

Chapter / Appendix 1

Muslim Reactions to Christian Critique of Sharia

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I call on you not to hate, because hate does not leave a space for a person to be fair and it makes you blind and closes all doors to thinking.

Saddam Hussein in his final letter to the world, 2006

The word “sharia” evokes strong sentiments in today’s world. Some of its detractors criticize it for being too rigid, forbidding and traditional, while others go as far as to claim it to be disparate from our tradition. Interestingly enough, this conflicting understanding among its critics illustrates the ignorance that exists with regards to the term “sharia,” its scope in contemporary contexts, and its sources.

The media has ensured that, as soon as we hear about the Penal Code in Islam, images of unjust, arbitrary and cruel punishments resound in our brains. Some of the arguments against sharia arbitration recently [in Canada] are based on these preconceived notions. But an objective learner will be surprised to discover how far this image is from the reality that governs the intent and structure of the Ahkamul Hudud (Penal Laws).

E-mail from Young Muslims [Canada], 2005

The happenings in Maiduguri, Nigeria, are symptomatic of the failure of the Muslim collective and its leadership in this country, or, more correctly, at least in the North. Isn’t it heart-rending for Muslims that their companions who live in their midst cannot expect plain good neighbourliness, justice and the doing of good for which this religion is so famous? I bow my head in shame and put up my hands in penitence and condolence to non-Muslims who have to suffer loss as a result of the stupid acts of those who, without knowing Islam, have become its vanguard.

Adamu Adamu, 2006¹

All Christians are followers of the holy Apostle; only, they do not recognise that.

Sani S. Mustapha, 1999²

In judicial jargon, anything which is repugnant to the concept of Islam is null and void.

Justice Abdulkadir Orire, 1988³

Introduction

¹Quoted in Y. Abraham, Spr/2006, p. 10. Original in A. Adamu, “Mayhem in the Name of God,” *DT*, 24 Feb/2006. For details regarding violence in Maiduguri, see Y. Ibrahim, Mar/2006, pp. 11-13. *LB*, Mar/2006, pp. 15-16. *CCD* <Misc Arts/State by State/Borno/...>.

²4 Nov/99.

³A. Mamman, 24 Oct/88. Appendix 2. At the time, Orire was Grand Khadi of Kwara State and member of the Constituent Assembly.

Assuming you have read volumes 6 and 7, you know much about Nigerian Muslim thinking about sharia and about the Christian reaction to it. What you may not yet know is how Muslims evaluate the Christian reaction to the introduction of the broader form of sharia by Governor Sani of Zamfara State. That is the focus of this chapter-appendix. I warn you that the document presupposes your having read those other volumes. I will not repeat myself.

While the main purpose of this *volume* is to examine the proposals that have been made for religious peace in Nigeria, the focus of this *chapter-appendix* is different. I tried to fit it into Volume 6, but that did not work. I tried to turn it into the last chapter of Volume 7, but that volume became too bulky. So, I tucked it into the electronic section of this volume, even though it does not quite fit into its main theme. It is more important for you to know this Muslim response than to forego it because of a rigid scheme.

Even though I have tried to systematize Muslim reactions to Christian opposition, it has not always been easy to do so. Many articles referred to in this chapter contain different arguments in such an interwoven fashion that does not always allow clear systematization.⁴ Hence, I advise you to be sure to read the supporting appendices it has generated where you find the reactions in their original shape.

Governor Sani's Open Letter to Christians

I begin with Governor Sani's open letter to the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Sani, you should know, is the Governor of Zamfara State that pioneered the new sharia regime. His letter sets the stage for this chapter. As you read the document, be sure to evaluate it in the light of objections aired by critics, Muslims in Volume 6 and Christians in Volume 7.

Open Letter to the Christian Association of Nigeria (C.A.N.)⁵

⁴I have previously thought of this problem as a difference between Nigerian and my Western thought pattern. However, a good Nigerian friend of mine, Olufemi Oluniyi, struggles with the same problem (O. Oluniyi, 2006, pp. 56-57).

⁵A. Sani, 29 Nov/99. See also Appendix 3, where Governor Sani explains himself in an interview with Mobolaji Aluko.

1. *I have decided to write this letter for the love of my dear country, in the interest of peace and unity of our great nation and the need to consolidate the gains already recorded so far by the democratic ideals accepted by all Nigerians.*
2. *I will want to begin by re-affirming our total support and loyalty to the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Our dear President, you are already achieving your objective in putting the economy on the right track and alleviating poverty which is the major problem affecting the Nigerian masses.*
3. *Now to CAN, it should be understood that I was elected by the people of Zamfara State as their Governor based on my campaign promises. I should therefore be seen to pursue the wishes and aspirations of the people of Zamfara State, which is my constituency. As a Muslim, whatever I am doing must be in line with my religious belief in whatever capacity I find myself, as long as it is within the agreement signed by the people of Nigeria to live together, which is referred to as the Constitution.*
4. *In Islam, whoever calls himself a Muslim and believes in that religion, Shari'a is compulsory for him. Shari'a can simply be defined as a "Divine command from Allah (SWA) revealed through our noble Prophet Muhammad (SWA) on how Muslims must spend their lives in this World."*
5. *If a person is an ordinary Muslim who is not in a position of authority, he can only apply Shari'a to himself and his family. By doing so, he has fulfilled the requirements as commanded by Allah (SWA). But for any Muslim whom Allah (SWA) has given the position of authority in this world as a Chairman of Local Government, Governor of a State or President of a Country, he has an added responsibility of ensuring the application of Shari'a on all Muslims.*
6. *The non-Muslims have nothing to do with Shari'a. I am also sure that CAN will never encourage alcoholism, prostitution, gambling, armed robbery, theft and other social vices.*
7. *Whatever we are pursuing in Zamfara State of Nigeria today, therefore, is for the benefit of the people of the State as provided in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Islam as a religion by definition means "Peace." Naturally, therefore, it encourages peaceful co-existence between Muslims and non-Muslims. Without peace, nobody will be in a position to practice his*

religion. That is why Islam prohibits “extremism” of any kind and directs Muslims to worship [according to] their religion and allow others to worship [according to] their own religion. However, should anybody attempt to tamper with our right and freedom of worship, we shall use every legal and constitutional means to defend it.

8. *The insinuation that I am being sponsored by local and foreign interests is totally unfounded and baseless. I want to assure everybody that I am only trying to fulfill my religious obligation to Allah (SWA) and the people of Zamfara State who voted me into office. I want to state here that no amount of threat, intimidation or harassment can change my course of action as long as I am the Governor of Zamfara State.*

9. *Knowing full well the volatility of religious problems and the fact that Christians in Zamfara State are in no way affected by our programme of Shari’a, I implore the leadership of CAN to stay clear from what the people of Zamfara have chosen for themselves.*

10. *I have stated in my earlier speeches and addresses that past leaders in this country failed to bring about the much-needed social and economic development due to our refusal to rely on the divine injunctions and apply them accordingly. All Muslims believe that the Shari’a contains all it takes to evolve a society that is progressive and egalitarian.*

11. *It is therefore surprising and sometimes disheartening that those who have taken it upon themselves to oppose our legitimate and constitutional rights have limited their interpretation of our actions to amputation of the hand of a thief and other punishments for capital offences, as if they are legitimizing such social vices.*

12. *It is even more disheartening when criticism comes from the Christian clergy who more than others should respect divine guidance of other religions. It is worse when they resort to falsehood and blackmail about the situation in Zamfara State. While every resident of Zamfara State has been going about his/her activities in a peaceful atmosphere, volumes are said and written about our situation by people who perhaps have never even set foot on Zamfara soil in their entire lives.*

13. *Let me state loud and clear, and without fear of any contradiction, that everything is well in Zamfara State. The majority Muslim population has more than ever before been educated on the Islamic teachings of respect to all human beings regardless of religious affiliation. The Government is also aware and conscious of its primary responsibility of ensuring the security of lives and property of all citizens residing in Zamfara State.*

14. *So please leave Muslims alone!!!*

The Promise: Sharia Only for Muslims

One of the biggest questions with respect to sharia is how it will affect Christians. Tankers of ink have been spilled and truckloads of cartridges dumped onto Nigeria's mountains of garbage by both sides on this question. Christians usually outright reject sharia, because they fear it is part of a programme of total Islamization, while most Muslims, including Governor Sani, go out of their way to deny any such intentions. Did Muslims not promise Christians that it would not affect them? Why do they not just mind their own business? There are some heavy-weight reasons, including the issue whether this is really only an internal Muslim affair. Somehow most Muslims do not recognize Christian concerns. What more do Christians want? The promise was repeated decade after decade, by writer after writer, politician after politician, on and on and on....

It has been an issue since before independence when the country was in the throes of preparing for independence.⁶ The arrangement that went into effect at the time included a reduced sharia and the Penal Code that included some important Muslim concerns. It was a compromise based especially on the experience of Sudan. Not everyone was happy with it, but it was accepted by both Muslims and Christians. The subject did not come up again as a serious issue until the first Constituent Assembly (CA) of 1977-1978, when both sides were very vocal.

1. The Promise

Many of the actors of this earlier CA period have passed away; some remain. One of the most prominent and controversial to pass away was Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, whom you can meet in previous volumes via their indices. Back in 1987, in the wake of the Kafanchan riots, Yakubu Mohammed of *Newswatch* interviewed him. He agreed that he was an advocate for an Islamic State for Nigeria. Such a state, of course, would be guided by sharia. That is a must for Muslims. However, since there is no compulsion in Islam, others will not be forced to obey sharia. If you are a citizen of a country, you have full rights, "including the right of worship and your rights will be guaranteed and protected. But Muslims must be tried as Muslims, according to Islamic laws. That is what Muslims are asking for. They are not saying that Christians must be tried under the sharia laws."⁷ Only a year and a half later, another knowledgeable Muslim and member of the second CA, Justice Muri Okunola, claimed without hesitation, "Islamic law has never been imposed on non-

⁶J. Boer, 1979, pp. 408-409; 1984, pp. 94-95.

⁷Y. Mohammed, 30 Mar/87.

Muslims in areas where Islam has influenced or ruled.”⁸ Because of their experience, Christians never believed such statements, but it was the honest to goodness belief of many serious Muslims.

In Nigeria, the issue of indigenous people in a state versus Nigerian citizens who have moved in from other states is an important one. In the ruckus that rocked Plateau State during 2003-2004, it was a crucial difference that led to hostility, bitterness, bloodshed and, subsequently, to much writing and several conferences and seminars. Zamfara has its share of non-indigenous Christians, 9,000 of them in the capital Gusau along with 45 churches, according to the state chairman of CAN.⁹ Director asked the Governor about the position of *indigenous* Christians under the sharia. Sani challenged him: “I want you to conduct a census and find out how many indigenous Christians we have. We have only two families in one village. I can tell you the names of the people. I think two of them are civil servants and they have risen to the position of authority and one of them has even married a Muslim girl.¹⁰ We have been living in peace with them. They have no fear at all, because their rights are well protected.”¹¹ The Governor promised that “Islam guarantees the rights of non-Muslims to practice their religion without hindrance and prohibits injustice of any kind against non-Muslims.” Their safety, including their properties, is secure with “justice and fairness to all.”¹²

On May 30, 2001, the Governor addressed a conference of magistrates held in his capital. He strongly stressed the intention that the sharia is not to be imposed on any unwilling person. “We do not intend to impose sharia law on anybody, nor do we harbour any ulterior motive against any group of people,” he promised. He then proceeded to list the people to be covered. The latter included Christians who voluntarily submit to sharia. However, they have the right to “have their cases adjudicated at the conventional courts. They are neither forced nor obliged to carry their cases to sharia courts. It is the duty of our Government to protect and guarantee the rights of residents of Zamfara State, irrespective of which religion they belong to. The Government is a government of justice and fairness as demanded by sharia.” As if that were not enough, the Governor repeated this pledge towards the end of his address, but for that you must turn to Appendix 18 in Volume 6. He

⁸O. Awogbemila, 24 Oct/1988, p. 17.

⁹Zamfara State Government, 9 Nov/99.

¹⁰It is generally considered illegal for Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men. The reverse is acceptable and even encouraged as *da'wah*. A recent report from Uganda reads, “Uganda is a main target of Muslim missionaries. One of the strategies employed is for Muslim men to marry Christian women. It is reported that a special allowance is awarded to those who do so, and a double rate for those who manage to marry a pastor’s daughter” (*Barnabas Prayer Bulletin*, 7 Feb/2009). In Nigeria this practice leads to abductions, as you will read from root appendix-chapter 35.

¹¹O. Director, 15 Nov/99, p. 21.

¹²Zamfara State Government, 9 Nov/99.

concluded this subject with the declaration that “Above all, Zamfara has been and still is one of the most peaceful states in the country with the lowest crime rates.”¹³

Governor Sani claimed he has tried repeatedly to put Christians at ease. From the beginning he was expecting Christians to be worried. Hence he allegedly held consultations and dialogue with them *before* he commenced. “They showed a lot of understanding initially. But when it became a national issue, they tried to go down a different route and changed their original position on things. Luckily for me, all our discussions were recorded.” Sani said he assured them “that there was nothing whatsoever to worry about. From a Christian standpoint, I realised that there might be conflicts between the approaches of Islam to certain criminal matters in comparison to the traditional Christian approach. Islam, for example, prohibits alcoholism and some would say to varying degrees that this was alright.”¹⁴ Referring to one of the recorded meetings with Christians, Ado-Kurawa quoted from a *TD* article that claims CAN members had suggested to Sani that he should also prohibit the selling of cigarettes, but he refused.¹⁵ According to Ali Ahmad, “Newspapers widely reported that Governor Sani requested Christians to submit any part of their religious law that they wanted promulgated and enforced by the state.” Christians did not respond to the invitation.¹⁶ An Ibo seller of spare parts by the name of Okechuckwu told a *TELL* reporter that his community had met with the Governor. He had reassured the Ibos that they were safe with both life and property.¹⁷

Other state governments made the same promises. Governor Abdulkadir of Niger State assured non-Muslims that they “would be adequately protected and would share from the gains of the system.”¹⁸ Bukar Abba Ibrahim, Governor of Yobe State, stated that “CAN of Yobe State was not opposed to sharia, provided it would not discriminate or infringe on their rights, while the government had assured them of adequate protection.”¹⁹ The governor of Katsina, Umaru Musa Yar’adua, now the nation’s President, similarly assured Christians of adequate security and protection of their rights.²⁰ However, the same governor also warned Christians against using their

¹³A. Sani, 10 Jun/2001, pp. 20-21.

