

**6<sup>th</sup>**

**Adeolu Adegbola**  
*Memorial Lecture*

**Retooling our**  
**Approach to Sharia:**  
*A Wholistic and Pluralistic Perspective*

*by*

**DR. JAN HARRY BOER**  
*([www.SocialTheology.com](http://www.SocialTheology.com))*  
*Former Director of the Jos Office of the*  
*Institute of Church & Society*

**Retooling our Approach to Sharia:  
A Wholistic and Pluralistic Perspective**

By Dr. Jan H. Boer  
([www.SocialTheology.com](http://www.SocialTheology.com))

Former Director of the Jos Office of the  
Institute of Church & Society

Being the 2011 Edition of

The Annual Adeolu Adegbola Memorial Lecture Series

Delivered on

May 11, 2011

At

The Institute of Church & Society

Ibadan, Nigeria

*Religious groups should together search for a more adequate basis for their contribution to national development, should jointly bring their religious perspective of social concern to bear on development plans, and should cooperate to promote the spirit of selfless service and loyalty to God in the citizenry.*

*E. A. Adeolu Adegbola, 1977*

## ***Introduction***

**The late Bishop Adeolu Adegbola was a man with wide-ranging interests and sympathies. The fact that this annual series of lectures normally focuses on development and poverty reduction is reflective of one of his major pre-occupations. For reasons I will not take time to explain, this lecture has a different focus, namely the issue of how we handle the sharia challenge. This, too, was one of his strong concerns. In fact, the above quotation embraces both of these interests. He was running the ICS ship at the time of the first Constituent Assembly in 1977 and was involved in some conferences on the topic in the course of which he produced a number of position papers.**

**Though the sharia issue appears to have died down, a perusal of the internet indicates that the issue is still ongoing and causing headlines right up into 2011.<sup>1</sup> The fizzle or sizzle issue has not yet been decided in spite of President Obasanjo's alleged early prediction<sup>2</sup> and Haruna Dandaura's declaration.<sup>3</sup> Philip Ostien, an American researching the entire sharia scene since its beginning in the 1970s, reported in 2008/2009,**

**As to whether sharia has fizzled out: well, all the new sharia-related laws are still there, and they are being amended, supplemented, etc. from time to time. The institutions...are there and are being operated. There are a whole lot of fairly serious-minded people in charge of these institutions doing their best to make them work. Yes: there are serious problems with the sharia programme in some states (not Zamfara); in others it is going forward.**

**After Ostien returned from another extensive field trip to Nigeria early 2011, he wrote:**

---

<sup>1</sup>It is in 2011 that the sharia is said to be creeping into the Central Bank of Nigeria. <<//creepingsharia.wordpress.com/2011/01/24/sharia-creeps-into-nigerian-central-bank/ > and other sites.

<sup>2</sup>J. Boer, 2008, pp. 208, 365.

<sup>3</sup>Conversation with Dandaura, Feb/2005. J. Boer, 2008, p. 95

Application of the harsher aspects of Islamic criminal law is pretty much in abeyance. But the Sharia Penal and Criminal Procedure Codes are still in place and are still being applied in the Sharia Courts, and all of the other "ulama agencies" established in the course of sharia implementation are still there and functioning.<sup>4</sup>

As late as 2009, some state government officials said they are doing their best and insisted there can be no turning back from Islamic law, though they concede that a full sharia state in multi-faith Nigeria is impossible.<sup>5</sup>

I wager that the Nigerian Muslim community, especially in the core North, will bring it up again until some *compromise solution* is achieved to *the partial satisfaction of both religions*. So the issue continues to simmer below the surface and groups of Muslims, both fundamentalists and more moderate ones, are right now planning the next phase of the struggle.<sup>6</sup> Hence, it is important that we address the issue before it leads to further violence--and to further under-development and poverty, especially in the North.

### *Requisite Attitudinal Pillars*

This lecture is about exploring a more Christian approach on our part to the sharia challenge. All too many Christians would interpret that as a spirited defence of all things Christian and rejecting all things Muslim, especially sharia. All too often it means to shut our eyes and ears to our Muslim neighbours, interpret all they do and say negatively. It often means a one-sided enterprise that seeks only to shoot holes in Muslim arguments and fails to recognize any truth on their part while recognizing no problems on our side. It means to simply oppose them. *Punkt. Shi ke nan.*

Now we are here in Ibadan, in an important Yoruba centre. Attitudes here, I understand, tend to be more congenial than the sharper antithetical attitudes of both religions in the North. It is possible that your situation here is a little softer, a little more pliable than up North. The religions are more mixed up with each other here in the same families and in more regular and close contact with each other. This may give you an advantage of giving Muslims a

---

<sup>4</sup>P. Ostien correspondence with Boer, 24 Mar/2008 and 22Feb/2011. J. Boer, 2009, pp. 401-402. I herewith alert you to two forthcoming articles by Ostien and Abdul-Fatah Kola Makinde that should be of interest to this audience: "Legal Pluralism in Colonial Lagos: The 1894 Petition of the Lagos Muslims to Their British Colonial Masters" and "The Independent Sharia Panel of Lagos State."

<sup>5</sup>K. Brulliard, "In Nigeria, Sharia Fails to Deliver." *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 12 Aug/2009.

<sup>6</sup>J. Boer, 2009, p. 418.

greater and sympathetic ear and may help you lead Nigeria in the quest for a *national compromise*.

To my mind, “Christian approach” means an approach based on Biblical and Christian ethical ways of relating to people. It includes love and respect for each other, even if that stretches us beyond our normal limits. It means fairness for *both* sides, multilateral over against unilateral. In folk language this is translated as “What’s good for the goose is good for the gander.” Looking for a *compromise solution* that is good for both goose and gander. “Christian approach” means the application of the golden rule, “Do unto others....” And then there is Christ’s aphorism to pluck the beam out of your own eye before you pluck the splinter from your neighbour’s. This means to recognize your own faults, sins, shortcomings and your own contribution to the problem at hand. As idealistic and naïve as these attitudes may sound, they are also the only *practical* avenue towards the goal of *reasonable national détente*, an indispensable component for the struggle to come to a conclusion. And all of this means we must take into serious consideration the Muslim complaints as well as recognize and admit to our own contributions to the problems.

So, ladies and gentlemen, with all protocol observed, herewith then my proposals for retooling our Christian approach to sharia, for rethinking the basis of our arguments against the sharia, for sharpening them, for making them more responsible and effective, for taking seriously the wholistic nature of the Christian religion and for seriously applying the modern concept of pluralism that both Christians and Muslims claim to espouse but find difficult to put into practice.<sup>7</sup>

### ***THE REGNANT PERSPECTIVE OF DUALISM***

Just a few paragraphs further down, I will be introducing you to a wholistic vision of our Christian faith, of the Bible and, indeed, of religion in general, that most of us may not be familiar with. However, there is another sharply

---

<sup>7</sup>I should here make it clear that, unless otherwise indicated, when I refer to Christians and Muslims, it is specifically Nigerians I am referring to, not some wider world communities. I am talking about home, about right here, our own country. Though I have left Nigeria 15 years ago, after living here for 30 years, including three months in Ibadan, more so now that my son, born and raised in Jos, and his family live among you, I assure you that not a day goes by that I do not think of Nigeria and certainly not a week during which I do not pray for her. It remains a kind of home for me and so I feel free to use pronouns like “we,” “us,” “our” and “ours.” I have spent more time here than anywhere else. This is where I matured.

