slippery subject of eschatology to rise above sensationalism and avoid where the best of their efforts will end up becoming a piece of comedy.

Prophecy scholars will normally be influenced by the works of other authors already in circulation, by the situation that prevailed during their work and then by whatever they could sense to be the direction of events. Therefore, with their deep roots in Roman Catholic and Protestant movements, most of the older generation of authors had embraced the theology of PostMillennialism, more so as it does not always call for too much effort to bow to popular opinions. The foundation of PostMillennialism dated back to the early days of the Church when it looked absurd to expect Jesus to come for a literal reign in the world. In the observation of Dr Chuck Missler, “as the

Church had increasingly become an instrument of the state, it wasn't politically expedient to look forward to a literal return of Christ to rid the world of its evil rulers!" which, ironically, the leadership of the Church itself had come to constitute at some point in history.

However, it will be mischievous to imagine that, with the honesty that guided the efforts of these scholars, they would have chosen to ignore the realities of our days and sweep the loud messages they communicate under the carpets of doctrinal bigotry or rigid tradition. For instance, a major event of our days that they could not have factored into their works is the rebirth of Israel as a nation, the massive return of its people to their ancestral land and the rise of international organisations, especially the United Nations. These are realities of today that many of the prophetic analysts of yesteryears could not have envisaged or volunteered opinions about. There can be no doubt that the hand of the Lord was mighty upon them and their works remain inestimable treasures to generations of Christians, even to the ones yet unborn. At the same time, however, the fact that they were human beings and that the study of the Bible is one field in which no one can lay claim to absolute mastery still call for reckoning.

It is indeed a wholesome delight that the revelations of the Bible on basic subjects like salvation and running of the race to heaven have been laid out plainly and detached from obfuscations that characterise the study of eschatology. Therefore, it is not our debate of eschatology in camps that will avail much with God like our individual readiness for heaven. It should be noted that our head knowledge of the intricacies of end-time doctrines is neither a substitute for, nor are they as important as our being in the right relationship with Him. The Bible for example preaches repentance from sin and confession of the Lord Jesus as steps for establishing a relationship with God. This is for salvation. It further admonishes those that are saved to press on to the higher ground by which their daily lives will radiate the nature of God implanted in them at the point of conversion.

Thus, our heeding the injunction of the Bible “. . . *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*”, (Hebrews 12v14) is among those that are central to the development of our Christian character in conformity with our sacred profession and glorious expectations. Any teaching that holds contrary views to them or which substitutes religious rites for the experience they promise will be a gross error. As tenets of faith, they extract commitments from all without discrimination; from the poor and the affluent, from an illiterate farmer and a learned professor of theology. They break through denominational walls to beam their light to those who are heaven-minded within the confines of sects, many of which may hold opposing convictions on all or some segments of eschatology.

The knowledge required to win a debate on Bible doctrines should not be confused with the grace of God and the tenacity of purpose required to live up to the demands of the doctrines. Someone said that one can know all about the Bible without knowing the One whom the Bible is all about. Anyone can trash all the arguments, win all the prizes and attract the loudest ovations on the platform of theological erudition while the person is a slave to sin, especially the covert ones. It is a sad truth, therefore, that defeats in the battle against sin in the solitude of daily life will damn the soul and, in the ultimate, a respected theologian or a professor emeritus of Divinity with a heavy head but empty heart will turn out to be an eternal fool!

It is for this reason that controversies or their resolutions alone will not fully compensate for whatever time and effort anyone will invest into reading through these volumes. We know many carry all the theories and doctrines of the Bible about in their heads but who will be shoved aside in the end just as there are also illiterate ‘fools’ who imbibe just the little they could and tread within the path of light which will guide them to the harbour of rest at last.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, we need to admit that attempt to detach discussions on eschatology from discordant tunes that have

trailed and afflicted it for generations will be a tall order. It is for this that we will have to confront the boiling segments of the subject headlong, either to prove some points or to refute others. At every point where it becomes necessary, a subject of contention is laid on the table for us to examine all its sides and then chart a course through its cloud, based on dispassionate exegesis of related scriptures.

The need to make a deduction from whatever is revealed to address those that are not as clearly conveyed cannot be sidestepped in the study of eschatology. This is because, from the surface of the Bible, there are raging questions relating to the subject that the book does not seem to address, maybe as directly, sufficiently or as clearly as we would normally expect. In most such cases, it will always be necessary to stretch a given revelation to incorporate underlying assumptions, especially where a scholar believes he is equipped with integrity, with some scriptural knowledge and spiritual maturity to safeguard his erudition against heresy or outright error.

On one hand, therefore, it is these gaps together with the need to bridge them that anchor the freedom of individuals to make their contributions to eschatological theories, just as I also do through these volumes. On the other hand, it is the same privilege that has birthed divergent interpretations and opinions on the various segments of the subject with the freedom of believers to choose where they want to pitch their tents or lay their emphasis. An obvious fact, therefore, is that there is no way by which all exercises based on different perceptions, levels of maturity and scriptural understanding of different scholars will produce the same result, or guarantee the veracity of every conclusion. It is true that the Bible is not, and should not be subject to private interpretation, nor are we expected to lean on our shallow intellects in handling its messages that are rooted beyond the grasp of human intellect and understanding.

For instance, time and space that means so much to our present sphere do not amount to anything in the realms of the spirit and that is

where the contents of the Bible derive their origin. As one of the examples we will seek to grasp later, we take the words of Jesus in John 5v29 referring to the resurrection, a major aspect of the end-time teaching. *“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”*. The statement came in one unbroken declaration where even the clauses are separated by only commas and semicolons. But we know that that same verse of the Bible prophesied two earth-shattering events that, in the interpretation of the pre-millennialists to which I lean more heavily, are separated by a period of at least one thousand years.

Thus, the interaction of human minds and their finite intellect with the infinite revelations of the Bible has birthed the acquisition of intended knowledge and unintended errors. Some of the undesirable outcomes are quite obvious in doctrinal practices of diverse sorts and origins which, though hardly traceable to any part of the book, have found their way into the churches, especially many of the funny ones that are making waves in our days. While I am conscious of the pitfalls on this delicate path, our venture into the study of eschatology will still place the same licence in our hands to expand whatever the Bible has volunteered in a bid to address obscured segments without clear-cut revelations. Though this process has been fingered as one of the major troubles with the study of eschatology, the need to make a deduction from scriptural references will confront us and we will need to yield to such advances if we must forge ahead.

Millennial Reign of the Lord for one thousand years as a major agenda of the end time illustrates this point. While the identity of the King of the kingdom is settled to be Jesus Christ, the ones of the subjects are not as clear. But the fact that Jesus Christ is often revered and referred to as the King of kings holds out an assumption that His disciples or some class of people will come to constitute the lesser ‘kings’ of the kingdom (Revelation 17v4). The expectation woven around the kingship of the disciples is strengthened by some passages of the Bible which inform that believers are ordained to suffer and,

afterwards, reign with Jesus.

Here we play down on the spiritual tinge of the reign of believers and all the privileges it confers like our dominion over sin, Satan and his host of demons while no one denies that these are also components of our throne packages. We also reiterate a position, backed by sufficient Bible passages to be fully addressed later, that Christ's millennial reign is an event to look forward to in a literal sense and on this same earth we are treading upon today. With these as the background of the kingship theory, it will sound reasonable to imagine that believers will not be the kings and subjects of the same kingdom at the same time. In seeking to solve the riddles of the identities of the subjects, a searchlight will beam on the unbelievers expected to survive the calamities of the end which will then inspire an idea that those who are not Christians will, after all, be part of Christ's millennial reign.

But while this idea seems to address a raging puzzle and fill an intellectual vacuum, the idea of unbelievers being part of the millennial reign of Christ does not seem to derive from too many clear passages of the Bible by which it will crystallise to a teachable doctrine without first of all having to lay a solid foundation for it in some conjectures, just as we shall see later. Therefore, in an attempt to establish this and similar theories, strong emphasis will tend to build around any passage of the Bible that seems to offer a lead to a destination that may not be as clearly defined from the onset. In that case, it will not matter much if the connection between the supporting references and the contending issues suffers from fissures to be mended by the connecting threads of academia.

LAW OF PROPHETIC RESERVES

Following the above closely, therefore, even where modesty is lacking and knowledge is intoxicating, a measure of humility and honesty will sponsor a confession that it is not possible for any man, no matter the depth of his research and efforts, to state with unquestionable

authority the exact scenes, sequence and consequences of the end time events. Neither is it possible for anyone to foretell the exact impacts the events will register upon the present or anticipated world. Paul taught us that “...we know in part, and we prophesy in part.” (Corinthians 13v9) and the delicate field of eschatology which is fully immersed in prophetic declarations must be understood as a target of this caution.

From my standpoint, and perhaps as a departure from what some sects teach, there are aspects of prophecies still locked up in mysteries and into which no one may claim to have received illuminations. For instance, from the book of Revelation, our main text for the subject, we read about a scene that John was prevented from recording:

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. (Revelation 10v1-4)

There was a similar injunction to Daniel, the writer of a mirror book to Revelation who was also told to “*shut up the words and seal the book, to the end time*” (Daniel 12v4). These have added to the fact that even the ones that were recorded had continued to attract a myriad of doctrinal conflagrations by which they seem to raise more questions than answers they are meant to proffer. King Solomon had raised a rhetorical question: “*that which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?*” (Ecclesiastes 7v24; 8v17). I bear no grudge; neither do I join issue with the sects that claim that many, if not all of such things that were hidden in one age of the Church had been uncovered in subsequent

eras. But the gaps in the teaching of the churches on eschatology and the fact that passages of time often dictate a reversal of former rigid doctrinal position belly the inability of anyone to make unquestionable assertions over the aspects of eschatology presently tucked away.

Facing the same murkiness in his exploration of the book of Revelation, Adam Clarke wrote in the opening remarks of his notes:

. . . nor can I pretend to explain the book; I do not understand it; and in the things which concern so sublime and awful a subject, I dare not, as my predecessors, indulge in *conjectures*. I have read elaborate works on the subject, and each seemed right till another was examined... I do not understand the book; and I am satisfied that not one who has written on the subject knows anything more of it than myself.

This honest reservation is apart from the fact that his exposition of the book addresses some of the raging issues in the mystery piece. This is especially to the extent that his annotations are directly traced to or linked with events of history accessible to both secular and theological authors up to the time of his work.

However, the fact that his expositions should not be taken as a final note on the complex subject of the end time has lent weight to the personal caution he waved to his readers and other scholars. As we shall see, especially towards the ending chapters of the volumes, there are areas of eschatology over which very thick clouds continue to hover. A specific example of this is in the attempt to paint the picture of the New Earth where the best of efforts will not be more than to offer two different but complementary theories for which a melting point will then be sought. The first is that in the final events that will follow the millennial reign of Christ, all men on the earth would have to be clothed with immortality to put up an appearance before the judgement seat of the white throne.

At the same time, and from what one may carefully glean from the reading of a few other passages, the New Earth will have to be populated by natural people who will retain their ability to procreate and saturate

the earth in which there will be no more sea and expectedly spill over to the yonder space in a new world that will endure forever and with which the covenant of God with Noah concerning the perpetuity of the earth may be realised. These and similar portions of eschatology upon which thick clouds still hang have inspired a principle known in the sphere of theology as 'the law of prophetic reserves'. The law states that no prophetic declaration can be as full and exact as the actual outcome of the events being predicted.

This is one fact that has compelled us to fasten our gaze and expectations upon God who alone holds the present and the future in His hand rather than making knowledge of prophecies and eschatology the bedrock of our confidence. The formula of God here will be to create sufficient room for the exercise of our faith by which we are to lean upon Him and trust His guidance for certain things that may not be fully understood on this plane and at this time. Even then, we still owe God a lot of gratitude. As He demands our patient expectation of other realities that may be outside the grasp of humans, He has revealed just enough to ensure that we have something on which to anchor our appetite and curiosity. Thus, the things that God has communicated for our learning and as a basis of our hope for the certainties of the future in the scriptures are more than enough to propel and justify every effort to be invested in this study.

Conflicting interpretations and opinions to which the treatment of eschatology is predisposed will call for an armour of vigilance to shield any work on it against error. By the same token, whatever idea or theory any author may put forward, especially on the boiling aspects of the course should be forwarded as suggestive rather than plenary. Even with the best of research efforts motivated by the purest of motives, the obscurities hovering around some segments of the study will deny anyone the privilege to hold out any work on it to be universally incontrovertible. What I discovered from extensive studies and consultations on the subject has compelled me, in handling most of the controversies, to plant one of my feet in a camp which I have

discerned to enjoy more scriptural supports and the other on a middle ground as if to wave some caution to both camps.

This is how I have managed to contain many rigid perspectives of some schools of thought without casting aspersion on the others. We know that Prophet Daniel and Apostle John who received and communicated the chunk of the prophecies we are examining have delivered their messages just as they received them. But while prophecies retain their purity and potency as inspired by God, the interpretations and conclusions that every scholar offers to every segment of them cannot boast of similar authority. The only certain thing is that, at the very end of all the debates and theories, prophecies will fulfil their mandate at a time or times and in a form or forms as ordained by their Author. The fact is that the plan of God was conceived from the foundation of the world. This informs us that prophecies about the end would not be subjected to any alterations by any events or bow to the opinions of Bible scholars who may choose to interpret or misinterpret them.

The above notwithstanding, in charting the direction of this course, I have identified with the pre-millennialists or literalists who believe that end-time prophecies will register huge impacts upon our world and its inhabitants. First and foremost, the events of our days are simply too obvious and compelling to be ignored and whatever explanation to tone them down by the spiritualists, however logical it may sound, will lack merit and objectivity. The events of the two world wars that signalled clear fulfilment of prophecy have been fought in the physical. Israel, a nation suspected to be central to the agenda of God on the earth for the last few days has been constituted into a literal nation after centuries of hopeless dispersal from their homeland. The signs that the Bible conveys in clear tones about the end time, especially those that Jesus predicted on Mount Olive are translating to hot news in our days. I believe these and other developments in and around our world today are issues that should not be downplayed.

Secondly from my studies, I came to understand that it is not that spiritualists outright deny the literal contents of prophecies. They argue that most of the prophecies held to by the literalists have been fulfilled in the course of history and therefore cannot be the issues of the present or future age. With this, the difference in the interpretations of the two camps is zeroed down more to the matters of timing and manners than that of whether or not the fulfilment of prophecies will be in a physical or spiritual sense. On this point, the pages and volumes ahead will reveal how such arguments that discount the present and future fulfilment of several prophecies which they claim to have become history stand on broken pillars. This is because there are several passages of the scriptures we will discover in the course of this study to have far more applications than can be pinned down to one or few instances of fulfilment.

For instance, the position of the spiritualists is that Antiochus Epiphany fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel in chapter eight and similar passages. But while the literalists accept the fact of history as it relates to his escapades, I rally with them to hold him out only as a forerunner and robe the ultimate subject of the chapter around the Antichrist of the future. Just as Antiochus Epiphany was once a real person around whom the fulfilment of that chapter revolves according to the spiritualists, so also you find other persons and events they believe are connected with the substance of most, if not all, of other end-time prophecies. It is these same prophecies that are held out by the literalists as the dynamics that will shape the events of the future.

Thus, if there are pieces of evidence to support the expectation of future applications of prophecies, many of which are bursting upon our world and dominating the media today, it will amount to bigotry to nail the messages they convey in a coffin of creeds that rest on questionable assumptions and imbalanced interpretations. We should note that the distance between the realms of the spirit and nature is not like the one between the present heaven and the earth. Apostle John who received his revelation "*in the spirit*" on the day of the Lord

certainly did not require a spacecraft to travel to the spot where he documented them on the parchment of the scroll that was later delivered to the Church, this time around, in the physical.

Piecing all these together, it should be clear that there is just no way by which the events of the end will end up leaving our world and the course of nature the same way. It is in line with this that I am charting the course of this work to inform the readers that the rapture is the connecting event that will unlock major programmes in the end-time package. This will be followed by the Marriage Supper of the Lamb when, at or about the time, the world will be passing through its bitter ordeal with the Antichrist and other oppressive regimes that will hold sway for that period of our history. This is almost certain to coincide with the outpouring of God's cups of wrath upon man and his entire realms which we have begun to see in some measures, COVID-19 not excluded. Next to the rapture will be the second coming in power by, and literal reign of, the Lord Jesus Christ on earth with His saints for one thousand years. This will, ultimately, usher the entire creation into the terrains of eternity for a journey of no return.

To the students of eschatology, I admit that these outlines have only tip-toed popular outlines as charted by foremost evangelical authors. It should, however, be made abundantly clear that I am upholding whatever position I am holding out in this work not because I have queued behind other authors but because I cannot contradict well-founded conclusions just in a quest for originality that may harm the truth I seek to discover and propagate. I well recall how I embarked on this project, not only with an open and inquisitive mind. It was also with a rebelling posture to upset several questionable theories that have climbed to the surface to cloud the atmosphere of the subject for generations. The result of this is a rare privilege that this work has enjoyed which is a strong appetite backed by a knack to discover things 'firsthand'. I had stepped out of the pantries of various churches and evaluated what the contending sects have on their doctrinal tables before taking what I consider to be an unbiased

standpoint.

Going by the fact that what I discovered in the course of this work is the same thing that others have discovered, all I needed was the humility to sheathe my sword of intellectual aggression and uphold conclusions that cannot be voided without injury to sound academia and good conscience. After all, my aim was not to rewrite or question the scriptures but the theories and interpretations that scholars have woven around them. My efforts have, at least in some ways, established the fact that the scriptures have no private interpretation, most especially where issues appear to have been laid out and all that is needed is the readiness to embrace what has been written. At the same time and in the process of this, I stumbled upon theories and interpretations that have either totally ignored or glossed over issues and others that violate clear revelations of the Bible. In such cases, irrespective of the respect enjoyed by the touting scholars or sects, I take a firm stand without hesitation, without apology and, where necessary, offer the perspective of the Bible that I consider to be more compelling.

A major snare of eschatology, like it is with most doctrines of the Bible, results from people who read their minds into the scriptures rather than reading scriptures to their minds. This is particularly the case with those who have placed excessive reliance on the opinions and biases of their pastors and founding fathers of their movements that are usually held as sacrosanct. It is the desire to beat around this temptation that great efforts were invested in every segment of eschatology I ventured into in these volumes. Quite often, I fought such biases by reading out the Bible passages with as much clarity of mind as I could afford, examined issues of prophecy in the light of historical events and current developments connected with the texts, all in a bid to avoid communicating unsubstantiated conclusions.

Even now that I cannot boast about the extent to which my aim has concretised, the pages, chapters and volumes ahead will lay bare

the honesty of purpose with which I sought to enthrone the supremacy of the scriptures over the biases of the denominations. It is as a result of this that I attest to the fact that, though no major school of thought on the highly debatable subject could be said to lack an abundance of scriptural support for its position, the standpoint of the literalists enjoys greater backing of clear scriptures than can be successfully downplayed by contending opinions. Apostle Paul, certainly one of the greatest teachers God gave to the Church offered a hint of support to the stand of the literalists in 1 Corinthians 15v22-25:

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

The above may be understood in the light of the fact that the resurrection of the saints will be in the pattern of the one of the Lord Jesus, followed by the end during which all men are brought to the edge of eternity. But this will not be until Christ has exercised His dominion over the entire creation, understood to be the process by which He will put all His enemies under his feet before surrendering the kingdom and authority to God in the ultimate.

Now to the scholars and colleagues who hold dissimilar persuasion, my taking this route has not in any way harmed the mission of these volumes which transcends analysis of theories and resolution of debates that have vitiated the impact of many works on the subject for centuries. With a little allowance for such differences which should not moth the fabric of our common expectation of the end and the imminent arrival of Jesus Christ, any apathy that is likely to be inspired by the doctrinal posture of this work will have been subdued. In the

process, a genuine seeker of truth will have brought a precious baby of intimacy with God out of the bathwater of generational contention of eschatology theories before flushing both into the drain.

WHY ESCHATOLOGY

A survey of the present-day Church will highlight sharply contrasting postures of its members to the subject of the end time. In one camp are the very few who believe that because Jesus is coming, they have no business with what they have termed as carnal ambitions or pursuits of the world which they believe will soon fade away, a misapplication of 1 John 2v15-17. They burry their lives in the grave of apathy and spend their days gazing continually into the sky for when the Son of man shall appear to evacuate them from the sinking ship of this world.

I am aware about how many have squandered great opportunities to better their lots and advance their career because they believed that Jesus would soon come. Following whatever voices they heard which blinded them to the days ahead and ‘conscripted’ them, as it seemed, a number of them had rushed headlong into full-time ministry at the wrong phase of their lives. I know a few who abandoned their studies by which they would have been better equipped even for the ministry they intended to pursue. For the fact that I was personally caught in the thick, I recall how odd it would sound in our ‘firebrand’ camps around the middle-1970s for anyone to talk about the plan he was nursing for ten or fifteen years to come then. You would find ‘mature’ brothers who would organise counselling sessions to address a ‘backsliding’ posture. The sad summary here is that great potentials have been flushed into the drains of misguided fervours that contradict biblical injunctions for the believers to maximise every opportunity that comes their way to be the very best they can be for God, the Church and the society at large.

But, if those in the above camp paint a drab picture, the case of those in the other is more pathetic. We agree that the complexity with

which theologians have perfumed the treatment of eschatology for centuries and conflicting conclusions that have emerged from their sweats have created wide gulfs between their pulpits and pews. Coupled with this also are many questions fluttering around the subject to which no satisfactory answers will ever be proffered until the events begin to unfold. Yet these are facts standing only on one leg while it is equally important to properly share half of the weight on the other to avoid our falling into spiritual snooze. A lack of doctrinal awareness of the matters of the end-time events such as is prevalent in our churches today will always prove to be costlier. While it will portray the triviality of the half-hearted and half-baked worshippers, it makes the Christian race of those who are serious and determined to be drudgery and journeying in a dark tunnel to where only God knows.

There is the danger of gradually grounding a fervency that would have been strengthened by sound doctrinal awareness of issues that relate to the Second Coming of Jesus and the glorious promises it holds for the believers. Could it be for this that someone wrote that “. . . no truth ought to be more frequently proclaimed, next to the first coming of the Lord, than his second coming; and you cannot thoroughly set forth all the ends and bearings of the first advent if you forget the second”. But as I remark in the preface, this is a dismal picture of the Church of today that has focused most of its consultation of the Bible on the pursuit of material gains with minimal thought on the end of it all.

No effort is needed to spot lax attitudes towards the study of end-time prophecies today. The usual responses are the ones like “let us just wait and see . . .” or “. . . just be ready for the rapture *o jare*²⁴” whenever the subject is laid on the table. Others will ask in a submissive tone; “since we cannot understand it now in full, why venture into it at all?” These and other flippant attitudes are known to have defined common responses to eschatology. The laity is contented

²⁴ “*O jare*” is a popular *Yoruba* slang of resignation to fate.

and comfortable to fold their arms and acquiesce to whatever the person with the microphone chooses to disclose to or conceal from them. This is even though many of them are accomplished masters and achievers in various fields of human endeavours but have chosen to be passive laymen in the study of the Bible where they should have displayed similar or greater stride.