¹⁴R. Nweke, May/2001, p. 5.

¹⁵I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, p. 393. *TD*, 12 July/2000.

¹⁶A. Ahmad, “Commentary,” 2005, p. 359.

¹⁷O. Director, 15 Nov/99, p. 15.

¹⁸B. Bitrus, 17 Jan/2000.

¹⁹A. Baba, 3 Jan/2000.

²⁰BBC, 1 Aug/2000.

homes as churches. He promised his government would provide Christians places for churches and cemeteries but would not brook illegal or home churches.²¹

Even the Christian Governor Nyame of Taraba joined the chorus. Baba Leme of Jalingo, Taraba State, argued that since Governor Nyame, a Christian pastor, has assured Christians that sharia would only be for Muslims, “what course has one to fear? Sharia implementation is another way of fighting crime and corruption.” Besides, “we are all living witnesses to countries or places that practice sharia in which they live peacefully with their non-Muslim counterparts. No non-Muslim will be forced to become a Muslim or tried under sharia, because the Qur’an says there is no compulsion in Islam.”²²

Muslim organizations and individuals in various other sectors argued and promised repeatedly that in principle the new sharia should not affect Christians. A JNI-sponsored conference that included Christians, published a communique that assured the public that “sharia is not unmindful of the rights and obligations for non-Muslims who live under it. In fact, sharia enjoins the protections of such rights.” “All existing misconceptions about sharia were largely born out of ignorance, especially since Muslim and Christian participants at the conference all agreed on the need to fight moral decadence.”²³

The Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) insisted that Christians “are not subjected to sharia.”²⁴ The Council wondered why sharia created so much more violence in Kaduna than in other states.²⁵ It also pronounced it a “monumental misconception” to view the sharia extension of some states “as the Islamization of the country through the backdoor.”²⁶ The Council declared these attitudes and practices obstacles to the free flow of sharia that create suspicion and block co-operation.

The Zamfara Declaration had barely been made public, when Mikai Mumuni of *TELL* magazine interviewed Adegbite, the General Secretary of NSCIA. In that interview Adegbite insisted “that sharia is good for Muslims, but it must be for Muslims alone.” The sharia domain must keep clear of Christians. In the Constitution, he explained, “every person is entitled to

²¹*REC*, Nov/99, p. 6.

²²B. Leme, 31 Dec/99.

²³*NN*, 14 Feb/2000, p. 2. J. Boer, 2007, vol. 6, Appendix 32.

²⁴*CC*, “Nigerian State...,” 13 Nov/2000, p. 2.

²⁵I confess to amazement that NSCIA pretends not to understand the dynamics of Kaduna State, when they have been so thoroughly analysed in response to the various riots over the decades. An example of the so-called “dialogue of the deaf?”

²⁶T. Adejo, 27 Feb/2000.

freedom of religion and, therefore, if you apply the laws of a religion to somebody who does not believe in it, you are infringing on his rights. The Qur'an is very clear on this. It says there should be no compulsion in religion. That is the principle of sharia. I don't think non-Muslims have anything to fear."²⁷ Many misconceptions, wrote Adegbite, have "fuelled the sharia crisis," but perhaps none so "unfortunate as the impression created especially by the media and sadly encouraged by some religious leaders, that sharia is foisted on all Nigerians regardless of their religious persuasion. The persistent declaration by the Muslims that sharia would not apply to non-Muslims has fallen on deaf ears."²⁸

Adegbite insisted that their "fears and apprehensions" expressed at the NIREC Conference of June, 2000, *must* be addressed. He summarized the three main fears Christians have as follows: "(1) The possible application of the offence of apostasy, which attracts capital punishment to a Muslim converting to Christianity; (2) The disinheritance of a Muslim convert to Christianity; (3) The possible unofficial enforcement of sharia on non-Muslims through the action of exuberant Muslim vigilantes." Adegbite commented on all three.

As to apostasy, it "can never be an offence in Nigeria, since it would offend the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion, covering both freedom to practise one's religion and the freedom to change." It appears that Governor Sani's "solution"--"private execution," a euphemism for taking the law into your own hands or, worse, for murder-- did not occur to Adegbite, even though it is practised in various countries, including Nigeria. Disinheriting converts from Islam is indeed a rule in sharia. Even if the Constitution does not recognize the legitimacy of this sharia practice, the owner can "upturn the effect of the sharia rule by making a will to that effect." The vigilantes issue can be "forestalled by strict prohibition of private meddling in law enforcement." Again, the *hisbah* solution in Zamfara and Kano did not, apparently, occur to him, though this too is practiced in some Muslim countries.

Adegbite dismissed the fears of Christians regarding freedom of their religion. He cited Sani's "assurance that the Government will not discriminate against any group on religious grounds: Islam guarantees the rights of non-Muslims to practise their religion without hindrance and prohibits injustice of any kind against non-Muslims. The Government will therefore ensure the security of lives and properties of all people, irrespective of their religion or tribe and will ensure justice and fairness to all." That promise has two sides to it, explained Adegbite. If Christians are

²⁷M. Mumuni, 15 Nov/99, pp. 16-17.

²⁸L. Adegbite, "The Constitutional and Legal...", 2000, p. 6; "Sharia in the Context...", 2000, p. 63.

guaranteed freedom of religion, “that same protection must be extended to Islam as a religion that regulates the totality of the life of every adherent.” Still more, the protection of Islam “must be to the religion as understood and practised by the Muslims” themselves, not as others define that religion.²⁹

Muhammad Gashua voiced a common accusation. Christians use secularism as an excuse to deprive Muslims of many of their rights, he asserted, including their right to sharia. While they consistently undermine “Islamic values and its legal systems,” they have with equal consistency “advanced the cause of the Euro-Christian legal system.” This common law has become the most prestigious among Nigeria’s triplex judiciary. It is respected “not because of its relevance to our setting, but because of its bearing the stamp of imperialism. In other words, the over 60 million Muslims of this country have, for quite a long time, foregone their sharia system for the colonial, nee Euro-Christian, legal system.” Quoting from Ibrahim Sulaiman, Gashua argued that sharia “is a law of God, and therefore has an inherent privilege to maintain precedence over all other laws, and any attempt to impose man-made laws over the sacred sharia amounts to an unwarranted human arrogance.” He berated as “enemies of unity, peace and stability” those members of the CA of 1988 “that have deliberately stalemated the deliberations on the full entrenchment of the sharia at par with the common law in this country, knowing full well that the implementation of the sharia has no effect on people of other faiths.” Some people resist anything Muslim, even when it has no effect on them. If Nigeria is to have peace, adherents of different religions must respect each other, which includes giving both faiths the space they need and suppressing the urge to oppose “for mere opposition sake.” More than anyone else, Muslims “deserve such respect for they have been taken for a ride far too long” by “their Christian brothers.” And all that in spite of the fact that “Christianity, a child of imperialism and an agent of neo-colonialism, has no blueprint of its own making other than neo-colonial traits.”³⁰

Baba Ejiga thought “it would be naïve for anyone to think that the average Nigerian Christian or Traditionalist will not be suspicious about the reason for promoting the sharia at this time.” He insisted that Christians and Traditionalists can be “assured that they cannot be punished in a sharia court. The holy prophet did not punish unbelievers by Islamic laws. Rather, offenders were punished as per dictates of their faith. Ignorance and fears on the issue of sharia are real, but it

²⁹ L. Adegbite, “The Constitutional and Legal...,” 2000, pp. 5-14; “Sharia in the Context...,” 2000, pp. 62-63, 67, 69, 75, 76-77.

³⁰M. Gashua, 2 Dec/88. J. Boer, vol. 4, Appendix 14.

is not too late to dispel such fears in the state and elsewhere in view of the unintelligent ways the governor went about launching the sharia.” Various religions have been founded by God’s prophets at different times in history and under a variety of circumstances. “Given this scenario and since sharia is purely related to Muslims, adherents of other religions have no basis to fear anything. I honestly feel sharia should be left for Muslims alone.” He continued, “Islam recognises other religions before it and puts them into perspective.”³¹

Ali Ahmad from Bayero University approvingly quoted the following statement made by Danny McCain, an American professor at UJ, at the 2004 UJ conference. Ahmad had observed that Christians were beginning to call less for secularism and were replacing it with a call for multi-religion. In this context, he described McCain’s comment as “incisive” and capturing the idea well. He quoted the following from McCain with approval:

*Although Islam has led in the opposition to secularism, Christians should stand shoulder to shoulder with their Muslim brothers and sisters and oppose it, because it is not in the best interest of our society and it is certainly not in the best interest of either Christianity or Islam. Christians must not so react against sharia that we hinder our own ability to publicly practice our religion. It is better to make some concessions to accommodate Muslim convictions and preserve the opportunity to practice our own religion publicly than to lose our religion to the godless forces of political correctness and secularism.*³²

Please listen to Jamilu Lawan’s declaration: “Christians have impartial benefit from sharia like security of life and property, grants from zakkat and improved well-being. Sharia does not in any way affect non-Muslims in relation to punishments or other jurisdictions. The Christian has the right to go to sharia or other courts as will be provided in any Islamic state. Also in a case involving a Muslim, a Christian will not be forced to go to sharia court but is given the right to choose.”³³

2. The Reality on the Ground

Sometimes the promise that Christians were not to be judged by sharia was adhered to. There is this story about Gambo Sawaba, the first Northern female Muslim politician, that illustrates several important points in this regard. As Rima Shawulu told it, the NPC, the political party at independence, used the sharia courts to harass members of the opposition. Most of them

³¹B. Ejjiga, 13 Nov/99.

³²A. Ahmad, 2005, p. 370. D. McCain, 2005, p. 15.

³³J. Lawan, 9 Nov/99.

were Muslims. Sawaba trained them “how to escape the wrath of the Muslim sharia. She taught us to say in court that we were Christians, even though we are Muslims. This tactic gave us relief from the *alkalais*. I for one, once stood up in an *alkali* court in Minna to say that I was a Christian.” The trick worked. They were released by the District Officer who ruled that the charges “were political issues that had nothing to do with Islam.”³⁴ The story suggests that the sharia rule was known. It also shows how sharia was used for corrupt purposes to imprison political opponents of the majority party, NPC, the party dominated by the Sardauna of high saintly reputation! And sharia was misused against Muslims as well as against Christians.

There are more stories about breaches of the promise than of adherence to it. Of course, it could be argued that adherence was so common, there was nothing to write about and that breaches so uncommon that they made the news. One would have to delve into the sharia court files to discover the trend. Certainly, Muslims in general are under the impression that Christians were not generally hauled before sharia court. Volume 7 shows how frequently it did and does happen-- either hauled before sharia court or treated according to sharia law as the perpetrators saw it or pretended to see it. Sometimes it was a case of pure ignorance on their part.

Various BZ incidents with respect to selling alcohol, reported by Muslims themselves, serve a kind of foreshadowing of a sharia regime. Though the reports do not use the term “sharia,” the incidents were obviously inspired by sharia. In mid-1988, the LG of Bida, Niger State, created an alcohol-free zone in the city and ordered the closure of all establishments selling alcohol, but also allocated them new plots outside of the zone. Some proprietors co-operated; others refused, were fined and then faced revocation of their licenses and prosecution.³⁵ This development touched all those involved, regardless of their religion.

In 1988 and 1989, there was a similar struggle between the Kwara State Government and her citizens on the one hand and non-indigene beer sellers on the other. The citizens of certain parts of Ilorin, the state capital, had appealed to the government to ban beer selling. The government agreed and instituted the ban. This action generated a series of court cases from both sides. The end of the story as I have it is that the core city became alcohol-free, the beer parlors were closed and some sellers were in custody awaiting trial for contravening the edict.³⁶ No doubt most beer sellers

³⁴R. Shawulu, p. 127.

³⁵*The Pen*, “Alcohol Banned...,” 1 July/88. *Alkalami*, “*An Hana...*,” 15 July/88.

³⁶*The Pen*, 27 Jan/89.

were “Christians.” And probably, the storm subsided and things went back to “normal”—fizzled out, to use President Obasanjo’s sharia language.

The press from both sides reacted in classic fashion. *The Punch*, a Yoruba-owned daily, apparently criticised the Kwara Government for the ban on selling beer. *The Pen* predictably described the comments in *The Punch* as “nothing short of intellectual betrayal and adulation of unhealthiness and moral laxity.” *The Punch* saw the ban as evidence of “religious intolerance” and viewed it all through the lense of religion, whereas, according to *The Pen*, it should view it through the lenses of health and social harmony. However, the fact that the ban was to affect only Muslims indicated the issue went beyond those of health and harmony. “The people of Ilorin have never wanted an imposition. They simply want to live peacefully, unbothered by the aftermath of alcoholism.”³⁷ That desire was fair enough, but this was definitely a foreshadowing of things to come in the approaching march of sharia.

It is not just a matter of some BZ governments carelessly trampling upon Christians. Some Muslim scholars already then rejected any attempt to restrict sharia to Muslims. Though he defends legal pluralism as we will see later in this chapter, Ibrahim Sulaiman rejected the notion of a restricted sharia.

Sharia will not be mutilated in order to placate people who happen to have the backing of neo-colonial powers. The sharia will apply only on its own terms, not on terms dictated by others. Non-Muslims will enjoy the justice and fairness of Islam on an equal footing with Muslims. But where they flout God’s law or offend the integrity and sanctity of the Muslim community, or where they commit fraud, destroy property or commit murder, they shall of necessity be dealt with according to the sharia. No human being can expect to be exempted from the due process of law in a civilized society.

He felt that the idea of a restricted sharia was “apologetic and far from helpful. The sharia cannot be subjected to standards and restrictions from which other systems are exempted. The common law does not apply only to Europeans or Christians in Nigeria: it applies to all.”³⁸

3. Ambiguity

Is Governor Sani serious about restricting the new regime to Muslims? In an interview with *AM*, he made it clear that at least the prohibition of alcohol would affect Christians as well. He

³⁷*The Pen*, “News Analysis,” 13 Jan/89.