contrasting vision prevailing among us that we have inherited from our missionary forebears that I need to identify first. It goes by the name of “*dualism*” and is the direct and major child of *secularism*. Diagrammatically, it looks like this:

Sacred	Higher	Grace	Divine Revelation	Spiritual	Soul	Theology	Church	Clergy
Secular	Lower	Nature	Autonomous Reason	Material	Body	Philosophy	World	Laity

This is a diagramme of the traditional secular worldview prevalent in the West, largely adopted by the Christian churches and its missionaries. Colonialism and missionaries imported it to Nigeria.<sup>8</sup> In short, the world is divided into two realms. The material above the line represents the spiritual or the religious. It is separated by a line from the affairs of the world. The counterpart of the religious sacred (above) is the secular (below); divine revelation has its lower counterpart in autonomous human reason. So, the spiritual is separated from the world of the material. You do theology in the church on basis of divine revelation, while its counterpart in the world is philosophy conducted on basis of human autonomous reason that does not need any input from divine revelation. This scheme reduces religion to a small part of reality; it reduces the scope of revelation only to religious and spiritual affairs. All of reality divided into two. The realm in which we all share as equals in an objective and rational way is the secular realm, the one below the line. That is the *common* world; the other, above the line, is a special world that is subjective, non-rational, private, churchy. That is why the secular British imposed *common* law on us, meant for everyone. Religion and politics do not go together, for they are on different levels. You don’t need the Bible in politics; only human reason.

This is the *unconscious* worldview which most of us Christians espouse, inherited from colonialism and missionaries. It is so common among us that we are hardly aware of its existence. This is the scheme on which we base most of our anti-sharia arguments. You see, it means that with religion above the line and things like politics below the line, the two shall never meet or, *should*,

<sup>8</sup>J. Boer, 2006, chapter 5. Here I explain the origin of this scheme in detail as well as the dualism or schizophrenia it has unleashed in the church.

never meet, for they belong to different realms. When they do meet, we run into confusion and debase religion by bringing it down to the common. Unconscious adherence to this scheme almost *forces* us to reject sharia outright, for it mixes the unmixable, the sacred and the secular. That, by definition, is not permissible.

Thus it is that by definition we resist sharia. We have no room for it in this dualistic scheme. We tend to insist on secular law. At an earlier stage of the sharia controversy, Northern Zone CAN insisted, “Secular law must remain the basis of the constitution. Christians will resist at whatever price the imposition of and introduction of any religion’s law, such as sharia law, into our secular constitution.”<sup>9</sup> Lutheran crusader Wilson Sabiya felt that sharia causes confusion precisely because it combines law and religion. “Law is inherently distinct from religion.”<sup>10</sup>

The synod of the Church of Christ in Nigeria among the Tiv, more popularly known by its Tiv-language acronym *NKST* and member of the Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria (TEKAN), stated that it is precisely the *religious* foundation of the sharia that makes it objectionable, “We are aware of the highly codified nature of the sharia law, but we still contend that this... does not make it non-religious, because these laws are still injunctions from the Koran and Islamic theology.”<sup>11</sup> In 1977, the year of the first Constituent Assembly, a consultation on the same subject held right here at the Institute of Church & Society, insisted similarly that a constitution should be religiously neutral and uphold only “the *ordinary* law of the land administered by the *ordinary* law courts.”<sup>12</sup> Allow me to reproduce my 1979 comments on this statement:

This law, according to the statement, is to be neither Christian nor Muslim, but to be based on “ordinary” notions, terminology identifying with the...Humanist idea of a general, natural and objective common sense shared by all men, based on sound reason quite apart from their religious commitments. Muslims not having experienced Western autonomous rationalism, have quickly pinpointed the problem, but Christians who are heirs to the tradition of dualism are found advocating a court system that must be divorced in principle from their highest source of authority, the Bible itself. We contend that the solution for Christians

<sup>9</sup>B. Az-Zubair, 2002. Boer, 2005, p. 159.

<sup>10</sup> W. Sabiya, 25 Feb/78. J. Boer, 2008, p. 265.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in J. Boer, 1979, p. 481. Also in J. Boer, 1984, p. 143.

<sup>12</sup> “Communique from a Consultation on Religious Pluralism and the Draft Constitution,” 22-26 June/77 (Ibadan: ICS). Italics mine. I do not misinterpret by identifying the use of “ordinary” in this statement with the term “common” used in discussions of Common Law.

must be sought in a different direction, namely within the framework of Biblical thought.<sup>13</sup>

The broader term for the perspective that has bequeathed us dualism is “secularism,” a term Adeolu Adegbola appears to associate with “institutional atheism” and rejects it accordingly as not suitable for Nigeria. “Secularism is not the ideological option for Nigeria in this regard. No Government which treats this country as a secular State is going to be popular with the generality of the people.”<sup>14</sup> Simeon Ilesanmi, another son of the soil but operating out of the USA, defined secularism as “the doctrine of the personal..., irrelevance of religion,” and immediately rejects it as inadequate for the Nigerian situation.<sup>15</sup> Lamin Sanneh from Yale, born a Gambian Muslim and now an American Catholic, expresses himself similarly: The secular attitude towards religion as “a private individual matter has blunted our grasp of genuine religious pluralism,” has led to the marginalization of religion and caused surprise “that Muslims show such little inclination to follow the secular path that it (the West) has confidently laid out.”<sup>16</sup>

Discussion of the definition(s) of “secularism” can take us far afield. Google the term and see where you land! I adduce two more descriptions of the term, representing the major meaning ascribed to it by *Kuyperian* writers. Harry Antonides, a Canadian, defines it as “the belief that man is autonomous, able to find his own way in the world when guided by reason and assisted by science and technology.” Its “core meaning” includes the rejection of “belief in the transcendent God and in life beyond history, and replaces it with an exclusive focus on man and on life in this world.” At its heart “is the conviction that man is his own lawgiver and that his power is therefore (at least in principle) unlimited.” Another Kuyperian, Paul Marshall, famous for his studies on persecuted Christians and author of published reports also on northern Nigeria, defines secularists not as “people who reject religion per se, but people who regard religion solely as a private matter.”<sup>17</sup>

Muslims often describe secularism as a dualistic separation of religion from marketplace and government, an arrangement they tend to reject vigorously

<sup>13</sup> J. Boer, 1979, p. 481.

<sup>14</sup> E. A. A. Adegbola, 1977.

<sup>15</sup> S. Ilesanmi, 1997, pp. 210-211.

<sup>16</sup> L. Sanneh, 1997, p. 222. Quoted in J. Boer, 2006, p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from various sources in J. Boer, 2006, p. 143. It is part of an expanded discussion on the subject —pp. 139-150.

as a rejection of the core of Islam itself. In fact, the primary purpose of the state is to protect the faith, the very opposite of secularism.<sup>18</sup>

**I am going to offer you a simple five-point description of this secular dualistic perspective that has penetrated so much of Christianity, that underlies so much of our thinking and evokes such strong Muslim resistance and then move on to its antidote or cure.**

1. Reality is divided into the spheres of the material and the spiritual.
2. God is said to be more interested in the spiritual than the material. There is thus a hierarchical relationship between the two, with the spiritual having divine priority.
3. One needs divine revelation, e.g., the Bible, to understand the spiritual world of the church, theology—all the stuff above that line. Here human reason is insufficient.
4. For the affairs of the world, the stuff below the line, human reason is a sufficient source of information. No need for revelational assistance here.
5. Working in the spiritual area—above the line—is often called “the work of God,” while working in the world is not really serious service to Him. Work above the line is “fulltime service;” below, at best half-time service.<sup>19</sup>

**It is this scheme that has led to the common practice of Christians to divorce religion from science, politics and economics—including law and sharia. It has deep historical roots in the development of Christianity that can be traced.<sup>20</sup> And we know where this has led to in the case of many of our politicians and businessmen. The Nigerian church, especially its leaders, have become aware of this problem in our heritage, even though we cannot always exactly lay our finger on it. We are struggling to overcome it<sup>21</sup> and I honour all efforts at doing so. However, habits of thought engendered by dualism do not die the moment we reject the principle. They take time to overcome. This lecture is intended to help us along in that process.**

### *A Wholistic Perspective of Religion*

**I have just now used the term “Kuyperian.” This is a new term for most of us in this country. However, among Christian theorists and social activists across much of the world it is becoming an increasingly recognized *term* not only, but also a *force* to be reckoned with in the search for alternative models for a Christian approach to the world that rejects the old dualistic secularism I**

<sup>18</sup>J. Boer, 2005, pp. 114-115, 165.

