

EDITORIAL

Nearly all of us are convinced that the Lord Jesus is coming back again. And we have unassailable Scripture supports for this conviction. Many of us are even convinced that His coming could be in our own very lifetime – and that too only makes sense; after all if He is coming, He will be doing that in some people's life-time. So why not ours? The big question however is what are we doing with such knowledge and convictions? Is our knowledge of the Truth enough to set us free from the chains of compelled conformity to the World Order? Are we sufficiently sure of this our Lord Jesus Christ as to want to put all our eggs in His basket? Beloved, if needs be, would you die for your faith? Today?

Helping us put our faith to action is what this newsletter is all about! We believe one way to help us Christians keep the right perspective about day-to-day issues is to periodically remind ourselves of the lessons of History and reflect on the prices people with whom we share the name 'Christian', have had to pay before us. Hence our decision that every 3rd and 6th edition of this newsletter in each year (as the Lord tarries) be presented with a 'history flavour'. We hope our readers will easily be able to understand that every action each of us undertakes (or fails to undertake!) today is capable of becoming or influencing tomorrow's history. (See **Rev 20:12** for another compelling perspective!). **Please meditate on the verse below from the Wake-Up Call album by the musical group PETRA.**

BELIEVER IN DEED (1 John 3:18)

On this journey we begin at birth
This fleeting moment that we spend on earth
No second chance to live it all again
It must be now or never
To cherish each endeavour
What will they say that I have left behind?
A faithful heritage for all to find
What will they see?

I want my legacy to be

Refrain: He was a believer indeed

He had a heart of a different breed

He made his mark and he lived by his creed

A true believer

A believer in deed

Am I living everything I say?

Am I pointing others to the Way?

Will I leave this world a better place?

Will Jesus say He knew me?

Is Jesus living through me?

Did I maintain my authenticity?

A man of honour and integrity?

Remembering me..

I hope that they will truly see

Refrain

At the end of my days I know I'm gonna say

I wouldn't live my life any other way

I'll look to my posterity, to carry on for me

And pray that they will see

Refrain

Bob Hartman.

CHURCH NEWS

Archbishop Idahosa goes home. The President of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria and Archbishop of the Church of God Missions International Inc. went to the with his Master on Thursday 12th March. His was the classical story of rags to glory and he grew to be recognized as the minister no one can ignore, leaving solid indelible marks upon Church and Society in Nigeria. His life story is published in his biography by Ruthanne Garlock.

OIC again? The Sultan of Sokoto and spiritual head of moslems in Nigeria reported on Radio Nigeria Network news (on 21/4/98) that the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) has "accepted" Nigeria into its fold in their last meeting in Iran. This confirms earlier reports (Guardian 24/3/98) that the Sultan had earlier broken this news to the Pope in his recent visit here.

All these show that the forces bent on changing the religious status of Nigeria and 'Islamizing' it are not relenting in their futile dreams, despite repeated failure on their part to achieve this. This is the time for all Christians to support our leaders with prayer, (for wisdom and boldness) while at the same time be prepared to demonstrate our obedience to God through them in contending for the Faith and the future of Nigeria.

Christians Leaders Unanimous on Abacha's Presidential Ambition.

There is no ambiguity whatsoever from Christian leaders in their call to the Nigerian Head of State, NOT to be a participant in the Transition Programme he is currently mid-wifing. For example, the usually moderate Foursquare Church in Nigeria in a communique issued at the end of their 1998 International Ministers' and Leaders' Conference (Feb 16-22), among other national issues addressed, advised the Head of State to "resist all temptations to remain in office beyond Sept 30, 1998". Some Catholic clerics have also recently taken a similar action. Gen. Abacha had earlier on urged Nigerians to pray for him in order for him to be able to decide whether or not to succeed himself.

Nigeria Prays – The General Yakubu Gowon-led Prayer Squad (co-ordinated by Rev Moses Aransiola) is going round state capitals on a serious prayer campaign. The meeting in Oshogbo, Oshun State, was broadcast live on the State Radio Station. With a former Head of State leading public prayers, who says God is finished with Nigeria? Why not link up with Him in prayer to find out more about His agenda for the country; and how you can fit in?

Prayer Works! Just as we have always maintained on the pages of this Newsletter as a sure possibility, praying Christians have finally made the difference in the 9-month long Ife-Modakeke fratricidal war. PTL! The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in conjunction with the Oshun State government called for a 7-day fast at which grand finale, prayers were said for the crisis. By the end of that day, there were spontaneous rejoicing all over the ancient city and people from the two communities flocked to hitherto forbidden regions in celebration. However, Christians still need to sustain the peace with prayer, as well as organize inter-community Christian activities to help consolidate the

HISTORY QUIZ

Q: What did Sir Thomas More say to his executioner when, climbing the Scaffold, he found it wobbly?