³⁸I. Sulaiman, 1986, pp. 8-9, 14-16.

stated, “Our Christian brothers too [must] try to live within the limitations imposed by Shari’a. The only problem I think they are encountering now is the lack of alcohol, which we said is not allowed. I am sure good Christians don’t patronize prostitutes and good Christians don’t even drink alcohol. So, I don’t see it to be a big problem to them.”³⁹

In his address to the Magistrates Association of Nigeria, Sani repeatedly stated that sharia would not affect Christians. He affirmed, “The crux of the matter is we are determined to rid our society of the degeneration and ineptitude that is prevalent, such as gambling, prostitution, armed robbery, corruption, drug abuse, lies and deceit. Sharia is aimed at eliminating all these vices and putting the fear of Allah in our minds as well as conducting our affairs based on trust, honesty, justice and fairness to all, irrespective of tribe, race, colour, creed or political leaning.”⁴⁰

So what *was* the answer? In response to a question from Roy Nweke about Christians, Sani answered that they, too, will be prosecuted for crimes like prostitution, drinking and gambling, but, unless they choose otherwise, they will be judged under common law. A Muslim has no choice: he goes sharia. The end result is that Zamfara is “one of the most peaceful states in the country with the lowest crime rates.”⁴¹ After only one year of sharia, Christians were comfortable and happy, according to the Governor. They were in fact better off than before. He then told the story of a husband who used to spend all his money on alcohol, but now brought his money home for family use. Christians get government contracts and have access to government loans.⁴² That may be so, but what *is* the status of Christians with respect to these laws? It is anything but clear.

Perhaps an important clue is found in Sani’s interview with Oladipo. Oladipo asked how Sani intended to deal with the grievances of Christians who were affected by sharia. Sani answered, “*It does not affect their lives negatively; it affects their lives positively.*” He followed up his answer with examples of gender separation in schools and transportation, details of which are found in Volumes 6 and 7. Yes, such separation affects them, but if such separation reduces the moral problems caused by indiscriminate mixing of sexes, what is the problem? “I cannot see how it affects anybody”--negatively. “We do not say that children should not go to school. We are trying to improve the moral standards of our youths.” The discussion went on to the prohibition of alcohol, about which he said he had consulted Christians. They agreed that for them too, alcohol is taboo.

³⁹A. Odo, 16 Feb/2000. J. Boer, vol. 6, Appendix 19.

⁴⁰A. Sani, 10 Jun/2001, p. 21. J. Boer, vol. 6, Appendix 18. Probably the same story as in Ado-Kurawa, pp. 336-337 and in *WT*, 2 Dec/99.

⁴¹A. Sani, 30 May/2001.

⁴²R. Nweke, 1 May/2001, p. 7.

Besides those issues, averred Sani, everything else applies only to Muslims. “So there is no way the sharia affects Christians”--negatively. As to amputation, flogging and beheading, why should people be bothered by these issues when they do not affect them and they do not believe in them? “These are divine rules and regulations.”⁴³ *Punkt! Magana ta kare!*

The answer seems to be both “yes” and “no.” Christians may not be subject to a sharia court, but they *are* subject to at least certain sharia laws. Various sharia states have passed anti-liquor laws. Governor Aliero of Kebbi State signed into law a bill prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol.⁴⁴ This will affect all his citizens. When I wrote the very first draft of this passage, I wrote, “At this point, I am not sure just how common law courts would adjudicate offences defined only in sharia. I suspect this has to lead to the Penal Code criminalizing some practices currently defined only in sharia. The whole matter is still in process and will need time.” Since then, more time has elapsed. It now appears that the matter has lapsed with the gradual fizzling out of sharia fervour, if not the sharia itself.

Sani was wary of complications that could arise. Recently a Christian had a problem with a Muslim car dealer. He wanted his money returned and reported the man to a sharia court. The sharia court instructed the Muslim to return the money. The incident reached the ear of the Governor. He—wrongly—declared that it “is against our [Zamfara’s] law” for Christians to go to Sharia Court without informing CAN. “We don’t want any situation where he will come back and say he was *forced* to go to sharia court. If the court were to judge against him, he would have reported a different story. So I said that if there is any Christian who wants to go to sharia, he should put it in writing to CAN. Let them know before the case is heard. So, we are trying as much as possible to ensure that only Muslims are affected by our rules.”⁴⁵

Some of these provisions are not new. Sani said that Christians are free to choose sharia court and law. Already a decade earlier, Yadudu wrote that Christians in Kano State sometimes would “voluntarily rush to the Sharia Courts to settle their small claims with dispatch. This is because these courts are easily accessible, their procedures simple to understand, while the life span of legal suits is fairly short.” The idea of writing to CAN *is* a new twist, I believe, but not the matter of writing a letter itself. Yadudu wrote that if non-Muslims want to take their case to a sharia court, they should write a letter to the court.⁴⁶

⁴³D. Oladipo, 6 Mar/2000, p. 15.

⁴⁴A. Rahama, 17 Jan/2000.

⁴⁵D. Oladipo, 6 Mar/2000, p. 17.

⁴⁶A. Yadudu, 16 Dec/88. Area Courts were *de facto* sharia courts in Kano.

Oladipo asked Sani about Southern Christian business people who were playing a crucial role in Zamfara's economy and who seemed poised to leave because of sharia. Sani gave a more complete answer here than he did to a similar question posed by Director as recorded in Volume 6.

*I don't think they are going to leave. I have friends amongst them. I have told them over and over again that this sharia is not going to affect them in any way. Therefore, all these reports that Christians are worried, are not true. You find these Christians in government activities. We patronise them and give them contracts. They are part and parcel of our family relationship. I don't see any situation where Christians will leave. Even if anybody leaves, I think he is only helping situations, because our people will rise to the challenges of providing what they need.*⁴⁷

More ambiguity. Does he want them to leave or not? Is this a thinly-veiled threat of a "zamfarization" policy on the horizon, parallel to the northernization of Sardauna days?

Zamfara State caused another stir with an unexpected announcement that it was going to "enforce the teaching and usage of Arabic to enhance the Islamic faith among the people." And note well: "*regardless of their religious persuasion*"! Governor Sani announced the decision at a workshop for Muslim clerics in Gusau that was organized by the Saudi Arabian embassy! Soon, he said to Saudi officials, we will not have to speak to you in Hausa. The arrangement will be mandatory for all primary and secondary schools. At the same occasion, Sani urged the attending clerics "to continue in their work of entrenching Islam in Nigeria." He was also happy that "*other states now look up to Zamfara for direction towards the total Islamization of Nigeria.*"⁴⁸ How, I wonder, do these statements and plans fit in the frequent allegation that Sani's sharia will not affect others? They come close to a declaration of crusade or *jihad*! *In addition, it seems we have here an admission that, in fact, the new sharia is part of an Islamization process of the country after all.*

In Kano, things did not go in the promised direction either. On June 22, 2000, within two weeks of starting the new sharia regime, 30 Christians were arrested for drinking alcohol. Governor Kwankwaso declared that "the time had come for Muslims in Nigeria to assert themselves and become proponents of Islam. He indicated Christians would not be spared." This was no mere threat. Kwankwaso's government marked 150 churches for demolition and began a wave of closures of Christian schools.⁴⁹ On May 16, 2005, Governor Shekarau, Kwankwaso's successor,

⁴⁷D. Oladipo, 6 Mar/2000, p. 16.

⁴⁸O. Minchakpu, 26 Aug/2002. Italics mine.

⁴⁹J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 109-110, 134-136.

allegedly announced that “All Christians in Kano are henceforth prohibited from dressing the way they like. Their dressing must reflect the culture and religion of Islam.” The order will first be implemented in schools and eventually extended to cover everyone.⁵⁰

In his interview with Adegbite referred to earlier, journalist Mumuni pushed Adegbite a little further. What of a Christian either drinking or selling alcohol? How can the sharia be applied or not in a multi-religious setting, given this very realistic example? Adegbite explained: Law is a matter of “the wishes of the majority.” When laws are in place, you are to respect them. Non-Muslims need to respect the law of the majority and not sell or consume alcohol. This is according to the adage, when in Rome you do like the Romans.⁵¹ Things are not quite as simple as the frequently stated promise would have us believe. There is an ambiguity created by Muslims themselves.

Those who know El-Zakzaki from earlier volumes,⁵² will not be surprised that his stand is more clear and resolute. It also feeds into the Christian skepticism you can read about in Volume 7. Danlami Nwodu of *TELL* magazine asked him about the fate of Christians once the sharia becomes dominant in the North. El-Zakzaki took an immediate distance from the sharia governors:

*Don't mix me up with what these governments are doing. My understanding of sharia is that it encompasses all. It governs the society. Even the governor and the head of state have to be under sharia. Sharia is the law of God and it has to be above the law of man. The whole laws of the country, including the Constitution, have to be under the sharia. So, even the Christians have to be under sharia. But if it is the sharia of the Governor of Zamfara State, he can answer you better.*⁵³

Sani Salih Mustapha considered it a mistake to exclude Christians from sharia. He wrote, “Sharia is applicable to all human beings. Therefore, when we talk of sharia, it does not apply to a particular group of people at the exclusion of others. I believe this is a mistake the Muslim world is making by applying the word sharia to them alone and not to entire mankind.” The notion that sharia applies only to Muslims “is a folly and a total misunderstanding and distortion of the message of Allah.” But in the second installment of his article published the very next day, Mustapha argued that Christians should not be tried in sharia court! He reminded his readers that

⁵⁰Barnabas Prayer Bulletin, 6 Oct/2005.

⁵¹M. Mumuni, 15 Nov/99, pp. 16-17.

⁵²For background information on El-Zakzaki and the Islamic Movement, check their entries in the indices of vols. 2 and 4 as well as the website <www.islamicmovement.org> Also M. H. Sulaiman, 11 May/92.

⁵³D. Nmodu, 15 Nov/99, pp. 22-23.

back in 1992 he had raised his “lone voice” to plead that General Lekwot, a Christian, should not be tried by sharia. “No people of the book are to be tried and punished with the Qur’an.”

The seeming contradiction is supposed to be solved by the distinction between the *voluntary and involuntary aspects of sharia*. Everyone, whatever the religion, is subject to the involuntary sharia. “There is not a single living cell in the world that does not follow the sharia. Man is hopeless, helpless in the sharia as evident by the movement of his shadow. There is no Christian or Muslim whose shadow does not conform to sharia.” All contract the same diseases; the diabetes of a Muslim is no different from that of a Christian. In other words, the sharia also governs nature, the physical, the part that is involuntary and to which all are subject. It is, among others, also the law of nature.⁵⁴ The distinction, I suggest, as valuable as the insight is, does not fully clarify Mustapha’s comments about Christian subjection to the Sani version of an expanded sharia.

After all is said and done, according to Mohammed Haruna, the facts on the ground are that by 2005 “not one non-Muslim has been dragged before any sharia court in any of the sharia states. Also to date not one non-Muslim has lost his life, limb or property in Zamfara because of sharia.”⁵⁵ M. S. Mustapha of Sohogbo, Osun State, assured Christians in sharia states that they have no reason for fear, since Islam is clear about the position and rights of non-Muslims.⁵⁶ Let me put it this way: Faithfulness to the promise is far from clear and even outrightly denied by some. *Ambiguity* reigns. What of Christian converts from Islam? They are Christian, but some Muslims want to treat them according to sharia. And what of church properties? Volume 7 gives a totally different picture.

Critique of Christian Attitude and Behaviour

1. General Attitudes and Tone

As you know by now, both parties are most unhappy with each other and have been for decades. After the 1988 CA, Juwariyya Badamasuyi commented with great annoyance,

During last year’s deliberations for the Constitution, the Christians mounted a misguided stiff opposition to the demand by Muslims for the inclusion of sharia in the Constitution and its application to Muslims of the South. They raised so much rancour through blackmail, orchestrated campaigns of distorted, violent, unpatriotic utterances and curses, the

⁵⁴S. Mustapha, 3 Nov/99; 4 Nov/99. For Lekwot, see J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 49, 204, 207-209.

⁵⁵M. Haruna, “Class, Religion....” May/2005.

⁵⁶M. S. Mustapha, 16 Dec/99.

government had to intervene to bring sanity into the deliberations and cool down the war cries of Christians.

But, according to Badamasuyi, all is not lost, for “with the dawn of a new century, there appears an evident re-awakening among Muslims” that has left the enemy in a weakened state of perplexity and confusion.⁵⁷ Did she envision a Sani-like pioneer?

Another accusation from the same BZ era came from no one less than President Babangida. He rejected the Christian objection that sharia would violate the principle of government neutrality with respect to religion. He declared, “It is pointedly mischievous and manifestly wrong to equate Sharia Courts with religious courts. They are no more nor less than simply courts of justice to which many Nigerians look for justice.”⁵⁸

As we move into the current era, we find that many Muslims reject the seriousness and genuineness of the charges against sharia and dismiss them all as bogus. In his speech at the Zamfara sharia launching, Abdul Alao, the *Aare Musulumi* of Yorubaland, claimed that almost 100% of Zamfarians are Muslim and they have declared their preference for sharia over any man-made laws. “One cannot understand why the non-Muslims are shouting. We all know that the laws of Allah have never been changed and will never be changed.” Then he reviewed the various constitutions under which Nigerians have lived. He listed five that have all ended up in the wastebasket of history. “Only the law of Allah can withstand the test of time. The sad thing is that it is only in Nigeria where people hate Islam, that non-Muslims attack the sharia. In some countries where the non-Muslims are even more than the Muslims, they respect the rights of Muslims.” A prime example is India, where, he claimed, Hindus form the majority but sharia governs the lives of Muslims. In Kenya and Uganda, Christians form the majority, but they do not “oppose the application of the sharia on Muslims.” In Muslim majority countries of Gambia and Tanzania, Christians do not oppose the application of sharia on Muslims.⁵⁹

Suleiman Kumo insisted that the campaign against the sharia
is not based on fears that the sharia would oppress Christians. The well-orchestrated campaign is only embarked upon to oppress the majority--to oppress the Muslims. I do not even think it is based on ignorance of the sharia. The real purpose, it seems to me, is to keep the Muslims in Nigeria, especially here in the north, under the perpetual domination of the

⁵⁷J. Badamasuyi, p. 6.

⁵⁸*The Guardian*, 16 Feb/89.

⁵⁹A. Alao, 5 Nov/99. With reference to Kenya, that assertion no longer holds. There is considerable friction there on the issue.

existing Christian-based legal system. In fact, one of the CAN leaders is quoted in the press as having said that “the sharia would die a natural death.”⁶⁰ That shows you the real agenda. Everybody knows that the sharia applies to Muslims only.