<sup>19</sup>J. Boer, 1989, p.11.

<sup>20</sup>J. Boer, 1979, pp. 449-450; 2006, pp. 151-152.

<sup>21</sup> Christian Association of Nigeria, Northern Zone, in a 1989 (?) publication, explained the origin and nature of the problem and the weakness it bequeathed to the church. It points directly to the failure of the missionary community to introduce a wholistic version of Christianity into Nigeria.

have described above. The word itself comes from the name of a Dutchman called Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), whom I have introduced to the English speaking world in several publications, including my series on which this lecture is based.<sup>22</sup>

Am I recommending the ideas of a totally unknown individual foreigner to Nigeria? Well, not exactly, but an entire international school of thought that has emerged from him. His ideas were seminal and have continued to develop among adherents to what is now a famous international school of Christian thought and action known as “Kuyperian”(-ism). I am only too aware of and appreciate Adegbola’s warning about foreign models: *“The Western European and American models do not help to solve our problem because our pluralism is not denominational but multi-religious pluralism. Lebanon, Sudan, the Philippines and other countries in similar situations have no answer for us because they have not yet solved the problem for themselves.”*<sup>23</sup> However, in spite of that warning, Nigerian writers are never shy to search for support and models from the international community. I take heart from ECWA’s Professor Yusufu Turaki, a former National Vice-President of CAN and scholar widely popular as an international speaker, who recommends the Kuyperian approach for Nigeria and Africa in general as exactly what the doctor ordered.<sup>24</sup> I am not suggesting the importation of foreign models of organizing, but I *am* about to propose an alternative perspective with which to handle the sharia question, one that is, moreover, more than secular dualism in keeping with the three major traditions we have in Nigeria, namely the Biblical, the African Traditional and the Muslim and thus arguably more indigenous. It is a wholistic perspective of religion. Though new to you, it is more indigenous, more in tune with our culture than is the secular dualism many of us unreflectingly espouse.

The dualistic scheme summarized above divides reality into the religious and secular and separates the two sharply. In contrast, I view religion not alongside other segments of culture as just another department of life, but regard it as *underlying* all other aspects or departments. Of course, there is that cultural segment known as church and mosque where religion is the

---

<sup>22</sup> A Kuyper & J. Boer, 2010. For a larger but incomplete list of English publications on the subject, turn to my website [www.SocialTheology.com/Kuyperiana](http://www.SocialTheology.com/Kuyperiana). For an introduction to the wholistic approach to society that emerged from the school of Kuyperians, see J. Boer, 2003, pp. 16-24; 2006, pp. 125-251. The final volume in my series, Vol. 8-2, represents my application of Kuyperian thought to the Christian-Muslim struggle here in Nigeria—J. Boer, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> A. Adegbola, 1977. See D. Byang, 1988, p. 100, for similar warning against foreign solutions.

<sup>24</sup> J. Boer, 2009, p. 44. There you will also find a longer list of international supporters of the school.

prime business. However, as useful as they may be, these institutions are not of the essence of religion. The essence is a heart-based commitment underlying and shaping everything that we do and think. Though the entire Bible supports a wholistic view of religion, the *locus classicus* passage is the so-called Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 that I have explained in several of my publications.<sup>25</sup>

Allow me to expand on the nature of religion. There are many scholars who have studied it scientifically and each comes up with his own definition. The problem with arriving at an objective or even “neutral” definition is that the scientist himself is driven by a *pre*-scientific and even *non*-scientific, unproven worldview on basis of which he pursues his science. This is true for everyone. The only way to pursue science, any science, including the subject of religion, is to be conscious of your pre-scientific assumptions and to state them honestly and openly. When I define religion, I do so on basis of what I read in the Bible. That is where the major components of my worldview are found.

The Bible indicates that religion is not one area of life alongside others. In the Bible we find man standing directly before God in a covenantal relationship that is total. The human race is mandate to care for the world. Because of his fall, our race no longer understood its position and so God saw to the publication of His law in the Bible. The Old Testament clearly shows God’s interest in all of life—politics, hygiene, economics, marriage, sex, etc. In the words of Ecclesiastes 12:13—“Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.” Or go to Deuteronomy 10:12-13 and the Great Commandment of Matthew 22:37-40. Christians are expected to “be transformed by the renewal of your *mind*” (Romans 12:2). They are to “take every *thought* captive to obey Christ” (II Corinthians 10:5).

But what happens when people turn away from God and follow other inspirations for their endeavours? Do they become less religious or even non-religious? Hardly, according to the Bible. Turning away from God does not mean people have lost their created nature, which is to serve God. If they no longer serve Him, they will fill their hearts and minds by devoting their creative energies to some aspect of creation instead of to their Creator. According to Romans 1:25, “...they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator.” Bluntly contrary to the secular faith in human rationality, the Apostle Paul declared that “they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were

---

<sup>25</sup> J. Boer, 1979, p. 491-492; 1984, pp. 149-152, 155, 159-160; 2006, p. 277--index entries for “Cultural Mandate”; 2009, pp. 324, 338.

darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images....” The human race is created religious and we cannot escape it. We never become less religious. We simply exchange one religion or worldview for another. It is thus never a question of either law or religion, of objective reason *versus* subjective faith. The question is *which* religion, faith, worldview or set of values it is that guides you. *Even secularism is based on an assumed set of beliefs; it is not objective, neutral or natural. It is modern man’s way of not merely evading God but of replacing Him.* It is a move from one religion to another. When we Christians espouse even our soft secularism, we have one foot each in two hostile camps. *It is called syncretism—an unnatural and unworkable combination of two contradictory worldview or religions.*<sup>26</sup>

**Egbert Schuurman, a Dutch Kuyperian philosopher, objects to treating religion**

*as one of the many factors or variables in human life, distinct from, say, sports, politics or science. If we look carefully at religious communities and various types of societies around the world, we can see that religion is not just a typical function among others, but is, rather, the root from which the different branches of life sprout and grow and from which they are continually nourished. Religion is of radical and integral importance; it concerns the deepest root of human existence and integrates human life into a coherent whole.*<sup>27</sup>

**Kuyperian Paul Marshall put it this way:**

*Religion refers to the deepest commitment and deepest identity of a person or group. An expanded concept of religion allows us to take account of the fact that our lives reflect and are rooted in a particular view of the meaning of life: of the nature of society; of what human beings really are; and of their essential responsibilities, whether to self, society, or another source.*

*...religion is particularly concerned with the roots of our lives. Indeed, the root of culture is religion, in the sense that the basic patterns of our society are shaped by our basic commitment and belief in life, which is, in turn, our religion. Our “god” is that in which we place our faith and trust, and our culture expresses what lies in our heart.*

*All [human] action in God’s world can be and should be service to God and our neighbours. There is therefore no specific area of life which we can call “religious” as though other areas of life were not “religious.” To put it briefly, we may say that “life is religion,” that our religion is what we believe, think, say and do each moment of our lives. As...[someone] remarked, “I can tell more about your faith from reading your cheque book than your prayer book.” Everything we do is religious in that it is done in faithfulness or in unfaithfulness to God. This*

<sup>26</sup> J. Boer, 1991, pp. 91-92.