A: Sir Thomas in his last moments merrily said: "I pray you, Master Lieutenant, see me safe up and, for my coming down, let me shift for myself".

peace. The moves of those who profit and delight in war must be firmly countered and resisted.

2 Million-Man March in March: The hope to have a gathering of 2 million men at Abuja in the month of March was met and surpassed – but in an unexpected way! While the political conveners, according to news reports, could only manage to draw a crowd of a few hundred thousands at an enormous cost to the nation, the visit of Pope John Paul II, the Catholic pontiff easily met the mark. In Oba, Anambra state, a crowd estimated at over 3 million met the Pope who visited Nigeria for a state/religious visit. During this his second visit to Nigeria the Pope met with a cross-section of Moslem leaders and appealed for “cooperation and tolerance”.

Were 31 people sacrificed to gods in Delta?

Quoting names and other facts, The Nigerian Tribune (19/3/98) reported that 31 people were “allegedly way-laid and rounded up by ‘pirates’ from (a named village) who took the victims to a shrine within the village where they were sacrificed to their gods”. Government however vigorously denied this report about a week later (Guardian, 25/3/98). **The question is what really happened!** Reports from other sources confirm that the so-called gods, apparently desperate and up to something (no-good!) are making demands of human blood in recent times. In most cases, these demands are met by precipitating some senseless wars and carnage among the people. Thank God, the name of the Lord Jesus remains a strong tower for the Christian.

Jesus Film is now ready in Kanuri, the language of some 4-5 million people living in North East Nigeria. The Great Commission Movement will be sending 20 teams in different locations around and beyond Maiduguri area who will present the film for 30 consecutive days from Apr 15-May 14. An estimated ½million Kanuris are expected to be exposed to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by the conclusion of the project. Please pray for an unqualified success for this Project. The Jesus Film is a feature-length motion picture about the life of Jesus based on the gospel of Luke. It is now available in over 20 Nigerian languages.

GETAC '98. That highly anointed, fruit-bearing and explosive 7-yearly gathering, God's End-Time Army Conference is now billed to be an annual event –perhaps an acknowledgement by the organizers of the imminence of the Lord's coming! This year's conference is scheduled for May 6 – 9. Please contact the Sword of the Spirit Ministry, (Agodi P.O. Box 6308, Ibadan; or by phone – ((02) 810-1475), for details.

French Clerics Ask Forgiveness for Church's sins in

Holocaust Era: In a statement published in Paris on Sept 29 1997 (prior to a similar one recently published by the Vatican) a group of prominent Catholic Bishops asked for “forgiveness from God and humankind” for the sins committed by the sons and daughters of the Church during the period leading up to the Nazi Holocaust. While they noted that a number of courageous bishops and other Christians did raise their voices in strong protest at various times, the statement agreed to the Church's overall culpability in the following words:

“Our Church leaders failed to recognize the fact that at that time the Church was called upon to fill a void and to play a role in a crumbling society. They failed to understand that they wielded tremendous power and influence, and that, in the face of the silence of other official bodies, the words of the Church could have aroused reverberations and might have stemmed the tidal wave of irretrievable events...”

Church Arise! hopes the leaders of the Church today are listening and they will not allow ‘history to repeat itself’

Church Arise! LivingWater Ministries is a faith ministry with a vision to serving individual Christians of that Stream designed by God to make glad the City of God – even as we the Church, brace up for the last series of conflicts before the Lord returns. To be a partner in this work, why not drop us a line or give us a call today?

“So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth”

The Lord Jesus Christ (in Rev 3:16)

UPDATES

Israeli Anti-mission bill: In our maiden issue, we reported on a bill introduced in the Israel's Knesset, that would provide for a year's imprisonment for anyone “possessing, printing, copying, distributing, delivering or importing material designed to induce anyone to change his faith”. According to the current issue of Christian and Israel newsletter, the Israeli government has now clarified the issue. While agreeing that the events leading to the bill were indeed outrageous, it however feels that the Bill was an overkill. Prime Minister Netanyahu has pledged that the government will work hard to ensure that the bill is defeated in the Knesset.

This is comforting news indeed; and also shows the result when Christians arise to maintain the grounds given us by the Lord. The Israeli government was literally inundated by letters from concerned Christians. Bravo!