He alleged that those opposing sharia development have introduced “some distortions” into the system in order to undermine it. The campaign against sharia is a “deliberate ploy to always employ the Christian legal system to oppress Muslims. I do not even think it is based on ignorance of either the constitutional ambit of the sharia or even its doctrines and rules and the way the rules are applied. Kumo urged the FG “not to be intimidated by the wrong-headed, ill-motivated attempt to whip up and organise and orchestrate an anti-sharia (and anti-Islamic) mass hysteria to frighten. Their sponsors are only trying to mystify some Nigerians. The hysteria mongers and their sponsors are only trying to create a storm in a teacup,” he added. The leaders of CAN “have scant regard for the truth and they want the perpetuation of the domination of the Judeo-Christian world view and philosophy over the Nigerian state, even though this is against the wishes of the majority. It is clear that the media moguls and their anti-Muslim cohorts are not even interested in trying to understand the feelings of the Muslim masses.”⁶¹

Ibrahim Aliyu of Barnawa, Kaduna, was disturbed by Christian allegations against sharia. “The CAN Chairman and many Christian leaders had said that sharia was implemented before its launching on the 27th of October in Zamfara state.” They had claimed that a Fulani had his hand amputated and that 26 Christians were detained in Gusau for violating sharia. Aliyu challenged them, “Do you have proof for all these allegations? If you have, then produce them. In the Bible, it is said, ‘Thou shalt not lie.’ Then why are the highly respected Christian scholars fabricating lies against Zamfara State?”⁶²

Salisu Bala was sharply critical of Christian fears of the alleged Islamization plan:

Christians always fear that the Northern Muslim group, particularly the educated elite and the powerful Emirs, are planning to Islamise the whole country. Some even believe that the Shari’ah issue was a step towards the second Jihad in the history of Nigeria, as Sheikh Usman bin Fodio led the first one in 1804. According to Philip Ostien, an American senior lecturer with the law faculty of the University of Jos, in his research work entitled “Three Articles on Shari’ah in Nigeria,” he tried to put forward the Christians’ thinking with

⁶⁰President Obasanjo has also been quoted thus.

⁶¹I. Modibbo, 8 Nov/99. I. Umar, 9 Nov/99, Appendix 4. J. Boer, vol. 6, Appendix 56.

⁶²I. Aliyu, 13 Dec/99.

*regard to sharia implementation. They argue that “under that hypocritical cover [of sharia] Muslims were actually aiming to destabilize the country, to create chaos, to topple the newly elected president (a Southern Christian) and to derail Nigeria’s new democratic system... ..The sharia was a monster from the pit of hell.”*⁶³

This kind of attitude was totally unacceptable to Bala.

Sheikh Dawud similarly addressed this fear. He “denied that Muslims aspire to turn Nigeria into an Islamic state. ‘We have nothing against Christians,’ he said. ‘Politicians create the impression that we Muslims don’t like Christians, that we want to convert Christians into Islam, and that we want to Islamize the state. This is not true. It is politicians who are inciting Christians against Muslims.’”⁶⁴

Sani Mustapha of Abuja was puzzled why Christians should fear sharia. The Prophet has never judged non-Muslims on basis of sharia. So why be afraid of it? He considered Christians ignorant, but after having placed the evidence before them, it is up to Christians to prove that the Prophet “or his rightly-guided *Khalifas* ever passed judgement on unbelievers.” “I am appealing to the Christians and their leaders to tell the truth. When they do not know it, they should believe it whenever historical evidence is produced.”⁶⁵

Hypocrisy, misunderstanding and ignorance, egoism, impatience, hostility—these and others all came up for constant mention. Saleh Maina congratulated Governor Sani for “calling off the bluff of non-Muslims, nominal Muslims, hypocrites and other enemies of Islam who have mounted a vicious opposition to the adoption of the sharia.”⁶⁶ Aminu Salihu Mikailu of Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto, advised Muslims “to exercise patience and show understanding in the face of the current criticism and outright provocation by opponents of sharia.” The critique was to be expected, he explained, with some of it coming “out of sheer ignorance.” Then, turning to the critics, he advised them also to “be patient and give the sharia a chance to take off and mature.”⁶⁷ Nurudeen Aliyu Mohammed of Masallacin Juma’a Street, Jos, wrote a letter to the Editor of the *New Nigeria*, in which he vented his feelings towards sharia critics. “There has been so much fuss, anxiety, hazy apprehension and misguided conclusions regarding sharia,” he wrote. He described the critics as “myopic and self-centred.” “They would not even think of seeing sharia practiced,

⁶³S. Bala, 2000, p. 15.

⁶⁴O. Minchakpu, 10 Oct/2005. J. Boer, vol. 7, Appendix 19.

⁶⁵S. Mustapha, 4 Nov/99.

⁶⁶S. Maina, 4 Nov/99, p. 5.

⁶⁷S. Gaya, 17 Nov/99.

even though it does not concern them! They have refused to learn about its application and restrictions. They would rather prefer to judge a book by its cover. You may never know the story.” Further into his letter, he exclaimed, “Wait a moment! Could someone tell me what is wrong with a people working towards eradicating prostitution, armed robbery and other social vices?” People all over the world are clamouring for their rights: religious sects, gays, prostitutes—“all to the glory of democracy. Well, Muslims have joined to ask for sharia.” “But I can understand the dissenting voices. They are bent on doing whatever it takes to suppress Muslims as a people and Islam as a religion.”⁶⁸

If you have read about Adegbite in previous volumes, you will recognize him as calm, mild and accommodating, but he can also call a spade a spade, using direct and strong language, as he did in some of the following passages. He suggested that “it was obvious that non-Muslims were trying to prevent Islam from flourishing.” “Their strategy is to cripple Islam, re-invent our religion for us and change it into something else, as has happened in Turkey. They also want Muslims to re-modernise their religion as they have done to theirs. Hence their ignorant views and shouts, about what sharia is and what it is not.”⁶⁹

At another time he wrote,

A number of Christian leaders voiced strong opposition to the Zamfara initiative, some employing unedifying language in the process. Perhaps, the protests would not have been so vociferous if the introduction of the new sharia had not been so dramatized and orchestrated, leading some commentators to interpret the event as a declaration of an Islamic State, an allegation roundly refuted by the Governor.

With prominent Christian leaders and some eminent lawyers describing sharia as illegal and unconstitutional, and the Muslim leaders on their part hailing the Zamfara sharia expansion as a welcome development, a possible showdown was clearly in the offing. The bandwagon effect of the Zamfara initiative, culminating in the adoption of the new sharia model in a number of states as well as the planned move of Kaduna State in the same direction, soon led to a political explosion.⁷⁰

Fears were expressed that these developments could lead to the disintegration of the country, as non-indigenes trooped out of the affected areas and headed for their home

⁶⁸N. Mohammed, 17 Nov/99.

⁶⁹P. Nosakhire, 1 Dec/99.

⁷⁰For details of that disturbance see J. Boer, vol. 1, 2003, pp. 63-78.

states. Some states in the South reacted by calling for confederation in Nigeria. This looks like an over-reaction as the confederated state would still contain some Muslims who would naturally demand the application of sharia to them, in the due observance of their religious freedom. The February Kaduna mayhem was a reminder to all of how easy it is for mischievous elements to exploit an innocuous issue like sharia for political and other nefarious ends.

He responded to an “absurd view expressed by yet another erudite jurist in an undisguised attack on the application of Islamic Law.” The reference was to one I. Olu Agbede, who was “canvassing” to abrogate sharia because it allegedly discriminates. Agbede claimed that the enforcement of sharia “confers substantial benefits and imposes some onerous duties on Muslims almost exclusively.” Adegbite denied that a law targeting a particular section instead of the entire community is discriminatory. What of laws regulating the legal profession or the medical or accounting profession? Does that make these laws discriminatory? “The alleged discrimination would have sounded plausible if Islamic law had been employed to deny non-Muslims the due observance of their respective faiths.” The real discrimination that *is* occurring is directed to Muslims who are prevented from their sharia.

“The deep-seated prejudices” some Nigerian opponents to sharia show, “requires a re-think,” according to Adegbite. They have “deliberately overlooked the intrinsic merits of the institution. The goals of sharia, namely the promotion of spirituality, morality, stability, security, prosperity and social justice has been sidelined by opponents.” These “critics have not been honest enough to address some of the mischief that sharia seeks to redress,” namely the depressing social and immoral conditions throughout Nigerian society.⁷¹

This general hostility to Islam among Nigerian Christians, combined with suspicion and fear, leaves Muslims genuinely puzzled. Safianu Rabiou wondered why people can be so hostile to Islam and its sharia when Islam has so enriched world culture, including Nigeria itself. Look at its contributions to the development of Britain,⁷² let alone its contributions to Nigerian culture:

In the context of Nigeria, Islam has offered some people the first introduction to the dignity of clothing and a broader view of space and neighbourhoods beyond their hitherto 30-40 km radius; the ability to trade, communicate with other peoples and exchange ideas; and

⁷¹L. Adegbite, “The Constitutional and Legal...,” 2000, pp. 5, 12-14; “Sharia in the Context...,” 2000, pp. 62-63, 69, 75, 76-77.

⁷²S. Rabiou, “On Obasanjo....” J. Boer, vol. 6, 2007, pp. 138-140.

understanding and respect for marital rights and other individual and public rights. It is well documented that adultery in many parts of Nigeria declined proportionally to the degree that Islam affected those communities. It is a sad paradox that a lot of degeneration and social ills, such as begging, have been muddled with the dignified ways of Islam.

Before Islam, many men in various Nigerian communities would spend the entire day long doing nothing but drinking home-brewed alcohol, while the women do all the work. This is generally the impression of early visitors, and the observation is still valid for certain parts of the country. And while those men indulged in their habits, the Muslim was busy tilling the land, trading and exporting agricultural produce that helped subsidize their children's education, including Christian missionary education. Islam has enabled us to distinguish the meats of various beasts, what to eat and what is prohibited. In Islam hunting for pleasure is prohibited. The creation of Allah is not for sport. No wonder wildlife can coexist with man in Islam. Mostly due to the rejection of Islam, poor government supervision and mass poverty, our wildlife resources in Nigeria have virtually disappeared.

With all these avenues of guidance and favours derived from sharia, our Nigerian elites do not see anything good in it. I challenge any culture, Islamic or not, to study and examine how Islam has influenced their lives and how they could benefit further from sharia.⁷³

Banu Az-Zubair similarly seemed genuinely bewildered at Christian objections to sharia.

What is the basis for the objection to sharia? We cannot see or imagine one and none has been tendered, except for the simple hatred of Muslims and Islam. The sharia is not a law to be imposed on non-Muslims in a Muslim territory. If the Jataus, Okogies⁷⁴ and their kind had genuine complaints, they could have demanded for a special Bill of Rights to be incorporated into the Federal Constitution to safeguard the rights of minorities. Islam appreciates the fact that non-Muslims may not wish to be judged by the sharia. Adequate measures are there within the sharia itself to protect the interest of non-Muslims. It is sad and disappointing that learned people such as Archbishops Okogie and Jatau are making statements about something they appear to have no knowledge. Muslims do not dabble in other peoples' faith, particularly when the matter has no direct bearing on themselves. Why

⁷³S. Rabi, "On Obasanjo..."

⁷⁴These are two prominent Christian leaders whom you can read about by checking the indices of almost all volumes.

*are the Christian ministers worried that Muslims may have sharia? We live in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. Making such reckless remarks, given our political and religious sensitivities, is the most evil thing to do. Finally, as they said, "They want to pray for the peace of our fatherland, where all should be free to practice our faith or religion according to our conscience and conviction." Why are they putting obstacles in the way of Muslims trying to observe their religion according to their conscience and convictions?*⁷⁵

Really, well said, Az-Zubair. I am asking Christians to read your statements and questions. I also expect you to read their answers, especially in Volume 7. You want to know why? You are puzzled? Alright, go there and read *theirs*. I wonder if you will still be puzzled after that.

Abdulkadir Orire, a judge, expressed his enthusiasm at being invited to speak at the NIREC meeting of 2000. He thought this would be his chance to help "break the barrier of ignorance and misunderstanding surrounding sharia and its application." In his opening paragraph he reiterated the aim of sharia: "To give mankind the required peace through the protection of life and property, granting the honour and dignity as well as providing rights and obligations for every creature living under the sun."

Alas, in the course of his preparation, the judge "was taken aback" upon seeing some anti-sharia publications. There was a brochure by authors with Muslim names, K. O. L. Abudl-al-Masih and M. J. Ibn Salam. The title: "*What You Have Not Heard about the Sharia Question.*" Then he read a copy of a letter from the General Secretary of CAN to all branches throughout the country, entitled "The Obnoxious OIC and Sharia." Orire confessed to being "flabbergasted" and feeling "bad." How, he wondered, could anyone convince Christians of "Muslims' good intentions about sharia? There were distortions in these documents about the sharia, deliberately made to confuse anybody who cared to read them and so create hatred and ill-feelings between Muslims and Christians."⁷⁶

In Chapter 6 of Volume 6, you have read the strong language in which Muslims can berate each other. Christian opponents to sharia have similarly been on the receiving end of the most vituperative language. In Chapter 3 of the same volume, I partially summarize an article by Femi Awoniyi, a Christian who is very critical of sharia developments in Oyo State.⁷⁷ His negative comments are so strong that some Muslims

⁷⁵B. Az-Zubair, 2002. J. Boer, vol. 6, Appendix 58.

⁷⁶A. Orire, 2000, p. 1.

⁷⁷For Awoniyi's own writings see Ch. 4.

wrote rebuttals in equally strong language. Magashi Ibrahim's is a case in point. He wrote that Awoniyi's article was "intended to inculcate hatred and enmity." "I keep asking myself why Awoniyi and company are always worried and concerned about sharia. What is your problem? I can say without hesitation, you are suffering from impropriety complex." "You deserve the name 'Shaitan.' Yes, I am right. You are a typical one, Shaitan in human flesh. There is nothing there but venom and hatred tendency. Your satanic write-up exposes your hidden agenda and devilish plan which are a dangerously destabilizing force. I am advising you to go and visit a psychiatrist for professional advice."⁷⁸

Another respondent to Awoniyi is Magaji Galadima. He referred to Awoniyi as a "buffoon" who "is seen as a problem and great embarrassment even to the people he appointed himself as champion of their cause and ideals." Even those who agree with his opinion "must by now have dismissed him as a colossal quack whose venomous outpouring will take their cause nowhere but the deep trenches of self-defeat." However, he was merely following the Yoruba tradition of "Fulani bashing and Islamophobia," but in an amateurish way. Awoniyi's statement that "'there is no place for sharia in Yoruba land' gives the erroneous impression that Yoruba land is wholly Christian." Actually, Muslims are in the majority, even if pagans are counted as Christians. As to Awoniyi's argument that the introduction of sharia into Yorubaland is only to "cause trouble in the region," Galadima challenged him to name the sharia advocates who have been behind the various political and other occasions for unrest in the area. What, asked Galadima, is the "purpose of Awoniyi's rants?" He wondered whether the latter might be "acting from a script written" by Wole Soyinka, of whom we will hear more just below. Awoniyi and his kind were posting their "rubbish on the web in line with the dictum that a lie repeated several times may eventually begin to sound like truth." He "is a man embarrassingly prejudiced and bigoted, dressed in the garb of elitism, iconoclasm, arrogance and xenophobia."⁷⁹ Well, you get the point.