<sup>27</sup> E. Schuurman, 20 Sep/2007. Quoted in J. Boer, 2009, p. 91.

*means that we should never consider a person, a corporation, a book or a government as “non-religious.” They are always religious in that they reflect either a turning toward God or a turning away from God in their activities. Of course, they may not know and they may even deny it—they usually do, in fact—but it still remains true. Everybody serves somebody. If people do not serve God, then they will serve something else. The “something else” that people serve is what the Bible calls “idols.”*<sup>28</sup>

**Evan Runner, the German-American pioneer of the internationalization of Kuyperian thought, put it bluntly, “Our whole life is religion.” In fact, the *Festchrift* dedicated to him is entitled, *Life is Religion*.<sup>29</sup> This is the underlying theme of this paper.**

**Not only is the above interpretation *theologically and philosophically* valid, but it is supported by *history*. Harold Berman was in life an icon in American legal academics. Combining philosophy and history, he wrote “that law and religion are two different but interrelated aspects, two dimensions of social experience—in all societies, but especially in Western society.” “We have heard too much about the separation of law and religion and not enough about their fundamental unity.”<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Anglican Kuyperian legal philosopher Hebden Taylor insisted that “law cannot be explained or defined without reference to religion.”<sup>31</sup> The religion they refer to is mainly the *Christian* religion.**

**Muslims also make a big point of this history. In his address at the Zamfara State launching of sharia, Justice Muhammad Bashir Sambo challenged Common Law opponents of sharia as follows: “What many of us do not know—and we ought to know—is that the Common Law is also inspired by the religion of Christianity.” He goes on to quote three “Christian legal luminaries, two English and one Nigerian” for support. One Honourable Lord Summer said about British law, “The English family is built on Christian ideas, and, if the national religion is not Christian, there is none. English law may well be called a Christian law.” Lord Chancellor Finlay, asserted, “There is abundant authority for saying that Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land.” Nigerian Honourable Justice Karibi-White similarly spoke of “the Holy Bible, which appears to contain the fundamental basis of Common Law....” Sambo, along with a number of other Muslim**

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in J. Boer, 2009, pp. 92-93. See also J. Boer, 2006, pp. 198-200.

<sup>29</sup> H. Vander Goot (ed.), 1981.

<sup>30</sup> H. Berman, 1986.

<sup>31</sup> H. Taylor, 1966, pp. 342-343. Quoted in J. Boer, 2009, p. 348.,

scholars, concludes that “it is not only the Islamic Law and Customary Law that have religious elements in them.”<sup>32</sup>

**But things get more interesting. It appears that we can go one step further. Not only is Western law heavily influenced by Christianity, that is, like sharia, by religion, but some scholars claim that Western law is influenced by sharia as well as by Christianity! Joseph Schacht (1902-1969), a German Orientalist whom Muslims do not consider their friend, posited such a historical connection:**

Several of its [sharia] institutions were transmitted across the Mediterranean in medieval Europe and became incorporated in the law... Another significant influence occurred in Islamic Spain. At the opposite end of the Mediterranean, Islamic law has exerted a deep influence on all branches of law of Georgia. There is finally the effect of Islamic law on the laws of the tolerated religions, the Jewish and the Christian. It is certain that the two great branches of the Oriental Christian Church, the Monophysites and the Nestorians, did not hesitate to draw freely on the rules of Islamic law.<sup>33</sup>

**More recently, the Kano scholar Ibrahim Ado-Kurawa, reported on a British seminar he attended where it was similarly claimed that “*the history of Islam in Britain predates the British Empire with the earliest Islamic influences dating back to King Henry, who imported Islamic Law from Muslim Spain and modified it into English Common Law.*” He added that “most English barristers are aware of this fact but they never make it public.”<sup>34</sup>**

**The Western and Muslim emphasis on the Christian background to common law is hotly contested by Christians. Already in the days of the first Constituent Assembly, various Christians denied it.<sup>35</sup> In the heat of the struggle, one can expect a Christian denial from YouthCAN, which, flying in the face of international Christian scholarship, insisted that “common law has such a diverse background that it is unreasonable to consider it Christian.”<sup>36</sup> Danjuma Byang, Middle Belt pastor/journalist, considers the Muslim argument here “either an exhibition of stark ignorance or a mischievous utterance aimed at provoking Christians.”<sup>37</sup> James Kantiok argues similarly in his dissertation from Fuller School of World Missions: it is based on**

<sup>32</sup>M. B. Sambo, 27 October, 1999. Quoted in J. Boer, 2009, p. 349.

<sup>33</sup> S. Rashid, 1986, pp. 88-89. J. Boer, 2007, pp. 66-67. The Schacht quote is drawn from Joseph Schacht, “Islamic Religious Law,” in J. Schacht and C. Boxworth (eds.), *The Legacy of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford, 1979.

<sup>34</sup>I. Ado-Kurawa, 2003. J. Boer, 2009, pp. 351-352. For further background materials about the sharia background of Christian law, see pp. 466-467, endnote 29.

<sup>35</sup>J. Boer, 2008, p.74.

<sup>36</sup>YouthCAN, 1987, pp. 18-19. J. Boer, 2008, p. 74.

<sup>37</sup>D. Byang, 1/89, p. 9. J. Boer, 2008, pp. 74-75.

ignorance.<sup>38</sup> Frankly, all of this is starkly opposite to all responsible historical reporting.



**What, it is time to ask, are the implications of this wholistic view of religion for the sharia issue? This religion that underlies and affects everything else?**

**It undermines secular dualism by deleting that artificial line between the sacred and the secular. You cannot argue that British Common Law is neutral, objective and based on reason, while sharia is not neutral but biased, subjective and based on religion, on belief, on faith. If all cultural endeavour is based on underlying religious values, then that holds for legal culture as well, including Common Law. Neither system is philosophically neutral, objective or based exclusively on reason. Both have underneath them systems of value and belief that have never been proven, but that are religious in nature, representing their architects' deepest convictions. That line does not exist. There is constant interplay between religion and the world, especially law, and a constant flow back and forth between them. Change in the one bubbles over into the other.**



### *Law and Culture xxx*

**There is another wholistic link that needs consideration, namely that between law and culture. Again, with their tendency to place things in individual boxes, secularists tend to carelessly ignore the intimate connection between them. Muslims have insisted on an intimate link between the two for centuries.**

**Already the 14<sup>th</sup>-century classical Muslim scholar, Ibn Khaldun, asserted that “no laws, religions or institutions can be effective unless a cohesive group enforces and imposes them and without solidarity they cannot be established.” “Unless religious laws derive their sanctions from social solidarity, they will remain totally ineffective.”<sup>39</sup>**

<sup>38</sup>J. Kantiok, 1999, p. 297. J. Boer, 2008, p.75.

<sup>39</sup>L. Sanneh, 1997, pp. 197-198. J. Boer, 2009, p. 355, 250-261.