Citing the goofing of Harold Camping²⁵, Collin Hansen said “ignorance about the end times creates a vacuum filled by deceivers”. Dr Omotayo Fakinlede raised a concern in his work *“Was Luther Mistaken?”*²⁶:

Whereas the Bible expects every Christian to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, thus be in a position to help others not only to know the Lord but to become disciples. We are contended to let the “Priests” do everything.

Except where intellectual mischief becomes a beclouding motive, my confession of a limit to what we can know about the end time is not to be construed as a disclaimer of several clear revelations of the Bible on the subject. Therefore, those who will hide under the contentions sponsored by the subject will lack an acceptable excuse for their passivity. Even beyond the need to crack the hard nuts of eschatology, it is perfectly in order to drag our scholarly quest to a point where it will bow to the word of God, especially on the question of the impalpable realms that have always posed a monumental challenge to the spiritual insensitivity and aberrant mind of man. This is how the study of this important course has become the inescapable

²⁵ Harold Camping had predicted that Jesus would come in 2011; first in 21st of May and he later changed the date to 21st of October when the first date he picked did not click.

²⁶ CAPRO’s Occupy, Vol.17, No 1, 1998 where he revealed how a worse version of the corruption and greed for which Martin Luther and his colleagues fought the Roman Catholic to a standstill have ‘reincarnated’ in the Pentecostal churches of our time

duty of every true believer, especially those who possess the ability to read and whom God, as a result of that privilege, will invariably hold responsible for the run of the ladder on which they perched their Christian lives.

The risk of veering into errors on the cloudy pathway of eschatology has dictated great cautions by which I may vouch for the integrity of these volumes. Moreover, whenever it is necessary, I do not shy away from the limitation of my knowledge to provoke readers' inquiry into such areas of the subject that are outside my grip at the moment. Therefore, as we sail into the course together, we rest our assurance on the promises of the Good Shepherd for a safe voyage.

The preponderance of Bible references exhumed and explored in each segment of the course, the sincerity with which they have been deduced and the real motive behind the project will ensure that the time and efforts spent in this study are well invested. With the assistance of the Holy Spirit who is retained in the cockpit, there is a grand expectation that He will work to convert every page to an irresistible knock at the door of every heart that may still be wandering outside the only Refuge from the brewing storms.

Chapter Three

THE STAGE IS SET

THE SIZZLING EVENTS being inscribed on the billboards of our time inform us that things will never remain the same way they have always been for too long. A halt is sure either at some instant or distant future. We are confronted with monumental challenges by which no one who reckons himself to be a part of creation may feign apathy. It is sometimes curious to hear the press describing some of the tragedies of our days as those just waiting to happen because of the droopiness of those who should have acted to prevent them before they burst on us. But the truth is that it is often difficult to draw a line between the culpability of liable institutions or their officials and where they were lured into somnolence by blood-sucking powers that hide behind the veils of the tragedies. This is why the reactions that trail most of such events are hardly more than for us to wake up, usually when it is too late, to count or mourn the damages.

How well did Jesus capture the picture of these days when He predicted: *“Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: . . .”* (Luke 21v26)! Rising instances of death

by heart attacks in our midnight of terror are fulfilling an ominous prophecy. Black clouds that trademark nightfall have descended upon humanity by which misfortunes of various types and degrees are defining the lots of men. Evil winds are blowing in every direction, sparing no one except those who are "*kept by the power of God*" (1 Peter 1v5). Bizarre crimes now make our news diets and are often accompanied by footage and graphics gruesome enough to break even the hearts with a content of stone.

Contrastingly on the other side of the divide, the people of God look forward to the days of glory with the assurance that cannot fail. This is the resurrection morning when the saints of all ages will converge at the feet of Jesus in the warm embrace of one another. The eyes that are now heavy with tears over the plight of men will burst their swellings with the radiation of His glory. Nights of walking with weary feet on the thorny pathway will pave the way for the morning of the blessedness of the angelic realms as they file their passages into the courtyard of the King. It will be time for them to possess the treasures they have beheld dimly with the eyes of faith for ages. While the marriage supper of the Lamb will be celebrated in the ambience of splendour that cannot be described with human language, there will be yet a darker night of anguish for those that will be left behind on the earth. That is when the heir of Satan, the Antichrist, will reign and wield unrestrained power to baptise the world into the full harvest of its rebellion.

THE DISCIPLES PULLED THE TRIGGER

In response to the questions of His disciples, Jesus listed the events that would usher in the end of human history in chapters 24 and 25 of the Gospel of St. Matthew. Other passages address the subject of His Second Coming and the signs that will herald it. But for brevity, I limit our exploration of the signs to the accounts of St. Matthew to summarise the messages with references to other passages of the Bible

only as may be necessary for clarification.

As a launching pad into the subject of the end, the disciples sought to excite their Master with the architectural splendour of Jerusalem temple. But, instead of complementing their compliments, Jesus gave a mind-blowing prediction that not one stone of that building would be left upon another that would not be thrown down (Matt 24v2). Unlike His disciples, He was not enthused by the outward attractions of the temple that had become ‘*a den of robbers*’ (Jeremiah 7v11; Matthew 21v13) and empty religious decoration. The hypocrisy of the worshippers and those managing its affairs had eroded its significance.

As expected, the disciples were perplexed by the revelation of Jesus Christ whom they knew was never in the habit of wasting His words. His comments provoked further questions from the disciple who wanted to know the basis of His harsh prediction on the awe-inspiring and idolised superstructure. Their curiosity paid off and blew the lid open on issues that went beyond the subject of their immediate concern. Just as they had always done with every opportunity that came their way, the disciples probed harder into the mind of Jesus about issues that had to do with their calling and the end of the world.

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (Matthew 24v3)

Precisely, the disciples asked Jesus to tell them three things:

1. When shall these things be? (i.e. the destruction of the temple)
2. What shall be the sign of thy coming? (In fulfilment of His promise that “*I will come again*” (John 14v1-3) which they verily believed)
3. (What shall be the sign) of the end of the world?

We note how the disciples understood the reference of Jesus to the destruction of the temple as preceding that of His coming and the *'end of the world'* in this instance. They were thus eager to know the time of the destruction and other events connected with it, like His second coming to seize power from the Romans. It is not sufficiently clear whether they took events number two and three as the same or held them separate²⁷. But, while Jesus answered the second and third questions in His catalogue of the signs, He avoided a direct response to the one of "*when shall these things be?*" and expected them to take prompts from the fulfilment of the signs.

The preface to the exposition of Jesus demands some attention. He began with a caution to His disciples about the capacity of man to deceive his fellowman. Even in the study of eschatology, the armour of vigilance will be required against those who will mount the barricades of deception. Treatment of the subject that tones down the threats of judgement and the day of reckoning as if they may be taken for a jolly ride or as decorative accessories of academe should be suspected. This, to me, is a real danger that Jesus must have intended to signal to His disciples. He said; "*Take heed that no man deceive you...*" (Matthew 24v4). Escaping the traps of deception that have inundated our world is beyond wishful thinking. It calls for concrete measures.

WHAT SIGNS ARE FOR WHICH EVENTS?

How Jesus rolled out His predictions in a manner that fused the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the gathering of the saints at the rapture, His second coming in glory and the consummation of human history into one unbroken stretch of events demands attention. Perhaps He had deliberately taken this route to hide the details about

²⁷ The recording of the passage, taken literally, will suggest that the disciples understood "*thy coming*" to be a distinct event from the "*end of the world*" and this, representing the standpoint of the pre-millennialists, is sustained in this work. However, the fact that the questions were separated by a comma and not a question mark and that the only question mark for the two questions came after their layout dangles a little caution.

the subject away from casual readers of the Bible who the majority of Christians would come to be and reserve them to those who would take time and pain to dig beyond the surface. Jesus' popular style was to speak in parables and laden within those narratives are truths of eternal dimensions. But as a good Shepherd and Teacher, whenever His disciple manifested their thirst for further explanation, He would call them aside and open their understanding.

While it seems that the answers of Jesus calmed the agitations in the primitive minds of the disciples as we did not hear that they raised any more issues on the subject, the same answers have not addressed the puzzles in the minds of Christians and Bible scholars of subsequent eras. This is why debates have continued unabated among them on how to properly contextualise the predictions about the end time. Working on the assumption that Jesus would not have chosen to confuse the Church on the crucial subject, there is a demand for the analysis and detachment of those events from each other for us to determine which prediction is for which event.

We will survey the answers that Jesus provided in Matthew 24 and 25 mainly in the light of the questions He addressed. His predictions and exposition, as we earlier saw, relate to three distinct events:

1. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple
2. The Second Coming which a section of Bible scholars has established will be two separate events; that is, for the believers' flight and the other, in a glorious appearing for His earthly millennial reign
3. The end of the world and consummation of history

Contrary to what some prophecy scholars have sought to popularise depending on which side of the theological divide they find themselves; I have been able to establish that answers to most of the

questions are tucked in, or should I say, hidden away somewhere in the two loaded chapters.

Matthew 24v1-14 introduces the entire discourse with events that were summarised by Jesus in verse 8 as *“the beginning of sorrows”*. We note a rewinding tone in the latter part of verse 6 that *“... the end is not yet . . .”* as a clause that helps us to pin down the focus of the verse and the preceding one on the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. He had cautioned; *“Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”* (Matthew 24v4,5). The background of this was that many self-appointed messiahs would rise to fill the gap which was created by the fact that Jesus did not come as the political emancipator that people had expected. The political activism of such people that would now step into the role that God did not assign to them would of course be accompanied by tumults while the countermeasure of Rome, as political masters, would ensue to breed *“wars and rumours of wars”*.

There was a quick twist of tenor in verse 7 that introduced wider calamities that obviously should not be confused with the focus of the previous verses. Jesus said, *“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”* This segment of the prophecies is among those that have established a veritable link with the events of our days. The link will pilot our discussion of this chapter and the next as we plot the charts of ugly developments in and around the world of our generation on the graph of the predictions of Jesus. In other words, while it would seem that nearly all the signs of the end time have found fulfilment in the course of history, the picture of our present world will need to be scrutinised to show that no event of the past has matched the template of prophecy as directly as the ones we are witnessing today.

From here we shift attention to the predictions about the imminent destruction of Jerusalem as laid out in verses 15 through 22 and which was earlier sketched out in verses 5 and 6. Verses 23 through 31 dwell

on His coming in power and glory to judge the tribes of the world and make a separation between the good and the bad. We suspend comments on verses 32 through 35 to the next section to enable us to see how the long passage that followed, precisely in 24v36 through 25v13 brought to the forefront the real issue of concern, which was the need for the believers to be watchful. It is therefore most instructive to note that while there are seventy-eight verses of the Bible from Matthew 24v4 through 25v30 that address the prophecy concerning all the signs, for all the events that have been programmed, forty-six of them, precisely Matthew 24v36 through Matthew 25v30 constitute a direct message to prepare the Church for the rapture.

The conclusion of the chapters in Matthew 25v31 through 46 harps on the judgement of the nations, perhaps based on what their stance will be to Israel when it will be passing through the most horrendous moments of its history. A connection between this and the final judgement of the people and nations of the world is highly suggestive though I cannot establish this in the affirmative. What we understand here is that, though judgement upon some wicked people and nations would be pronounced at the time that Jesus comes to establish His reign in the world, the ultimate execution of those judgements will not be until the expiration of the millennial reign. This will become a prelude to and basis of the judgement of the same people at the final session before the awful white throne. As will be firmly established in the course of this work, we are mindful of the fact that not all sinners and wicked nations will be uprooted from the earth before and during the millennial reign of Jesus.

“THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS . . .”

This statement of Jesus, “*Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled*” (Matthew 24v34) has added a dimension to the intricacies of eschatology. The generation that will see all the predicted signs and also witness the events they foreshadow needs to

be ascertained in the light of prophecy. Even where the statement is taken literally as referring to those who were present at the venue of His exposition, it will still be necessary to determine which of the predicted events would be fulfilled in their lifetime since all of them appear to be fused. We have already seen from the previous sections that, at least, three distinct events constituted the focus of the prophecies of Jesus on that occasion. Failure to detach those events as neatly as necessary will cloud our pathway and mock our efforts to untie the knots of His predictions.

For instance, literal interpretation of the verse has furnished the basis for Preterism, a belief in a theological circle that prophecies about the signs of the end time and the coming of Jesus were fulfilled in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed. There is further division in the camp of the preterists into Partial Preterism and Hyper or Full Preterism, also known as Pantelogy²⁸. While Partial Preterism reserves few predictions as future events, Pantelogy writes off any future application of prophecies. Just as we have with many segments of eschatology, opinions have applied the verse either to uphold or discount the place or role of prophecies in the present and future dispensations.

In the study of eschatology, there are always copious scriptures that will support whatever doctrinal stand that anyone may wish to promote. Preterism holds to the fact that both the signs of the end and the coming of Jesus Christ were to occur in a matter of few years from when He spoke on Mt. Olives. The passages of Matthew 10v23 and 16v27-28 provide classic examples, with the latter being one of the puzzles to which I am yet to find a convincing clue. Not even various theological expositions that I have read on 16v27-28 and similar passages which seem to unite their summary on the fact that, by

²⁸ But this position is easily faulted in the light of plain scriptures and the events that are bursting upon our world today. In effect, there seems to be only a very thin line of difference between the standpoints of Partial Preterism and the one of spiritualists or postmillennialists.

reference to His “kingdom”, Jesus meant the institution of His Church. As we know, this occurred on the day of Pentecost and which many of those at the venue of His discourse actually witnessed as He said. But this did not quench my thirst on it. While it will be too superfluous for us to wade into all the theories that have emerged from the interpretation of the passages by scholars²⁹, I here establish a position that informs the focus of this work and on which we will build its foundation.

This will demand that we begin with finding a meaning to the word *generation* as used by Jesus. Again, assuming the word is taken as a reference to the people living at a particular time in history, we will also need to define the starting point or the timeline of that generation and see which of the predicted events fit into it. We note the following:

1. The proper meaning of the word, *generation*, like every word that has both literal and symbolic usage, should derive from the context of its application here. The word can mean the lifetime of someone or a group of people who are contemporaries (Genesis 7v1, Exodus 1v6). It can also refer to a distinct group of people that belong to a particular ancestry (Exodus 17v16).
2. At the same time, and as it may be more appropriate on this occasion, the word may be taken to imply the whole sojourn of man on the earth, described by the Bible to be the generations of Adam following his creation with the blessing of and responsibility for procreation (Genesis 5v1,2). Concerning this, the categorisation of men into good and bad generations is to be traced to the distinction between the first two sons of Adam and Eve; namely Abel as a good seed (Matthew 23v35) and Cain as a bad seed (1 John 3v12). It is a fact that the *generations*

²⁹ For instance, a scholar has listed seven schools of thought with each having different interpretation of the statement of Jesus in Matthew 24v34.

of good and bad people that have sprung from these two people have maintained their dividing lines from the very beginning and up to this day.

3. The term may also be understood as the wicked generation to which many in the audience of Jesus (Matthew 23) belonged and which was to be reckoned as continuing throughout the Church age until the establishment of the literal reign of Jesus on the earth. For instance, the constant usage by Jesus of the term the “generation of vipers” (Matthew 12v34), “a wicked and adulterous generation” (Matthew 12v39) and “faithless and perverse generation” (Matthew 17v17) will fit into this. The truth is that despite the birth of the Church and vigorous propagation of the gospel through the ages; these generations of evil-doers have not only continued to thrive. They have increased in leaps and bounds.

The attempt here is to play down the restriction of the word as applying literally to only those that were physically present at the time and place where Jesus made the statement. Just like I stated earlier, we must neatly separate issues and slot each of them to where it belongs. For instance, there was a literal generation that was going to see the destruction of Jerusalem which was the most immediate of the predicted events. In this regard, it will not matter if a generation should be forty years in which the unbelieving generation of Israel was made to waste away in the wilderness (Number 32v13) or seventy years as was penned down by Moses in his psalm (Psalm 90v10). The fact that Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., about forty years following the prediction of Jesus meant that some of those who were at the venue of His seminar witnessed it. This is one answer to the case.

However, where *generation* is to be understood as the entire sojourn of man and during which two generations of good and bad had co-existed from the beginning, the generation of evil upon whom the

judgement of God would finally descend at the close of human sojourn will witness all the events put together and occurring at whatever period of human history. Therefore, a cautious approach will adopt a broader perspective to the interpretation and understanding of the statement of Jesus Christ as applying to the generation of men, both as one and as a whole.

Further support for this position derives from the fact that the message of the Bible is addressed to all generations of men, whatever their dispensation, background, culture, attainment of the past or aspiration for the future may be. The tradition of applying the whole counsel of God to all humanity has prevailed throughout the history of the Church. It is for the same reason that the writings of the saints of old, like for example those of Apostle Paul, addressed to some churches, some specific people and intended to address some specific problems of their local churches have continued to enjoy the universal relevance in the Church of all dispensations and places, even till today.

Chapter Four

THE SIGNS, THEIR MESSAGE

The foregoing chapter is meant to forge a link between the predictions of Jesus Christ and the events that are bursting upon our world and making the news headlines today. In proceeding further, our study of the signs of the end will be approached from two different but related perspectives. The first will focus on many strange occurrences of our days that derive from direct revolts of nature over which man is lacking control. Though there was no time in history when the world was free from calamities, several of those in our days especially with regards to their frequencies, extents and the impacts they register on places and populace may only be explained in the light of the prophecies of the end time.

As of the time of concluding this review, COVID-19 was one of the loudest events in the news all over the world, having infected millions and claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands across the globe. In other words, judging from history and trends or statistics, only the predictions of Jesus about the troubles that will engulf the world as it speeds through its final phase may just be sufficient to explain the upsurge of such events and their devastation on man and

nature.

Secondly, many prophecies require the agency of man for their fulfilment³⁰. For instance, alteration to the configuration of the earth, pollution of its atmosphere and tilting of its symmetry are all consequences of his daring ventures that may be assessed from the point of his unsolicited roles and unconscious contributions to the fulfilment of prophecy. It is now a shared concern of the scientists that the gross abuse to which the earth has been subjected by the interference of man in its configuration has occasioned damages that can neither be reversed nor repaired.

We will add to this the challenge and mismanagement of population explosion and its awkward distribution pattern that has resulted in unplanned urbanisation and attendant overstretching of facilities. This is how tragedies or pandemics that would have made minimal impact in the past now result in heavy casualties. There is also a spillover of all these to the social sphere in the wobbling politics of many nations that have continually pitched the citizens against each other in a fierce struggle for domination and control, the outcome of which cannot be ignored in the analysis of ominous events of the end.

In pursuit of our study, therefore, our attention is pinned on events of today that are rooted in prophecies than may be traced to any other cause. This chapter will examine the predictions of Jesus Christ and how history and current events are heralding their fulfilment. While this chapter focuses on the global dimension of end-time prophecies, I have drawn references from common reports that enable me to sound more authoritative in citing instances that are evidencing their fulfilment. The grand aim is to establish the accuracy of the predictions of Jesus Christ about the days we live in, together with the integrity and authority of the Bible that records them for our learning.

³⁰ If the news that filtered to the surface about COVID-19 with regards to the role of the Chinese and its connection with introduction of 5G network has any element of truth, then it will not be a natural plague but manmade in pursuit of prophetic mandate.

Matt 24 Verses 7-11 reads:

- 7 *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*
- 8 *All these are the beginning of sorrows.*
- 9 *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.*
- 10 *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*
- 11 *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*
- 24 *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

We are now shifting attention to the analysis of the above in turn.

WARS AND RUMOURS OF WAR

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of war . . . For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom . . . (Matthew 24v6, 7)

Wars have been fought in the world with such frequency and intensity that their history alone will nearly summarise the history of the entire human race. Many of the present geopolitical delineations of the nations and the rise or fall of kingdoms and empires in the course of history have either been causes or consequences of bloodshed from past wars. Someone lent his voice to this when he stated that “the geography of many nations in the world has come from the aftermath of war”. Take this as an example. Even when the promise of the land “*which floweth with milk and honey*” (Leviticus 20v24) was handed to the Israelites, it was obvious that even God did not expect them to sing praise worship and dance their passage into it, neither would the inhabitants of Canaan fold their arms and hand over the inheritance of their forefathers to the invading forces, just like that. War, even brutal war in this instance, was inevitable.

Scholars of international relations have united their stance to tell us that war is a natural corollary of relations among men, a veritable part of their experience that results from unavoidable social and political frictions. Therefore, according to established theories, peace and war are two sides of the same coin. This is why measures have been taken by nations over the centuries, not necessarily to prevent wars which will erupt when they will but to manage them and minimise damages. Geneva and The Hague conventions that form the integrals of the international laws of armed conflicts and International Red Cross and Red Crescent charters are notable among such provisions³¹.

The armed conflicts raging across the world may therefore play a trick on us to discount incidences of wars and rumours of wars as a predicted sign of the end. Still, however, the huge tension that hangs over boiling spots of the earth today, the unrest within and around the nations, tribes, religious sects, the breakdown of law and order in several places, the collapse of peace talks and failed negotiations have added a tinge that may only be explained in the light of the ominous sign “*of wars and rumours of wars*”. For instance, researched statistics reveal how no less than 286 wars were fought in Europe alone in the past three or four centuries and that count could not have included those being brought to our television screens today. There were similarly disturbing scenarios in other places, particularly Africa which continue to paint pictures that no one may dismiss as ordinary.

Even where temptation may still press us hard to pitch down the signals, all the rubbles of national and international conflicts can be buried under the resonating emblems of the two World Wars between 1914 - 1918 and 1939 - 1945. On this point alone, even those who are grudging with citing “*wars and rumours of war*” as a sign of the end because of its trite will need extra efforts to stiffen their stance against

³¹ For most of the time, the provisions operate only on papers. The desperation to win often drives warring sides into whatever measures they think may secure them an advantages against the opposing forces, however extreme or irrational they may be.

the message that the World Wars and destructions that trailed them communicated. Indeed, Bible scholars seem to be united on the fact that when Jesus spoke of wars and rumours of wars as part of the signs of His Second Coming, He was predicting those wars that left our world with heavy tolls and damages to properties that have been tasking the nations and their sweats to rebuild.

Many parts of the world have been set on odious flames that burn with human blood as fuels and many “*rumours of wars...*” (Matthew 24v6; Mark 13v7) have blown into full-scale hostilities through the activities of blood-sucking powers. Common causes of conflicts like injustice, the conquest of masses by the fraudulent electoral process, political marginalisation and isolation that breed discontent, mutual suspicion, distrust and hatred, religious intolerance and abuse of human rights are phenomena we cannot eradicate especially as they affect many parts of the underdeveloped worlds. Just to recount a few instances within past decades alone, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Korea, Sudan, Cuba, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Rwanda, Russia, Yugoslavia, Ethiopians and Eritreans have experienced civil or cross-border wars.

Nigeria fought her civil war for close to four years during which blood flowed like floodwater. For many decades now, its political weight became badly skewed in favour of a section of the country and the blunders of the most recent governments have climbed to the unprecedented height. Only divine intervention may just be cited as to how the country has not witnessed a more devastating war, over and again. Angola’s field of slaughter operated for close to a quarter of a century leaving behind horrifying statistics of the destruction of both lives and fortunes. Blood flowed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from 1998 when Laurent Kabila mobilised the citizens and took up arms against the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko. The conflict which lasted about a decade was reported to have claimed about 5.4 million lives. The death tolls at the war fronts swelled to that figure from humanitarian disasters when about 45,000 displaced people died every month from disease and malnutrition alone. A research team that

studied the situation affirmed that the war and its effects caused more deaths than any other conflict since World War II.