Cloning: As we suggested in our last edition, the cloning train may be unstoppable, simply because it is only one of the marks of the end times. Even in the US (apparent leaders of the anti-cloning campaign), the bill to ban human cloning was shelved in the Senate (11/2/98) due to differences over what constitutes a form of human life that merits legal protection. Opponents of the bill, including numerous groups in the scientific community, say it goes too far in restricting vital research. (Source CNN 12/2/98)

HISTORICAL PERSONALITY FOCUS: Bonhoeffer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer could have been any of the Christian University lecturers in today's Nigeria. He was a lecturer at the University of Berlin when Hitler came to power. He joined the anti-Nazi pastors in the German ‘Church struggle’. In 1939, Dietrich refused a job in America thus choosing to stay in Germany rather than escape the impending war. He was convinced that he had to face the difficulties ahead with the Christians in Germany. During the war, forbidden to preach or publish, he served as a double-agent and vainly sought the British government support for the anti-Hitler conspirators. For his involvement in smuggling 14 Jews to Switzerland, he was hanged on April 9 1945, at the age of 39, leaving behind a rich legacy of books, letters, papers and notes especially on the subject of the pathways of future Church renewal.

Like any other human being, Bonhoeffer may not be the perfect example in all the circumstances he passed through; but one thing we can easily learn from him: if Christianity is anything at all, it must be *everything!*

“It is infinitely easier to suffer in obedience to a human command than to accept suffering as free, responsible men. It is infinitely easier to suffer with others than to suffer alone. It is infinitely easier to suffer as public heroes than to suffer apart and in ignominy. It is infinitely easier to suffer physical death than to endure spiritual suffering. Christ suffered as a free man alone, apart and in ignominy, in body and in spirit, and since that day many Christians have suffered with Him” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD my strength, and my Redeemer”
David (Ps 19:14)

FAMILY

Study: Better Child Care, Better Behaviour

Young children who are cared for in “high quality” settings, where caregivers actively play and talk with them have fewer behavioural problems than children cared for in settings where they don’t get such intense attention, according to the results of an on-going federally-sponsored (USA) child-care study. (CNN 4/4/98).

Just how much do you consider it worth, to have your children live for God, untainted by the spirit of the age? It may not cost you more than mere re-ordering your priorities (and of course you schedules)!

Connected Daddy. When my small boy was playing with his buddies in the back yard I overheard them talking one day – and the conversation was, amusingly, one of those ‘I can whip your dad’ routines. One boy proudly said, “My dad knows the mayor or our town!” Another said, “That’s nothing – my dad knows the governor of our state!” Wondering what was coming next in the programme of bragging, I heard my son say, “That’s nothing – my dad knows God!” I slipped away from my place of eavesdropping with tears on my cheeks. On my knees in my room, I prayed earnestly and gratefully “Oh, God, I pray that my boy will always be able to say, ‘My dad knows God.’”

H. Halverson

MANHOOD. Where does a boy learn the privileges and responsibilities of manhood but by watching his father? The great gift of a man to his son is a strong father image – stability and tenderness, a daily example of courage and integrity, a balanced combination of aggressiveness and contentment – all enhanced by his dedication to Christ.

Dr. J. Allan Petersen

MODELS Long before a child can say, “Daddy” or Mommy”, he can “read”. Not words, of course, but parents’ lives. When should parents begin to teach him the Word of God? As soon as he is born, for this is when he begins to observe, to feel and to interpret expressions. By the time a child is two, the attitudes he has observed in his parents regarding God, Jesus, the Bible, and other members of the family have already influenced his personality development.

Dr Gene Getz

Ugh, Ugly: Nigeria football stars Austin ‘J.J’ Okocha and Emmanuel Okechukwu both playing professional soccer in Turkey, have been reported to have taken up Turkish citizenship in order to beat some rules by the Turkish F.A. and maintain their positions in the first team. Well, that may be professional enough. **But were they also required to change their names and religion as they now seem to have done?** Is this a case of selling one’s birthright for a mess of pottage or perhaps they never had any previous religious convictions? Esteemed Reader, may we ask: is your own faith in Christ also not more than another exchangeable item on the shelf, (apparently) like these two gentlemen’s?