**Ibrahim Sulaiman, a northerner, asserts repeatedly that no legal system can operate successfully without its social, political, economic and administrative arrangements supporting it. Allah, writes Sulaiman,**

**has prescribed that laws must never be imposed on any religious community against their will, and that the system of law of each human organization should be duly recognized and protected. This is the only way to ensure harmony in society, and forestall friction and conflicts which may ultimately lead to the disintegration of society. That eternal law is enshrined in the Qur'an 5:44-50.<sup>40</sup>**

**Abdulkareem Albashir insists that “sharia and customary law are more relevant to Nigerians than the common law.” The Muslim people are “more comfortable with sharia and customary law.” Then he quotes a British luminary, Lord Denning, who “rightly said, ‘The people must have a law which they understand and which they will respect’.”<sup>41</sup>**

**An anonymous author wrote in *Radiance*, a short-lived magazine of the Muslim Student Association, that the foreign system just was not working in Nigeria. At independence the people of Nigeria were saddled with arrangements that had “neither roots in the society nor represent the true aspirations of the people.” Various systems were tried over the decades, but none worked. The writer asked, “Has there been any nation in history which flourished under thoughts, ideas, institutions and political culture which are not only alien but hold in contempt the history, culture and convictions of a great majority of its people?”<sup>42</sup>**

**The truth of this perspective was demonstrated by the people themselves when an unprecedented crowd of two million trooped to Gusau to witness the official declaration of the new sharia regime, with a second huge crowd at the actual inauguration. Only a legal system that responds to the aspirations of a people will gain such respect, confidence and adherence. As Governor Sani, now Senator Sani, stated, the event was “a clear reflection of our people’s culture.”<sup>43</sup> The Muslim conclusion is that Common Law will not work in their community, for it is of foreign inspiration that is not understood and will not gain respect, let alone adherence. Only sharia will do that for them.**

<sup>40</sup>I. Sulaiman, May/86. J. Boer, 2007, pp. 74-75; 2005, p. 206.

<sup>41</sup>A. Albashir, 8 Nov/99. J. Boer, 2007, pp. 80-81.

<sup>42</sup>*Radiance*, no. 4, 1983, p. 7. J. Boer, 2007, pp. 207-208. See here for more on the subject.

<sup>43</sup>J. Boer, 2007, pp. 82-83, 98; 2009, p. 355. For additional examples of the unusual popularity of sharia among Muslim commoners see J. Boer, 2008, p. 28.

**It is not only Muslims who are searching for pro-sharia arguments who insist on a close relationship between law and culture. It is, in fact, an internationally accepted principle.** Before zeroing in on the dualistic and self-defeating attitudes of some local Christian writers, I draw your attention to comments from two Christian international experts on the subject. One is from John Witte, a Kuyperian law professor at Emory State University in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Human rights laws, he writes, “need a human rights culture to be effective.” Laws “are not artifacts to be imported wholly from abroad; they must be sown and grown in local cultural and constitutional soils and souls.” “Words are not deeds.... Words pregnant with meaning in one culture may be entirely barren in another.”<sup>44</sup>

Zambian-American Lamin Sanneh insists that law “depends on a broad consensus concerning the fundamental constitutional axioms upon which laws and rules are based *without a controversy about ‘beliefs’ in each round of rule making.*” There should be no disagreements “about the fundamental axioms and their source in religion and tradition.”<sup>45</sup> The italicized words serve only to highlight the special challenge we face in Nigeria, since there *is* that controversy among us about basic beliefs.

Way back in 1977, Adegbola led the way in Nigeria. He wrote,

Nigeria is an inheritor of both traditions. The way we merge the two approaches may spell our doom or assure a peace which can become an example to many other countries. Since we have both Islam and Christianity in this land, the conclusion we draw for one religion on the issue of relationship with the State must equally apply to the other. The Constitution must be based on a national policy to be uniformly applied.

In the same paper, he wrote that “If we hope to have a Constitution which is capable of leading Nigeria into a future of unity and peace,” it must be based on “the need to give relevance to the moral, religious and ethical beliefs of all segments of this society.”<sup>46</sup>

Though most Christian writers do not seem to draw the same implications from the principle as Muslims do, most do accord it some weak recognition without allowing it to drive them to its natural conclusion. For Sabiya, “law is an expression of the needs and values of a particular society.” Exactly. Then, in the case of sharia, he describes it as the law of “an Arab society which

<sup>44</sup>J. Witte, 13 May/2003. J. Boer, 2007, pp. 206-207.

<sup>45</sup>L. Sanneh, 1997, pp. 197-198, 230. Italics mine. J. Boer, 2009, pp. 355, 250-261.

<sup>46</sup>A. Adegbola, 1977.

flourished some twelve centuries ago. That society is long dead.” He then wonders how that experience can be duplicated today in Nigeria.<sup>47</sup>

Danjuma Byang, author of *Sharia in Nigeria: A Christian Perspective*, agrees with Muslims that we all hate foreign domination and want to eliminate all things colonial. But then he becomes erratic and falls into the contradictions so common among the adherents of Christian dualism. He wants to retain common law which is the alien product of the colonialism he wants eliminated! And then he chides Muslims for trying to impose sharia, which they regard as indigenous but is not, and wants to impose common law on them, which is not indigenous either. Both are alien laws!<sup>48</sup> Both Christians and Muslims are transgressing a principle they acknowledge by imposing repugnant non-indigenous law on each other. I am sorry, but I am lost! Are we reduced to seeing who can impose which alien, repugnant and unsuitable law on the other with the winner taking all? We are two equal, huge majorities for God’s sake! We will end up destroying each other with only chaos remaining, both national and religious.

In spite of the above strange twists of thought, Byang does recognize the importance of a positive relationship between law and culture. “The moral and value systems of all the people of Nigeria should be incorporated into the legal system to ensure that the laws are indigenous to us all.” He suggests “that there is need to review our whole judicial and legal system with a view to making it more relevant to our customs and moral values.” But then, echoing Adegbola, he insists that such a review “must be to really satisfy the yearnings of all the segments...of Nigeria,” not just “a clique of religious fundamentalists.”<sup>49</sup> Indeed! All Christians *and* all Muslims. Wonderful stuff and true. But... what if these yearnings include sharia?! Somehow, those yearnings are not to be included. Those yearners want us to adopt their value system, to the utter disregard of the value systems of other citizens in this pluralistic society.”<sup>50</sup> Byang, think about it: Is this not true for *both* sides?

I target Sabiya and Byang not because they deserve all this criticism more than others so much as that they had the courage to take the risk of writing and go public. As writers, they exposed themselves to the contradictions in which Christians constantly embroil themselves when they argue out of the

---

<sup>47</sup>J. Boer, 2009, p. 356.

<sup>48</sup>D. Byang, 1988, pp. 101, 98. J. Boer, 2009, Appendix 35; 2008, pp. 264-265.

<sup>49</sup>D. Byang, 1988, pp. 101, 19.

<sup>50</sup>D. Byang, 1988, p. 98.