With the discovery of oil in Southern Sudan following which the north-based central government revoked the partial autonomy it granted in 1978, the country returned to full-scale war in 1983 that was going to last till 2005. The deadly clashes that erupted one after the other until 2011 when the south finally secured its independence made the country's war the longest in the history of the continent. Reliable records have it that Sudan lost about 3 million of her citizens to those conflicts. The invasion of Darfur killed at least 70,000 civilians with about 400 villages destroyed and more than 1,500,000 people displaced in a campaign of brutality by the government forces. As revealed by UN officials, the situation created "the world's worst humanitarian crisis"³² of that era.

Tamil Tiger rebels, one of the most dreaded guerrilla movements of all time, engaged Sri Lankan government in a war of independence since the early 1980s. There were bloody insurrections in Chechen, Russia and in Columbia where a rebel faction held sway and was at a time dictating terms of settlement for a constituted government. For a very long time, deepening rivalries and skirmishes over Kashmir robbed Pakistan and India of the much-needed border peace. At other times, hostilities and menacing situations that were thought to be over in places like Yugoslavia-Bosnia-Kosovo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia reared their heads over and again. East Timor and the Solomon Islands are among the boiling spots of the earth where the United Nations has had to maintain peacekeeping troops at times.

North Korea sits precariously atop nuclear arsenals which, according to its officials, it intends to maintain as ". . . nuclear deterrent for self-defence under any circumstances". Speculations about its

³² This, obviously, was before Asian tsunamis tragedy that displaced about 5 million just in a single night. It is also at a different time from the situation in Congo earlier referred to.

nuclear activities for years were laid to rest with open several testing of the weapons in recent times. The country threatens that its military was ready for “prompt, merciless and annihilatory action” against its enemies. On a worrisome note, at no time has the country ceased to foam its threat against its southern counterpart which leans to the west. It should also be noted that the 1950-1953 war between the neighbours is not officially over because only a truce was signed as opposed to a treaty that would have negotiated terms of lasting peace. Even now, acrimonies often rare their heads to fuel international concern.

The survival of the fittest has become the rule in the world where the ‘unfits’ are trampled upon in the fierce struggle for domination that often comes as wars and bloodshed. Insecurity, political assassination, ritual killings, violence and wreckages together with bitter memories that trail them will not be fully accounted for in this volume. The ripples of these conflicts and the tears they birth have set the lives of people ablaze in many places. All these are loud testimonies to a grand failure of our generation that would want to boast about the most advanced diplomatic machinery in the history of man to arrest anarchy and police its affairs. But how else would we expect prophecies to be fulfilled if man through his wisdom or diplomacy could have prevented wars and bloodshed?

In the chapter on the millennial reign of Jesus Christ ahead, we will expose the futility of the efforts and expectations of any person, people, nation or their agencies to bring peace to the earth. The temperature of our atmosphere will continue to rise until it reaches a point where no one will be left with an option other than to embrace a central government which will pretend to reconcile conflicting religious, economic and political interests that are clashing endlessly to fuel crisis. Further discourse on “*wars and rumours of war*” will lead us to its breakdown into *Terror and Counter-terror Measures, Middle East—A Boiling Cauldron, Iran and Her Nuclear Venture*; completed with *Groanings of the International System*

TERROR AND COUNTER-TERROR MEASURES

The world has gradually come to agree that, except for the motive that is best defined by whoever is involved; there is little or no difference between terror activities and violent anti-terror measures. Both involve the targeted killing of those that have been fixed with the tag of an enemy. In the logic of politics and diplomacy, just like in the study of mathematics, the multiplication of negative “*p*” and “*q*” equal positive “*pq*” to confirm a popular notion that nearly all the time, a negative reaction is needed to balance negative action³³.

On one side of the battle in the international system, we have the west led, by Americans who came to dominate the political landscape of the world following the waning of the Soviet Union. But the pursuit of its interests in the international system continues to clash with those of several other nations to make it a target of assault. In response to the threats posed by the extremists, especially since the event of 9/11, America declared war on the terrorists and has been employing every available means and machinery to outwit their stratagems.

On the other side of the divide are religious and political radicals who have put their lives on the line to foment trouble and sponsor mayhems. They are motivated by generational divides and enraged by what they term the desecration of Islamic lands by the occupation forces. Rather than being cowed by the superior power of the west and its dreaded war machines, such has only fuelled their resolve and made them more daring. For instance, in the struggles of the Palestinians against Israeli forces, a top member of Hamas stated in an interview that “we are all candidates for martyrdom. We enjoy life, but if death will provide our people protection, dignity and victory, we will be ready to give our souls as a price for it.” Though someone once

³³ We know this is not the case most times with the saying that two wrongs do not make a right. Example of this may be seen in the person who has to die for committing murder while his execution will not bring back the life already lost but will only add to the loss.

opined that it makes no sense fighting those who are ready to die, a counter opinion has placed its emphasis on the need to rise to the challenge and see how many of the killers will be killed before they kill.

Thus, it is only as the terrorists embark on their asymmetrical assaults that the citizens of the world will wake up to count and mourn their losses. For about three decades now, Nigeria came under the siege of the *Boko Haram* sect, a terror organisation said to have forged a link with other international similar groups. Though attention had always focused more on Israel, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other volatile Middle Eastern settings in the past, the fact is that the entire world has become a battleground and anywhere, even places that are least expected, can become a theatre of tragedy. On various measures to counter or contain terror moves, Gareth Evans, former Australian foreign minister, was quoted to have summed it up logically that “the net result of the war on terror is more war and more terror”.

By now, all of us are quite familiar with the rhetorics and empty jingles that normally trail terror attacks. As those who are affected by the tragedy scream their pains, officials and those who are mouthpieces of various governments will express their disgust over the incident. Security agencies and rescue workers will run helter-skelter to work out responses that have hardly been anything more than medicine after death. At the same time, politicians, religious and opinion leaders across the globe will invite the press to register their solidarity, express their outrage and then issue signed statements of denunciation of the attack on behalf of themselves and their constituencies. By then, the media houses will have stockpiled enough information that they will devote a chunk of their time and pages to beam, over and again, to the inquisitive audiences.

What is worse is the fact we also know too well that all such reactions and dramas are neither intended to reverse the damage that has already been done nor hurt the reputation of the perpetrators which, in the first instance, they have never claimed or cared to own in

any measure that may deter a repeat. After all, it will be stupid to think that those who lend themselves to terror operations will ever expect anyone apart from those in their camps and their secret sponsors to mount a podium and sing their praises in the open. The worldwide revulsion that usually greets their exploits can never be anything more or less than what they must have anticipated or factored into their calculations before embarking on their repulsive missions.

All these are to show how the world will know no peace because the war on terror is one for which no one can predict a progression or suggest when and how it will end if it ever will. In fact, for quite a while now, the concern has shifted from the certainty of future attacks by the terrorists on the communities of their target to speculation of their seeking non-conventional weapons of mass destruction to inflict maximum damages. We have witnessed how changes in the government of targeted nations have promised some temporary let-ups in the past, like when Barack Obama reached out to the Islamic world in the early days of his presidency. But it is also true that no paradigm shift by the west will promise alteration to issues of fundamental contentions or redefine the motives and ideologies of the aggrieved warriors. Neither will such changes make the west abandon its civilization rooted in the ideals of democracy and freedom of conscience it claims to champion which are at loggerheads with the prevailing psyche of the terror masterminds.

Today, it is difficult to gauge the torture that the threats of Islamic terrorism have continued to inflict on the fragile psyche of the west and other soft targets. Whether we admit it or not, even the perpetrators of terrors will reckon such restiveness of the rest of the world alone as an achievement on their part. The fact that the media houses do not blast the volume of such concerns does not make any difference to a fact that saturates the air. Quite often we hear of the preparation of the terrorists to strike, of how they are pursuing the acquisition of the dirtiest of destructive weapons. The catalogue of past exploits and the reality of their dark mandate forbid anyone to water

down the threats they issue or the propaganda they sponsor.

Even where such claims appear to be unfounded, it will amount to sheer folly to downplay the underlying intentions. With the bitterness lurking about in the corners of their minds against those they have identified as enemies of their religious and political cause, the execution of those plans is an ambition that will continue to drive them, their targets and the wider world crazy. Now, to the extent that no one knows when the presumed empty threats will crystallise into existential ones that will spill bloods in the patterns of the events we have all been witnessing, the world and its inhabitants remain under siege. After all, revelations later emerged about how many such threats leaked to the surface before the catastrophe of 9/11 which, as admitted later; were not taken seriously until it was too late.

MIDDLE EAST—A BOILING CAULDRON

The problems of the Middle East have defied and will continue to defy all solutions, and this is without apology for whatever anyone may feel. The pursuit of conflicting interests by nations within and outside the region will linger on to rob the region the much-needed stability. Nearly every major and minor power in the world's political settings has its ally and foe within the bloc. Since the action of one group generates the reaction of others both from within and beyond the region; that fact has turned the region into an arena of struggles where the atmosphere is constantly overcharged. The importance of the region has not only derived directly from the Bible, but it has also underscored the authority of its historical contents and prophetic appeals against which the world has today united its stand in unbelief.

The story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden into which they were created and nurtured by God, the story of Noah and his descendants, the story of Nimrod, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Laban and Rebecca, Joseph and Pharaohs, the powerful ancient kings of Egypt, the story of the Canaanites, the establishment

of erstwhile glorious Jewish kingdoms and those of other ancient empires of latter centuries had their setting within the region. Virtually everything we read about Jerusalem and the temples of Solomon and Herod that once adorned the city, the coming into the world, the ministry, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Pentecost and the birth of the Church with the spread of the gospel that followed all had their roots in the Middle East.

Indeed, all the flames engulfing the region now have been understood as setting the stage and preparing it for the fulfilment of future prophecies which have been pinned down to the region. Although the region is not associated with great inventions and developments apart from the discovery of oil by which it came to retain the status of being a major trade route, no region of the world exudes as much passion as the Middle East. For many decades now, a day hardly passes by without something to report to the world from the region and most of the time; it is news about violence and bloodshed. The strategic importance of the region in the agenda of both God and Satan is what no Bible reader may question. It is sure to retain its ugly description as the theatre of absurdity that will defy solutions because of the higher forces of both good and evil that will continue to be at the loggerheads.

Commenting on the worrisome state of the Middle East towards the conclusion of his work, Tim Hames in *The Middle East Isn't On The Brink Of War. It's On The Brink Of Catastrophe*³⁴ wrote:

The final element is that the Middle East has ceased to be an argument of its own; it has become enmeshed in and sometimes a theatre for other conflicts and controversies. A whole series of rivalries—Arab-Israeli, Shia militia and Sunni fanatics in Iraq, Iran and its nuclear ambitions, the activities of al-Qaeda and a revitalised Taleban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the contest over Kashmir—have become entangled with one another.

³⁴ Source: **The Times**, 17 July, 2006

Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990 to annex the oil-rich country and this became the loudest bomb that was detonated over the region. This was followed by the invasion of Iraq by the United States of America and its allies on January 1991 to force him out. While the major part of the world rose in the applause of that move, especially as the campaign progressed well and ended quickly, it sowed the seed of the ‘terrorists’³⁵ attack of September 11, 2001 that rudely shocked the entire world and following which Americans again invaded the country as if to conclude its unfinished business of initial venture. Since then, the woes of the region multiply in folds.

That second invasion of the country was at the insistence of President George Bush II who hinged its justification on the need to destroy the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) of Saddam Hussein and the network of international terrorism for which the country was suspected to be a safe den. However, no one would need more than the sense of an elementary school pupil to figure out a retaliation move for the psyche-damaging and ego-deflating event of 9/11. In a statement to the beleaguered rescue workers of a sorrowing nation while on a tour of the World Trade Centre site four days after the attack, the President told them; “the world hears you, and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon”

The war by the United States created a messy world and became a

³⁵ Notwithstanding the common notion and the fear it sparks, ‘**terrorist**’ remains loose and depends on who is referring to who. Those who are branded as terrorists by the west are freedom fighters and celebrated heroes in the Middle East where the same definition is applied to Israel and its supporters. However, since most of the terrorist organisations operate to undermine the government of their targets, an ‘official’ definition of the word **terrorism** is said to have five components: 1. The *means* as **violence**, 2. The *method* as **creation of fear among the citizens**, 3. The *target* as the **non-combatants, the civilians**, 4 The *goal* as a **fundamental change of political (and religious) order** and 5. The *actors* as **non-state actors** (*Apart from state sponsored terrorism or where a state officials use violence to gain or/ and maintain political grips to pursue or achieve an (unpopular) goals*).

hard-to-end entanglement, reversing all the euphoria of the victory of the earlier raid to substitute open shame for the ovation that had greeted it. While the overthrow of Saddam Hussein was swift and President Bush had formally declared an end to hostility in a hurry, the foray only set the entire region ablaze with hordes of terrorists emerging from various hideouts in sympathy for the displaced interests. There were huge destruction, killings and immeasurable damage and, for a long time, news of suicide bombings with heavy casualties in Iraq ceased to evoke any more shock from the rest of the world. It was just as if the media were reporting about the deaths of a swarm of flies or some worthless creatures on a faraway planet³⁶.

The sour relation between the Israelites and Palestinians remains a major cause of sustained hostility that continually defines the political temperature of the region. By now, even the most interested and keenest observers must have lost count of the number of flopped peace efforts between the two neighbours, with violent insurrections that have spanned over several decades of their bloody history. Despite the enormous resources and efforts that have been committed to finding a solution to major clashes of interests, the prospect of lasting peace continually slips out of the grasp of peacemakers. The situation poses continual threats not only to the stability of the region but the entire world by every uninhibited implication.

A highly coordinated peace move launched at Annapolis on November 2007 at the instance of the US government attracted huge prospects and inspired high expectations. Judging by the gaps they told the world had been bridged during elaborate preparations for the summit, the mediating quartet of UN, US, EU and Russia thought it had cause to sound a note of optimism³⁷. But as 2008 drew to a close

³⁶ From the counting up to November, 2006, about three and half years into the conflict, civilian deaths were estimated to be around 150,000; mostly Shiite Muslim whom the invasion of the 'foreigners' was perceived to have favoured.

³⁷ Though in actual fact, no informed person would ever have taken them serious because whatever hint of optimism they gave that Palestinian state would emerge and peace

which made it about a year since the renewed efforts were launched, it became very clear, once and again, that plans had hit the rock in many directions. In a press briefing during her eighth visit to the region within one year after the launch of the orchestrated talks, a prominent media noted that the “US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice all but conceded that an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal by a year-end deadline is no longer possible...”. Another scholar had echoed a bitter truth about the initiatives that even “if the preconditions for the fabled two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians could be brought about, outside players would be able to sabotage it”.

The administration of Barack Obama brought so much force and fervour into the project and the renewed negotiation seemed to be on course until the jinx of failure imposed a setback that could not be outwitted. The sides to the negotiation threw in the spanners rather too quickly this time around. The news shortly after the effort was launched summed it up that “. . . America was unable to find a formula that both parties could accept and take to the negotiating table”. The news focus had shifted from reconciliation to the attempts of the Palestinians to unilaterally declare their statehood. This is more especially as beleaguered Palestinians were seen to be basking in the open and clandestine support of a powerful section of Europe that had fanned its anti-Israel embers to open confrontation.

Those who monitor events can recall what transpired in succession to inspire hope of a new dawn for the region. An uprising in Lebanon extracted the resignation of a government that tied the country to the aprons of Syria. There was a succession of ‘elections’ in Afghanistan, Iraq and even Saudi Arabia. There were ‘multi-candidates’ elections in Egypt “considered to be unthinkable for decades” though the whole world is a witness to what became of this about three years after. At the same time, there were step-ups in Israeli-Palestinian relations

would prevail before President George Bush II was due to vacate office in January, 2009 must either have ignored history or chosen to champion a diplomacy of lies or mockery.

following the death of Yasser Arafat. However, it took only a very short while for the balloons of the high hopes to burst and for familiar dark clouds to descend again. The region, more than any other part of the world, is touting the greatest incentive to the establishment of one world government and the demands for this are coming from those that cannot be ignored for too long. It will not matter whether or not the clamouring agents understand their overture as setting the stage for and throwing unrestrained invitation to the prophesied man of sin destined to emerge as the world's maximum ruler one of these days.

IRAN AND ITS NUCLEAR PROJECT

The venture of Iran into the nuclear project and the loud implication it has with end-time prophecies was the most sizzling news that dominated the media, particularly before and around the 2010s. Its drums had toned down for quite a while now. But, to the extent that there is not as much to discount the belligerent postures of Iran and Israel, and the International Atomic Energy Agency had complaints about Iran's³⁸ non-cooperation by which it is hesitant to give it a clean bill of compliance, the situation remained a matter of concern. A source as recent as May 2020 hints that "Iran is manifestly closer to being able to produce a nuclear weapon than they were two years ago"

Iran quietly sneaked into a dangerous puzzle that once pushed the entire world to a delicate dilemma with its nuclear agenda and the hard posture of its leadership. On one hand, I maintain a caution I dangled in chapter one against an attempt to overheat the prophetic landscapes with sensitive events we suspect to be connected with prophecies of the end time. On the other, no one will do well to dismiss the signals that developments in Iran and similarly belligerent nations have been transmitting to the international communities across the globe.

The subject of Iran and its nuclear agenda has perspectives of

³⁸ A counterbalancing report indicates how the protests of Iran relate to the objectivity or otherwise of International Atomic Energy Agency.

diplomacy and prophecy and the two share a weight concern. I once argued that Iran as a sovereign nation should just be left like other nations to pursue whatever its interests and ambitions may be in the world, the sky of which is considered spacious enough for every bird to fly in whichever direction and altitude. This is more so since Iran has insistently maintained that its nuclear programmes were to generate electricity and produce medical radioisotopes to treat cancer patients.

However, it is just that the rest of the world is unable to reconcile that claim with its fiery statements and belligerent posture against the statehood of Israel conjoined with the United States of America. That is a posture considered to be scary even by some moderate Islamic regimes in the neighbourhood. Even the Iranian leaders who tried to sell a gospel of peaceful nuclear agenda do not expect the world to take them as seriously unless they choose to make a fool of themselves. The fiery sniffs they emit towards oppositions alone will make it hard for them to resist the temptation of taking extra steps to upgrade 'peaceful' infrastructure to destructive weapons that will assist them to achieve what has become a national agenda. This is an agenda that is backed by religious and ideological fervour on the one hand and what looks like an unyielding resolve to prove a point on the other.

It, therefore, remains a real concern of the international community that, with a nuclear-armed Iran, the world may just wake up one morning to discover that Israel has been wiped "off the map" of the region, just as one of their leaders had consistently advocated! As I hinted earlier about the rhetoric that usually greets terrorist carnage, what will follow such catastrophe will never be more than the usual belated condemnation from the allies of Israel. At the same time, many around the world who have secretly shared a burden for the destruction of Israel with Iran will be flung into celebration.

On the other side, Israel has made it abundantly clear that it will not fold its arms and allow Iran's nuclear ambition to prosper following which national tragedy of a colossal proportion will suddenly

sweep upon it. Reacting to the plan of Iran wading into a nuclear venture, an Israeli military source confessed that “Israel is very vulnerable. All our economic and intellectual assets are concentrated in a piece of 20 and 60 miles . . . two bombs can turn Israel into a scorched Third World country . . .”. Another expert equally remarked that the only thing that will be more dangerous than a military attack against Iran's nuclear weapons program would be a nuclear-armed Iran.

This is why military action against suspected locations of Iran's nuclear installations will never be ruled out either by Israel or the United States of America or by both in joint military efforts. The world must have come to know by now that, should Iranian bomb threats become heightened again, nothing will hold back Israel, in its usual but unconventional style, from violating whatever diplomacy or international norms to protect its nation and its people. At the same time, we also face the fact that military moves against present-day Iran are not a course of action that will conform to whatever war strategy to be penned down on a piece of paper. For many years now, Iran does not compare with Iraq in 1981 when Israel bombed the latter's nuclear reactor in Osirak.

Therefore, even with the worst or best intelligence, no one will expect Iran to undermine the threats which the duo of Israel and the United States of America alone pose to its nuclear ambition. A connection of the development with the prophecy of Jesus about “*war and rumours of war*” is real. First of all, the world must brace up for the invasion of Iran at some point in the near or distant future unless there is an open denunciation of its weapon ambition, backed by openness and concrete action to prove it. Secondly, Iran is not a cheap cow just waiting to be slaughtered by Israelis and whoever is backing them.

A commentary, *The Iran War—How It Will Begin*³⁹ once visualised the scope and dimension of the wars that would ensue and noted that the invasion of Iran at any time in the near or distant future carries

³⁹ Sourced from an article by The Earl of Stirling

with it the possibility of launching our world into a major conflict such that may be a prelude to Armageddon⁴⁰:

Regardless if the war begins with a limited number of air strikes against Iranian military and nuclear targets, or if an all-out several thousand target attack begins from day one, the probabilities of the war becoming a major regional war within 48 hours are 90% or higher. The Iranians will simply not allow Israeli and/or American military forces to attack its territory without a major response. Any significant counter-attack on Israel and/or American regional bases will trigger a much greater counter-response.

The expert further hinted that Iran has “trained a massive unguided rocket and guided missile force in Lebanon”, a highly trained and well-equipped Iranian commando force that Hezbollah Special Forces are known to be. The ground battle that is likely to ensue will be tough as Iran is said to have different topography and mountains in the surroundings which contributed significantly to aborting the attempt of the United States to free its hostages in Tehran in 1980. It is a geographical fact that Iran “. . . does not present the oft conventional military target” that was offered to the US army in its invasion of Iraq.

If the nation’s nuclear threats should resurface to become a piece of hot news again at any time in the future, whatever option to counter

⁴⁰ Again, though the measure of my concurrence with this prediction has justified its inclusion in this work, perhaps we should still exercise caution as nearly every preparation for major wars in the Middle East in our era was preceded by similar prediction of global doomsday only for the situation to be contained afterwards. I recall clearly the dominant headlines in 1991 when America forces first invaded Iraq and nearly all the local newspaper and a few international media reported the event as the herald of Armageddon, which eventually it did not become. Yet, we dare not indulge in superficial conjecture at least because of the profile of the scholar who envisaged the scenario, who has “served as a consultant to three very high-tech aerospace firms” and whose “specialty is conceptualizing advanced warfare especially as it relates to new cutting-edge advanced weapon systems”

Iran or contain it, the most likely of which is military in the ultimate is sure to create “a messy world”. The hard choices were spelt out by someone as either bombing Iran or living under the threats of the Iranian bomb. Though the aggression will aim at Iranian nuclear ambition, we are yet unable to imagine what the world will turn out to be and how the war will progress or spread its ugly tentacles once the machinery is rolled out to the battlefield and the first trigger is fired⁴¹.

There is a more disturbing aspect of the Iranian bomb project which seems to lay dormant now but which may have been rooted more in prophecy than diplomacy. Sufficient leads suggest that the leaders of the country have identified the place carved out for them in the end-time agenda. Even though references to prophecies as we have them on the pages of the Bible may not necessarily be intended, Joel Rosenberg in an article of November 09 2011, titled *Why Iran’s Top Leaders Believe That the End of Days Has Come* noted rather pointedly:

Iranian leaders may, in fact, have a motive to accelerate direct attacks on the U.S. [in] Shia Islamic eschatology, or “End Times” theology. Iran’s Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are convinced that the End of Days has come. They believe the Shia messiah known as the “Twelfth Imam” or the “Mahdi” will appear soon to establish a global Islamic kingdom known as the caliphate.