Violence on the Plateau continues to flare up. The bloodiest one took place in 2004. End November, 2008, it erupted again. Be sure to turn to the *CCD* folder devoted to the subject.⁸⁰ Among others, you will find a file containing two articles by Mahamman Adarawa in reaction to this latest violence, one of which begins as follows:

⁷⁸M. Ibrahim, "In Response to Femi...", 2003.

⁷⁹M. Galadima, "Do They Sell Ogogoro..."

⁸⁰*CCD* <Misc Arts/State by State/Plateau/2008 Plateau Violence/2008 Riots>. Those riots have continued on into 2010 and still show no signs of easing. As if the 2004 Plateau Peace Conference never took place!

It is unfortunate that even after conducting a flawed election and using the opportunity provided by protest against the rigging to commit ethnic cleansing against Hausa/Fulani and Muslims, Jonah Jang and his government officials are still talking about “settlers” and “foreigners”. The fact that they are not sober or reflective on the crimes they have committed and no one is calling them to order just showed the decadence in our political and judicial system. What it shows is that retired military officers and political office holders are at liberty to commit and even boast about their crimes.⁸¹

It is clear from these two articles that the two parties are miles apart and seem to be living on different planets. Adarawa betrays no knowledge, let alone understanding, of the Jos Christians’ concerns about sharia, *jihad* or Muslim plans.

Female dress code has been a long-standing source of friction, dispute and even violence between the two religions.⁸² Ali Ahmad stated “it is difficult to find a single incident where Muslims have tried to be sharia-compliant without such efforts being vigorously resisted, even if it will result in little or no adverse effect to non-Muslims.” For an example he referred to the Muslim-Christian uniform feud in the nursing world. The Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria permitted female Muslim nurses to don more Muslim-friendly uniforms. Opponents to this move argued that the traditional Western-style nursing uniform is in conformity with the international standard to which Nigeria should adhere. Similar battles were still being waged about school uniforms for Muslim girls. Ahmad also informed us of a dispute in Oyo State about the proper dress code for female government officials. He could not comprehend why such developments always end up in confrontation rather than lead to reasonable solutions. Sentiment often plays greater part than does reason.⁸³

During August, 2007, Christian elders in the 19 Northern states, under the aegis of Christian Elders Forum, criticized the Kano State Government over an alleged decision to compel all students in the state to dress like Muslims irrespective of their religions or cultural inclinations. They were concerned that “the rights of a large segment of the population in the state have been infringed by those who have sworn to protect and defend those rights.” They urged the government to rescind the order in the interest of peace and harmony.⁸⁴ However, Sule Ya’u Sule, Director of Press and Public Relations to the Governor, denied the charge not only, but also clarified the situation and

⁸¹M. Adarawa, “Hausa/Fulani ‘Settlers’....”

⁸²See entries “Dress” and “Uniform” in J. Boer, indices of Vols. 2, 3, 4, 6.

⁸³A. Ahmad, 2005, pp. 369-370.

⁸⁴E. Mamah, 4 Aug/2007.

firmly chided CAN for its rashness. Sule explained that Christian female students were not forced to wear Muslim dress, but they *were* obligated to dress decently. This, Sule argued, was even a law in some Christian states in the South as well as a rule on many university campuses. Sule chided the Christian Elders: “It is sad that an organized body like CAN would base its official position on newspaper rumours and would proceed to issue a statement indicting the state government without exhausting all avenues for official clarification.” The Elders “should have first tried to find out exactly what the law said from relevant Kano State Government agencies or from the Kano State Branch of CAN, which is better informed about some of these issues, before rushing to criticize the state government.” He added, “The Government is committed to instilling a morally right dress code among its students and therefore expects Northern CAN and indeed all well-meaning organizations to join hands to stamp-out immorality and indiscipline in our schools and society. Acting on rumour and cheap religious sentiments will not help us in our struggle for a united Nigeria.”⁸⁵

2. Miscellaneous Muslim Writers and Issues

Secularism has long been a bone of contention between the two religions in Nigeria. Ado-Kurawa was piqued by Matthew Kukah, who had written that secularism “has never been a threat to any religion.” Those who argue that it is, do so only because they want to use state funds for Muslim purposes and, secondly, because they “think that it is they, not God, who own the religions.” Ado-Kurawa bristled that secularism itself is a Christian notion, not Islamic. Furthermore, what right does Kukah have to speak for Islam? As to the matter of Muslim use of state funds, he quoted from J. D. Peel, whom he described as a “Christian brother,” and who detected contradictions in CAN at this front:

On the one hand, CAN insists that the Nigerian state should hold its secular principle of neutrality as between religions against the desire of Muslim pressure groups like JNI to associate the state with Islam. On the other, it is drawn to compete with them for state favours, such as subsidies for pilgrimages or religious buildings, and to adopt an attitude of automatically endorsing Christians in office, irrespective of their competence or probity.

⁸⁵S. Sule, 10 Aug/2007. CCD <Misc Arts/Women/Fashion and Hijab/2007-08-10...>.

*Nor has it been willing to open dialogue or establish links with progressive or secular Muslim opinion.*⁸⁶

And, Ado-Kurawa argued, secularism no threat to Christianity? Is it not a major cause of the decline of the Church in the West?⁸⁷ With a scant reference to the Kuyperian struggle, he pointed out that at least some Western churches have struggled against secularism, for they did see it as a threat, but they are few.

Ado-Kurawa was also much annoyed with Mbang. He accused Mbang of having delivered “one of the most bigoted declarations ever made in Nigeria” with the following comment: “All members of CAN must make sure that the House of Assembly, governors and their deputies are Christians. Whether they like it or not, we will not allow any Muslim to be president of Nigeria again. I am declaring this as the president of CAN. They used to say politics is a dirty game. We must go and clean it. We will win Nigeria for Christ. Christianity has come of age in Nigeria.”⁸⁸ This, understandably, was a bit much for Ado-Kurawa.

His logic took a strange twist when he turned to Kukah’s quotation of a parallel statement about Abubakar Gumi,⁸⁹ who could be considered Mbang’s Muslim mirror image. Gumi at one time declared that neither Christian nor woman would ever rule Nigeria in his lifetime. Instead of drawing attention to their mutual intolerance, Ado-Kurawa felt that this and other materials “demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the missionary predecessors of Kukah were the most intolerant bigots ever in Nigeria’s history....”⁹⁰ I must confess that I have difficulty following the logic here. If Mbang’s statement was bigoted—and it probably was—then how could Ado-Kurawa fail to recognize and criticize the same in Gumi? As I have stated before, anger can distort logic. It happens on both sides.

He was also more than a little annoyed at the insulting ways in which Christians wrote about sharia. Reuben Abati, a columnist with *The Guardian*, “used banality to ridicule the sharia by insulting Muslims.” His insults were expressions of crude dreams “in which he drank beer and enjoyed his sexual fantasy.” Furthermore, he exercised “journalistic cowardice” and propagated

⁸⁶I. Ado-Kurawa, 2003, pp. 410-413. Kukah and other Christians were aware of this contradiction and ambivalent about it. See J. Boer, vol. 3, pp. 128-129 and vol. 5, p. 98.

⁸⁷If Kukah may not speak about the effect of secularism on Islam, may Ado-Kurawa speak of its effect on Christianity?

⁸⁸Quoted from *TD*, 31 July/2000, p. 4.

⁸⁹For identity of this (in)famous Nigerian Muslim, see J. Boer, index entries in vols. 2, 3, 4, 5.

⁹⁰I. Ado-Kurawa, 2003, pp. 410-413.

“falsehood by literary manipulation” by statements such as “corporal punishment under the sharia has become the most popular form of entertainment...” Turning to an anonymous “vicious anti-sharia Yoruba Christian journalist,” Ado-Kurawa described him as having made it “his vocation to ridicule the sharia. One of his methods was portrayal of the sharia as a law enforced by the *almajirais* [Qur’anic school pupils] and that it ‘can catch only the poor and hungry.’ As usual, Ahmed Sani must be a subject of ridicule and insults. Thus he wrote, ‘The more I look at the photograph, the more uncomfortable I become. The first nagging question is: Where is Governor Sani’s hand?’”⁹¹

Ado-Kurawa was also incensed at the way the “Christian-dominated media...personalised the sharia debate” by “character assassination.” Governor Ahmed Sani “was called all sorts of names.” Former Heads of State, Shehu Shagari and Muhammadu Buhari “received the worst bashing from these religious bigots.” Abati took the cake with his “crude and boorish” remarks about all three of these leaders: “So, what is the Governor of Zamfara waiting for? Let him ask his chef to fry and garnish Jangebe’s severed hand. This properly fried meat should then be divided into three parts: a portion should go to the Governor (he’d enjoy it), and then the remaining portions should be shared between...Shagari and...Buhari...May Their Excellencies have a good meal. *Allahu Akbar!*”⁹² It is bad enough when “base journalists” use such “abusive words, but what about the clergy?” The concrete example here is Matthew Kukah’s calling Ahmed Sani “a mad man.”

Ado-Kurawa closed his chapter about sharia and the Christian press with a quote from US President Thomas Jefferson: “The man who reads nothing at all is better educated than the man who reads nothing but newspapers.” This, he concluded, “is very relevant to the contemporary Nigerian situation, where most of the Yoruba Christian-dominated papers are not committed to educating their readers but rather to dissemination of propaganda, of hate and bigotry.”⁹³

3. *Miscellaneous Muslim Writers*

Ado-Kurawa was not the only one upset about Abati. Ahmad Rufa’i Khalid, in a letter to the editor, wrote how impressed, if not enamoured, he used to be with Abati. However, Abati overshot himself with the result that Khalid now became his bitter critic. Abati’s report on a trip to Zamfara thoroughly incensed him for its alleged falsehoods and insults. “Every material fact as canvassed

⁹¹I. Ado-Kurawa, 2003, pp. 413-415.

⁹²Quoted from *The Guardian*, 31 Mar/2000, p. 49.

⁹³I. Ado-Kurawa, 2003, pp. 420-422.

by Abati is born out of falsity, misconception, mischievousness and lacks firmness of purpose. The urge to write must not only be there, but most importantly, enough facts to buttress the facts must be there too.” Abati clearly did not understand the importance of sharia to Muslims. Other parts of the Abati report that offended Khalid included the proposal that the Governor “be arrested for perjury.” He insulted the Governor with the nickname “Ayatollah Komo Nothing.” In addition, he misrepresented important issues, not to speak of the gross insult in his prediction that “Zamfara might turn out to be a homosexual state, beggars, apartheid, etc.” Next time Abati writes about sharia and related issues, he should be conversant with his topic.⁹⁴

In 1999, A. B. Ahmed was one angry man. After telling us a very interesting inside story of a rebellious anti-sharia paper he himself, a Muslim, had presented at the 1977 CA, he lashed out at Sunday Mbang, at the time the national leader of both the Presbyterian Church and CAN for his abrasive statements. He had watched Mbang on TV and reacted with great vehemence.

To my utmost surprise and distress, I watched and listened in disbelief as that small priest, with a dog-collar around his neck and a crucifix dangling down his chest, began to repeatedly refer to Governor Ahmad Sani of Zamfara as “that mad man!” He went further to make several other incendiary statements to the effect that CAN would instruct Southern states with Christian majorities to declare Canon Law rule; that oil-producing states would be told by CAN to disallow oil prospecting and mining in their domains; that if a pin pricks a Christian in Zamfara, then Nigeria would go into religious war; and many other unmentionable, provocative and intemperate statements of truly irresponsible import. I swear solemnly that I sincerely believe that Mbang was either drunk or [possessed by an] imaginary power that night or that he was slowly but surely going ga-ga.

Now it is not in my place, I, who committed near-apostasy in 1977 in order to keep Nigeria united, to begin to contribute to its dismemberment in 1999 by responding to this insane “Rasputin” of a prelate in a manner most suitable to his own arrogant, insolent and unpriestly vituperations.

What irks me unbearably is the fact that Nigerian Christians do not actually know the true facts about the sharia, which they attack so viciously. Not a single Christian has risen up in the last several decades to speak with understanding or a kind word about Islam and sharia. It is bad enough that our Christian compatriots have deliberately deafened their ear

⁹⁴A. Khalid, 19 Nov/99.

and reinforced their hearts against something which they have neither studied nor sought to understand. But to proceed from thoughtless antagonism to publicly calling us madmen is going too far, especially for a so-called man of God who should preach peace and universal love. If Mbang is not himself a madman, how can he call Governor Sani a madman? And if the governors of other Northern states also opt for sharia, will he continue to call all of them madmen?

Let Nigerian Christians remember that religious leaders, like political leaders, are the ones who have led their poor and ignorant innocent followers into horrible conflict like the Inquisition, the Crusades and jihads, throughout history. As Mbang's foolish tirade has clearly shown, the gown does not make the priest and the crucifix can be dangling from the neck of a warmonger.