**dualistic perspective I am unraveling for you. These contradictions surface all the time in Christian discussions of sharia. We Christians need to think and work our way out of these contradictions but will not succeed unless we overcome this dualistic heritage.<sup>51</sup>**

**Neither am I suggesting that Christians are the only ones to contradict themselves. Muslims may not operate with a dualistic perspective, but that does not necessarily protect them from contradictions. Only a few paragraphs earlier you may have observed that, while Sulaiman insists on the cultural relevance of law, he immediately implies that the Qur'an is the only legitimate source of that law. His is the typical Muslim fascination with the Qur'an and its sharia. It is regarded as so true and so absolutely divine, that it simply can never be irrelevant to a culture, not even a non-Muslim culture. It is always at home everywhere, in any culture. It is never a case of foreign imposition. Only Christians do that!**

**The bottom line for me is that I am a missiologist, an academic student of and practitioner of missions. The topic at hand is also a missiological principle. In an article about a completely different context, namely the Christianization of American "Natives," as they are called in an article from which I am about to quote, Rick Wood writes:**

**The word "indigenous" means "normal or naturally existing." Indigenization is a process that must take place in every people group on earth if the Gospel is to flow naturally within each people.... The Gospel must look normal and natural to the people within a culture if it is to be accepted....**

**When foreign forms and practices are forced on people, you are likely to get syncretism, because the foreign forms often have very little meaning to them, and they end up just going through the motions.<sup>52</sup>**

**This lecture is about our Christian approach to sharia, but in the Christian scheme of things, the issue of indigeneity is the same in mission and law. They are of one piece. Here the issue of wholism combines the concerns for mission and law. Underneath it all lies or *should* lie a Christian concern for a missionary embrace of our Muslim neighbours. The Gospel as a whole as well as any legal system offered by the adherents of that Gospel must be experienced as liberating and indigenous, as naturally fitting the local culture. As long as we insist on imposing a foreign legal system on them that is not**

<sup>51</sup>J. Boer, 2009, pp. 221, 364. I refer you to p. 545 to check out the numerous index references to this "contradiction."

<sup>52</sup>R. Wood, Sept-Oct/2010, p. 5.

even in keeping with our own religion, we will be looked upon as oppressors. They will not listen to us, let alone listen to the invitation of our Saviour to them. The Gospel we present to them and live before them must shun all forms of oppression and must be *seen* to be doing that. It must give them a sense that we support their liberation *as they understand that in their present context*. Our approach to sharia must go hand in hand with the way we present the Gospel. Muslims easily detect any disconnect between the two and will react accordingly.

So, where are we at this point? Allow me to summarize so far.

1. I have sought to undermine the dualistic worldview that defines religion as one among many sectors of culture, as one cultural sector standing among politics, economics, etc. This definition causes Christians to separate religion, including Christianity, from the rest of culture. There is an area of politics, another of economics, each in their own area, and then there is that of religion in its area. This worldview traps Christians into constant contradictions by their failure to recognize the underlying foundational role of religion in cultural affairs, a failure that leads even to distortions of history. It creates a blindness that prevents Christians from recognizing that they impose foreign repugnant religious laws on Muslims no less than Muslims impose on them.
2. All of the above happens largely due to the emotions of anger, fear and hatred that prevent Christians from thinking these issues through more calmly, clearly and rationally. There is no sense of fair play on either side. It is a case of taking all or nothing. It is this emotional package that encourages us to jump uncritically on the above worldview that seems a ready-made tool for us to provide a logical and tight-fitting anti-sharia position. When Christians argue about that worldview in other contexts where sharia is not a threat, they do not really support this dualism. It is this combination of emotion and inherited dualism that creates blindness and weakness on our part and leads to contradictions in our resistance to sharia.

Muslims are less generous in their attitude towards Christian inconsistency. It is pragmatism, Yadudu bristles, not inconsistency. Christians insist on secularism whenever they find it convenient. “However, when it is in their interest, they will simply ignore secularism and act on basis of religious

considerations.”<sup>53</sup> Sulaiman chimes in, “Secularism has become a sinister but convenient mechanism to blackmail Muslims and to impede the progress of Islam.”<sup>54</sup> Similarly Justice Sambo interprets Christian appeal to secularism as a Christian gimmick to deny Muslims their rights.<sup>55</sup> I am not prepared to deny that element altogether. I have occasionally found this to be true, with Muslims as well as Christians.<sup>56</sup>

3. I have sought to replace dualism with a more wholistic perspective that recognizes the foundational role of religion in all cultural affairs and sectors. All of life is religion and is influenced by religion, including law. Though I come with this perspective from a Kuyperian background, it is also more indigenous to the three major Nigerian religions. Thus, I come pleading for us to shed this foreign dualism in favour of a more Biblical and indigenous perspective I describe as wholistic, because it underlies and envelopes the whole of life, including law, including common law.
4. Acceptance of this wholistic perspective can lead us towards greater clarity and greater fairness. It will show us that we are not as different from Muslims as we think with our attempt to impose common law on them. We have the same beam in our eyes, not merely the same splinter. We both impose a system heavily influenced by our religions. We both impose a foreign system on a culture where it cannot earn respect or allegiance.



### *A Pluralistic Approach xxx*

So, the situation on the ground is that we have two religiously influenced legal traditions vying for hegemony. That’s radically different from the way most Christians think of it. It is no longer a case of a neutral, objective, rational, universally valid, secular, public common law system on the one hand versus a subjective, non-neutral or biased religion-based legal system that by definition is private and based on belief or faith on the other hand. That line has been removed. Religion is at the centre of the entire enterprise, both sides of it. The secular solution has evaporated. We are reduced to a Christian versus a

<sup>53</sup>A. Yadudu, 1989. J. Boer, 2005, p. 137.

<sup>54</sup>I. Sulaiman, 22 Mar/86. J. Boer, 2005, p. 137. See also Appendix 5.

<sup>55</sup>M. Sambo, 3 Nov/99. J. Boer, 2005, p. 137. See also Appendix 8.

<sup>56</sup>J. Boer, 2007, pp. 202-203; 2005, p. 153.

**Muslim legal system, both on the same level. What is more, they are represented by two equal blocks of supporters.**

*The solution, in short, is a thorough-going pluralism.*

**Adegbola identified pluralism as a critical issue for Nigeria. He wrote,**

*The question of religious pluralism in Nigeria is one of the issues fraught with grave possibilities of national unity or discord, of social peace or civil war. So grave are the possible consequences that political observers have been quick and will be quicker still to identify it as the underlying cause of any social stress or upheaval in the body politic.<sup>57</sup>*

**Muslims are no strangers to pluralism. They almost universally boast that Islam in both its history and essence is pluralistic and they use the term interchangeably with “multi-religion” and “multi-culturalism.” In fact, Sulaiman makes two large claims. One, Islam with its sharia “has been the only system that respects pluralism.” Two, pluralism is the only way in which Christians and Muslims can live together. It was Europeans with their secularism who wiped it out. Muhammad Sambo similarly posits that there “is no viable alternative to Nigeria opting for a multi-religious status.” In fact, Nigeria *is* a multi-religious state and should continue as such. He wants the Government to identify the country’s religions and “cater for them according to their structure and scope.”<sup>58</sup> That’s pluralism.**

**However, it’s not as straight forward with Muslim pluralism as the above sounds. Tanko Yusuf, a convert from Islam and a stalwart in the Christian struggle, exposed the serious contradictions and ambiguities in the Muslim attitude by describing how some really only want a *Muslim* pluralism, a contradiction in terms. He bristles with anger and disdain, “a despicable contradiction.” An outright “We don’t give a damn about anyone else. This is the Muslim idea and this is the way we want it!”<sup>59</sup>**

**Christians are not always consistent on the subject either. Though the main stream embraces the concept, at one time the Northern Christian Elders Forum actually “denied that Nigeria is a multi-religious country.” This was, I believe, to be interpreted as an emotional outburst under the pressure of the moment rather than a carefully thought-out rejection of mainstream**

---

<sup>57</sup>A. Adegbola, 1977.

