

Book One – The Story of Pachacuti

in a few minutes of silent entreating prayer. Then with a growing sense of trespass he climbed back to the top and stood looking out across the church roof at the scenery in the valley below.

He didn't know how long he stood there lost in thought, awestruck by the natural timeless grandeur of the valley and of the horrific human tragedy being played out within it, of the church beneath his feet standing testament to the persistence of human endeavour and to man's capacity for faith in the Divine. Just out of sight beyond the southern horizon he knew was the Great Rift Valley, regarded by many as the cradle of the human species. He had no doubt that from the exact same spot where he now stood, other men had gazed in similar wonder. Before the birth of Christianity, before the concept of a single God, before even the concept of gods at all, this land had borne silent witness to all of human significance that had transpired.

He tried to put into context the natural, the divine and the human elements of all he beheld. He saw the church as a symbol of a religion two thousand years old, against the backdrop of a thousand times that. He visualised the ancients who had come here to make stone tools long before others had brought their metal tools to hew that same stone to their will. He wondered if the edifice he beheld was truly a temple to an omnipresent, omniscient and compassionate God or merely to a human fabrication born of a confusing torment of mind he himself now endured. Were the ancient gods truly discoveries or mere fabrications?

Then his mind returned to the present, to the job at hand and to his reasons for being there. He could envisage in the valley below the gaunt wasted bodies and the traumatised, sunken eyes and he felt at that moment that the evidence to support his interventionist God was similarly thin and withdrawn. Unenlightened and unrestored, he returned to join the men at the truck.

In all, Adam spent a total of nine weeks in and around the Lalibela relief centre, during which time the numbers of refugees seeking succour doubled and then doubled again, as did the number of individual graves and multiple burial mounds adjacent to each of the encampments. Some of the work of interring the dead was carried out by government labour gangs, but all too