Ahmed ended the discussion by quoting from the Bible all of Matthew 23:1-12 and left the reader to draw his own conclusions about Mbang the “priest.”⁹⁵

Two days later, Yaquba Kurba advised Christians that they should realize “that silence is not always a sign of fear. They should restrain themselves from making statements or actions that can jeopardise our fragile peace. Muslims are peace-loving people and they should be allowed to live in peace. Therefore, enough is enough—but only for the wise.”⁹⁶ Two weeks down the pike the Mbang episode evoked still more tirade, this time from A. A. Shu’aibu from Malali, Kaduna State. He, too, had watched the programme “with utmost dismay” when he heard that Mbang “openly insulted and ridiculed the Governor of Zamfara.” In his closing, Shu’aibu referred Mbang to a number of Biblical texts and commented, “It is disheartening that a priest and religious leader like Prelate Sunday Mbang could launch a crusade to champion secularism against the divine laws from his Creator.”⁹⁷

Some Muslims just plain lost their patience with opponents to sharia. This might have been the case with Ibrahim Datti Ahmed, a one-time presidential aspirant from Kano. He said he failed to understand the hysterics of opponents to sharia in Kano State. He suggested that “instead of opposing the legal rights of the majority, all those who feel uncomfortable with the new system

⁹⁵A. B. Ahmed, 10 Nov/99.

⁹⁶Y. Kurba, 12 Nov/99.

⁹⁷A. Shu’aibu, 26 Nov/99. For more details see J. Boer, 2008, vol.7, p. 97.

should move out of the state.” Nigeria upholds freedom of movement. Thus, if you do not like a majority decision, move on to a state more congenial to your comfort level.⁹⁸

Some were not much concerned with Christian reactions or healing relationships. When many Christians closed shop in his state, Governor Kure of Niger State reportedly said, “He did not care if the shops stay closed. And he may not really bother if the schools, already short of teachers, also closed up. What matters, he told the Muslim faithful, is to be ‘steadfast.’ He said that the full implementation of sharia is a challenge to all Muslims”⁹⁹ This is in sharp contrast to another time when he actually went to the markets of Minna to assure non-indigenous traders of their safety.¹⁰⁰

There was an awareness that not all Christians entertained these fears. We have already met Governor Nyame earlier on. Ado-Kurawa told of Professor Adamu Baikie, a prominent core-North Christian leader, who allegedly reported, “So far as Northern Christians are concerned, we have not been unduly molested and in fact in a state like Zamfara, the governor goes out of the way to identify himself with us, our aspirations and our fears.”¹⁰¹ President Obasanjo has stated that he was informed that some Christians took their cases to Sharia Courts because quick justice is assured. So we should recollect the popular saying “justice delayed is justice denied.”¹⁰² Unfortunately, the show case adultery trials before the entire world described in Volume 6 were hardly examples of quick justice!

R. D. Abubakre of Ilorin University found that some Western scholars have a better attitude towards sharia than do Nigerian opponents. Referring to J. Norman Anderson and Noel J. Coulson, “two foremost authorities on Oriental laws,” Abubakre found that these foreigners, though limited in their knowledge, “were apparently better, because their opinions were not...born out of prejudice against the Muslims. In contrast, Nigerian non-Muslim critics of the sharia are not in most cases ignorant, but they seem to be insensitive to the feelings of their opponents.” Similarly, he found that Palmerston, an early British colonial administrator, though also basically ignorant of Muslims,

⁹⁸L. Azare, 3 Mar/2000. This is parallel to a controversy raging in Canada during September, 2007. A well-known radio personality had suggested that non-indigenes who do not like Canadian values, should consider returning to their place of origin. Substantial minority groups raised a hue and a cry and demanded his resignation from a public committee on which he served. The issue triggered columns, editorials and letters to the editor all over the country, not to speak of TV reactions.

⁹⁹S. Oyibo, 2 Mar/2000, p. 25.

¹⁰⁰J. Boer, 2004, vol. 2, p. 118.

¹⁰¹ Reported by *The Guardian*, 19 Nov/2000, as quoted by M. Haruna, 2002, “Sharia: Agabi’s Executive Arm-twisting,” *DT*, 23 Mar/2002, back page. Baikie’s positive attitude reported here is almost the opposite from that found in J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 177-178, endnote 213, pp. 444-445 as well as in his speech at the launching of CAN in 1987 (A. Baikie, 1989, pp. 37-47).

¹⁰²I. Ado-Kurawa, “Minorities under....,” p. 23.

displayed a more positive attitude towards Muslims than do Nigerian Christians. “It is almost certain that few Nigerian non-Muslims have the spirit of friendship towards Muslims” as expressed by Palmerston.¹⁰³

As already noted several times in this series, the situation in Plateau State differs from the others in a number of ways.¹⁰⁴ Minchakpu reported Muslim opinion through the mouth of Sheikh Dawud:

“The conflicts in Plateau State have their bearings in politics and jealousy,” Sheikh Dawud said. “Politicians use religion to stir up sentiments among their followers.” Sheikh Dawud believes that Christians have discriminated against Muslims. “Those who are not Muslims do not want to see Muslims in leadership positions in Plateau State,” he said. “They do not want to see Muslims prosper economically, and that is why they have discriminated against us.”

Aggrieved Muslims recall, he said, that when British colonizers assumed power over Plateau State, they eroded Muslim leadership by appointing a Christian to take over Jos. “Right from the beginning, Jos was under the leadership of Muslims,” Sheikh Dawud said. “The Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups had 11 leaders that ruled this city before the colonialists came to Nigeria, but the colonialist usurped us of this position and gave it to Christians. It is this that has infuriated us, the Muslims, and that is why we are demanding that this injustice be corrected.”¹⁰⁵

On November 9, 1999, the Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Honourable Okosun, was interviewed on TV about sharia issues. One writer, Isa B. Abdullahi of Sokoto, responded with considerable annoyance. Apparently the Speaker had expressed all the usual Southern Christian objections, including the prediction of a natural death of sharia. He declared the sharia move dangerous for the country. He also threatened to evict all Zamfarians from his state, if any Edo citizen in Zamfara would be hauled before a Sharia Court. Abdullahi retorted that when the Edo State Government handed “over all its primary schools to Christian missionaries, nobody outside Edo State interfered.” There had been no discussion about possible forced conversion of children to Christianity. These schools were now running with state funds. Is that not the establishment of Christianity as the state religion? In Zamfara, secular schools will remain secular;

¹⁰³R. D. Abubakre, n.d., pp. 62, 69-70.

¹⁰⁴J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, ch. 8.

¹⁰⁵O. Minchakpu, 10 Oct/2005. J. Boer, vol. 7, Appendix 19.

no attempt at Islamization has been made. Why is Okosun so worried about Zamfara or, as Abdullahi put it, “so supra-sentimental?” Or why does he express himself on TV with such arrogance?¹⁰⁶

Pentecostals also drew the ire of sharia campaigners. Sani Mustapha was offended by comments allegedly made by Bishop Okwonkwo, National President of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, and judged them “most unfortunate and very inciting.” The Bishop had apparently dismissed sharia as “medieval law ill suited to modern society.”¹⁰⁷ Mustapha chided the Bishop. “He should have made reference to history, as in reality the history of Prophet Muhammad (SWA) has been translated into English.” He was not making the proper distinctions inherent in sharia and thus confusing the issues.¹⁰⁸

Similarly, Aminu Okpanachi was not impressed with the methods of Pentecostals, CAN and other sharia opponents. “There was massive use of rumours, lies, exaggeration and blackmail.” CAN and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria with their paid advertisements “fed the public with crap, which later turned out to be lies.” They claimed that more than 20 people had been detained and churches burnt down in Zamfara before sharia went into effect. Zamfara officials denied the charges and expressed their disgust. CAN even ordered Christians to strike on December 1, 1999. Okpanachi then told the scandal of Mbang’s insults of Governor Sani reported above. He asked, “Why is it that those who do not live in Zamfara, a state with 99 per cent Muslim majority, are the loudest critics, while we hear little or no noise from Zamfara people? Why all this noise when we have been educated that Islam does not permit the forceful application of this law on non-Muslims?”¹⁰⁹

Ibrahim Umar was of similar sentiment and turned the spotlight especially on CAN:

As to CAN, their reaction is not surprising. Their religion has never been propagation or defence of Christianity, but opposition to Islam. Their threats are but empty rantings of desperate men with neither focus nor wisdom. The only good thing is that we have serious Christians like Reverend Maikudi Kure from Jos, who went on air over the BBC and declared that the same tenets of the Islamic Sharia are enshrined in the Bible and the declaration of Sharia in Zamfara is a welcome decision as it will curtail social vices like prostitution, theft, disrespect to parents, consumption of intoxicants, adultery, etc. Islamic

¹⁰⁶I. Abdullahi, 30 Nov/99.

¹⁰⁷Mustapha quoted from an advertorial published in *TD*, 21 Oct/99.

¹⁰⁸S. Mustapha, 4 Nov/99.

¹⁰⁹A. Okpanachi, 8 Dec/99. No noise or criticism from Zamfarians? Please go to Chapters 4 and 6 of Vol. 6.

states from the days of the Holy Prophet (SWA) through the Ottoman Empire down to the Sokoto Caliphate have always provided cover and protection to Christians and allowed them to live according to their laws. It is those without the knowledge of history that express blind fears based on mere assumptions.¹¹⁰

These accusations and critiques continued right up to the time of this writing. In 2007, a new ruckus occurred in Kano State. Here is a report from Ibrahim Shuaibu:

There was panic in Tudun Wada LGA of Kano State yesterday as youths unleashed terror on Christians living in the area. The action was as a result of speculations that a Christian teacher in the area drew a cartoon of Prophet Muhammad and displayed it in his sleeping room in the area. The protesting youths caused serious pandemonium. Ten shops belonging to Igbo traders in the area were set on fire.

The cartoonist was said to have relocated to the house of the district head for safety, before the intervention of the police. The police are now on red alert in the town to prevent escalation of the crisis. TD gathered that an emergency security meeting was yesterday quickly arranged by the joint security team in the state to ensure that the crisis did not escalate to other parts of the state.¹¹¹

The Kano Muslim Youths Consultative Forum (KMYCF) Chairman, Aminu Yakub, accused CAN of reporting falsely on the incident. The latter claimed that nine Christians had been killed, a report the Forum judged “baseless and an attempt to incite the public.” As Hassan Karofi told the story, Yakub

Challenged CAN to produce evidence over its claim, adding that for a body that is supposed to be religious, should not allow itself to be seen promoting falsehood.

"We have been living for over 40 years with our Christian brothers without any such incident, this was the first, why can't we ask what was responsible instead of casting aspersions that were false and misleading?" he asked.

The Forum chairman challenged CAN to give the number, name and area where the said corps member was serving the area, stressing that a religious body must always work to promote harmony and not inflame an already tense situation.

He said the security agencies are in possession of the cartoons drawn by some Christians

¹¹⁰I. Umar, 19 Dec/99. Appendix 4.

¹¹¹I. Shuaibu, 29 Sep/2007.

in the area and not by an Indonesian as claimed by CAN.

He therefore called for concerted efforts to create awareness towards religious tolerance and respect for religions rather than un-provoked attacks on the sanctity of religions which mostly led to crisis and loss of lives and property.

It could be recalled that CAN Secretary General Mr Samuel Salifu, last week called on the FG to investigate the Tudun Wada crisis, claiming that nine Christians were killed, including a corps member, a claim the Forum denied.¹¹²

Enough said. The recriminations continue in thought, word and deed.

Here then you have the general attitude of Muslims towards Christian opposition to the expanded sharia. While the above Kano stories are not overtly about sharia, such developments are the result of the fragile atmosphere created by a combination of sharia and the Danish cartoons.

Sani Mustapha, along with Lateef Adegbite, was among the few Muslims who professed understanding of Christian opposition to sharia. “I fully understand the tears of the Christians with regard to the establishment of the sharia,” he wrote. “Muslims have been ruling this country far longer than the Christians.” They have created a mess of illiteracy and poverty with the rulers interested only in maintaining their own luxurious style of life. “The opposition and fear of Christians against the sharia could therefore be justified.” However, Christians have participated in maintaining this order of injustice and corruption. They did not pursue the justice of the Bible anymore than Muslims followed the justice of sharia. Christians knew that the sharia was better than Muslim practice, but Christian leaders pursued their own “selfish interest.”¹¹³

I end this highly inflammatory section with the following parting shot from the National Publicity Secretary of Action Congress, one of Nigeria’s political parties, Alhaji Lai Mohammed. Without distinguishing between Muslims and Christians, he had this to say about clerics “With naira signs in their eyes and the hunger for land in Abuja¹¹⁴ driving their thoughts, many clerics have abandoned the truth and joined the pigs at the trough, instead of speaking the truth to power.” One recognized exception to this was Catholic Archbishop John Onaiyekan, of whom we will hear much in Chapter 3.¹¹⁵

¹¹²H. Karofi, 21 Oct/2007.

¹¹³S. Mustapha, 3 Nov/99.

¹¹⁴Abuja is the new capital of Nigeria, where land is being distributed at a premium and often under most corrupt conditions.

¹¹⁵C. Okocha, 18 Aug/2007.

Jihad and Islamization Plan

You may recall from previous volumes that Christians are convinced that Muslims have a definite plan to take over Nigeria and Islamize the place.¹¹⁶ Muslims, of course, deny it. Salisu Bala wrote,

Almost thirty years now, since the sharia debate of 1977-78, CAN has been accusing the Muslims of a secret plan to Islamise the whole country. The question now is, is Nigeria today an Islamic state? Is it possible for a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country like Nigeria to be Islamised? The answer to these questions is no doubt a capital “NO,” as there is a great difference between an Islamic state, Muslim state and a multi ethnic/religious state. Nigeria is in the third position and cannot be an Islamic state, for an Islamic state is where a country is governed completely by the holy Qur’an. But in the case of Nigeria we have the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which is accepted by all. But some of the states in the federation may be called Muslim states, because they are populated, governed and controlled by Muslims. Like in the year 622 AH, when the prophet migrated from Makkah to Madinah, it became a Muslim state from the beginning, even though there were also Jews, Christians and Traditionalists. The non-Muslims were not forced to accept Islam; in fact, they put hands together to develop the city.¹¹⁷

Sheikh Zakariya Balarabe Dawud denied that “Muslims aspire to turn Nigeria into an Islamic state. Politicians create the impression that we want to convert Christians into Muslims and that we want to Islamize the state. This is not true.” Muslims are supposed “to live in peace with Christians, so long as they allow us to live in peace with them, and allow us to practice our religion. However, we are enjoined to fight to defend Islam if we are not allowed to practice our religion.”

Issues of Law

1. Sharia and the Bible

Muslims are often puzzled by Christian opposition to sharia, since much of it is also found in the Bible. Why then do Christians reject it? Ibrahim Ali stated that “stripped to their basic moral code, Islam and Christianity were fundamentally similar. Both abhor adultery, fornication, prostitution and alcoholism.”¹¹⁸ Lawan wrote that Christians critique sharia for its provision for

¹¹⁶J. Boer, vol. 3, 2004, pp. 35-44.