<sup>58</sup>J. Boer, 2007, p. 203; see also Ibrahim Umar, Appendix 56. J. Boer, 2005, pp. 133, 136-137, 224-225;

<sup>59</sup>L. Grissen, 1995, pp. 75-77, 109. J. Boer, 2008, pp. 201-202.

opinion.<sup>60</sup> Archbishop John Onaiyekan also is wary of multi-religion, at least as far as giving it constitutional standing goes.<sup>61</sup>

**But while mainstream opinion favours pluralism, it becomes also a major reason for favouring a soft secularism and rejecting sharia, the very opposite to the Muslim approach. This is the CAN way as well as of individual Christian writers. Pluralism, multi-religion and secularism go together, while sharia is rejected.**<sup>62</sup>

**But while pluralism is accepted by most Christians, *legal* pluralism is not. Some of our Christian giants reject legal pluralism. Onaiyekan considers this “a major issue that we must face squarely and honestly.” A united nation requires “that the laws that govern should be the same for all. Any moves that tend to create different laws for different categories of Nigerians seem to me clearly running against the desire for a united country.”<sup>63</sup> Yusufu Turaki affirms Nigeria’s pluralism, but concludes that “it is therefore impossible for sharia to instill unity, stability and peace.”<sup>64</sup>**

**Back in 1988, Christian journalist Danjuma Byang begins a chapter on pluralism with a description of the almost extreme pluralistic nature of Nigerian society and then warns, “If the truth of the diversity of the country is not considered in setting up any national institution, the institution is doomed to failure. It may split into bits and pieces. This is the threat Nigeria is facing right now.”<sup>65</sup> Indisputable. That warning must be taken to heart. Byang also offers some valid suggestions that I have included elsewhere.**

SIDEBAR: I find it very interesting that once you take the discussion about pluralism, including legal pluralism, out of the context of the sharia controversy, the topic evaporates. Most, if not all, Nigerian states have customary courts systems. When Governor Lar established that of Plateau State in 1980, he appointed Haruna Dandaura its first judge. The aim was to ensure “that everyone, irrespective of ethnic, political or religious affiliation, should enjoy justice in all its ramifications, without discrimination.”<sup>66</sup> This was legal pluralism, but no one objected during all the years I lived in Jos. Why was legal pluralism acceptable in this context but not in the sharia context? And while Dandaura headed this pluralistic system, he consistently opposed legal pluralism in the sharia context. Why did the objections in the previous paragraph

<sup>60</sup>J. Boer, 2008, pp. 203-204.

<sup>61</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 21 June/2000, p. 6. J. Boer, 2006, pp. 54-55, Appendix 1.

<sup>62</sup>J. Boer, 2006, pp. 53-54.

<sup>63</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 2000, p. 9. J. Boer, 2008, p. 91.

<sup>64</sup>Y. Turaki. J. Boer, 2008, p. 296.

<sup>65</sup>D. Byang, 1988, p. 97.

<sup>66</sup>M.Gaiya, 2003, p. 50. J. Boer, 2008, pp. 91-92.

not hold here? I venture this answer: a combination of inconsistency, the intellectual haze that comes with Christo-secularism and the threats, fears and anger associated with sharia.<sup>67</sup>

**Early in my closing volume I propose the need for a wholistic pluralism “that will create room for both religions to be themselves, but subject to some compromises demanded by the multi-religio-cultural situation” in which we find ourselves. Today, it is simply impossible to pretend that only my religion counts when there are 65 million adherents of another religion also vying for a legitimate place in the Nigerian sun, *even though I am convinced of the truth of my own*. My conviction cannot possibly deny those other millions their own legitimate place. Both religions confess that God is great. By constantly expanding our awareness of the unfathomable numbers of galaxies out there and of pushing back the limits of the created universe, science is increasingly confirming this amazing greatness. It is simply inconceivable that such a Creator God is too small to have space for two comparatively puny communities perched on a tiny needle tip somewhere in the middle of this apparently unlimited universe. That God is so great that *of course* there is room for all of us**

**I currently live in Canada, a secular country that prides itself on being multi-cultural and multi-religious, both of which terms are roughly synonymous to the pluralism I am going to advocate. However, the regnant Canadian secular spirit tries hard to keep religious faith out of the public arena, considering it too subjective and confining it to the small realms of church, family and the private. It calls this arrangement “pluralism.” Within that small space, it is very tolerant of all religions, as long as they adhere to that secular restriction. That is not the pluralism I am advocating. In fact, it is no pluralism; it is the establishment of the secular worldview over all other worldviews or religions. It is no different from Muslim dominated countries, where others at best are allowed a restricted place. And it is not all that different from the soft secularism Christians in Nigeria are trying to impose on Muslims.**

---

<sup>67</sup>J. Boer, 2008, pp. 91-92, 82. A disclaimer: Not being a legal expert, there may be issues here that I do not recognize.

Kuyperian thought was incubated in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century situation like Canada's above, only worse. Christians in The Netherlands were under intense pressure to tow the secular line to the point where they exploded under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper. His movement grew. Under the power of his worldview, his peasant followers began to stand up tall and straight and moved up the cultural ladder to become a major force in the country till this day. My grandfather was a small peasant farmer. I hold a Ph. D. and stand here lecturing to you, a Nigerian audience of highly educated people. Both of my sons are Yale graduates and one of them, born here in Nigeria, is the CEO of a major Nigerian foundation. All of this is due to the wholistic vision that developed within the Kuyperian movement that gave us strength and determination. His seminal ideas developed and expanded until they went international. This school of thought advances a pluralism where every worldview, every religion, every culture within a given society is given a rightful place around the table. There is no privileged religion or philosophy. Everyone is regarded as having equal status before the law and everyone has equal access to government resources, everyone, including secularism and atheism. *One table for all.*<sup>68</sup> Think of it. If all worldviews, including rationalism and humanism, are based on some kind of faith or belief system, on what basis would you rationally accord special privilege to one particular set of beliefs that supposedly is objective, neutral, natural to all? That whole thing is one grand myth. But we Christians are doing just that—as are Muslims.

What would this mean in our Nigerian context? Assuming the wholistic perspective outlined earlier, Christians would no longer impose common law on Muslims nor Muslims the sharia on Christians, but they would recognize each other as equal partners in the project of Nigeria, with equal rights and equal access to resources. Understand well. This is political pluralism, social and cultural pluralism and even *religious pluralism, but this is not religious relativism*. Under this kind of pluralism, religions have the space to remain faithful to themselves and to contribute to the commonwealth out of the depth of the core of their own religion, though ready to make compromises to make our modern society possible. Both Christianity and Islam have the tools for applying ancient wisdom to new situations. In the case of Islam, it is called *ijtihad*.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup>J. Boer, 2006, pp. 211-220; 2009, pp. 73-85.

<sup>69</sup>J. Boer, 2009, pp. 116-121.