EDUCATION IN THESE LAST DAYS

The Ohio Education Association (USA) is working to root out conservative religious activity in the state’s schools. In 1995 participants in one of the group’s meetings were asked to fill out a questionnaire on religious activity in their school districts. One of the questions asked was: “Are any of the school board members in your school district known or suspected to be proponents of the radical right?” Activities that could indicate allegiance to the “radical right” included parental challenges to sex education, opposition to AIDS curriculum and to outcome-based education, and requests for “public review of curriculum” The group plans to use the information “to

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We shall be delighted to send bulk copies of Church Arise!

regularly to Pastors or other leaders in the Christian community for prayerful distribution. This will enable us plan more meaningfully on increasing our circulation. Please write to our Circulation Department with your details.

combat the negative impact of such activities”. Groups listed on the survey that were classified as being members of the “radical right” included Focus on the Family, the Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America, and Citizens for Excellence in Education.

In Nigeria, Christians may think it’s time to relax after the protracted battle to save the mission schools, fought particularly in the last republic. However the report above shows us that the battle, globally, is only shifting towards curriculum and educational structures. And if we take time to reflect on this again, we will see several tell-tale signs in this country right from primary education to University education. One of the requirements for OIC states is that the education minister must always be a moslem – and changes in names to doubly confirm this might even be required! The tolls are definitely on us.

It is time Christians arose to this challenge. The Bible places a solemn responsibility on parents and the local church to be involved in education. The Great Commandment (Deut 6) states, “These words which I command you today shall be in your heart, and YOU (parent) shall teach them DILLIGENTLY to your children. See also Eph 6:4. Church Arise! wishes to commend to us the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) programme which has been producing great fruits all over the world and is now available in Nigeria by subsidy of Christians abroad. (Please contact ACE Nigeria, c/o ECWA, Box 63, Jos for further details). We should also endeavour to show interest in what and how our children are being taught. With the vast fortune most of us commit to our children’s education, we certainly should be able to have a say in the system, especially when Biblical standards and principles are involved.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Modern Israel clocks 50

On Tuesday May 12, it will be fifty years since the modern Israeli nation was born and established in Palestine. For almost 2,000 years, the Jews had been scattered worldwide and faced tremendous difficulties and, many times, outright persecution largely due to their insistence on maintaining their unique identity as the people of God. After all, they would claim, the Messiah is supposed to come and rescue the Jewish people and sitting upon the throne of David, reigns forever and ever. No known race exists that succeeded in maintaining their identity for more than 500 years after dispersion. However despite the fact that the Jews were violently scattered and subjected to hardship unprecedented, they firmly refused to be assimilated by the cultures (worldwide) where they were scattered since 70 AD when Titus sacked Jerusalem. If this assimilation had occurred, it would then be a trivial task for Bible critics to discredit Biblical prophecy which unequivocally pronounce that Israel will be re-gathered to Palestine prior to the end of all things.

Such was the apparent hopelessness of the enterprise of having a re-born Jewish nation that the highly regarded Encyclopaedia Britannica, in a 1905 entry wrote:

“The dream of some Zionists for the restoration of Hebrew as a living language has as little chance of success as the dream of the restoration of a Jewish state in Palestine”

Today, the Biblical fact that the ‘folly of God’ is wiser than the wisdom of man is borne out by the existence of the nation of Israel with Hebrew, the language of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as their official language.

Biblical scholars have always linked the re-emergence of Israel with the end times. A common interpretation of Matt 24:32-34 is that the generation that sees the re-birth of Israel (the fig tree putting forth its leaves) will not pass away till all end time prophecies be fulfilled. Should this be correct, then the reader is left to make his own deductions!

How long is a ‘generation’- Seventy years? Fifty years? Or Forty years? No one can speak with absolute certainty. A clue to the imminence of things however, is the talk that Israel is hoping to rebuild Solomon’s temple on its original site (presently occupied by a

Mosque). Some think the counting of the years due a generation should commence from the year that Israel took total control of Jerusalem (June 1967, during the 6-day war).

Whoever is right, one thing remains clear: as Israel marks her fiftieth birthday this May, a clear sign is being presented to all whose sense of discernment has not been completely overwhelmed by the current World Order that the end of all things is at hand. The opening words of our Lord Jesus Christ in His ministry (Mark 1:15) is more than ever, urgent today: *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”*

Pre-Millennial Tension:

Some people base their opinion on the imminence of Christ's second coming on the fact that we are approaching a new millenium. We may however do without making the assumptions inherent in this type of reasoning – assumptions that God also counts in decimal and that the reckoning of the length of what constitute a year has remained constant since Adam. The numerous signs of today speak for themselves! The Light for the Last Days newsletter has a short list of these Biblically significant events all converging about this time). An extract from that newsletter:

“The single European currency, the talks on the final status of Jerusalem, the papal plans for a world religious union for the next millenium, the New Age (occultic) belief that the ‘Age of Aquarius’ is about to dawn in the next millenium with a new ‘Messiah’ to usher in a New World order of global peace. In addition to these, a number of articles in the secular press have noted the growth of unusual phenomena now being code-named Pre-Millennial Tension. These include UFO investigations and abductions, New Age lifestyles and interest in the occult and witchcraft, visions of the Virgin Mary, the rise of strange cults outside mainstream religion....”