Thus, it may be that Iranian leaders have never owned a copy of the Holy Bible or read through any of its pages. Also, it does not even matter whether or not the world believes their version of eschatology

⁴¹ We are aware of the false alarms that press always raise each time that diplomacy fail and war machine is being rolled out, up to and including what we saw in the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine. At the same time, however, when conflict is likely to ensue between nations with stronger and more strategic relations with the world powers that are always enmeshed in cold war, there could be a different and unpredictable outcome.

or sees it as sufficient motivation for their actions. If the leaders have been goaded to believe that the world must be set on fire by confrontation with the west to hasten the revelation of the hidden Imam who will fulfil their religious dreams of an Islamised world, they will pursue a stropy course until the situation gets out of hand. Within the context of its common definition and practice, no one should undermine the capacity of religion⁴², to cage the senses and inspire insanity. So, once the world can define the ambition of Iran in the light of a duty which its religion has imposed on its citizens, it should just brace up for the bloodletting that will come with it.

Also, the radical agenda of the country which includes the destruction of Israel, causing a major upset for the United States of America and subduing the west; its religious dream of a world that will someday be ruled by an international caliphate are issues that had been deeply rooted in the psyche and souls of the powers ruling the land. They are not tied to the apron of any particular past, present or future leader of the country while the expiration of the tenure of any of them, like that of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for example, may not dig the grave of those agenda that is more nationalistic than personal.

It is in these regards that we expect that Iran will invariably be driven to the pursuit of the acquisition of whatever technology it thinks will be necessary for the fulfilment of its religious and prophetic mandate. Therefore, on one hand, irrespective of whoever is saying anything or planning whatever action against it, the face-off of Tehran with the rest of the world is not likely to abate until it has run its full course. On the other hand, irrespective of whatever consideration there may be for Israel to want to thread with caution and avoid whatever catastrophe the invasion of Iran will engender, the need for national survival will prompt it into preventive or reactive measures.

A military analysis commented that “. . . Israelis will ultimately have to choose between launching an attack likely to spark a large-scale

⁴² That includes Christianity of the forms and rites without discretion and content of life.

regional conflict and allowing Iran to go nuclear with dire long-term implications”. Echoing the same position, Israeli’s long-time Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu at a time said that “. . . making a risky decision carries a heavy price, but the price for not making it would be heavier”. All these were meant to inform us that, when the time comes to attack Iran, there will be no cost or fear of repercussion that will mean as much as the need to avert a national tragedy and colossal destruction being masterminded by a bent foe. Even the large majority of Israelis once indicated to be in “favour of military action over living with the ubiquitous threat of nuclear annihilation”

Therefore, from all we can see or sense, the dust of Iran’s case, though presently dormant, may not have been fully settled. The war against it will trigger multiple reactions, increase the spate of hostility across the region, put all diplomatic machinery under severe pressure and overrun the world with red alerts. As usual, Islam’s militant youths who appear to permanently hide in the backyards and are known to be always battle-ready will go on rampages to protest and make a demand on their government to join in the *jihad* against Israel and America. Their motive will be exonerated by the fact that they will have no means of ascertaining that, indeed, Iran was making bombs to destroy Israel just as has been alleged such that would have assisted them to think of what route they probably would have taken for self-preservation were they to find themselves in the shoes of Israel.

We know that while the threat of Iran to wipe out Israel is loud enough for the world to hear, the fact of its venture into a nuclear bomb to achieve that aim is not as loud except to the few hierarchies of the nations involved. Thus, going by religious sentiments in which such an issue is usually soaked, the rampaging youths across the Middle East will be instigated by the fact that international media has always been used to deceive the public. Their reaction will mobilise suicide bombers who will be let loose for their operations to extend to such places that may not be imagined as yet. The ensuing reign of terror will engulf everywhere and prevail, perhaps until the world is indeed

pushed to the edge of Armageddon. Thus, Iran of today may have its quota in the prophecy of Jesus on “*wars and rumours of war*”.

INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM IS GROANING

Away from the Iran bomb issue, no one will pretend to be at peace with the way the North Koreans have been flaunting their weapons in recent years. They have used every available opportunity to flex their muscles and rouse the psyches of the international community. The hot temperatures that flared to the atmosphere over and again between them and their southern counterparts and by which the United States was being subtly drawn into the centre of a tiff that was climbing to a boiling point at a time cannot be taken lightly. The country which has never hidden its resentment and its crude challenge to the world’s superpower has continued to conduct nuclear tests. It also claimed to have nuclear warheads which, if they are fitted on its *No Dong*, will launch medium-range ballistic attacks.

Even then, whatever is happening between the country and its southern neighbour and the United States is only an aspect of the worry. For instance, I do not know if the world has imagined what will happen if the Iranians quietly turn to them to buy the technology which they are being frustrated from producing. We know that while all attention is concentrated on preventing them from making a bomb, the clandestine moves of any nation through the backyard to engage in negotiation by which it will take the delivery of such weapons from a willing partner like North Korea will certainly not attract the same funfair that is detectable by the prying eyes⁴³.

In conclusion of this segment, we may further imagine a sinister scenario more than that of the Iranian bomb or North Korean aggression. For instance, we may ask ourselves what will happen if any of the radical groups like, say, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Taliban, Boko Haram

⁴³ At the same time, however, I dare not pretend to know better than Israelis who are in the centre of the conflict and who must have weighed all its possibilities and dimensions.

and others like them should manage to acquire a nuclear weapon in circumstances that will not attract noise or pose the obstacles being hurdled on the path of Iran to make a bomb. After all, the terror groups have been thriving on illegal weapon supplies, even up till now. The same arrangement that supplies them with weapons of war may just be finetuned to achieve their acquisition of more deadly weapons. I cannot imagine anyone who will doubt that if someone like Osama Bin Laden had access to a nuclear bomb, he would think twice before detonating it on his target.

We may also figure out what will happen if any of the radical groups should one day overrun a country like Pakistan which has not only been politically unsteady but which possesses some nuclear arsenals and where the radical groups within its borders⁴⁴ will gain access to them. I do not see how the heavily charged atmosphere of our world today about “... wars and rumours of war...” can be disconnected from the predictions of Jesus Christ.

FAMINE, PESTILENCE AND EARTHQUAKES

... And there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. (Matthew 24v7)

Entwined with the prophecy of “... nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...” is the one of “... famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places”. All over the world, especially in its underdeveloped axis, many people are dying of diseases that have poverty and malnutrition as their mainstay. It does not make the news any longer that a large per cent of the world population does not have access to good food and water while efforts of various governments and agencies to address the problem remain a gross mismatch that will

⁴⁴ There are presently no less than 48 ‘terror’ groups operating in Pakistan with various agenda and operational focus. Among these, 12 are home grown, 32 are trans-border groups and 4 are classified as extremely dangerous.

not alter the disturbing trend, at least for some time to come. Now, able-bodied human beings compete with animals and wandering lunatics at dump sites to keep bodies and souls intact.

I recall those long days on campus when a woman used to sneak into the backyard of our refectory with her children at mealtime. After noticing her for some time, I inquired from one of the kitchen staff why the lady was always around, especially during mealtime. I was shocked to hear that she was coming to collect the remnants left on the plates by the students to feed herself and her kids⁴⁵. While I was touched by her degraded situation, a much worse situation descended upon the people, including even the students themselves that made the experience that scared me in my campus days a huge joke.

The situation of our world is such that millions of people in several countries just fill the tummy with whatever they can lay their hands upon and at such intervals to sustain their frame in search of meaning to their existence. By the late 2000s, Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia experienced their worst famines in many decades that threatened to wipe off millions of people who had survived on food aid in the region. The majority of those in the middle class in several countries a few years back have been plunged into the poverty zones in droves. As food production continues to dwindle, the prices of the ones that make their way to the market are continually soaring out of the reach of many families who have been barely surviving.

One of the reports issued by United Nations officials confirmed that over seventy per cent of the citizens of many nations or 20% of the world population of about 1.1 billion people are living below the poverty line⁴⁶ and this may have become outdated statistics as you read

⁴⁵ That was the time when students enjoyed good living standard and had official canteens where meals were served at highly subsidised rates. Shortly after, precisely from 1983/84 academic session, it came to the turn of the students to experience real hardship as economy plummeted further and misery set in to replace what we knew in our days.

⁴⁶ A person is said to be below the poverty line if he has income of less than \$1.00 per day (1985 value) or, in a clearer language, he lacks income necessary to afford food intake as

this. A number of those who appear to be up and kicking are walking corpses who could be ushered into their graves by a slight flurry. We may recall the pictures we have seen on either television or pages of newspapers of children dying of hunger and malnutrition in places ravaged by war and where extreme famine combined with poverty. Though I am not quite sure of this, I heard about one journalist who compiled some clips⁴⁷ from one of the worst hit places and was reported to have committed suicide afterwards because he could not live with the trauma of what he had witnessed and recorded.

On the health scene, there are now many diseases that medical experts are struggling to conjure names for and which have remained subjects of intensive research. There are occasions when they have voiced out their bafflement and the number of such instances is on the rise. In a science article *Deadly Viruses Mutating To Infect Humans At Rate Never Seen Before*⁴⁸ we read a frightening report:

At least one new disease is jumping the species barrier from animals to human beings every year, exposing people to emerging germs at a rate that may be unprecedented. The first work to catalogue the range of germs capable of infecting people has disclosed that 38 new human pathogens have emerged in the past 25 years. Three-quarters of these, including AIDS, avian flu, SARS and a new variant of CJD, originated as animal diseases. The survey, led by Mark Woolhouse of the University of Edinburgh, has identified more than 1,400 pathogens that can cause disease in human beings, at least 800 of which crossed the species barrier from animals.

Many factors were said to be responsible for this development,

measured by daily minimum calorie requirements.

⁴⁷ A friend sent copies of the labelled photographs to me such that made me an eye witness of unimaginable hardship and suffering that befell such people.

⁴⁸ A write up by Mark Henderson and published by *The Times* on 21 February, 2006

some of which are environmental pollution, intensive agriculture, the ease of long-distance travel and the effects of global warming. Therefore, such factors that help animal germs to acquire the ability to infect people are those that will not abate but increase in the days ahead. Support for this claim came with The Health Report⁴⁹ of September 2007 by the World Health Organisation (WHO) which highlights the danger associated with our days, especially on trends in the spread of diseases around the world. It stated:

Infectious diseases are emerging more quickly and spreading faster around the globe than ever and becoming increasingly difficult to treat . . . With billions of people moving around the planet every year an outbreak or epidemic in one part of the world is only a few hours away from becoming an imminent threat somewhere else”.

COVID-19 which is presently ravaging the world as this work is being concluded offer a perfect example of this prediction, penned down over a decade ago. Of immense relevance to us in the same report is a mind-blowing revelation on how such development relates more to our time:

Since the 1970s, new threats have been identified at an “unprecedented rate” of one or more every year, meaning that nearly 40 diseases exist today which were unknown just over a generation ago. Over the last five years alone, WHO experts had verified more than 1,100 epidemics of different diseases.”

It should be of interest for us to remember that WHO was not set up to resonate the prophecy of Jesus Christ about the end of time or lend

⁴⁹ Source: Programmes and Project section of World Health Organisation (WHO) website

support to the claims of the Bible. The purely scientific and secular body is only pursuing its mandate to promote a safer world as it relates to the prevention and treatment of diseases, especially those that are considered to be humanly manageable.

For specific examples, we beam a light on the HIV/AIDS pandemic which has so far proved to be one of the deadly additions to the list. Despite the concerted efforts to tame it, the global trend of the scourge, generally touted as perhaps the most destructive in medical history, was reported to be on a steady rise. According to a reliable report compiled at the thirtieth anniversary of the scourge about a decade ago, no less than 25 million people had died of AIDS-related diseases globally and that was with a rising annual average of deaths and with no less than 40 million people said to be living with HIV globally⁵⁰. The infection rate in the world was also reported to be high with one of the countries in Africa having 20% of her entire population living with the virus.

The Spanish flu epidemic outbreak of 1918-19 killed 50 million people worldwide as a ground preparation for all we see in our days. A ‘mad cow’ disease ravaged some western countries and killed many people who consumed the beef of infected animals. While that was subsiding, another one, ‘foot and mouth’ diseases made its odious reappearance, creating a health hazard and economic disaster⁵¹, particularly in Britain where it was first spotted around February 2001. For a long while, the world battled against bird flu and the liable virus for the dangers they portended. The virus, code-named H5N1⁵², resurfaced in Southeast Asia where several millions of domestic ducks and chickens were slaughtered and incinerated to contain a dangerous

⁵⁰ Source: UNAIDS (Uniting the world against AIDS)’s Summary of Reports on global AIDS. This was released about 2 decades ago while anyone may find out present status.

⁵¹ In an effort to contain the outbreak, tens of thousands of animals were destroyed and several infected farmlands were laid waste and deserted. The mammoth loss resulting from the outbreak and the chaos into which it plunged international business became the full dosage of the accompanying woes and a reference point.

⁵² There are other types, H5 and H5N2 but H5N1 is the commonest.

spread. Despite all the measures, the virus managed to sneak to other places up to and including West Africa where health officials of affected countries had a hard battle. Another scourge, the swine flu hit the scene sometime in early 2009 and wrought confusion in several places before it was brought under control.

Thus, while the world groans under the excruciating pains of AIDS and is battling to contain its spread, several similarly devastating scourges made their incursions from the side lanes. What do we say of the ones like Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), caused by a previously unrecognised virus, first broke out in two regions of China around March of 2003 and, within some days; it had left many people dead? While AIDS spreads only through sexual and blood-to-blood contact with an infected patient, SARS employs loose contacts to distribute its killer virus. The crisis of "*pestilences . . . in divers places*" in our generation may only be comprehended in the light of satanic innovations that account for their debuting and exploits.

Unlike the current ravaging of COVID-19 which had shut down the nations and their economies, it should be remarked that the world has so far managed these outbreaks by whatever measures it adopts whenever they surface most of the time by travelling restrictions and isolation of affected areas among others. Yet an honest answer to the question of how the situation has come to what it is since the last century will only be found in the prophecy about "*pestilences . . . in divers places*". It will take nothing short of a grossly damaged sensibility if not a reprobate intellect to disconnect the developments on health platforms from the predictions of Jesus Christ. We have seen how the listed outbreaks climbed to the surface on the back of each other and in such a succession that whenever the world thinks it has seen the last of a particular syndrome, another one is hibernating and waiting to burst the balloon of our celebration.

We will not be able to explore in detail the revolt of nature and violent wind that left about 125,000 dead in a particular year and

another 10,000 people who were killed in a cyclone with over a million people displaced! The ten most devastating hurricanes to hit the United States of America are reported to have occurred within the last century alone⁵³. A news medium that trailed one of the incidents in Galveston, Texas reported, “. . . the story of the September 08, 1900 hurricane could never be truly written. For many, no words could ever be spoken again about the deadly hurricane that reshaped the Gulf coast forever”.

The situation with earthquakes and earth tremors smears another worrisome trend. The deadliest ever earthquake in Shansi, China on January 23 1556 claimed 830,000 people and that may be said to have opened the floodgate of such disasters ordained to fulfil the prophecy of the end time by Jesus. The one on December 28, 1908 in Messina, Italy wiped away close to 100,000 people and another one in China again on 27 July 1976 claimed about 655,000 lives. There were those of Kobe in Japan on January 17, 1995 and in Colombia shortly after that cannot be erased from memories in haste. Turkey in August 1999, south-eastern Iraq on December 26 2003, India, Mexico, USA, El Salvador, Taiwan and Costa Rica are some of the places that have experienced major earthquakes that made loud news.

On December 2004, tsunamis propelled by an earthquake in the bed of the Indian Ocean swept through about eleven coastal nations, mostly in South-eastern Asia and brought about deaths estimated at over 300,000 to rank as the worst of such disasters in recent times. Great treasures were swept into the pathway of the sea, millions were displaced and colossal destruction that could only be estimated and not accounted for accompanied the event. In 2010, it came to the turn of Haiti to hit the news when an estimated 250,000 perished, 300,000 people were injured and 5,000,000 people were displaced in an earthquake with sour stories. That was at a very difficult time when

⁵³ Another one include Hurricane *Katrina* which hit the New Orleans region of the US, Hurricane *Rita* that devastated Texas, also in US and also Mexico, Hurricane *Wilma*, said to be most devastating of its type in the places it affected, were three of the 12 hurricanes of the season to hit the US and other American coastal regions.

70% of the citizens were said to be living below the poverty lines.

No one needs a degree in statistics to highlight the worrisome frequency of these tragedies as the day of the Lord draws in. For instance, from 526 AD up to the year 1900 AD, a period of 1,374 years, the world had only 24 earthquakes on its records. But in 100 years from 1901 to the year 2000, there were at least 117 earthquakes, with 76 of them in the last 30 years alone of the century, including the ones in El-Salvador and West India. When the National Earthquake Information Centre recorded 82 significant earthquakes during the year 2002 alone, 13 of which were said to be serious, it was as if we have had the worst⁵⁴. There was a long-term average of about 10,000 global earthquake deaths per year but that has now been rubbished by such catastrophic events of the recent time, especially since 2004.

In another event that caught the world by surprise, on the evening of 26 August 1986, Lake Nyos in Cameroon emitted a dangerous gas without any warning and poisoned the air. Before medical experts could gather to unravel what was going on, it had left about 1,700 people dead. What makes the incident more baffling was that, with all the volcanic eruption hypotheses to explain the event to date, experts could only describe the event as “rare natural disasters... complex, little understood and difficult to study...”. A media quoting the United Nations sources on the trend of tragedies in our days remarked: “cyclones, earthquakes and hurricanes around the world made 2008 one of the worst years for natural disasters so far in this decade where at least 235,816 people were killed in 321 different disasters”

PERSECUTIONS OF THE BELIEVERS

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye

⁵⁴ Within seven last days of the month of February 2010, 258 earthquakes, including 81 major aftershocks that trailed a major one in Chile, were reported. The major ones among them include the ones of Ecuador on 28th, Argentina 27th, Afghanistan 27th, Philippines 26th, Japan/Ryukyu Islands 26th, Guatemala 23rd, Haiti 23rd, Iran 23rd, Tonga 22nd China (Mainland) 26th and another one in the regions of Xizang, Yunnan on 27th.

shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.
(Matthew 24v9, 10)

Persecution to the point of death is a price that many Christians of all ages have paid for their faith. The quiet mandate of the Church in the world has constructed a cross for it by which it becomes the prime target of the prince of darkness to whom nearly all the political powers, thrones and authorities of the present world are subordinated. The fact is that the persecution of the Church and the slaughtering of her members have promoted their evil unity far more than can be traced to any other cause in history. Today, the relative freedom of worship enjoyed by many in the West and other stable regions of Africa may pull a trick on us to undermine the fact that there are many places where the name of Jesus is still an anathema.

A direct fulfilment of this prophecy of Jesus in our generation and that which has set the stage for other places is the horrendous persecutions of Christians in the Soviet Union and some regimes of the old Eastern Europe. Sometime in the early 1980s, I watched a movie titled *The Footmen* which is much more like a documentary. It reeled out upsetting scenes, gruesome torture and barbaric executions of the Christians by agents of those regimes, particularly in the Soviet Union. While the film was showing, I relieved my discomfort with the fact that I was watching a movie which is usually coated with gimmicks that sometimes bear no semblance to reality. But that relief spilt out when the narrator of the programme informed that those scenes were the candid experience of Christians in the communist enclaves and not just a fiction work that the audience had taken them for.

Moreover, the persecution of the Soviet Union paired with other events to support an idea of being either the precise event foretold by the Lord Jesus or a herald of wider fulfilment of it as we witness in many places today. The idea is not lacking in foundation. First, the

persecution in the Soviet Union till today remains one of the worst in the history of the Church both in its extent and intensity. It began in the heart of the Union and gradually spread to other countries in Eastern Europe. For the second and more important reason, its launching coincided with the fulfilment of other signs of the end time on the global platform. Two of the most significant developments associated with the period were World War II and the rebirth of the nation of Israel which resulted directly from it.

Also, it will be perfect to establish a link between the persecution and adjoining developments in the gospel scenes in other places and regions of the world. Surveying the local scene, those were periods, beginning from July 1930, when the Church in western Nigeria experienced great revivals to provoke bitter vexation of hell and set her on a collision course with unbelieving local rulers. Revival fire was ignited at Oke-Ooye in Ilesha, Nigeria and later swept through entire West Africa and beyond. This was during a movement in which Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola, the founder of Christ Apostolic Church was mightily used by God. Though the revival and severe persecution of the members of the Church that trailed it did not attract global attention like the world wars and the believers' persecution of the Soviet Union⁵⁵, it seems to be more than a coincidence that these whole events fused neatly into the same time bracket.

While the news of events in the faraway Soviet Union spread through the media of the day, we give no less credence to the events on the local scenes in the same period. Thus, those who ignited the Pentecostal fire in Nigeria during that period had bitter tales to share about how hell was let loose on them. On occasions, I was privileged to hear stories that broke the heart of one of those directly involved in

⁵⁵ The event of Joseph Babalola's revival was also phenomenal enough to attract global attention but for the primitive and limited reach of Nigeria's media of the period. We will recall that it was not until 1959, nearly 30 years after the great reawakening, that WNTV which is the first TV station in Africa was established by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the then Premier of Western Nigeria.

the movement who had waded through the terrors unleashed upon the Christians of their days. Like the dregs of the society they were taken to be, they suffered cruel hatred and were subjected to the worst ordeal including denial of their share in a communal heritage. On several occasions they were arrested and paraded like criminals on false accusations and following which they were publicly assaulted at the fad and fancy of hostile local kings and their chiefs.

Even with the intervention of the colonial administration which was then their only human shield from brutal executions, they were chased far away from the towns to forbidden forests to pitch their tents. That of course was in expectation that the spirits that were thought to inhabit those places would strike them with death blows they were shielded from in the physical. The significance of this narrative to our discourse was the comfort that the believers of those days received from the leaders of their movement that their persecution was a fulfilment of the prophecy of believers' persecutions that would herald the Second Coming of Jesus. It is therefore a fact to which records will abundantly testify that before, during and even since that time up till now, Christians have continued to have it raw in many places. In extreme instances, the total extermination of their generation has come to define the agenda of the powers that rule the land.

A few of the websites⁵⁶ dedicated to the defence of persecuted Christians around the world continue to raise their alarms on the plight of Christians in several places and amplify their groanings to the wider world. There are cases too numerous to mention of harassment, intimidation, brutal killings and depravity being meted out to the members of the Church in several places. A media house reported, sometime in 1999, how about four hundred Christians were executed in one country in one particular year. In the usual pattern, the

⁵⁶ The foremost of these are the Voice of Martyr hosted by www.persecution.com and www.prisoneralert.com that gathers and disseminate information on the distress of the Church in many parts of the world today.

authorities would charge them for one crime or the other to shield their grouse against the faith of the Christians from the international community. Now, it is no longer news that countries like China, North Korea, Burma, Russia, Vietnam, Belarus, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq continue to exhale deep-seated cruelty against Christians in their midst.