**We are not starting *de novo* with a clean slate. We have our shared history since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially since 1914. We have our shared institutions that we squabble about but nevertheless are proud of. We have accomplished much since our birth and do not wish to squander what we already have, what with our mixed heritage of Western colonialism and missions along with the developments we have contributed towards it ourselves. With the new wholistic and pluralistic perspective we need to start off with what is already on the ground, renounce the secular dualism with which we have fooled ourselves and trounced Muslims, and think our way into a new future that is wholistic and pluralistic. Wholism and pluralism are not on the ground fully, but these now form our new direction and goals towards which we will work. And it is only you, Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, who can do it and *must* do it. There is no alternative.**

**All of this will mean deep reflection on the part of genuine leaders. All of this assumes that we can get Muslims of good will aboard in order to create a legal system and social order that respond to the deepest social impulses of justice in our respective religions. Avoid shortsightedness by staring yourself blind on the squabbles of the past few decades, not even on the blood that was so violently poured. Set your sights on the great civilizations our respective religions have developed at different times and aim for those levels. If it's been done before; it can be done again. Our religions have staying power. They will not unravel because of sporadic periods of upheaval, occasional shrinking of vision and temporary failure of spirit. They revive time and again. I challenge you to contribute to the Christian wing of that revival within wholistic and pluralistic parameters. Long live Nigeria!**

## Bibliography

- Adegbola, E. A. Adeolu. "Religious Pluralism and the Draft Constitution of Nigeria." Paper read at the Institute of Church & Society, Ibadan, March, 1977. See J. Boer, 2006, Appendix 6. (On Companion CD-Rom only.)
- Ado-Kurawa, Ibrahim. "Negotiating Identity and Representation: A Review of the Proceedings of British Council International Seminar on Representing Islam." [www.gamji.com](http://www.gamji.com), July/2003. J. Boer, 2009, Appendix 9.
- Albashir, Abdulkareem. "Sharia: Its Meaning and Significance to Muslims." *New Nigerian*, 8 Nov/99, p. 5. J. Boer, 2007, pp. 80-81.
- Az-Zubair, Banu. "Secularism, Sharia, and the Nigerian Constitution." Digital document circulating cyberland, probably 2002. Boer, 2005, Appendix 1, pp. 158-165.
- Berman, Harold J. "The Religious Sources of General Contract Law: An Historical Perspective." *The Journal of Law and Religion*. 1986, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 103-124.
- Boer, Jan H. *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context: A Case Study of the Sudan United Mission*. Amsterdam Studies in Theology I. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1979.
- . *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1984.
- . *Christians and Mobilization*. Jos: Institute of Church & Society, 1989.
- . "Science without Faith Is Dead." In A. Kuyper and J. Boer, *Faith, Science, Miracles, Islam: Four Kuyperian Essays*, ch. 4, an E-book from [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com), 2010. Originally published in Jos, Nigeria: Institute of Church & Society, 1991, pp. 76-102. Also found on J. Boer, vol. 9.
- . *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations*. 9 vols. Total of over 2700 pp. Belleville ON, Canada: Essence Publishing, 2003-2009. Jos, Nigeria: Africa Christian Textbooks (ACTS).
- Vol. 1—*Nigeria's Decades of Blood*, 2003.
- Vol. 2—*Muslims: Why the Violence*, 2004.
- Vol. 3—*Christians: Why This Muslim Violence*, 2004.
- Vol. 4—*Muslims: Why We Reject Secularism*, 2005.
- Vol. 5—*Christians: Secularism: Yes and No*, 2006.
- Vol. 6—*Muslims: Why Muslim Sharia Law*, 2007.
- Vol. 7—*Christians: Why We Reject Muslim Sharia Law*, 2008.
- Vol. 8—*Christians and Muslims: Parameters for Living Together*, 2009.
- Vol. 9---*Companion CD-Rom*. Contains all the volumes and over 4,000 supporting articles. Also contains appendices not found in the books themselves. Available

only from author at [boerjf@hotmail.com](mailto:boerjf@hotmail.com).

Byang, Danjuma. *Sharia in Nigeria: A Christian Perspective*. Jos: Challenge Publications, 1988.

Christian Association of Nigeria, Northern Zone. *Leadership in Nigeria*. Enlightenment Series no.1. CAN Publicity: n. p., n.d.. (1989?).

Gaiya, Musa. *Honourable Justice J. H. Dandaura: Apostle of Religious Harmony*. Jos: University of Jos, 2003.

Grissen, Lillian V. *That We May Be One: The Autobiography of Nigerian Ambassador Jolly Tanko Yusuf*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995.

Ilesanmi, Simeon O. *Religious Pluralism and the Nigerian State*. Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies; Monographs in International Studies; Africa Series, No. 66. Published in association with Religions of Africa, a series of the African Association for the Study of Religions, 1997.

Kantiok, James B. *Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria: Political and Cultural Implications for Evangelism*. Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, School of World Missions and Institute of Church Growth, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999.

Kuyper, Abraham & Boer, Jan H. *Faith, Science, Miracles, Islam: Four Kuyperian Essays*. E-book at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com), 2010.

National YouthCAN. *The Sharia: Implications for Christians*. Ibadan: National YouthCAN, 1987.

Onaiyekan, John. "The Sharia in Nigeria: Issues and Perspectives." Presented at NIREC meeting of 21 June/2000. J. Boer, 2005, Appendix 1.

Ostien, Philip. Correspondence with Boer, 24 Mar/2008 and 22 Feb/2011.

*Radiance*. "Nigeria: The Third Decade of Independence." Jan/83, pp. 7-13. J. Boer, 2007, pp. 207-208.

Rashid, S. Khalid, ed. *Islamic Law in Nigeria: Application and Teaching*. Lagos: Islamic Publication Bureau, 1986.

Sabiya, Wilson. "The Constituent Assembly and the Sharia Controversy: The Hour of Decision—Sharia or Jihad (Chaos)?" A presented at a seminar organized by the Institute of African Studies, University of Jos, on the Constituent Assembly and the Draft Constitution, 25 Feb/78. J. Boer, 2008, pp. 258-277.

Sambo, Muhammad Bashir. "An Address on the Official Launching of Sharia, Zamfara State,

by His Excellency the Executive Governor of Zamfara State, Alhaji Ahmad Sani Yariman Bakura on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> *Rajab*, 1420 and 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1999, at Ali Akilu Square, Gusau.” J. Boer, 2005, pp. 219-228.

Sanneh, Lamin. *The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977.

Schuurman, Egbert. “The Challenge of Islam’s Critique of Technology.” Ex-augural address delivered at the University of Wageningen on 20 Sep/2007. Trans. Harry Van Dyke.

Sulaiman, Ibrahim K. R. “State and Religion in Nigeria: A Suggested Framework.” Commissioned paper submitted to the Political Bureau, Lagos, May/86. J. Boer, 2005, Appendix 6.

Taylor, Hebden, *The Christian Philosophy of Law, Politics and the State: A Study of the Political and Legal Thought of Herman Dooyeweerd of the Free University of Amsterdam, Holland, as the Basis for Christian Action in the English-Speaking World*. Nutley, New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1966. Note: A digital edition is available on < [www.reformationalpublishingproject.com/paideiabooks](http://www.reformationalpublishingproject.com/paideiabooks) >.

Turaki, Yusufu. “Government Involvement and Legislation of Sharia Endangers and Threatens the Policial Unity and Stability of Nigeria.” N. d. J. Boer, pp. 291-307.

Vander Goot, Henry, ed. *Life Is Religion: Essays in Honour of H. Evan Runner*. St. Catherines ON: Paideia Press, 1981.

Witte, John Jr. “Religion, Secularism and Human Rights.” Annual lecture delivered at Parliament Hill, Ottawa, 13 May/2003. See J. Boer, *Companion CD* <Human Rights / Witte John >.

Wood, Rick. “Editorial Comment: Learning from Our mistakes.” *Mission Frontiers*, the magazine of the US Center for World Mission, Sep-Oct/2010, pp. 4-5.

Yadudu, Awwal H. “Observations on Nigeria’s Secular Arrangements.” *The Pen*, 18 Nov//89, p. 12. J. Boer, 2005, Appendix 7.