Church Arise! invites the Reader to judge for him/herself if all these events predicted thousands of years before as marks of the endtimes are really here or not. Or are we so completely engrossed with the current political/socio-economic situation in the country to be blind to these vital signs as well?

CHALLENGES FACING THE CHURCH

Invitation for Readers' Contribution

Have you ever been burdened about the obvious fact that despite the ever increasing number of those of us who respond to the name ‘Christian’, our Society has very little to show for it? Or dare we compare ourselves with the 1st century Christians in any way? Where is our influence ... what is keeping us from performing as the Lord has designed us to?

Church Arise! invites you to prayerfully consider and write to us what the Lord will reveal to you as the **top 5 challenges** either already confronting the Church today or is likely to do so in the near future. If you are inspired to proffer solutions to some of these, please include such solutions as well. Aspects of your contributions may be published in this newsletter; but we actually hope to make use of every contribution in preparing a document on the theme and which will be made available to the Body of Christ. Your contributions will also help us in preparing sub-themes for some seminars we will like to organize in the near future on this very important subject.

So please, do not delay it. Set to work today on this issue. You never can tell how far your contribution may go to help prepare the Body of Christ in these end times. And please note that you don't have to write an essay – though that would be equally welcome. Just send in your outlines with a few comments. Resist all that would stop you from responding to this clarion call in Jesus' name! Thanks and God bless you.

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Questions, comments, or substantiated information of relevance to this newsletter are welcome. We thank you for your interests.

A Martyr's Diary

Martyrs, throughout the ages, are ordinary folks like you and I. It's all a question of denying or confessing Christ Jesus, when we are on the spot. Really, every moment, we all make our decisions one way or other! The account below is an extract from the diary of a 4th century young lady, Perpetua, who decided to maintain her witness for the Lord Jesus Christ – up to the point of death, being torn to pieces by wild beasts. Remember, it is a true-life story.

“While we were still under arrest my father out of love for me was trying to persuade me and shake my resolution. ‘Father,’ said I, ‘do you see this vase here, for example, or water pot or whatever?’

‘Yes, I do’, said he.

And I told him: ‘Could it be called by any other name than what it is?’ And he said: ‘No.’

‘Well, so too I cannot be called anything other than what I am, a Christian.’

At this my father was so angered by the word ‘Christian’ that he moved towards me as though he would pluck my eyes out. But he left it at that and departed, vanquished along with his diabolical arguments.

During these few days, I was baptized, and I was inspired by the Spirit not to ask for any other favour after the water but simply the perseverance of the flesh. A few days later we were lodged in the prison; and I was terrified, as I had never before been in such a dark hole. What a difficult time it was! With the crowd the heat was stifling; then there was the extortion of the soldiers; and to crown all, I was tortured with worry for my baby there.

These were the trials I had to endure for many days. Then I got permission for my baby to stay with me in prison. At once I recovered my health, relieved as I was of my worry and anxiety over the child. My prison had suddenly become a palace, so that I wanted to be there rather than anywhere else.

One day while we were eating breakfast we were suddenly hurried off for a hearing. We arrived at the forum, and straight away the story went about the neighbourhood near the forum and a huge crowd gathered. We walked up the prisoner's dock. All the others when questioned admitted their guilt. Then, when it came my turn, my father appeared with my son, dragged me from the step, and said: ‘Perform the sacrifice – have pity on your baby!’

Hilarius the governor, who had received his judicial powers as the successor of the late proconsul Minucius Timinianus, said to me: ‘Have pity on your father's grey head; have pity on your infant son. Offer the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors.’

‘I will not,’ I retorted.

‘Are you a Christian?’ said Hilarius.

And I said: ‘Yes, I am.’

Then Hilarius passed sentence on all of us: we were condemned to the beasts, and we returned to prison in high spirits.

Editor's Note: The sacrifice alluded to above was a pinch of incense offered to the Emperor. Genuine Christians found this offensive to their faith. Other so called Christians however either hired people to offer the sacrifice for them or procure fake certificates of compliance. Though they ‘gained’ their lives (for a while), they lost the unique opportunity to witness for, and represent Christ Jesus. These same situations go on even till today!

As a result of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her friends at Cathage it was reported that the prison governor was converted. We'll see these folks in heaven some day. Amen.