A prison alert ministry of Persecution.Com reported around August 2005 that at least 10% of the entire Christian population of a particular nation were serving an average of 15-year jail term. It also showed in particular how thousands of South China Church members were pining away in prisons with a number of them serving a life sentence. Around mid-2011, one international interfaith conference held in Hungary revealed that 105,000 Christians are being killed every year simply because of their faith. This was supported by the submission of Massimo Introvigne, a representative of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on *Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians*. He also “added that these figures did not include the victims of civil wars, or wars between nations, but only the people put to death because they are Christians”⁵⁷.

There are revelations about Christians who are incarcerated for the entirety of their primes and many others who do not come out alive to tell their stories in full. Some of those countries are known to stick to atheism as an official tenet that forbids the open practice of any religion. A woman journalist once protested that it is like the mainstream media have united their voices to bury several shocking stories that relate to the persecution of Christians in several places. She had described the hostility against Christians in many such places as “an unrecognised battle costing thousands of lives” citing particularly how Christians are being killed in the Islamic world because of their

⁵⁷ Source: Christian Post, June 08, 2011 Edition.

religion. To the concerned woman, “. . . it is a rising genocide that ought to provoke global alarm” with loud trends of this making news in places like Somalia, Saudi Arabia, the Gaza Strip and other places.

Those who are in the front row of prayer and advocacy for the bleeding churches will recall how common it is these days to receive prayer alerts about a group of Christians or individuals, some of them already condemned and awaiting execution. Many of the countries involved are known to preach and practice freedom of religion for them to be seen as respected members of the international community who subscribe to and are upholding the human rights charter. At the same time, the bitter lot of the Christians in their lands has continued to expose their hypocrisy by which whatever they have annotated in their constitution in this respect is never to be seen as being more than mere decoration. At times when the noise of the human rights vanguards rose above the din of suppressed media, they reluctantly cave in and then subject all religious activities to strict control and undue interference of the state. As will be expected, it is only the Christians that are daring to step out of the limits to pay dearly for it.

While countries like China and North Korea hide behind the tenets of communism to cage the Church, it is the machinery of the Islamic militia that is working hard to wipe out Christians and their religion from places like Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan and several other Muslim countries where the activities of the militants are either uncensored or even enjoy the supports of the state⁵⁸. There were extreme cases of brutality where pregnant Christian women were ripped open with a knife and unborn babies smashed against concrete pillars. In Indonesia *jihad* and Egypt at some point in time, many Christians lost their lives to the explosion of bombs that were planted often in the surroundings of church buildings⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ Facts relating to many local states in the north of Nigeria, particularly in the North East exhibit this pattern with the conniving of many in authority that should check the trend.

⁵⁹ This happened in Indonesia on the eve of 2000 Christmas when 15 innocent people

At other times, it is the Buddhists of Sri Lanka or the Hindu extremists of India with the support of the states or local authorities that are taking up arms to wipe out the Church⁶⁰. It has since become very dangerous to evangelise in many places nowadays owing to the ever-rising tempo of religious intolerance. Stories have been told of how several men of God were subjected to torture and bitter ordeals in fulfilment of Jesus' prediction. Watchman Nee died in jail in 1972 after spending 20 years behind the bar. A Romanian pastor, Richard Wurmbbrandt spent 14 years in prison and came out with tales of brutality, buttressed by bruises on his body. Whenever he had the floor to narrate his ordeals in the 1970s, he would undress before his audience to exhibit scars of wounds inflicted on him during his years in prison. His experience gave birth to the Voice of Martyr, earlier referenced in a footnote, to champion the cause of the persecuted Church worldwide. As the world draws to a close and is busy preparing the stage for its maximum ruler, the true brides of Christ will yet be identified as the 'misfits' and clogs in its path of fast-moving wheels of 'progress' that must be shoved aside.

FALSE CHRISTS AND FALSE PROPHETS

*And **many** false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive **many**. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24v11, 24)*

were sent to their graves. Also, 22 people lost their lives and tens others sustained severe injuries on the eve of year 2011 in Egypt.

⁶⁰ We do not lose the sight of the fact that not all reported cases of persecution and conflicts on religious grounds are targeted only against the Body of Christ. There are 'persecutions' which have nothing to do with the cause of the cross but have everything to do with the clash of interests that uses religion only as a cover up. At least we have example of this in the Northern Ireland that has witnessed violent clashes between Protestants and Roman Catholics mainly in the name of religious difference, clashes that are rooted more in political and economic discontentment than in religious causes.

Jesus warned that *many* false christs and “*many false prophets*” will rise, “. . . and shall deceive *many*”. Our point of emphasis here will not be different from the one by which He applied the word *many* to signal how the combined team of these fraudsters will work as agents of Satan to sweep *many* into his trench of destruction. As earlier saw, this must have informed the reason for opening His discourse on the entire subject of the end with a counsel that we should “*take heed that no one deceive you . . .*” (Matthew 24v4). It also explains why the majority of those who would lead millions astray on the theatre of religion would masquerade as churches and hide under the banner of the name of Jesus. There is therefore no way by which the invasion of the pulpits by this band of “*false prophets*” as we have it today will be detached from the predictions of Jesus without injury to conscience.

As earlier seen, there was a partial fulfilment of the prophecy of false christs among the Jews during their turbulent years that led to the destruction of the temple when some self-appointed leaders rose to champion the political cause of the nation. As we sweep that episode into the can of history, we face the application of the same prophecy in our days. For a start, predictions about false prophets will hold any meaning to only those who are or are supposed to be familiar with the title and functions of a prophet as one who speaks in the name of God, just as a similar warning about false christs assumes both the reality and awareness of one true Christ.

It may then be seen how such warnings are meant to appeal more to the members of the Church than to any other group of people. The entire scenario is premised on the fact that we cannot talk about a counterfeit if there are no originals and proper means to identify them. It is what we know about Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God and all His true servants throughout the ages that has placed us in a position to recognise the false claims of false christs and false prophets. It will then be normal, particularly in many nations around the world where Christianity has spread its wings to see people and communities both within and outside the Church that can attest to the rising of fake

pastors in fulfilment of these predictions.

The story everywhere paints the same picture of people that have stormed the scene and claimed to be Jesus of their domains. A Christian news medium reported about two decades ago that "... there's been a boom in false messiahs. The number of self-appointed religious saviours has never been greater than today when more than 1,500 people claim to be an incarnation of Jesus Christ". The fact is that the mere passage of time has always exposed their deception and wasted them away from the centre of their well-garnished theatres. By and large, in the same manner by which the news of their advent had spread, we always hear about how a person who posed to be the 'author and giver' of life has died, just like ordinary mortals.

Another class of deceivers did not adopt the name of Jesus directly but lay claim to His spirituality, status and power. Following their romance with some demons through some dirty rituals, they establish places of worship and attract worshippers whom they bamboozle with strange anointing. Many of those who reject the truth and simplicity of the gospel have ended up in their nets only to have their lives subjected to irredeemable ruins. There are many such men around who were equipped from the pit of hell with all attractions that blind seekers are searching for, including the power to do fake miracles to spellbind their victims.

One of them hit the airwaves a few years back following which warnings were sounded by a section of the Church especially when he openly claimed that he was "the Second Coming of the Messiah and that Jesus Christ failed to complete the mission God sent him to do" which was "to marry and create perfect children". He was reported to have told his followers that he and his second wife were the "True Parents" of a new spiritual lineage born without original sin. Despite the open falsehood he propagated, the man attracted a large following. In pursuit of fake recognition and for paltry gifts he doled out to some gospel preachers, a section of the Christian forum was said to have

rallied around him to endorse his abrasive theology.

All these place a duty on you to check if you have embraced falsehood and bargained your soul with another 'Jesus' who is different from the One revealed to us through the pages of the Holy Bible. If you have reasons to suspect, you must prayerfully sever the tie before it drags you too far. I agree that this will not be an ordinary feat because Satan who holds people in bondage is never kind enough to let them off his hook on a bed of roses. At the same time, people must appreciate the worth of their souls and understand that there can be no alternative to fighting their way out of whatever bondage there may be. The only Jesus who can secure a place for anyone in the kingdom of His holy Father is the One who came to "*... save His people from their sins*" (Matthew 1v21) to make them fit for the glorious end.

Coming specifically to the case of false prophets, the gospel platform is bastardised by a horde of satanic agents who now pose as pastors and are floating churches here and there, just like typical business enterprises. Those on the dark side of the crucial divide have perfected their strategy to fasten the gaze of people on vanities and shallow pursuits of life. Just as Matthew Henry noted; "the colour of the greatest good is often the cover of the greatest evil". Sprawling worship centres and heavy publicity have served as a cover-up for bizarre rituals perpetrated in the dark vestries of those churches. Today you find many people who have registered their failures in various human endeavours, including even the pursuit of basic education but who have now received a 'call' into the ministry. By the time you examine their claims, you find nothing to the call other than the discovery of green pastures in miracle exploits with satanic means.

The fact of today is that false prophets live big on the patronage of those who have substituted the so-called prophets of God for the God of the prophets. The result of that attraction is that many genuine children of the devil have exchanged their costumes of black magic for cassocks to become miracle workers and deliverance ministers. It is of

little surprise then that apart from deadly craving for ‘bread and butter’, for mundane things of the moment and desperate search for a solution to whatever they have ill-defined as problems; their followers know very little to nothing about the rudiments of Christianity. Holy living as befitting the representatives of the kingdom and in pursuit of glorious eternity when the world will be no more is out of the curriculum of blind followers who queue religiously behind blind leaders.

Away from the fake pastors who furnish their places of worship with all the attractions and employ modern gimmicks to captivate their audience, there are illiterate prophets who are not as cultured. They operate on the crude end of the chain, compete with and employ the means, materials and methods of herbalists and metaphysicians to proffer solutions. They have a ready prescription for nearly every kind of problem that involves the use of strange stuff⁶¹ to be conjured with similarly strange processes. The way of holiness, fervent prayers and patient expectation for answers from God as a solution to all problems are foreign to them. They read meanings to and place undue emphasis on nearly every prophetic or symbolic instruction recorded in the Bible without recourse to the Holy Spirit that moved the holy prophets in the Bible to issue such pristine directives.

Those who operate at the other end among them still perform blood sacrifices, invoke spells and incantations and are involved in extremely dirty rituals while the name of Jesus they still call is only a cover-up. Smokes of incense burning have inflicted irreparable damage to the eyes that should have been used to consult the Bible while those among them who still manage to see are glued to forbidden books from the depth of the pit. Popular among such books are the so-called *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* with spurious authorship that cannot be traced either to Moses or the God he served. In defence of errors, the prophets often cite instances of incense burning from Leviticus and a portion of the book of Revelation to the flagrant neglect of all that

⁶¹ These are fetish or occult materials (known as ‘*lekuleja*’ in Yoruba parlance).

Jesus and the Church He founded at Pentecost did as recorded in the Gospels, the Acts of Apostles and several epistles where no doctrine in support of such ritual can be established.

The only aspect of the life of Jesus Christ and His huge history that appeals to the curiosity of such prophets is to 'research' into whatever He was doing to acquire power during His silent years. Their 'findings' are then used to propound theories that the Bible we have now has lost 'many precious materials' during compilations and will need such extra insights to make it work. As an attestation to their claims, whenever associated demons are conjured with prescribed rituals, miracles follow. It is a sad truth, however, that a generation that has confined its Bible to the shelf will never be able to raise questions about the source of the wonders they behold and celebrate with applause.

Large-scale swindling and bloody crimes in the name of religion that we continue to witness attest to how people have failed to learn from history. Reverend Jim Jones led members of his People's Temple congregation into solitude, far away from the glimpse of relations and friends. At last, his dark mandate prevailed when he coaxed 914 of them into a suicide binge in an incident that has become popularly known as Guyana Tragedy. In October 1993, over fifty members of hill tribe villagers in Vietnam were led by a physically blind man, Ca Van Liem, to their graves under the ruse of religion.

A similar incident resulted in the death of about the same number of people in the Solar Temple movement in Switzerland. In March 1997, members of the Heaven's Gate movement in San Diego poisoned themselves after they were made to believe that Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) would wake them up at the gate of heaven. An addition to the list of horror involved the Restoration of the Ten Commandments movement in Uganda where over nine hundred members of the church were swept into mass suicide.

From all we have come to know, there are sufficient criteria not only to identify but to isolate all obnoxious doctrines and practices of

the sects which are now popularly classed as dangerous religious groups (DRG). To the extent that everyone is responsible for whatever he believes, honest efforts at discovering the truth will highlight something uncanny about false ministers or their movement that cannot be sustained in the light of open scriptures. Such a thing does not necessarily have to be altogether negative, just as Satan is not stupid enough to expose himself cheaply to those whose understanding of the Bible is left in limbo. It may even be undue emphasis on a good doctrine of the Bible, like a teaching on material prosperity which is firmly rooted in the scriptures as being the portion of the believers in this world and as God may choose to apportion it.

Whenever any doctrine is isolated from other curricula of the Church that deserves equal emphasis like patience, faith, endurance and even suffering in our walk with God, there will be grave danger. A glance at the posters for advertisements of popular programmes which have become an environmental nuisance to the publicity scenes of our urban centres will tell you nearly everything there is about the mandate of many of such ministers. They beckon to men and women of our time, to the wayfarers who may now have grown weary of waiting and who will no longer mind having it quick and hot from whatever source. How then do we expect such pastors to resist the temptation of dabbling into the esoteric either to secure or sustain miracle-working capability since that is the only thing that accounts for their success in the ministry and relevance in society?

The distraction sponsored by these fake ministers in the Body of Christ is not only a major tragedy of our days; it will be intensified as the curtains of time draws to a close. The counsel is that once suspicion of dirty dealing floats to the surface about a minister or any aspect of his ministry; that may be a warning signal to those who appreciate the worth of their souls. Jesus warned that we should “. . . *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*”. That the *wolves* who parade many church altars today will employ every means to conceal their real identity should

never be a surprise to anyone. The warnings of Jesus rest on the assumption of a sense of duty we owe ourselves and the fact that we have whatever it takes to heed them. Therefore, grounded on the truth of the gospel, we are to test and expose them and then resist their ploy. Our Lord left us with a detective formula which is yet to fail. “. . . *By their fruits ye shall know them . . .*” (Matthew 7v20).

SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS

. . . many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (Daniel 12v4)

The context of the above prophecy of Prophet Daniel informs clearly as to the time of the human era under reference, a time of the end that falls neatly within the focus of our discussion (Daniel 12v9). While all the signs of the end are leaving negative impacts upon our world, this prophecy beams a ray of light from the side mirror of our passage through a very dark tunnel. Its reference outside our main text is informed by its relevance and direct application to our generation. The prophecy of increased knowledge is that which has contributed something visible to every field of human endeavour and impacted nearly everyone on the planet earth as we may all see today.

Technology has been making giant strides to redefine our lives in many ways that those who are detached from the forefront of its development may imagine. The foundations of the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries have bequeathed us a new world with its dumbfounding discoveries which have placed our generation on the fastest lane in pursuit of its endeavours. Means of travel have witnessed a boost by which it is now possible for a man to circumvent the entire world in a matter of hours. Trips to space by technologically advanced nations in the quest for the expansion of domains have defined other areas of intensive competition. News and information in any form one may choose to have them can now reach

the remotest parts of the earth in a matter of seconds. Apart from the need to exercise his physical body to keep in shape, man has quietly transferred almost everything he needs to think about or do to secure maximum comfort in his realm to the machines.

Only social resistance or divine inhibitions may have been standing between man and his efforts at making another man with amazing capabilities while we are not unaware of how ways are constantly being explored to beat around the barriers. The herald of test tube babies, scientific projects of cloning of man and beast that are now helping in the production of ‘designer babies’ and human-animal hybrids projects, most of which were trailed by hot protests and controversy are steady moves in this direction. Trans-humanists are exploring the full benefits of biotechnology and genetic engineering to alter basic constituents of man’s inherent composition and produce super beings that will not only dwarf man as he is known today but will be to its people “what man today is to chimpanzee”. They believe “that the human species in its current form does not represent the end of our development but rather a comparatively early phase”. Another science media recently reported something about synthetic biology said to be “taking genetic engineering to the extreme” to make life in the laboratory, and just from scratch. The “novel organisms will fight disease, create alternative fuels or build living computers.”

The computer now does most of the thinking while the robot supplies the manual labour of technology-driven factories to implement programmed instructions. Microprocessors are becoming smaller, cheaper and they come with amazing aptitudes. You can judge this even from the versatility of multipurpose use of the handsets that are now commonplace. Computer experts several decades back talked about ‘quantum computing’ said to be unbelievably better and faster than what has so far been known in the field of computer and information processing. According to a source⁶² “... quantum

⁶² An international IT newsmagazine

computers will digest enormous heaps of data that present-day computers couldn't handle in a billion years".

Many in the urban centres of activities have their computers now as the ones they can access, do their work and visit their favourite websites by just placing their finger whenever a password or username is required, without the hassles of having to memorise or remember your secret codes. A news media reported about "a computer controlled by the power of thought alone" being then "unveiled at a trade IT fair in Germany. It could provide a way for paralysed patients to operate computers or amputees to operate electronically controlled artificial limbs". A pill-sized brain chip was developed to allow a quadriplegic to check e-mail and play computer games with thoughts.

In 2007, another device was unveiled by an electronic giant company in Japan by which someone can control electronic devices without the person lifting a finger. The device only needs to read brain activity and take instructions from there. The brain-machine interface is said to analyse slight changes in the brain's blood flow and translates the motion into electric signals. Also developed by a team of world-leading neuroscientists, there are now brain scanners that "can read people's intentions", assuming that this does not have esoteric content.

Crazy developments in the field of technology today will have to be left to the imagination of us who read or write about them but who lack the grasp of what they represent in the present or what they prospect for the near future. Through my training, I am not anywhere close to the classroom of science as a discipline by which all the information I struggle to share here may not be anything more than scratching the peripherals.

While a non-scientific person may suspect elements of witchcraft in some of the developments⁶³, we dare not shut the eyes to a pure

⁶³ The scientific world has not totally rubbished the idea of **pseudoscience** which according to Wikipedia, "...is a claim, belief, or practice which is presented as scientific, but does not adhere to a valid scientific method, lacks supporting evidence or plausibility, cannot be

technological possibility of these unbelievable discoveries in fulfilment of the prophecy of Daniel about the end of time. Technology innovation was confirmed to be growing exponentially, doubling every five years⁶⁴ and that was about two decades ago. In many cases, new products become obsolete before they get to the market. Even the amazing gist I am trying to share here which was among the initial drafts of this work penned down over two and a half decades ago must now be out of tune! Similarly, man has reaped the fruits of technological breakthroughs in agriculture, food processing, housing and construction, health and medicines and other fields with more remarkable things that are waiting to emerge from the laboratories.

The delightful stunt of science has its very dark side as we may see in the design and manufacturing of destructive weapons of warfare using the same scientific discoveries by which, should God permit, it will require no more than someone pressing a few buttons somewhere to wipe out the entire realms of existence today. A recent report citing the genuine concern of the international community on the ubiquity of materials for the production of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) informed us that "...the same science that may cure some of our worst diseases could create the world's most frightening weapons", including the manufacture and future deployment of deadly weapons categorised as "invisible". They include geophysical weapons, based essentially on "the manipulation of processes that occur in the earth's crust, and its liquid and gaseous mantle" and also laser or quantum generator, which is "a device that produces a narrow powerful beam of light by exciting atoms" to disrupt the function of sensitive military weapons and inflict permanent damage on man.

reliably tested, or otherwise lacks scientific status". Indeed, I have personally heard about and learnt of some so-called scientific inventions that raise dusts and smokes about their origin or real powers behind them.

⁶⁴ This was estimated to be in every eight years around year 2000.

Chapter Five

A GENERATION ON THE EDGE

Our voyage has progressed fast and conveyed us to the edge of eternity. The signs have spoken and are speaking very loudly and they have driven us beyond a bargaining point. Whoever or whatever will want to tell us about rewinding the hand of the clock or fueling our expectation of better and greater tomorrow may only be a merchant of falsehood. The only exception is where God has an agenda to pursue. Otherwise, the world as we know it will not remain the same again as there is no room for any form of self-deception.

THE RAGING STORMS

With what we see and hear from various parts of the world, it should be very clear that we are sitting on a time bomb. Local and international news media now devote a substantial portion of their air time and pages to the analysis of chaos that erupts in different places, one after the other. Also for those who care to listen, there are always explanations to downplay the events on the ground that the population has exploded, social frictions have escalated and man is becoming more daring than ever. But such an explanation will have missed vital

contents. It will amount to a reprobate stance to regard the frequency of tragedies, the magnitude of destructions, bizarre occurrences and widespread disasters in our days as being within a trend that can be ignored.

Media organisations now always have their warehouses filled with gory news of tragedies they convert to hot-selling stuff to the curious audience through various means among which the internet has become the most potent. Nearly most of the local and international media have etched catchy slogans to compete for and arrest the attention of their audience. The popular slogan in the media world is that ‘*bad* news is a *good* news’ for their profession. This is why phrases like, for example, “be the first to know . . .” and “. . . still the first choice for viewers during crisis” now define an catching slogans in their competitive bids to outdo one another. Also as a complement, the news headlines that buttress the appeals border mainly on ritual killings, destructions, wars, assassinations, abductions and kidnapping.

Political revolts in many places have informed or necessitated brutal measures by threatened governments to contain them and increase the volume of blood flow. One may just imagine the pitiable sight of women and children in places that have been upturned by armed conflicts. Terrorism under whatever guise and threats of nuclear desolation are developments that can alter the course of events and permanently reshape history overnight⁶⁵, to talk less about an increase in the revolt of nature to which our era has been playing reluctant host.

The persistent cry of relief agencies worldwide is about their inability to cope with the people in various refugee camps whose lives have been touched, either by manmade or natural disasters. Oxfam, a British humanitarian organisation revealed at a time that “the number

⁶⁵ The event of 9/11 alone has brought about far reaching changes in formulation and implementation of policies by the West, at least in the areas of security and how to relate with the outside world. It also redefined the new threats to its civilisation and how to combat them, even before the euphoria of its victory in the Cold War has thinned down.

of natural disasters around the world has increased by more than four times in the last 20 years". Without being a prophet of doom, anyone can now predict how the best diplomacy will fail, how peace talks and initiatives will collapse and how, in the ultimate, wars will break out. The subsisting clash of ideas between the east; represented by Russia, China, North Korea, Iran and others, and the west as championed by the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France and the struggle of religions for domination are things that will not abate. The truth is that powers that foment chaos are beyond the comprehension of the most informed social analysis, international relations expertise or the press. Such powers will not shed a drop of sweat to bring the ominous prophecies to pass while the best explanation that the most enlightened press crew will coin around them will never be more than a dummy.

NO SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE

So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. (Luke 21v31)

The signs that were predicted centuries ago together with the events that are fulfilment them today are the smoke. The future events they both point the way to are the fire. No common sense will contend that there must be fire, however flickering it may be, to produce smoke. When Jesus stood on Mount Olive and rolled out His predictions of the events that will portend the end of our world, only His disciples and close associates who appreciated His divinity would take Him for real. To expect the fulfilment of the prophecies the way they are making the news today must have transcended the imagination of even the most pious and spiritually enlightened disciple of that era. However, if the most hardened sceptic who lived in the days of Jesus were to be sent back to the earth to see what the world he left behind has become, he would most likely repent in a hurry and spend all his days preaching the Bible.