¹¹⁷S. Bala, 2000, p. 6. See also J. Boer, 2007, vol. 6, pp. 200-209.

¹¹⁸S. Misau, 31 Jan/2000.

capital punishment, “but they mischievously refuse to recognise” that the Bible also provides for the death penalty for adultery, while flogging is also prescribed for certain crimes.¹¹⁹

The Islamic Circle of Minna, the capital of Niger State, “noted with deep concern the spate of criticisms that have greeted the declaration of sharia in Zamfara.” “Most disappointing is the fact that these criticisms were chiefly from Christian clerics who should be the first to recognise and support it, since all the divine injunctions governing the sharia are also found in the Holy Bible.” Like others before and after them, they listed a multitude of issues that the Bible shares with the Qur’an—adultery, fornication, drunkenness, homosexuality, murder, usury and more.

In view of the similarities between the OT and sharia laws, “it is a matter of serious regret” that such people “could still engage in vehement and shameless criticism of people willing to obey those injunctions. Such an attitude is tantamount to open rebellion against God.” Their attitude is like that of the Pharisees. “It is shameful, disgraceful and indeed painful to observe that people who spent years in the seminaries, training to uphold the injunctions of God and by virtue of which they got the responsibility of leading people to obey God, would be the very first to vehemently and openly reject Him.” “We feel bitterly disappointed particularly with the Catholic bishops and archbishops. Whenever some of them speak against Islam or sharia, we pity their flock.” For Christian clergy to oppose the sharia that teaches the same things is unbelievable and unacceptable. “What is there in the sharia that Christian scholars are quarreling about? Is there anything that the sharia talks about which the Bible has not said the same thing about? Or are we to understand that those laws in the Bible are not meant to be obeyed? They are threatening thunder and brimstones against those willing to obey God. What a shame.” “Their stiff opposition to sharia has made it clear that they are either ignorant of the Bible as regards sharia or that they simply do not believe in their holy Scriptures. We tend to believe the latter. We appeal to these clerics that if they are spiritually too weak or unwilling to see to their implementation as God directed (Matthew 5:17-19), they should at the very least leave Muslims alone.”¹²⁰

Albashir similarly argued in this fashion. “Christians should understand that Islamic law has many common grounds with the Christian law. For example, both religions prohibit vices such as robbery, theft, adultery, fornication, gambling, corruption, etc. The essence of law in the two religions in effect is similar.”¹²¹ Ibrahim Aliyu also argued, “They say sharia is too harsh, that the amputation of the hand that commits theft is barbaric, but they’ve forgotten that in the Bible,

¹¹⁹J. Lawan, 9 Nov/99.

¹²⁰Islamic Circle, 6 Dec/99.

Deuteronomy 22:22 and 25:1-3, death is the penalty for adultery and flogging meted as punishment respectively. Also, in the so-called democratic societies, capital punishment, such as electrocution, hanging, firing squad and lethal injection are meted on criminals. Why won't you call these harsh?" Elsewhere in the same article, "What are Christians worried about? Does Christianity approve of alcoholism, stealing, prostitution, murder, lying and adultery? The answer is 'no.' Many verses in the Bible condemn these acts. See Exodus 20:13-17. Then why don't we implement sharia to fight these immoral acts? Why the opposition?" He concluded his article with an appeal to Christians "to calm down and try to understand what sharia is all about. They shouldn't make conclusions before its implementation. Let's give sharia a chance."¹²²

2. *Religious Roots of Common Law*

While almost all Nigerian Christians and secularists--such as there are-- regard Nigeria's common law neutral, secular and non-religious,¹²³ Muslims insist that it is far from any of these. In this section we will adduce their argument that, in fact, common law is based squarely on the Christian faith and is thus, by definition, religious in nature and hardly neutral. In that respect it is no different from sharia.

Suleiman Kumo, in answer to a question by Ibrahim Umar about the implications of sharia in a "multi-religious secular society," declared the question itself wrong. The real question, he insisted, is: "What are the implications of continuing to implement the current Christian-based legal system in a multi-religious society where Muslims are in the majority?" End of subject. It would have been interesting to hear Kumo out on this one. His corrected question was, of course, a good one.¹²⁴ But there it is: The current legal system has its base in Christianity. Though Christians themselves often fail to realize this background to the system or flatly deny it, Muslims are very much aware of it. It is, in fact, a crucial point in their sharia campaign.

Thirteen years earlier, Ibrahim Sulaiman made the same assertion with a little more substance. In opposing sharia, he charged, Christians "hide under the banner of secularism to campaign against the sharia. Such hypocrisy is not enough to prevent us from knowing the truth of the matter. English law is essentially Christian, or so it is claimed." In a case that Nigerian Muslims

¹²¹A. Albashir, 8 Nov/99. See also M. Dadi, *AM*, 15-21 Mar/2000. J. Boer, vol. 6, Appendix 17. I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, pp. 16-17.

¹²²I. Aliyu, 13 Dec/99.

¹²³See J. Boer, vols. 4 and 5 on this subject.

¹²⁴I. Umar, 9 Nov/99, Appendix 4. J. Boer, vol. 6, Appendix 56.

have strenuously latched on to, Sulaiman adduced the “interesting case, *Bowman vs Secular Society Limited*” of 1917 in which

Lord Summer refers to England and English law as follows: “Ours is, and always has been, a Christian state. 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, but we apply many of its rules and most of its principles with equal justice and equally good government, in heathen communities and its sections, even if courts of conscience are material and not spiritual.”

Lord Finley, the then Lord Chancellor, in the same case, said, “There is abundant authority for saying that Christianity is part and parcel of the laws of the land--but [and here comes a clincher--Boer] the fact that Christianity is recognized by the law is the basis to a great extent for holding that the law will not help endeavours to undermine it [i.e. Christianity].”¹²⁵ Thus, the awareness of the Christian foundation to Common Law was not new at the time of the Gusau Declaration. It has since been expressed time and again. Muslims love to bring it up as you can see from the last endnote.

Yoonus Abdullahi, not further identified in my sources, for one example, stated that “Muslims have never pretended that their religion has nothing to do with their law and vice versa. The main constraint is the refusal of some critics to admit that the laws of Nigeria cater to their religion. During the ‘great debate,’ T. Akinola Aguda said, ‘I shall concern myself here with the courts as established by the Constitution, excepting, of course, the religious courts called Sharia Courts.’” “We have borrowed the European courts system in our land and many learned English and erudite Nigerian lawyers like Lords Summer and Finlay as well as Culson and Nigerian Justice Karibe Whyte, have all admitted that the common law is a Christian law and Christianity is a religion.”¹²⁶

One time when the Council of Ulama referred to common law, it immediately corrected itself: “common law, sorry, Christian law....” The Council suspected that Christians are aware of the background of common law. Christians “covertly believe that the operating common law is Christian, bag and baggage, as established by Lord Summer in the British case of *Bowman vs secular society* and attested to by Karibi Whyte,” a Christian legal luminary in Nigeria.¹²⁷

¹²⁵I. Sulaiman, 1986, p. 64. See also A. Alkali, 13 Nov/99. I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, pp. 298-299. A. Orire, 2000, pp. 6-7.

¹²⁶Y. Abdullahi, 31 Dec/99.

¹²⁷A. Alao, 5 Nov/99.

The Council stated that when Muslims insist on sharia, “they are not trying to hurt or inconvenience anybody. They are simply trying to live up to the tenets of Islam. What is now taking place in Zamfara is to give the correct interpretation of Islam.” Then the Council added, “Is it not ridiculous for Christians to tell Muslims that they will not allow them to practice their own religion, while the Christians’ own religion has been imposed on the Muslims for about a century now?”¹²⁸

Muslim individuals and organizations continued to insist on the alleged Christian background of common law. Abdulkareem Albashir argued that Christians have no basis for rejecting sharia simply because it is religious in nature, for their own is also religious in background. As he put it, “If critics’ attitude to sharia is because they think that only sharia and customary law have religious elements in them, they are mistaken, because the English common law has religious elements in it also.” Then he adduced the same Lord Summer quote and turned to Justice Karibi White, who stated at one time, “The Holy Bible appears to contain the fundamental basis of the common law.”¹²⁹

Lateef Adegbite urged that those who oppose sharia because of its religious foundation “should remember that every law is rooted in religion.” This is true for both African customary law as well as common law, “a substantial portion” of which “is Christianity-based as emphatically declared” by Lord Summer. Elsewhere, Adegbite complained, “For many years, we Muslims have undergone humiliation of our faith being relegated to the background in public matters. We have been greatly subjected to the Christian common law.” He warned that Muslims cannot “continue to be on the defensive on Islamic law.”¹³⁰

Justice Sambo made a big issue of this point during his lecture at the official sharia declaration ceremony in Zamfara. I reproduce the relevant part as the closing salvo on this subject:

In the case of Islamic Law and Customary Law, it is clear to everybody that they are inspired by religions. 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. I think it is important that this explanation should be made so that everybody should realize it, especially the Christians, who have grudges when courts having legal systems inspired by the religions of Islam and Custom are funded by the Government. I like to quote below what three legal luminaries have said about the Common Law being a Christian Law as an evidence. The three

¹²⁸Council of Ulama, 7 Nov/99. J. Boer, vol. 6, Appendix 26.

¹²⁹A. Albashir, 8 Nov/99.

¹³⁰L. Adegbite, “The Constitutional and Legal...,” 2000, p. 9; “Sharia in the Context...,” 2000, pp. 68-69. D. Nmodu, 6 Mar/2000, p. 20.

Christian Legal Luminaries, two English and one Nigerian, are Hon. Lord Sumner, Hon. Lord Finlay and Hon. Justice Karibi-White. Hear what they say about the common law.

Sambo then proceeded to repeat the sayings from these three luminaries that have already been quoted above. There is one part of Karibi-White's statement that has not yet appeared in these pages:

The Holy Bible, which appears to contain the fundamental basis of the Common Law, claims to have been derived partly from the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses on the mountain. The several books of the Holy Bible are said to have been written on inspiration. The Roman Twelve Tablets, the Laws of the Greeks, and the laws operating in many civilised countries are founded on divine revelations.

It is very important to note that these assertions that the Common Law is a Christian Law, coming from these learned Christian Legal Luminaries of the Common Law, are good enough to educate the ignorant ones that it is not only the Islamic Law and Customary Law that have religious elements in them.¹³¹

Kabiru Muhammad asked, "What greater injustice could you inflict on a Muslim than barring him from practising his religion, while imposing the practices of another opposing religion that has been done by the institution of a system of Christian laws under the guise of operating a supposedly secular constitution?" To support this challenge, he appealed to an article in *The Guardian* about the Christian legal luminary, Professor C. S. Momoh from the University of Lagos. Momoh, who referred to the British House of Lords "as the court of last resort in matters constitutional in the Commonwealth that all Commonwealth laws are Christian laws."¹³² Though Christian legal laymen vigorously denounce this claim of Christian influence on Common Law, here is one area where Muslims approve of and even lean on the declaration of Christian experts.

Before moving on to the next section, I want to draw attention to a titillating claim that brings the issue of the Christian nature of common law to a deeper historical level. British law, it is claimed by some, may have been influenced by sharia! Kurawa, in his report on a British Council International Seminar on Representing Islam, held 22nd to 27th June, 2003, at Watford, UK, wrote,

The history of Islam in Britain pre-dates 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. This was quite interesting to me and I had to ask the

¹³¹M. Sambo, 3 Nov/99, pp. 6-7. J. Boer, vol. 4, Appendix 8, pp. 219-228.

¹³²K. Muhammad, 17 Nov/99. The original story is from *The Guardian*, 17 Oct/99.

contributor for the source of this information, which he readily gave.¹³³ He also added that most of the English barristers are aware of this fact but they never make it public.¹³⁴

Thank you, Kurawa! You have opened up an interesting new vista to be explored. I will return to this subject in due time.¹³⁵

The Opposition Press

Muslims frequently attack the “Christian” press for its opposition to sharia. By “Christian press,” apart from some Christian books, I mean mostly Southern newspapers and magazines, some of whom parade themselves openly as Christians, while others put on a secular face. To most Muslims, “the difference is the same.” In his master’s thesis about the Kaduna sharia and riot issues, Salisu Bala of Arewa House in Kaduna was quite critical of Christian writings on the subject. He wrote, “It is evident that some of the literature of the year 2000 conflict was one-sided and not objective in the true sense of the word. Some deliberately swept certain significant facts under the carpet.” He was particularly annoyed by Bee Debki’s book.¹³⁶

The author seems to have misrepresented certain facts in the cause of his analysis, for example he placed Rigasa, which is in the present Igabi local government area, under Ikara local government. The name of the publisher, date and place of publication was totally missing. The author seems to have lacked the discipline of the study of contemporary world history. Pictures of people killed in the riot were boldly put to use to justify certain claims and assertions. This, if care is not taken, may result in another mayhem even worse than the previous ones put together. It is one-sided in the sense that the book was essentially a report prepared on the February and May 2000 violent conflicts in Kaduna state, by the author on behalf of a foreign religious body, before it was later developed in to a book form.¹³⁷

To the best of my knowledge, no one has written more about the role of the press than has Ado-Kurawa. He devoted a chapter of 100 pages to the subject of sharia in the Southern Christian press. His basic take was that the media, both press as well as electronic, are anti-Islam and anti-

¹³³J. A. Makdisi, 1999. “The Islamic Origins of the Common Law,” *North Carolina Law Review* 77: 5 UNC Press Chapel Hill, USA.

¹³⁴I. Ado-Kurawa, July/2003. Appendix 9.

¹³⁵J. Boer, vol. 8-2, pp. 351-352.

¹³⁶See “Debki, Bee” in Bibliography.