Take for instance, who on one hand would have imagined that with a small community of around fifty thousand wandering Jews⁶⁶ completely submerged by the Arab population of about ten times in Palestine at the close of the nineteenth century, the Israelis would regain their homeland and dominate the politics and economy of the Middle East as we have it today? On the other hand, who could ever have thought that Ariel Sharon would yield that much to the demand of the Palestinians and the pressures of the international community to a point of unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and the establishment of a moderate political party in Israel to promote peace with arch-rivals? Who would expect that uncompromising hardliner and a no-nonsense war general he was known to be for decades would someday begin to mend and bend in a move that, on the face of it, seemed to put the interests he had laboured hard to defend for decades at risk?

Hamas, the unrepentant and branded militant group that swore to the destruction of Israel, was regarded as an outcast in the political setting of the Middle East for decades. Apart from a few insightful experts, I do not know anyone on the street who did not express shock when the group defeated the Palestinian Liberation Organisation's Fatah to terminate its forty-year grip on Gaza in the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections and secure control over the territory in a development that was described as a political earthquake.

Europe is making frantic efforts to assert its position and influence in response to the beckons of destiny as it seeks more involvements and roles in the affairs of the Middle East. Also, despite the negating thoughts of scholars that prevailed for decades on the subtle rivalry and mutual suspicion of the giant nations, Russia and China are

⁶⁶ The term *Jew* applied to Israeli in the southern kingdom of Israel following the breakup of the country during the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. However, we do not need to bog ourselves down with this restricted use of the term since we know that it has never applied to any other race other than those who are traceable to Jacob, the inheritor of the promises of God pinned down to Abraham and Isaac while I do not have any more reason to sustain the division of the north and south of Israel in the application of the term and reason for this will become clearer in the course of the work.

narrowing the dividing gulfs to pitch on the side of Palestinians and Iran for a piece of the action in the volatile region prophetically touted to play host to major events of the future.

These are lucid examples of how all prophecies will be fulfilled by whatever and whoever may be mandated to play a role. It is this ability of God to have His way that prompted a prophet to declare:

Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure' (Isaiah 46v8-10)

It is only as we choose to see that we label the celebrations of fortunes and tears of tragedies in the world either as naturally ordained or as man-made events. Those who scratch beyond the surface see and know better. I once saw a massive piece of artwork in a traffic control office depicting wreckages of vehicles involved in multiple accidents with many corpses lying by the roadsides. A caption was written beneath the drawing, apparently to caution people against dangerous driving, that “it is not bad luck; it is bad driving”. Yet some such incidents, if not most of them, involve a combination of bad luck and bad driving while most of the time, the latter is only an accessory of the former because of ‘the powers behind’ factor. It just happens that someone or something will serve as the vehicle by which impalpable forces will register their impacts on the physical realm.

The theory here establishes a strong link between all we see today and the prophecies that had gone forth to conjure them into being. This is why it is very possible for tragedies to still strike, and they will continue to, even with the best of precaution and care and in circumstances for which no explanations will ever be sufficient. Also nearly all of the time, and because of the ability of such powers to disguise, there will always be a logically sound explanation for whatever

has gone right or wrong, if only to make man believe he is in full control or to further darken his spiritual sensitivity. With this, it is easy for us to see why peace deals will fail, why violence will erupt, why terrorists will yet strike their worse blows, why rebels and insurgents will rear their heads, and much more even though all precautions are taken and every effort or machinery is geared to the contrary.

Therefore, all prophecies, whether good or bad, will be fulfilled, as they certainly must. But somebody, something and somehow will have to serve as a link between the physical and spiritual realms. This is how it will still be possible for anyone who chooses a pathway of unbelief to discount the fact of the fulfilment of prophecies to be able to disconnect them from what we are seeing. But, whatever opinion anyone may hold, the word of God is alive and active and will prevail in the ultimate. It also confirms that all other events which are prophetically lined up to link our present days with the future until every plan of God is fulfilled over His creation will find their places in the same manner and accuracy as the ones we are witnessing today.

SWINGING WITHIN THE RANGE

The destruction that man fears most has indeed crawled to the tip of his fingers. Today, as earlier stated, nothing is required more than just pressing a few buttons to bring instant desolation to his world! The world staggered to this brink during the scariest moment of the faceoff between the USSR and the USA in Cuba in October 1962. For thirteen of those days, the survival of the earth perched precariously on the tread of delicate diplomacy of mutual suspicion by the two superpowers. Comments of a nuclear foundation initiative captured the grave danger that nuclear science has brought to mankind with specific reference to that incident:

The Cuban Missile Crisis stands today as a constant reminder of the immense danger that is ever present in the Nuclear Age. Subsequent

meetings among key decision makers in the Cuban Missile Crisis have shown how many misperceptions there were during the tense period of the crisis, and how fortunate the world was to have escaped a dreadful nuclear holocaust between the two “superpower” states.

That was when each of the tussling powers had amassed nuclear arsenals that could destroy the entire world many times over. For some moments of October 27, 1962 which was the peak of the tension, Anatoly Gribkov, Soviet General and Chief of Army Operations said “. . . nuclear catastrophe was hanging by a thread, and we weren’t counting days or hours, but minutes”. Aside from that date, there were secret manoeuvrings during the tense years that produced signals from one side which could have been misinterpreted by the other to pull the trigger that would end it all for planet earth. The way the world has managed to wriggle out of such moments is anchored on facts to which no mortal can boast of explanations.

Even now that the arms race continues to rise to a new peak⁶⁷ and tension between the east and the west is rearing new heads, even now that the Middle East retains its frying pan posture with Iran and its nuclear project, even now with the Russian invasion of Ukraine and what the world suspects may be the clandestine aim of this belligerent giant, the fear is well-founded that man will ultimately destroy himself, and this may be any moment from now. The conviction of nuclear experts is that all the deterrence that rivalry in weapons accumulation has achieved for man is no more than a transient measure while the question of nuclear war has gone beyond a matter of ‘whether or not’ to that of ‘when and how’. Therefore, those who ignore the Bible at a time like this have every cause to lose their sleep especially as the threat

⁶⁷ In early 2000s, US Air Force reported its invention of 11 tons GBU-43/B device, tagged *Mother of all Bomb* (MOAB) as the most destructive nuclear device ever. This, among other things, has only triggered the response of Russia Air Force which claimed to have superseded that feat with its 44 tons bomb tagged the *Father of all Bomb*. These are all coming at a time when the world thought it was overcoming the madness of arms race.

of intended or accidental nuclear war⁶⁸ continues to loom large

The Bible offers the only source of comfort that addresses the anxiety of these moments and whoever has chosen to believe or snub the hope it dangles will not matter. Our world, hostile as its people may have become, wobbling as its politics and diplomacy may have degenerated and sophisticated as its arsenals may have grown, lacks the mandate to end it all by itself. This is why no Christian should ever be alarmed by the fear that man will destroy his world someday as this is contrary to what was ordained by the Author of prophecy. The Bible did not just tell us how the world came to be, it also informs us about how it will end. Its revelations on evolving issues and the pictures of horror they may paint cannot be sidestepped. God built the earth on a foundation that no arsenal of any nation can access. Psalm 102v25 says *“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands”*. With this and numerous other passages like Isaiah 48v13, Zechariah 12v1 and Hebrews 1v10, I confidently wave a banner of soft-pedalling before we swing out of range.

Yet it must be emphatically stated that my soft-pedalling is not and should never be construed as back-pedalling on the imminence of the end. The revelations of Jesus concerning these days were intended to help us distinguish between the signs of the end and the end of the signs that will usher in all the events that the signs were given to herald. We can arm ourselves with this and discount the threats of nuclear desolation staring our generation in the face. The prophecies of the Bible do not rely on America, the diplomatic polarisation of the world, the self-regulation of its politics or the efforts of whatever leading nation(s) that may assign itself the job of policing the international space as if to prevent one from the acquisition of nuclear programme or the other from the development of destructive capabilities.

⁶⁸ In a typical case, Russia misinterpreted the signals of a Norwegian scientific rocket in 1995 as an onset of a U.S. nuclear attack and President Boris Yeltsin was in the process of giving an order to his nuclear base to launch a retaliatory strike before they discovered by some chances that they were only miscalculating.

There is just one more point to note as we close this chapter. Jesus gave us the signs to warn us about the imminence of the end. *“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”* (Matthew 24v6). The same Bible that records the signs that are being fulfilled today is the same that also addresses the subject of the end time in detail. People often say that ‘seeing is believing’, just as they can also pretend not to see what they do not want to believe. The fulfilment of the signs as we are witnessing them today should awaken in us a sensible expectation of the events that are predicted to follow them. This is a logical surmise that has nothing to do with where anyone is standing on the issue of religion or the Bible. Therefore, may it strike us, and very sharply too, that only a thin veil of time is hiding away the actual events of the end and every tick of the clock is wearing out that veil, even now!

Chapter Six

EXIT OF THE SAINTS

IN KEEPING WITH PRE MILLENNIAL and Pre Tribulation viewpoints which have not only dominated the eschatological posture of the main-stream Pentecostal denominations⁶⁹ but also dictated the pulse of this work, the evacuation of the saints through the flight of the rapture is the grand opening of the events of end time agenda. This is what the world is waiting for today.

THE RAPTURE

From the onset we own up to the fact that the term *rapture* is not in the authorised version of the Bible, except as may be traced to any of the new translations with I cannot quote authoritatively now. However, the

⁶⁹ With respect to the present statistics of the Church, these in the main, are the Apostolic, Pentecostal and Evangelical movements that came to constitute a large segment of the Christian community and by which their Pre Millennial theory alone account for about 70% of all those in the camps of Pre Millennial, Post Millennial and Preterism schools.

word has for centuries come to be associated with an instant global event when the believers will be *caught up* to meet the Lord Jesus in the air, an event expected to hit the world with rude shocks. It is ordained to close the Church age and garnish a rallying platform for believers of all nations and ages. In these days when dark shadows are engulfing everywhere, believers are pinning their hope on evacuation from the sinking ship of the world at the rapture. But while the event is a most certain occurrence of the future, its time is most uncertain, which is why the Church of every age has been urged to be ready.

THE PRESENT AGE

The present dispensation of the Church has its root in the outbursts of Pentecostal power upon the disciples at the Upper Room in Jerusalem. It is the age in which God suspends His direct dealings with the nation of Israel as rooted in generational covenants to focus attention on those who would accept the gospel of Jesus Christ, rejected by the people. Its link with the end derives from the fact that it is the last in which man has the opportunity to determine the portion of his soul in the realms of immortality. This he does by embracing or snubbing the provisions of God through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus at Calvary. At this time when the gospel message is bombarding the human race intensely from nearly all directions and the Holy Spirit is busy courting the willing brides for the coming of the Groom, the vilest and the worst of all sinners can still repent and be reconciled to God.

Apart from the broad division of people into saints and sinners, the era also offers an opportunity for individual Christians to demonstrate the depth of their love for Jesus Christ who paid dearly for their redemption. Their labour of love, their contending for the faith, the measure of their subjection to the Holy Spirit and the sacrifices they make to advance the cause of the cross will come to reckoning on the day of the Lord. As there are people placed in government hierarchies of the nations today, there are also those who

operate within the confines of local and rural settings of the same government. Although they are all employees and representatives of the same governments, some are higher than others in prestige and authority, rank and rewards. This fact prompted Apostle Paul to inform that though they are all stars, “. . . *one star differeth from another star in glory*” (I Corinthians 15v41).

The righteous Judge of the universe, the One to decide who gets which reward and in what measure is infallible, fully loaded with full facts about everyone and everything he has done. His message to the seven Asian churches confirms this in the clearest possible tone; “*I know thy works*” (Revelation 2v2, 9, 13, 19; 3v1, 8, 15). We are mindful of the fact that the messages here apply to those who have enlisted on the race to heaven and in pursuit of His cause.

A THRIVING LEGACY

The earthly sojourn of Jesus, His exemplary and lowly life and His discourse on the subject of the kingdom are means by which His followers are challenged to focus their expectations on treasures beyond present glares. In her response of faith, the Church from inception has been waiting patiently but anxiously for the moment when she will be ushered into the realms of the promised glory. This is why the events that are unfolding today are of great significance to her as they will culminate in the accomplishment of her toil and warfare.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. (Luke 21v28)

Sharing importance with the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus in the doctrine of the Church is His Second Coming and both with their full twigs will present an adequate summary of the New Testament portion of the Bible. This is without apology to the fact that the eye

and mind of the average Church member today appear to be shut to whatever he ought to know about the all-important doctrine of the end time. The Second Coming of Jesus has been a strong pillar of the Christian faith from the inception of the Church when the imminence of the Lord's return was drummed into the subconsciousness of its folks. We see this in the way it defined the posture of the members of Corinth church who, way back then, went about their daily routines ". . . *waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (I Corinthians 1v7).

The Second Coming of Jesus and the associated reward for those who will overcome are among the stimulants of believers to forge ahead against the ploys of the enemy in the arena of life. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: "*If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? . . .*" (Corinthians 15v32). In other words, the motivation of Paul to resist the enemy, here pictured as the *beast at Ephesus*, and later defended his testimonies to the point of execution at Rome derived from his expectation of resurrection which will come with a sure reward. It is the same hope that has inspired sobriety and diligence as essential ingredients for victory in the Christian race and by which many have turned around to receive great testimonies as by-products.

STORMS AGAINST HOPE

While the saints of all ages have striven to keep their focus on the rapture, Satan on his part has mobilised the gates of hell and gathered turbulent storms against that hope. His host of demons, the unbelieving folks and false brethren, including fake pastors, have served as his instruments in the ignoble task. Tough battles have been raging right from the time of the early generation of believers to whom the promise of the Lord's Second Coming was delivered. Consequences and conquests of the battles have distilled to sponsor apathy among Christians. It is therefore hardly surprising that our age is sparing not so much thought about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ or the certainty of an end to our world.

For instance, Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost suggests that the coming of the Holy Spirit is a partial fulfilment of God's promises for the "last days" (Acts 2v16, 17). But seeing beyond the horizon, the Epistle he later wrote sometime around 60 AD, long after that sermon, tried to highlight the dangers that lurked within the corridor of time. He captured the picture of how the courage of many people who profess the faith would crumble under the weight of prolonged waiting that hangs between when the promise of the Lord's return was given and when it would eventually be fulfilled. He then warned those who would become easy prey to the forces of diversion or fall into the abyss of scepticism to scorn their only hope of escape from the wrath of God coming upon the world. By the same means, he strengthened the resolve of the few who, in their unflinching assurance of the Lord's return, would swim against the tides.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. (2 Pet. 3v3, 4)

From here we may understand how the present apathy towards the coming of the Lord has taken a long and deep root in the realms of the spirit and many scoffers have emerged to serve as the mouthpiece of Satan and scorn the idea of the rapture. Though there were always scoffers and doubters around who will like to inform us that the world is without end, that all we have seen and will yet see are nothing but cyclical repetitions of history, there is no doubt that our generation is parading the largest batch of such fellows. The spirit that worked in the infidels of earlier generations has secured fertile grounds for the flourishing of its deceit in the present day's global apostasy.

Thus, the scoffers of today are now armed with the 'prolonged' waiting of the Christians that has not only spanned through several

centuries but which appears to be unending, even today. This has been fashioned into a weapon of ridicule against those who still hold on to the hope of Christ's return. For instance, if someone should mount a rostrum today and publicly challenge the rapture alarmists to a debate that the same message of Christ's imminent return had been preached before his great, great grandfather was born without any consequence, he will likely draw huge applause which is rooted in the fact that, of a truth, "*since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*" (II Pet. 3v4). The more upsetting aspect of the whole story is that while those outside the Church openly spurn the idea of the rapture, doubts and indifference have grounded the fervency of many within its walls.

In a true-life story, a woman with a good start in the Christian race was marking her seventieth birthday and a group of young ladies were on hand to celebrate with her. While appreciating them for their visit, she prayed that God would spare their lives so that they too would someday celebrate their seventieth anniversary as she was doing. The ladies responded that though they valued her prayer, they were not nursing a thought for that expectation because, as they were taught to believe, Jesus could come at any time. The woman, who by all expectations should be a pillar of the blessed hope, cautioned the ladies and urged them to say *amen* to her prayers. She went further to 'educate' them about what they too were being told when they were young, that Jesus was coming very soon, way back at that time. But there she was, celebrating her seventieth year on the same earth!

This event provides us with a sample of tragedy that has ambushed the faith of many of those who once held firmly to the promise of the Lord's returns. Judging by the age of that woman and her background; she would be well qualified to hold any position, including that of a pastor for churches that open their altars to women. While she maintained her membership of the church to a level that could at least prompt the visit of the ladies in the first instance, while she cruised along and religiously kept her position and the company of others, the

lapse of some decades had waned her convictions about the soon coming of the Lord, the hope of which she once nursed.

This may not have provided all the proof needed to conclude that the woman had backslidden or that the young ladies would not live up to their seventieth birthday on the account of Jesus coming soon. It is possible that they too will live that long, and raise children or even grandchildren who also will. At the same time, however, it will amount to heresy if not outright error for anyone to teach or expect that Jesus will not come until someone has fulfilled a cherished ambition as if God has shown him a timeline of His agenda that Jesus said was not revealed even to the angels.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “. . . we are not discouraged by the length of his delays; we are not disheartened by the long period which he allots to the church in which to struggle with little success and much defeat”. Therefore, in a balanced approach to issues for which the Bible is well known, while we have the writings of Apostle Paul that urge the believers to look forward to the coming of the Lord at any moment after the inception of the Church, we also have the epistle of the likes of Apostle James urging us to patiently wait for it. His was in a tone that did not compromise the urgency of the issue or tone down the need for our vigilance. *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”* (James 5v7.8)

SHADOW CHASING CHRISTIANITY

If we look away from those who once kept the hope of the Lord’s return firmly but had their zeal deflated by the ‘long’ waiting, we have others who paint worse pictures. As narrated earlier in this work, we have a throng of new-generation Christians who have never been exposed to any doctrinal awareness of Christ’s return or what the promise of His coming holds for them. It is therefore hardly surprising

that, apart from general or official acquiescence of Christendom on the expectation of Christ's second coming, a great number of its members nurse no personal expectation for it. They mill in and out of prayer houses in search of what they cannot define in the light of open scriptures. In pursuit of whatever they have defined as their goals, what they hold firmly to is a form of Christianity that does not attract the commendation of heaven or pose any threat to hell.

As if to compound the issue, a number of those charged with the teaching of "*the whole counsel of God*" (Acts 20v27) have embraced the satanic diversions of our age. Pursuit of money and material comfort for themselves, family members and congregation have lured them from the centre stage of their callings and caged their fervency. The result of this is manifest in the superficialities and deep-seated illusions that are the only things which many church goers of this generation can show for their Christianity. Therefore, we should play down awhile on the problems of the scoffers outside the confines of church buildings and beam our fault-finding torch inward.

The summary here is that those who are guilty of the neglect of the blessed hope are the very Christians to whom it was delivered, particularly the present-day bunch who pay only lip service to it just because they cannot tear the pages relating to it away from the copies of their Bible. The falsehood of their claims is stamped on their negative lifestyles and shallow testimonies that are bereft of any trace of such hope. Their apparent apathy toward the promise of Christ's return has sent wrong signals to those outside the Church. In other words, if all that Christians spend their days craving and praying for in their meetings and crusade grounds is the wealth and comforts of this world, how can they turn around to convince those outside their fold that the world is racing on the path of ruin to where all its alluring treasures will amount to nought?

It is a tragedy that the bunch of Christians that fill our worship centres today do not see beyond the fleeting pleasures and empty

glories that are driving the rest of their world crazy today. How well did Apostle Peter capture that which should characterise the life of the saints in conformity to their expectation of the Lord's coming?

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (2 Peter 3v11-14)

We must settle this, however, that despite the contradictions that characterise the lives of many professed Christians, the certainty of the Lord's return is that which transcends all opinions and every shade of doubts arising from whatever negative postures. The Lord is coming indeed but only for those who live in the consciousness and expectation of His coming and conduct their lives with the sobriety that *'the day of the Lord'* has provoked in the true saints of all ages.

H. Bonar wrote in his hymn, *A Few More Years Shall Roll*:

'Tis but a little while
And He shall come again
Who died that we may live
Who lives that we
With Him may reign

The Lord is coming for those who have their spiritual ears constantly tuned to pick the signal of the rapture trumpet expected to hit the airwaves in one of these moments. They are those who understand that

there will be no other warning than the signs that the majority within and outside the Church has chosen to ignore today.

THE IRONY

There are now satanically coordinated attacks on the message of the Bible and the hope it holds out for man that have secured fertile ground in our spiritually bankrupt generation. The army of those who do not believe has been swelling and now, it all seems like a piece of mocking drama. While the hope of the return of Jesus appears to be fading out and attack against it is mounting to its peak in the physical, every agency is competing hard in the realms of the spirit to discharge its role towards the appointed hour when the Son of man shall appear.

Though the physical and spiritual worlds interact contiguously, we have seen how most of the time they function in the opposite direction and are governed by contrasting laws. First and foremost, even if it is from his sound knowledge of the Bible alone, Satan knows so much about the coming of the Lord and what it means for those who will be fortunate to go with Jesus Christ at the end of their earthly sojourn. Secondly, he knows, from the agenda of God, that he has only a short time to accomplish the task of diversion, deception and destruction of the human race he has assigned upon himself (Revelation 12v12).

It is in this wise that he has deployed all weapons at his disposal to deaden the impulse of man to the cry of the prophecies which have become so loud, especially in these days. He capitalises on the blindness of man and his insensitivity to the realm of the spirits to beat him into a stupor where he will wake up only to shed tears of regret. Therefore, while Satan is instigating men everywhere against the certainty of the end and the promises that the rapture holds for them, millions of them are regretfully crossing the threshold of being victims of his lies to being his accomplices.

EXIT OF THE SAINTS

At the rapture, all believers, living or dead, will be gathered unto Jesus Christ “*in the air*” (I Thessalonians 4v17) and the bearing of ‘the air’ for the gathering of the saints will only be secondary. Both the Bible, in Isaiah 40v32, and modern geography have established that the earth is spherical and the direction of ‘the air’ or sky will depend on where one is positioned at any point in time. Thus, concerning the return trip of Jesus Christ, we may reasonably expect it will be to the very spot and from the direction where He ascended when He vacated the earth in His glorified body (Acts 1v9-12).

The prophetic remarks of the angels who spoke with the disciples at the point of His departure hinted at this fact. He left from Mount Olive and we are told that He “. . . *shall come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven*” (Acts 1v11). Thus, we may suppose that the ‘*like manner*’ here will also incorporate the spot where He left off. We will do well to remember that the event of the rapture is more spiritual than physical, meaning that, at the rapture which involves spiritual transformation and physical translation of the saints, no one of them, even from the remotest part of the earth, will have a longer distance to cover or require more travel time than any other saint in the flight to meet Jesus ‘. . . *in the air*’.

While we tone down this preamble, we face the grim fact that Jesus Christ will not rapture a single sinner with His saints. He is coming for those who are truly expecting Him and no volume of sermon can be too much to ensure that every person will strive hard to be fit for the flight. Irrespective of whatever glory is attached to the destiny of anyone or the one in which he may be presently basking, it would be better for him to have been flushed into the drain in the abortion of a careless pregnancy, perhaps by a street prostitute, than for such a person to be born into the world and miss the rapture. It is the greatest tragedy that can befall anyone born of a woman!

Doctrinally, resurrection and translation are two key operational

terms that explain the rapture. Resurrection, on the other hand, is the restoration of life to that which was dead, buried and long forgotten. Translation concerns the changing of the physical body of Christians that will be alive up to that moment to the spiritual body that can relate with the realms of the spirit. Both expectations are rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul declared:

And if Christ be not raised then, your faith is in vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (1 Corinthians 15v17-19)

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead has had a firm root in the Old Testament, particularly in the messages of inspired writers like the Psalmist in Psalm 49v15 and Prophet Daniel in Daniel 12v2. Job affirmed “. . . I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19v25,26). However, it is in the New Testament when the Lord Jesus became the first fruit of the experience that resurrection finds its fullest expression to become a teachable tenet, a pillar of the Christian faith and a glorious expectation of the Church. The benefits of resurrection are directed to the body with its properties of dust and ashes which is subject to decomposition after its separation from the animating and life-giving spirit.

VIOLENT RIPPLES

We are aware of scholars and sects who teach about a secret rapture of the saints as believed mostly by the pre-millennialists. Irrespective of where we stand, we can at least unite our opinion on the fact of His returning, either secretly for the rapture of the saints or overtly to establish His millennial reign. Detailed comments on this are reserved for the later part of this chapter and the ones yet ahead. Both Apostles

Peter and Paul agreed that the day of the Lord would come *“like a thief in the night”* (I Thessalonians 5v2, II Peter 3v10)⁷⁰. The resurrection and translation of the saints at the rapture are understood as a separate event from Christ’s Second Coming when all eyes shall behold Him as He comes in glory and power to displace the Antichrist and crush all rebellions to establish His earthly kingdom. This notwithstanding, it is only as we have read our mind into the scriptures that we have over the years harped the rapture as a clandestine event. On the contrary, nearly all the verses that may be cited for the event in the Bible involve a blasting noise, a shaking and heavy commotion.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* (1 Thessalonians 4v16, 17). Also in his epistle to the Corinthians, the same Paul wrote: *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”* (1 Corinthians 15v52). The first involves a combination of *“the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”* and the other, the sound of *“the trumpet”*, bearing in mind that, even today, trumpet remains one of the instruments of music with the most piercing sound texture.

Therefore, the revelation that Jesus is coming as *“a thief in the night”* alone is not sufficient to sustain the expectation of the rapture as a quiet event. Instead, the phrase suggests the coming of Jesus at a time no one looks forward to Him, just as no one ever looks forward to the invasion of his domicile by a thief. Even then, while the metaphor of *“a thief in the night”* may suggest the ‘stealing’ away of the believers and upsetting the human landscape, the clandestine invasion of a thief

⁷⁰ The common idea of this to those who rebuff the idea of secret rapture is the way they robe the passages only around the need for the believers to be watchful or ready.

usually contrasts sharply with how his activities are sure to inflame and dominate the news afterwards. So exactly it will be at the rapture of the saints which will send shocking waves across the globe. From the teaching of Jesus Himself, it is expected that the rapture will spell sudden disconnection of physical and emotional ties because “*one will be taken and another left*” (Matthew 24v40).

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only . . . Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. (Matt 24v36-42)

The warning of Jesus above, now discounted with damning apathy by the Church, highlights *surprise* as a key element of the rapture. It rarely strikes us that the realities of the end-time event we are discussing and debating in academic camps will catch up with us at some particular date yet ahead. The ruins that visited the ancient world like the Deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and many instances of carnages in Jerusalem also came with warnings that were ignored until tragedies struck suddenly, without a remedy or second chance. Even some calamities and earth-shaking events that made loud news and reshaped the world of our time like the terror attack of 9/11 and some of the natural disasters of recent years shared the same elements of surprise and suddenness that left no room for adjustment.

Back to the statement of Jesus in Matthew 24v36-42, the rendering of it by Luke 17v34 added how two people will be on the same bed only to be separated by the rapture of one while the other continues to snore. When two people are yoked together in an activity and one is taken and the other is left, consternation will grip the one that is left. With the trumpet sound that will penetrate the graves of dead believers, the sights and scenes of disappearing folks will trigger a

worldwide commotion that will hit the realm of man with utter shock, everywhere and at the same time. People will troop out of their closets to catch a glimpse of dramas on the streets. Relevant agencies will swing into futile action to unravel the mystery of ‘mass kidnapping’ and foam out explanations for the relatives of those missing. Security will be beefed up and frightened governments will declare states of emergency. The breaking news at all the television stations and their analysis the world over and at the same time will beam on the event⁷¹.

The church dignitaries that have severed contact with the Head of the Church and have nowhere to go will become the rallying points of the inquisitive journalists. They are those who have paraded tall images in the church circle which in the first instance has attracted the attention of the press to their corners as repositories of Christian heritage. Their carriage within and around the altars of various churches, their expensive cassocks and flowing *agbadas*⁷² have not only defined their status but have veiled their audience from seeing the path of humility and simplicity charted by their Lord and Master. Let God forbid that any of them may fail to retrace their steps before it is too late, press crews will chase them to their hideouts and it will be their turn to offer explanations for the unfolding drama⁷³.

At that time, billions of people who have heard about the rapture but failed to make it will come to terms with their bitter lot. They will mourn for the truth they have snubbed for years in careless living. Many will seriously wish that what they are seeing were happening in dreamland after which there would be an opportunity to wake up and retrace their steps. People will be amazed that the event, which has been a subject of loud gist, documentaries and movies, has suddenly

⁷¹ This is the scenario that *Left Behind* by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins sought to paint and those who have read it will need no better descriptions.

⁷² *Agbada* is a three-piece flamboyant costumes worn by important people for important occasions in many African settings.

⁷³ Reference the write up, *Why Didn't You Go With Them?* (Page *xvi* of the opening section).

come to be. Those who have played roles in such films just for monetary returns but lacked personal conviction about the message they seek to pass to others will wish they were still rehearsing before the cameras. As people gather in groups to discuss the strange scenes, bitter cries will roar to the skies from the church buildings and Christian homes where the Holy Spirit has lost full control.

Chapter Seven

THE ANTICHRIST AND RAPTURE THEORIES

As stated in chapter two, how the rapture relates to the expected reign of the Antichrist is one of the storms that may never be quelled until events begin to unfold. Theories have climbed on the back of each other to suggest that the two will coincide or be separated from each other. Even if we take them to be detached, there is no clear consensus as to which of the two events will precede the other. Generally speaking, there are different schools of thought on the order of proceedings in the segment of eschatology about the rapture, the regime of the Antichrist and the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. This outline below will assist us to navigate the thoughts of each school that has expressed its opinions.

OUTLINE OF SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Here is an overview of various schools and their thoughts about the events of the end time:

1. The first of the schools here is one that holds that man is going nowhere, that all the noise and alarms about the end time is a

myth or a big scam. But I prefer to label this group as jokers.

2. Preterism Schools

a. Partial Preterism

b. Full or Hyper Preterism, also known as Pantology School

3. Millennialism Schools

a. Post Millennialism School

b. Pre Millennialism or Tribulation School

i. Post tribulation School

ii. Mid tribulation School

iii. Pre tribulation School

The first of the groups deny the fact of the rapture as an experience to look forward to and teach that man is going nowhere outside his cosmic realm. While we may not overlook the scholars in this school, we can exercise our reason to ignore them. Their position is a blatant denial of all that the Bible has to reveal concerning the present realities and future events and who may not be anything better than the infidels or scoffers, according to 2 Peter 3v3,4.

Coming to the Preterism school, a segment of it teaches that rapture is already a history and it makes no sense for anyone to continue to gaze to the sky in expectation of the return of Jesus. The standpoint of the preterists was fully discussed in chapter two and further reference to them here is to fix them into the context of other groups to form a complete picture. Somehow, it will appear that partial preterists share some grounds with Post Millennialists, especially with their claims that many old testament prophecies have been fully fulfilled, either literally or symbolically.

However, Hyper or Full Preterism denies the fact of any of the prophecies still hanging in the air or waiting for fulfilment. This would rank them with the first group on our list except that they have

defended their ground with instances of how prophecies have been fulfilled. Thus, if we go by the plain revelations of the scriptures, irrespective of whatever event of history that may lend support to the first two groups, or regardless of the profiles of the scholars that may queue behind their theory, we can safely ignore their positions to focus on the teachings of more serious scholars in the pre-millennialism and PostMillennialism camps.

The position of Post Millennial theorists was also discussed in some detail in chapter two and there is no need for repetition here. It will just be enough to point out that for generations, the majority of Christians were divided into the two broad camps of Pre Millennial and Post Millennial theorists. Both are hooked on the strong expectation of the reign of Jesus but in different time structures. Pre Millennial which further splits into three different groups believes in the regime of the Antichrist, especially concerning the second half of his tenure when his destructive mandate and machinery will not find any shelter. It also relates the millennium of Jesus more to the reign of the Antichrist but further split into three camps as we shall see.

Before we examine the relevant theories of the schools, there is an underlying fact about this segment of eschatology. Contrary to whatever the protagonists of any school of thought may have said or written, it is difficult for anyone to hold out verses of the Bible that confirm, perhaps as plainly as everyone would like to have it, that the Church will or will not wade through the tribulation. Just as you find portions of the Bible that trigger the notion that the Church will encounter the Antichrist, you also have others that can only be interpreted to the contrary.

Thus, within the church circles and among the scholars, it has always been a matter of where someone has chosen to pitch his tent and for which he gathers supporting scriptures that play down the position of the other. I earlier mentioned two of the foremost pastors and scholars of the immediate past generation, namely Oswald J. Smith

and Reverend Tim LaHaye. For the sake of clarity, both of them belonged to the Protestants camp. They did not just stop at recording resounding personal testimonies but were mightily used by God to establish and lead successful ministries. Also, they both demonstrated large hearts and deep commitments to scholarship that cut across denominational, continental and generational barriers as their books continue to enjoy global reception, even till tomorrow.

While I hold them both in the highest regard, they are poles apart on their stand on whether or not Christians will escape or experience tribulations. Therefore, as a quick reminder of what I earlier wrote, whatever we choose to hold to or the theory we peddle around them will never compete with or replace what the prophecies were ordained to communicate or consummate. The Bible will never bow to the most intelligent argument that contradicts its intent. All we need is for us to appreciate the limitations of our intellectual sweats as we subject them to the counsel of the Author of prophecies whose plans and purpose are sure to prevail in the ultimate.

I stated earlier that PostMillennialism was popular among early Christian theologians who were influenced by the prevailing facts and events of their era. That was basically when no one envisaged the elongation of time to the present era that the Church is still waiting for her Groom. This has resulted in significantly toning down the stance of this school in recent centuries to pitch the majority of the Church in the tribulation camps. It thus becomes necessary to play down the theory of Post Millennial since the Church era they touted as the millennial of the Lord has been overtaken by so much evil, corruption and disaster than can ever be associated with the reign of Jesus that prophets of old have portrayed for us.

History and current events have inspired contemporary analysis of prophecies with the events that have been bursting upon our world. One effect of this is the shift of the emphasis of eschatology from connecting the rapture of the Church with the millennial reign to the

one of the tribulation era, that is, from the *Pre-* and *Post* Millennial to *Pre-* and *Post* Tribulation. It is to be established now with sufficient assurance that the rapture of the saints will have more to do with the reign of the Antichrist and accompanying tribulation than with the millennial reign of the Lord. This has shifted our emphasis on the currently contending schools of thought of **Post-**, **Mid-** and **Pre-**Tribulation analysis which we will examine in that order.

POST TRIBULATION THEORY, SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Post Tribulation scholars believe that the saints should brace up for encounter with the Antichrist as they will not be taken out of the world until after his reign. Even for those who may be tempted by the most assuring posture of the Pre Tribulation theorists to thumb down this standpoint, we have Bible references that dangle cautions and demand a double-checking. Here we examine one of the most glaring of them, which is the statement from the lips of Jesus on a Post Tribulation event:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
(Matthew 24v30, 31)

Preceding verses 27 through 29 revealed with sufficient clarity the period under reference here. As earlier hinted, and contrary to what we were made to believe for decades, the rapture may not be a clandestine event to be known only to the departing believers but the one that will jolt the entire world with shock and horror. Similarly, it is clear that this passage above relates directly to the glorious advent of the Lord Jesus after the tribulation to establish the millennial kingdom, when “*all the tribes of the earth*” will mourn at “*the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*”. The key question that begs for an

answer here and now is to identify “*his elect from the four winds*” in this context and this will be any or a combination of any of the following:

1. *Christians who are waiting to take their exit from the sinking ship of the world seem to rank first in the list of possibilities:* Post Tribulation standpoint is that Christians are the elect that will weather through the tribulation period with the Antichrist and be rallied together to meet Jesus afterwards. Now, should this turn out to fully answer the question of His elect, all opinions about those in the other groups below together with all arguments of the Mid Tribulation and Pre Tribulation theories will only be good for the dustbin. But then, going by the balanced approach of this work, I do not foreclose the possibility that any of the categories below may also be intended.
2. *There are careless Christians in the category of five foolish virgins who will miss their point of exit and will be jolted out of slumbering to become fervent during the tribulation period.* The import of this parable is that it came directly from the lips of the same Jesus who is not only our Lord and Master but also the Groom of the Church⁷⁴. Indeed, I have personally imagined that the vast majority of present-day Christians will fall into this category.
3. *Those who rejected the gospel up to the point of (Pre Tribulation) rapture but who will embrace the verity of God’s word and seek the salvation of their eternal souls during the tribulation.*
4. *The Jews who in their great majority have continued to snub the gospel up till now but who will come to terms with their generational blunder and plead to be rescued from the genocide agenda of the Antichrist by the advent and intervention of the Lord, and to whom the offer of salvation will eventually be made and received with ready disposition.*

The status of being an *elect* here would derive from a connection

⁷⁴ Jesus did not tell us what eventually became of the careless five virgins. But, we can guess that it may not necessarily be for them to be hurled into hell.

with God, either by the covenant for the Israelites or by repentance and regeneration for other races. Moreover, people in both groups are likely to be found in every part of the earth where man has spread his tents. Now, apart from the Christians in the first group above, I am not grounded in the teachings of the Post Tribulation scholars as to whether or not they recognise the remaining three groups, what exactly their portion will be or how they may be yoked together during the tribulation to be qualified for the description of “*his elect from the four winds*”. On one hand, the inclusion of those in groups two and three above would seem to fuse the treatment of Posttribulation into the jacket of Pre Tribulation teachings. Yet on the other hand, I feel emboldened by the fact that, from the open scriptures, there is no way by which their beings and involvement may be suppressed in a balanced teaching of eschatology.

Beyond the foregoing, it would seem that the finger of Jesus points more in the direction of the Israelites who are certain to remain on the earth during the tribulation and can be traced to any part of the earth at His glorious appearing. We recall the tragedies that have befallen the race and how they have suffered untold decimation and dispersal. The Assyrians led ten of their twelve tribes in the northern kingdom into captivity around 720 BC and scattered them to the ends of the world. Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and Judah in tranches between 598 and 588 BC and Romans nailed the coffin of their ancient history with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The fact of the Jews having to contend with the Antichrist, wade through “...*the time of Jacob’s trouble*” (Jeremiah 30v7) and then yearn for deliverance toward the twilight of his oppressive reign not only has sufficient support of clear scriptures. There have not yet been many contentions about it among many scholars, even those in the divided camps. The unique status and connection of the people in the matters of the end time is exhaustively discussed in *The Nation of Israel*, a major chapter of this work yet ahead. Furthermore, a standpoint with scriptural support that touts the Pre Tribulation rapture of the present-

day believers in the first of the group above will leave the people of Israel in the forefront of the description of “*his elect*” in this passage.

The Bible informs that the people will wholeheartedly embrace Jesus at His second coming as that will be their only option for national survival. Therefore, the expectation here will fix them, either exclusively into the template of *his elect* or lump them with the tribulation Christians in numbers two and three of the groupings. The privilege of election by which people come to embrace the status of *his elect* as it is here defined does not need to be over-flogged. We note the use of the terms *saint* and *elect* to refer to the people of God in both the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible by which we may just skip any need to dig into the language dictionary on the terms.

Just as the Israelites were the elects of the Father in the old covenant, so also are those who have yielded to the call of the gospel in the new. This includes billions of people “. . . *from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*” who are Christians in the present age and others, going by the Pre Tribulation theory, who will embrace the gospel or become serious Christians in the days of the Antichrist. It will therefore not matter much whether the latter is taken separately or grouped with the Jews already settled to be in the camp of *his elect* from the call of Abraham up to that time of history.

As a major consideration to this segment, we have many trending issues and breaking news around the globe that are drumming loud support to PostMillennialism scholars. This is more so because a number of them may not reverse their trends in the days ahead until the consummation of history. The thinking sessions I shared with two scholars on this segment informed the opening of my mind a bit wider to accommodate whatever messages the events of today are signalling.

HORSES OF REVELATION AND THE MISSION OF THEIR RIDERS

Chapter six of the book of Revelation on the opening of the seals introduced several issues that scholars have connected with the events

of our time. At least a few respected theologians agree that the white horse symbolised the gospel and its conquering power over the opposition of Judaism and by which it has spread across to the nations of the world up to this moment⁷⁵. Its colour of white is the purity and peace which the gospel has sponsored to the major parts of the world. But the other horses of red, black and pale and what they represented are being connected with death, hunger and other calamities of various magnitudes as they engulf the world today.

As may be gleaned from the passage without much ambiguity, red is an “emblem of war; perhaps also of severe persecution, and the martyrdom of the saints”, the black horse is famine and pestilence while the pale one signifies death and hell. These are the measures that are being offloaded at the doorsteps of humanity today with their gripping horror in varying degrees and on daily basis. It is also to be expected that there may not be allowance for when their trend may begin to reverse. My misgivings to the treatment of this segment of eschatology do not hold much back as to disprove the arguments that it is the fulfilment of those hard prophecies or mandates of three of the coloured horses that are catching up with our generation.

However, the issue I have with such interpretations as propagated by Post Millennialism is the reason why I sought to detach this work from many of the volatile symbols of the book of Revelation with inferences that have proved to be both subjective and debatable. For instance, segments of the book have several prophecies that tout multiple fulfilments in the events of history, even up till today. But, for a great number of respected scholars who pinpoint the events of our time with the mission of those horses and their riders, we may just be content that Post Millennialists have something on which they can anchor their submissions.

⁷⁵ John Gill and Adam Clarke agree to this while Albert Barnes thinks otherwise, that the rider of the white horse was Emperor Trajan under whose reign the Roman Empire reached its greatest strength and extent.

COVID-19, 5G TECHNOLOGY AND THE MARK OF THE BEAST

So much dust has been raised since Barack Obama introduced a health scheme that required the implant of RFID into the users. Controversies and curiosity have been trailing the scheme on whatever connection it may share with the administration of the mark of the beast in the days ahead even though I cannot forge any at the moment. More of this and similar stuff will be seen in the sections and volumes ahead.

Now we saw how all attention got shifted to the COVID-19 pandemic when it lasted, the global efforts to contain it, the making of and altercations about the vaccine being touted as the means to contain it. This is also with purported claims about the connection of the vaccine with the introduction of 5G internet technology. The entire flurry is suspected as a process by which the world will be hooked to the dreaded technology said to have stunning capabilities with which to baptise the world into the mark of the Antichrist by his forerunners.

Moreover, the way some governments are making so much force with the distribution of the vaccine has fuelled the arguments on the need to prepare the Church for any eventuality and not to narrow her mind to Pre Tribulation theories or any school of thought. At the same time, we are mindful of the segment of the Church that does not see the mark of the beast but the fulfilment of the prediction of Jesus on diseases and pestilences (Matthew 24v7, Luke 21v11). A rather funny dimension to the whole drama is how the vehemence with which some Christians are rising against any move that smells whatever connection with the mark of the beast will suggest that, if it is left to them alone, the fulfilment of prophecies about the end of time should just be put on hold either till God knows when or forever.

The facts here notwithstanding, there are two positions we need to note in the introduction of the mark. Firstly, many situations like these have burst upon the world and have come and spooled away without

any consequence. In the course of this work, we will discover dozens of instances where it appears that the end has come, that either Jesus or the Antichrist has hit the scene. Those are instances that prophecy watch touted to mean one thing or the other that will end it all, only for the mere passage of time to diffuse them. Secondly, going by the awful consequence that the scripture associate with the mark of the Antichrist, I am not able to imagine how anyone who truly belongs to Jesus Christ may be stamped with it without a conscious choice either to receive or reject it.

Even when it will come to Christians having to face the wrath of the State to either have it or pine away with hunger in isolation, there will always be extra-ordinary grace of God to match extra-ordinary challenges that may ensue. With the daunting courage we have seen of those who have refused to yield their grounds in the face of intimidation and death, the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit will strengthen His own and avail for those who need His help. The aim of this is for true believers to count on the great love of Jesus that bought and brought them to Himself as that which will prevail in the ultimate. Paul raised a pointed question: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”*. (Other things include) *“death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature...”* (Romans 8v35-39)

It is for this that we have witnessed the most daunting courage in the face of the worst intimidation and threats, including the threats of instant death. The case of Leah Sharibu, a Junior Secondary School girl who refused to renounce her faith in the courtroom of gun-wielding and horror-instilling terrorists, the tragic incidences of those who have fallen to the bullets and arrows of the same satanic agents operating in several spots of the earth today under the tinge of religious extremism and the story of millions of others who in the history of the Church have suffered persecution to the point of death are examples of what the Holy Spirit can do to support His own in the

worst of situation.

Since the arguments of the Post Tribulation scholars cannot be said to be devoid of merits, we give in to the fact that Christians may turn out to be *his elect* who are also spread through “. . . *the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*” and ordained to encounter the Antichrist. The teaching is also often rooted in other scripture about the need to endure and persevere to the end as enjoined by Matthew 24v13, Romans 8v17-20, 35-39, 2 Timothy 2v12 and several others. Whether the reference, therefore, is exclusive to the Christians, or the Israelites in addition or, by any remote connection, to the addition of those that will embrace the faith during the tribulation period, Posttribulation scholars have something to cling to and the controversy rages on until the outworking of prophecies will blow the whistle.

MID-TRIBULATION THEORY, SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

The perspective of scholars in this camp is that believers should not expect to be taken out of the world until the mid-way into the Antichrist’s seven-year eventful rule. Like other contending theories, the scriptures supporting this theory are not those we may dismiss with a wave of hand or confine to oblivion.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (2 Thessalonians 2v1-4)

This passage touts a thought that believers will not be evacuated from the world until after the revelation of the Antichrist and the establishment of his rule. We read that “. . . *for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition . . .*”. If the reference to “. . . *that day*” is the same as “*the day of the Lord*” which has always been preached to every generation of Christians to be “*at hand*”, we will not be able to disconnect it from the event of *the rapture* that is being regarded as the time of direct intervention of heaven in the affairs of man and nature.

Paul talked about *falling away first*, which may be seen in the worldwide apostasy and spiritual disintegration spearheaded by the religious confusion and moral degeneration of this generation. Further light will be shed on this in volumes ahead, particularly as it relates to the coming together of various religions of the world under one umbrella to forge a common agenda. The breakdown of systems that characterises our era would seem to fulfil the falling away that Apostle Paul predicted. Eventually, it is this disorder that will pave the way for the Antichrist who will come and pretend to have a solution to the crisis his forerunners are busy piling up now.

The arguments of the Mid Tribulation theory dwell on the fact that the believers were admonished to expect the coming of the Lord at such a time when the man of sin will have been revealed to the world and the evil of his reign is hitting the surface. It is this understanding that has lent the strongest scriptural support to the position of those in this camp. However, the balloon of this theory suffers a major leakage which, in my honest opinion, is serious enough to deflate it to a mere speculation if not an outright error. If the argument is sustained as presented, it will put the world on a guard to do an extrapolation of the time of the rapture to an extent. All that will be required is to simply mark the time *the man of sin* appears and then guess out the time of the rapture, plus or minus, from that. Yet, from all that we know, this is a conjecture into which Jesus discouraged anyone from venturing. He said, “*but of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but*

my Father only.” (Matthew 24v26).

This is the weakest point in the chain of the Mid Tribulation theory. We are aware of those who have tried to forge unpredictability into their timetable of events, perhaps in a bid to purge the theory of that error. But the only way to achieve this will be to claim that no one will know the exact time the Antichrist will sneak in to prevent anyone from speculating the time that Jesus has said nobody knows except His Father. Notwithstanding this, there are respectable Bible scholars in this camp who feel they are armed with passages of the scriptures to defend their position, including even such passages of the Bible that are peddled by Post Tribulation scholars. It is because of this that such a glaringly weak point in the chain of Mid Tribulation theory may not have provided sufficient ground to trash it altogether.

2 THESSALONIANS 2: A 2-SIDED PORTRAIT

The theories of the Mid Tribulation and Pre Tribulation demand that we make some clarification on the above passage, especially as it appears to hang in between the perspectives of two schools. My honest confession is that, up to this moment and in spite of the time and efforts I have invested in this project, I retain soft spots for the doctrinal positions and scriptural supports of the two camps, though with heavier leaning to the camp of the Pre Tribulation theorists. But before we introduce the hypothesis of the two schools with related scriptures, I will strongly suggest that this book should be laid aside for the reader to tap directly from Chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians.

Chapter two of the second epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians offers an exciting treatise on the rapture segment of eschatology and how it relates to the revelation of the Antichrist. However, like other aspects of the subject, fogs of questions hang over the setting and characters of the passage that we will need to diffuse. The most popular of these has robbed the passage around the Roman Catholic regimes and their exploits in the course of history. This theory has it

that the *papacy*, the system of church government headed by the pope, is the substance of the passage that was portrayed as “*that man of sin . . .*”, “*the son of perdition . . .*”, “*that Wicked*”. As we shall further see in the chapters ahead, the idolatry that was introduced into and blended with the liturgy of the Church was taken as “*the mystery of iniquity*”.

This position conforms to or inspires the prevailing opinion of the Post Millennialists that many of the events predicted for the last days have already been fulfilled in one form or at another time. However, if this standpoint is admitted, it will leave many tough questions unanswered and its leakage may be spotted even from the terms and tone of the passage alone as regards who or what “*that man of sin . . .*”, “*the son of perdition . . .*”, “*that Wicked . . .*” may refer to. We may safely assume that such labels point to a *person* and attempt to robe them around an *institution* is likely to suggest a deliberate distortion. It is on this account that I hold that the interpretation of the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians suggests the coming of the Antichrist, his rise to power, mode of operation and expected encounter with Jesus Christ at His glorious appearing. This fact should submerge options that have robbed the passage around Roman Catholicism and its papacy.

I am not oblivious of instances where the Bible uses symbols or articles to represent persons, nations, institutions or things of importance, and conversely; many of which are abundant in the book of Revelation which is a principal text of this study. I am also aware of such instances where spiritual or symbolic interpretation of Bible passages rather than literal applications will convey the intended message. A few examples of this are in the narrative of the vine and its husbandman in Isaiah 5v1-7, the potter and clay in Jeremiah 18v1-6, the encounter of a prophet in the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37v 1-14 and also in many parables of Jesus.

Further to this is the fact that where the human Antichrist is intended by prophecy and he will eventually hit the surface by the force of prophecy, no one will raise his child and christen him “the

Antichrist” at the naming ceremony. No matter the strange occurrences that may be associated with his birth; such a child will certainly bear an attractive name common to male children in the community where he will be raised. It is only that, whatever effort there may be to conceal his identity, he will find no hideout but to be what he had been programmed to be, the Antichrist.

Likewise, on some occasions in both the Old and New Testaments, the same practice is sustained. The statement of Jesus concerning ‘Jerusalem’ was an unambiguous reference to either the inhabitants of the city or the entire Jewry as it may be. In nearly all such instances, the passages usually provide a sufficient lead that will assist the reader and provide him with a link to the object of the symbol being used. But then, whenever it is possible to glean the message of a passage from the surface with sufficient clarity, perhaps like the passage on hand, it will always be better and safer to abide by straightforward understanding or interpretation. On this note, I suggest we rest our opinion on the fact a picture of a *human being* rather than that of *an institution* is painted in the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians.

But then, if we settle with this standpoint, that will introduce the next subject of contention about the identity of the person under reference. Apart from Antiochus Epiphany who is singled out under the analysis of Daniel’s prophecy and fully discussed in the next chapter (in Volume 2), too many individuals have been hyped as the object of this reference than for all or even any of them to be true. For example, a section of the Church believed that Simon Magus was the ‘*son of perdition*’ for his role in the great apostasy that accounted for the deflection of some Christians from the doctrines of the early Church. Titus, the Roman General who destroyed Jerusalem, killed, maimed and scattered the Jews into slavery, was held out by some theologians of Jewish Christians as the prophesied ‘*man of sin . . .*’. This will sound particularly real for his role in the desecration of the temple which may be connected with the prediction of Jesus about the “*abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet*” in Matthew 24v15-19. To the

majority of the early Christians, the Roman emperors, notably Domitius Nero who brutally executed most of the Apostles and other disciples was both 'Antichrist' and '*that Wicked . . .*'

In recent generations, some men had been fitted into the jacket of the Antichrist. Margaret McDonald, a Christian prophetess, foretold around 1830 that Robert Owen would be the Antichrist before events rubbished that prediction. We will find the likes of Adolf Hitler, Napoleon Bonaparte and others in their class that have been fingered as the substance of the Antichrist's prophecy. There are also notable political figures among the Arabs and in the Middle East, like Hafiz al-Asad of Syria and Hussein Saddam of Iraq who made no pretence of their implacable hatred towards the Jews. Similarly, going by the content of an article that circulated among some brethren around 1975, even Henry Kissinger, the American veteran diplomat was fingered for his galvanising strong support for one world government⁷⁶.

In the current era, we have had the likes of Javier Solana⁷⁷, a one-time charismatic and outspoken European Union foreign secretary credited with the leadership position in the Union with a strong romance with the Palestinians and background manoeuvring for a solution to the Middle East impasse. One of the latest addition to the list is President Barrack Obama who was said to have exhibited some traits of the Antichrist. I should own up that there may be many more people in this class than I know of, or can afford the time and space to list. Perhaps the activities of these people on the world's political stage have fuelled speculations that are connecting them with any of the predicted exploits of the Antichrist.

⁷⁶ Henry Kissinger was quoted as stating that "conflicts across the globe and an international respect for Barrack Obama have created the perfect setting for establishment of 'New World Order'". Whatever that means, it informs that the doyen remains unrelenting in his efforts to see a world government in place, perhaps in the twilight of his highly eventful and most exciting diplomatic career.

⁷⁷ Mr. Javier Solana was European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy in the forefront of the Maltese initiative spearheading the first ever 27 nation members European Union and Arab League summit.

For example, there are those whose stories are not as widely circulated, like one diplomat who was reported as lurking about in the corridors of the Middle East at a time and made background news in some circles several years back. Israeli intelligence revealed he was born in Rome in the early nineteen fifties and moved to sojourn in Jerusalem in the early nineteen nineties. Nothing was known about his father while his mother was said to be a German and a staunch supporter of the dreaded Nazi, the political base of Adolf Hitler until she was murdered in 1966 in a crime in which he was the prime suspect⁷⁸. Following these and other odd credentials, accusing fingers pointed in his direction as some scholars and religious leaders issued warnings to isolate him.

All these will drive us to a clear conclusion. On one hand are the certainty and, perhaps, the imminence of when the Antichrist will emerge on the world's scene and more revelations of this fact form the discourse of Volume 2 of the series. On the other hand, I can counsel the readers to resist diversion ploys being traded in form of questionable opinions. Even many of those who peddled rumours and issued warnings about those on the list of suspected Antichrist are strongly believed to be those who will welcome and closely collaborate with the man when he finally emerges. I rather will wish to insist and inform you that the Antichrist cannot be anyone on the list in circulation now. But this position does not diminish a caution that I am not in a position to assert what is hiding in the corridors of time or when the *man of sin* has been programmed to step out of his hideout.

While the foregoing serves as general background, further examination of the thoughts of these schools will lead us back to the

⁷⁸ Why the anonymous man is singled out is the aspects of his exploits that reveal a close link of his profile with *After the Omen*, a documentary (movie) project on the Antichrist in three series which I watched around early 1990s. The movie suggested something that as Christ came without an earthly father, so will the Antichrist come without a known human lineage. However, these are aspects of Antichrist's life about which the Bible is silent and theories woven around such revelations may not be more than speculations concerning the birth, family profile and life of the expected world ruler.

same 2 Thessalonians 2 which is regarded as laying a solid foundation of biblical truth concerning the coming world ruler. It is also a passage from which any of the two and other contending schools of opinion has something to support its arguments. It is those revelations and their analysis that will point the way forward as we seek to unravel the theology of the Mid Tribulation and Pre Tribulation theories.

PRE TRIBULATION, SUPPORTING THEORY

According to Jesus Christ, tribulation and persecution are like twins in the encounter of the believers with the world. Still however, there is need to clearly distinguish them in the context of the rapture theory. Persecution of the righteous has been since the beginning of time and will persist till the end of human sojourn. Tribulation on the other hand is a time-bound event reserved for and associated more with the reign of the Antichrist. Persecution of the believers is not tribulation but tribulation involves a great deal of persecution. Jesus Christ admonish His followers to brace up for both as they swim against the odds in their bid to enthrone Him in the world. Further admonition of Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3v12 summarises the deal that believers have signed into.

Though I have inclination for some of the opinions of Mid Tribulation and Post Tribulation theorists, I have pitched my tent in the camp of Pre Tribulation Scholars. This is as a result of the weight of scriptural supports which I sense it enjoys and my sincere analysis of them. Despite my strong quest for objectivity, however, I may not discount the influence that the works of scholars in this camp may have rubbed on me⁷⁹. Falling back on our text, 2 Thessalonians 2, and

⁷⁹ As revealed in the acknowledgement, the first complete work, *The Beginning Of The End*, which I read on eschatology in mid-1970s as a young Christian was authored by Reverend Tim LaHaye's. It is possible that I was not totally weaned of the impact the works on me. But, at the same time, it will also make no sense to ignore the fact of my sincere and independent search to discover whatever may have either sustained or redefined my position ever since and by now.

other verses apart from those that have advanced the cause of Mid Tribulation theorists, we can examine the following with an independent mind.

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: (2 Thessalonians 2v5-8)

For a start, I have a reason to agree with scholars that hold out the Holy Spirit as the restraining factor in the present dispensation by which the evil influence of the Antichrist is contained. Thus, a quiet gist of the above passage suggests that with His presence in the world, the influence of the Antichrists is not only restrained but the activities of his forerunners are also kept under close check⁸⁰. The argument in favour of the Pre Tribulation theory, therefore, is that as long as the Holy Spirit is in the world, the Antichrist will remain confined to the background. This is without any regard to how desperate he may be or whatever the pressures may be that are urging his take over.

A point to note as a corollary to this thought is that, of all that is in our gigantic world, of all its monuments and architectural wonders, it is only in the hearts of Christians that the Holy Spirit has secured His shelter. In other words, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world is tied to that of the Church He is here to comfort, guide and empower as she wades through the storms in pursuit of her mandate. We may then conjecture that the Holy Spirit will not vacate the hearts of Christians to pave the way for a full-scale revelation of the Antichrist

⁸⁰ Here we leap over the argument of those who robe this passage around Roman Catholic and its papacy system already examined in earlier section and several political and religious machinery that checkmated them at the height of their powers.

while they are left trapped in the same. It is the Holy Spirit that will continue to inhibit the triumph of the evil and complete takeover of the Antichrist with the disaster that his reign will spell for the world.

One loud argument of the Post-Millennialists is the comparison they forge between the escape of the Israelites from Egypt and that of the Christians from the world of trouble. They claim that the Israelites witnessed all the plagues of the land before they were finally delivered. But there is nowhere Jesus or any of His apostles made such reference to the escape of God's people from Egypt as a pilot of rapture expectations. While Jesus was not silent in His teachings on the need for comparison, the only one He volunteered was the one that heavily buttresses the Pre Tribulation exit of the believers.

And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed... (Luke 17v26-30, 34-36)

I do not think there will be any way to tone down the above by any contrary opinion that will not suffer a conscience injury. Though the arguments that Noah and Lot symbolised Christians in the world are heavily castigated by those in the other camps, there is no sound basis to discard whatever their experiences may have signalled. The worlds of both men experienced disasters that foreshadowed the one that will be visited on the world during the tribulation. But Noah and members of his family who survived the flood with him were ushered into the ark before it began to rain. Also, Lot and his family, except his wife who flouted a clear instruction, were delivered from Sodom and Gomorra before fire and brimstone were rained upon the city.

We know that Jesus was never under any pressure to address any subject whatsoever, including this. But He took it upon Himself to

volunteer the teaching above which He concluded with *“Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed”*. The experience of Noah and Lot may thus be conjectured to be a pattern for the believers that will be translated during the rapture before the wrath of God in the extra-terrestrial calamities of the age will fuse with the rage of man to burst upon man and nature during the reign of the Antichrist.

Apostle Peter buttressed the same position when he wrote that *“the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished”* (2 Peter 2v9). Perhaps there may be no greater temptation to which believers may be exposed than the picture that has been painted for the days of the Antichrist. Paul also remarked that *“... God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5v19)⁸¹ to boost our expectation of evacuation before the outburst of prophesied disaster.

Jesus invested so much time to discuss the signs and events of the end with the His disciple and in the process seek to educate the Church of all ages. He wants His people to be fully ready for the flight of rapture to escape the tale of woes that will ensue.

But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke 21v36).

The objective that Jesus communicates here agrees with the grand aim of every sincere believer which is to be able *“to stand before the Son of man”*, an expectation which the rapture is expected to consummate. We may thus appreciate this counsel of Jesus Christ as lending a weight of support to the near certainty that the coming of the Antichrist with its keg of troubles and in whatever form will not catch up with the

⁸¹ We know and see how members of the Church, as we earlier saw, are presently contending with the rage of the enemy and are bleeding in several parts of the world. The Church in the north of Nigeria and Afghanistan has come to symbolise this. But this will be on the same scale as we envisage during the reign of the man of terror.

believers who are expected “*to escape all these things that shall come to pass . . .*”. This is especially if we agree that most of the tragic events of the end are robed around the reign of the Antichrist even though their introductory phases are already bursting upon us.

SEALING THE MATTER

There is a meeting point between Mid Tribulation and Pre-Tribulation theorists with the claim of the former that the exploits of the Antichrist agreed to be entwined with the great tribulation will be confined to the second half of his reign by which time the believers will be gone. We may glean a basis⁸² to infer that the Antichrist will not make the full show of his evil nature until the latter part of his seven-year reign, at least until he has gained the confidence of the Israelites. It is just that an understanding of the person of the Antichrist and the implication of his ascendance to the throne of the world for the believers will not allow this line of thought to coagulate. Even when the Antichrist may want to pose as a man of peace with his arrays of fake solutions to the problems of our troubled realms, the destruction he embodies will not find complete shelter from the sensors of sensitive Christians.

A grand aim of our Christian race is to escape from the brewing disasters and whatever may be our leaning towards any of the contending theories will not share a place of importance with that aim. We should be prepared to go with Christ whenever and however He chooses to beckon us home and this may be either crossing the path of natural death, or through persecution to the point of death as we just laid out above, or by the ‘mass transit’ of the rapture. There will be no other warning for anyone to be ready for any of these apart from the ones that are sounding very loud today. Thus, irrespective of the

⁸² This is on the expectation that he will need to warm his passage into the hearts of the Israelites and pose to be an ally in their age-long search for peace and security in the Middle East. Even Jesus predicted that they will embrace him out of ignorance and unbelief before they will realise their depth of error (John 5v43)

doctrinal or theological postulations by anyone or a group of scholars, a wise counsel has condensed the arguments and sealed the whole matter to the bargain that we make for the portion of our souls with the quality and focus of our lives, both here and now.

Epilogue to the Volumes

JUST AS IT WAS STATED from the onset, the mission of *Prophetic Force* series goes beyond quenching intellectual appetite for knowledge about eschatology. They are an urgent urge and strong appeals to the readers to ascertain where they stand in a matter of crucial bargain and their choices about their souls in eternity soon to become a reality in one of these days. As we do well to remember the certainty of Jesus Christ coming back again to the earth, everyone that is born of a woman also faces a day of reckoning. “*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:...*” (Hebrew 9v27). This awful revelation pairs with the fact that no one will have the opportunity to change his bearing once he crosses the path of death because “*...in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.*” (Ecclesiastes 11v3(b)).

I well recall my childhood days when my father sought to drum some tutorials about the Second Coming of Jesus into my ears and the sessions painted scary scenarios of what to expect concerning the event. He told me that the Second Advent of Jesus would be heralded by a deafening explosion to be triggered by God in the sea to eliminate Satan⁸³. The picture that my mind painted of this scenario suggested that all lives would be terminated at once and everyone would be ushered to the throne of judgement and depart from there to heaven or hell. This hunted me for many years.

While my father thought that he was preparing me for the Second Coming of Jesus, unknown to him, what he did only sowed a seed of torment into the fragile soil of my heart. This is more so when I sensed a haunt in my conscience that I was a bad person as the typically wayward boy that I was in those years. Thus, the coming of Jesus would not only mean a termination of my life and ambition. It would set me on a journey to hell, a place of torment. Upon leaving the care of my father to return to Lagos in 1971, I began to feel a strong urge to seek God and this coupled with the godly influence of Brother Dele Ajibola, now a pastor, who mentored me. I kept his company to join a

⁸³ I later discovered from the Bible that this notion was woven around Isaiah 27v1, together with the trumpet that will fetch believers away

few evangelical groups, like that of Gospel Crusaders, which he founded in the same year with about ten of us, including a few teenagers like myself.

. Though I got deeply involved in the activities of some vibrant Christian groups, occasions of temptations and fumbling, like impatience that sometimes involved brawls with colleagues, usually away from the glare of the brethren, dominated my profile. If I had been saved during those years, my salvation lacked definite assurance that one could rest upon. With time, Brother Dele discovered two Bible Study centres outside our church, Old Path Ministry, led by Brother J. A. Dokunmu in Agege and Deeper Life Christian Ministry, led by Brother W. F. Kumuyi in the early years of the ministry when his apartment at the University of Lagos, Akoka served as the study centre on Monday evenings.

I finally laid down my burden at one of the Monday Bible study sessions, precisely on October 04, 1976. The national independence holiday of that year had offered an opportunity for the ministry to organise a programme tagged *Institute of Evangelism* somewhere around Bariga, a suburb of Lagos during which, after study sessions in the morning, we were paired out to go for evangelism and invite our contacts to the next Monday Bible study. It came to the turn of Brother Stephen Akinola to lead the study session of that evening, being perhaps the first time that most of us would hear someone else apart from Brother Kumuyi. In fact, upon discovering that he was not to lead the session, I felt wet within. But because I had travelled from Agege, I did not think it was wise for me to leave, as if in a protest.

Brother Stephen Akinola mounted the rostrum and preached from John 3v16, a passage which I had personally used for many years preaching to others. It was in this attempt to package the gospel fully to those we had invited during our weekend outing that I discovered that the salvation message was being presented to me, personally. I sensed the opportunity to cast my pride and doubt away and make a firm commitment of my life to Jesus. It is this experience that I have always cherished and held to as the beginning of my Christian journey and a reference point for my testimony.

With all doubts laid to rest, I have experienced the support of heaven and enjoyed every inch of the glorious journey since then till now by which no thought of reversing or wavering has ever crossed my mind. This is how the thought of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ that once tormented my imagination is today a centre of my being and a source of great encouragement. It is now an event I look forward to with a kind of joy that is difficult to share with anyone. This is my message and earnest prayer, that each of us who has read any of these volumes will see and heed the alarm that the Bible sounds about a rapidly approaching end so that we will not be caught unaware.

Someone may survey my experience and ask about my status and the possibility of my sailing through during those years when I paraded sagged testimony. That I knew Jesus as the Lord and Saviour was beyond question. I also understood the need for a sinner to acknowledge his sin and let Jesus into his heart. But I did not recall if there was a time I struck that bargain before I began to cruise along with others, even to a 'respectable' altitude in the church settings. That became a sufficient source of worry, especially since I knew it made no sense for anyone to dwell on an assumption in a matter of such gravity.

Today, millions exhibit gaps between the catechism in the head and the content of their hearts. They masquerade about in the chancels of various church buildings and the corridors of its politics, performing their religious duties for monetary returns, for prestige or both. We see professional 'actors' nowadays who are acting their scripts out on several pulpits to draw applause from their bewitched audience. Thus, if there is a need to, it will always be better to ask God again for the salvation that one may suppose he has received even if it is to secure the needed assurance than to dwell on assumption when he may only have been treading in the peripherals of spiritual disaster. Charles Spurgeon vehement urge to Christians is unmistakable:

Trifle not here, I adjure you! If you must trifle anywhere, let it be about some secondary matter: your health, if you will, or the title deeds of your estate; but about your soul, your never-dying soul and its eternal destinies, I beseech you to be in earnest.

Similarly, from one of the *Sermons Notes* of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church movement we read:

If we are wise, we shall be continually crying to God, until His Spirit cries in our heart, ‘Abba, Father!’ This is the privilege of all the children of God, and without this we can never be assured that we are His children. Without this we cannot secure a steady peace, nor avoid perplexing doubts and fears...hereby shall I know that I am in no delusion, that I have not deceived my own soul...

Therefore, if as you read through this, the spirit is not bearing loud witness with your spirit that you truly belong to God, you must do something. Paul says *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”* (Romans 8v16). This is more so when lack of assurance may be the only proof that you have not crossed the line.

Where you sense the need, please pray the prayers below in faith to invite Jesus into your heart and settle the matter, once and for all:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know You love me dearly and suffered for me on the cross of shame at Calvary. I have come to admit that there is an end to everything that has a beginning. I repent of my sins, surrender my life to You and embrace Your salvation as my portion from this moment on. I believe that whoever comes to You, You will in no wise cast away. So, I have come. Write my name in the Book of Life and help me to live for and walk with You for the rest of my sojourn on earth. I have the assurance of going with You however and whenever you come to take the saints home. Thank you, Lord.

If you pray this prayer from your heart, you have been saved from the wrath to come. Team up with a Bible-believing church where the book is preached and taught in truth. It may even be the same church which you are already attending and where you will now worship and serve in the newness of life. You can contact me if there is a need to.

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