¹³⁷S. Bala, 2000.

sharia, controlled as they are by mostly Southern Christians. Ado-Kurawa agreed fully with the less-than-complimentary descriptions, scattered throughout this series, of the colonized Nigerian elite. These descriptions hold also for the owners, operators and writers of most of these newspapers, according to him. Thus I do not plan to re-describe them, but do be aware that these characteristics form the backdrop of Ado-Kurawa's treatment of the press. These people who own, edit and write for the press--and they are mostly Christians-- "are either secularists or religious fanatics." You will also find some Muslim secularists among them. All of them "are echoing the values of Western Christian civilisation." Even the "Muslim-owned papers have not necessarily been pro-sharia. The *Concord* has not been supportive, while *WT* has remained on the fence," as confirmed by one of their own columnists. *NN*, a government-owned newspaper, "has been cautious."¹³⁸

Kurawa's *Shari'ah and the Press in Nigeria* is an exploration into "the reasons for the sharia agitation by Nigerian Muslims and the response of Nigerian representatives of Western Christian civilization." Kurawa has concluded that the "Yoruba Christian-dominated press" is "the major actor in the media war against sharia." They have been quite successful, and their success has "emboldened them to the point of recklessness." "They thought they could 'kill' sharia." However, their campaign was a "top down" approach, while the "sharia vanguard is being spearheaded from the bottom upwards." The press with its "top down" approach "cannot intimidate the downtrodden." So, "despite the most vicious attack on Islam, Muslims and sharia, states in the North continue to adopt the sharia criminal code."¹³⁹

Utilizing the research of one "Dr. Tilde," whom I assume to be Aliyu Tilde, the author of Appendix 8, Kurawa named "intimidation, insinuation and sensation" as strategies the "anti-sharia press" has adopted to "kill the sharia," a phrase he borrowed from a major archenemy of sharia, the Catholic Archbishop Okogie of Lagos. The intention was, Kurawa claimed, to persuade both the public and the leadership "that the sharia is something dangerous and capable of breaking up the country." Tilde listed 18 newspaper cover stories to demonstrate his point.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸My own impression of *NN* is that it seems often to be chavng at the bit for the restraint that comes with Federal ownership. Nevertheless, it publishes myriads of articles and reports supporting the sharia campaign. A perusal of the endnotes will indicate how much I have depended on *NN* for information for this Muslim-oriented Appendix. You will find far less dependence on *NN* in Appendix-chapter 35 that reports on Christian opinions. It would seem that my definition of "caution" differs from that of Kurawa.

¹³⁹I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰For more discussion on both the media and Ado-Kurawa, see J. Boer, in all vols. check entry "Media" in the Index as well as "Ado-Kurawa" in vols. 6, 8-2; vol. 2, p. 28, 31-32, 65; vol. 3, pp. 147-151; vol. 4, pp. 122, 235-236, 239; vol. 6, pp. 324-325

The Christian threats in the media kept mounting. There was talk about sharia war, of breaking up the country, of *jihad*. All the big names entered the fray--bishops and even Ojukwu, the former leader of Biafra. "Almost all the Christian-dominated papers were biased against the Muslims in their reporting of the Kaduna carnage" in 2000. "In point of fact, it was not journalism at work, but religious propaganda." Imagine the press' jubilation at "the purported FG 'decision to suspend the sharia,' based on an alleged agreement with the Northern State Governors." Of course, the story turned out to be a hoax.¹⁴¹

Kurawa complained that the press "rarely reports anything good about Zamfara," though they love to tell negative stuff. One example was the "portrayal of the sharia as enforced by the *almajiris*," pupils of Qur'anic schools. An anonymous writer published a picture [cartoon?] of Governor Sani without hands. The picture suggested that the *almajiris* caught the Governor stealing and amputated his hand. "The point is," the writer explained, "since there is nothing faithfals will not do to defend their belief, and the Governor has even vowed to die for his, could he not have used his limb as an example of the gruesome fate awaiting violators of the sharia law by severing his hand?"¹⁴² They "had no prominent space for the story of a Christian tire dealer who opted to be tried by a sharia court" and won his case against a Muslim.¹⁴³ Neither did they have space to report on the crime reduction reported so generously in *NN* about Zamfara.¹⁴⁴

Kurawa seemed to be in a permanent state of fury at what he considered the "most vicious anti-sharia attacks by Yoruba Christian journalists" who make it "their vocation to ridicule the sharia." Given the large book he published on the subject, I believe I have good reason for that statement. He told about thirteen interviews on sharia in a single edition of *Guardian* newspaper. The interviewees included one lone Muslim. "The views of Muslims were deliberately drowned out." Lateef Owoyemi, who wrote the original report, commented:

So, where is the avowed "Conscience, nurtured by truth" of the Guardian stable? The full page of venom poured on Ahmed Sani entitled "Ahmed Sani's Place in History" which was advertised on the front page as "The man who almost brought Nigeria to its knees," would make any Muslim feel ridiculed, in a country professing respect for all faiths! The truth is that the last has not been heard about Sharia. But, there is no need for Muslims or Christians to resort to violence. It was not Ahmed Sani that almost brought Nigeria to its

¹⁴¹I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, pp. 331-333.

¹⁴²I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, p. 415. *TD*, 25 Nov/99.

¹⁴³Probably same story as in A. Sani, 10 June/2001, p. 21.

¹⁴⁴I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, pp. 338-339. See J. Boer, 2007, vol. 6, ch. 4.

*knees. No. It is a long reign of accumulated injustice, unattended ignorance, resentment, unemployment and social neglect, security lapses, and those who deliberately refuse to listen to other people's assurances and reassurances!*¹⁴⁵

Aminu Okpanachi from Abuja also chimed in. "The Southern press tried its best to create a feeling of insecurity by speculating chaos and bloodshed come 27th October, 1999, in Gusau, simply because it would be a gathering of Muslims. Others threatened religious war. The 27th came and passed and we saw no chaos, war or bloodshed." "These dirty tactics" continued after the launching, including "direct attacks and insults." Southern media reported on a mass movement out of the state. One paper featured a headline that read, "Igbo order kinsmen out of Zamfara to avert foreseeable danger to their lives and property and business." It was, wrote Okpanachi, "all lies." Apparently a few people died in the crowd, a fact played up in the press as a sign of divine disapproval. They were silent about more deaths during a Reinhard Bonnke Christian crusade in Benin a few days earlier.

Furthermore, the Southern press "wants us to believe that it is an unpopular venture. Do you call a programme with more than two million people in attendance an unpopular affair? With demonstrations in places like Katsina by masses asking for sharia, who then are these critics speaking for? Why don't we objectively ask ourselves some questions" like how can it be that the moral level of sharia countries like Saudi and Iran is so much higher than that in the West with its immorality, crime and social decadence, which Nigeria wants to copy? This is a question "of ignorance, sentiments, subjectivity and hypocrisy, all resulting from the stereotypes that we grew up with."¹⁴⁶

You may have noticed that I write mostly about the press in this section. It is a matter of choice based on space. However, all the things said in this section apply as well to the electronic media. It is largely a similar crowd who is in control there, according to Kurawa. It is interesting though to note that Kurawa considered the coverage of the international electronic media, like BBC, VOA and others, neutral with respect to some of the violence surrounding the sharia. He criticized Obasanjo's Chief Press Officer, Doyin Akupe, for accusing these stations for deliberately undermining Nigerian democracy. Akupe stated that the government is "convinced that these stations are deliberately out to create anarchy." Kurawa insisted, instead, that they have been

¹⁴⁵I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, p. 339. Culled from L. Owoyemi, *TD*, 19 Mar/2000, p. 10. For a discussion of a Muslim view of the proper functioning of the press, see I. Abdul-Kareem, 1986, pp. 87-88.

¹⁴⁶A. Okpanachi, 8 Dec/99. Is it a question of different levels of morality or, rather, of both cultures applying selective morals, each emphasizing what the other ignores?

“neutral, reporting on both the supporters and opponents of sharia.”¹⁴⁷ My reaction to this discussion is that Western Christians, including myself, have long noticed an anti-Christian bias in the secular Western media that sometimes favour other religions over Christianity in the name of pseudo-multiculturalism. The pro-Christian FG would naturally dislike that emphasis as negative propaganda, while Kurawa would, of course, appreciate it as neutral and objective. *Neutrality and objectivity are sometimes interpreted very subjectively in a highly partial manner!*

In addition to his books, Kurawa also publishes articles on the Web. At one time he wrote, *Many studies have been conducted on the nature of Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria. Many of the authors were Christians who were happier to blame the Muslims for the violence. For example: Father Matthew Kukah, who belongs to the ethnic group known as Kataf, writes from the perspective of a Roman Catholic priest from a minority ethnic background of Southern Zaria, who resented the perceived Islamic domination of Northern Nigeria. That can be said to be the strength or weakness of Kukah’s work. The terms “Hausa-Fulani hegemony” or “Northern hegemony” used throughout by Kukah are misleading, for they tend to establish that those who dominate Northern Nigeria do so by the virtue of their ethnic status. This approach plays down class struggle, which is an important aspect of social life.*

One of the most documented religious crises in northern Nigeria was that of Kafanchan. But even on it the writings of the Christian social scientists were not as objective as expected. One scholar commented thus: “Even scholarly accounts are suspected of being biased. Implicit in the accounts of Jibrin Ibrahim, a Marxist from Christian background, Father Matthew Hassan Kukah and Toyin Falola, also a Christian, is the idea that Muslim fundamentalists provoked the crisis. On the other hand, scholars from a Muslim background, such as Bashir Isiyaku, see CAN and other Christian activists as the villains.” The Muslim version was that the Christians provoked the crisis by trying to neutralize “Dan Fodio Week” scheduled from February 27 to March 1, 1987, whereas the Christian version reported by Father Kukah and Dr. Jibrin was that the Muslims tried to neutralize an “evangelical crusade” on March 5, 1987. But “interestingly neither J. Ibrahim nor M. Kukah mentions this Dan Fodio Week in their otherwise well-documented analyses of the crisis.” As social scientists, these scholars should have at least mentioned this, because

¹⁴⁷I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, pp. 328-329.

they were expected to make a fair assessment and reporting the event will help others who may attempt an objective analysis.

If it was a Muslim who wrote on Christians as Reverend Kukah or any of these Christians did on Muslims, he would receive nothing but condemnation from both Muslim “moderates” and Christians and he would be branded a “neo-fundamentalist” or “fundamentalist” and then finally a “terrorist” and eventually he would lose his rights especially for travel to attend international engagements. This happened to Muslim writers who did not even behave like Kukah, who based some of his analysis on false accusations. Their crime was that they were Muslims who wrote what the West did not support. Kukah on the other hand was praised by fellow Christians visible on the jacket of the book and was honored with fellowships and awards presumably to facilitate more indictment of the Muslims and Islam. The most illustrious of such positions is his appointment as a Papal Adviser. Muslim intellectuals rightly view the promotion of people like Kukah, Ibn Warraqah and others with Muslim names such as Jibrin Ibrahim¹⁴⁸ by the West in the name of scholarship as an attempt to perpetuate Western domination of the Muslims.¹⁴⁹

Kurawa was by no means alone in his fury at the Southern “Christian” press. In fact, I would call him representative of the general Northern Muslim attitude. Yakubu Yerimah, a public affairs analyst in Abuja, wrote a biting article pitting the North’s *NN* against the FG and the Southern press. “For the average Northerner, the *NN* is a respected voice of truth, justice and fairness,” he asserted. “It is the voice that has not surrendered its essence to the wind of meaninglessness, a voice that has remained poignant, rich, systematic and relevant.” It “is the most authentic voice of the North.”

And that is where its trouble started. The FG is afraid of *NN*’s alternative opinions “which might attack, disparage or destroy its own stand on issues. It will do anything to pull the paper down. So what if it hits the rocks?” “It has to suffer untold tribulations, get deprived of life-meaning support. It has to be killed because it does not respect the kind of ‘truth’ which others want

¹⁴⁸Note by Ado-Kurawa: Two Christians wrote a book on Shari’ah in which they referred to Dr. Jibrin Ibrahim as a Muslim who wrote on the Shari’ah and they quoted his critique of its implementation. Incidentally the two Christians also have Arabic names, maybe some others will sometime also quote them as Muslims. See Abd al-Masih, K. O. and Ibn Salam, M. J. 2000: 54 where they wrote “Another Muslim Jibrin Ibrahim said the adoption of religious laws (e.g. Sharia) is always a threat to the legitimacy of the state, because it is seen to serve the interest of only those who belong to the ruling religion or rather the ruling faction within the religious group.”

¹⁴⁹I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, “Islam and Non-Muslim...,” p. 4.

to preach. It has to suffer strokes of the hammer, because it gives prominence only to those who are ‘opposed’ to government, those who would preach sharia.”

For that reason, *NN* does not receive support from the FG as do some Southern newspapers, especially the *Daily Times*, which “can easily be controlled and manipulated.” As to the Southern press in general, it has a cordial relationship with FG. “It is believed government is directly interested in their coverage, their outreach and performance. They keep drumming untruths on attempted coups, arrests, interrogations and attacks on prominent Northerners.” They keep publishing stories of Northerners that “are not only inhumanly terrible, but a disservice to humanity.” You get the point. The rest of the article can be read as Appendix 33 in Volume 6.¹⁵⁰

Rabiu lamented that in the Southern press every calamity in the country is traced to the influence of sharia, even those in the distant past like Kafanchan in 1987.¹⁵¹ Those who so argue, “conveniently forget” other dimensions of Nigeria’s problems, such as colonialism and its fallout in current Nigeria. Basically, Rabiu’s opinions with respect to the press are similar to those of Kurawa. There is a host of “mediocre journalists” eager to “insult Islam and Muslims from the North.” They “bluntly lie, twist text of speeches and ascribe statements to persons who did not make them, notwithstanding the fact that there are recorded audio tapes to attest to the contrary.” The reference is to an infamous statement attributed to Muhammad Buhari and, perhaps, as well to Governor Sani’s claim to have recordings of his discussions with CAN.¹⁵² Muslims of high standing are vilified. For some, the sharia saga has become “an opportunity to dupe Christian charities abroad,” based on charges of persecution of Christians by Muslims. “In spite of these rumblings, no one has demonstrated that sharia has been the real cause of his suffering.”

Where does all this Muslim bashing come from? Rabiu held a group of minority politicians within the Middle Belt responsible, along with sympathetic journalists, mostly Southerners, whom he once again described as “unprofessional, dishonest, unkind and mischievous.” The second source is the current worldwide atmosphere of Islam bashing. This, too, gives certain Nigerians the courage to “discredit Islam and rant against Northerners.” Why, wondered Rabiu, do Middle Belt leaders need to invent enemies in order to secure their positions?¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Y. Yerimah, 22 Nov/99. Appendix 33 in J. Boer, vol. 6. For a similar article see also A. Jika, 24 Nov/99, p. 5.

¹⁵¹J. Boer, 2003, vol. 1, pp. 50-78. I am not convinced that there is no connection between sharia and those upheavals, though Muslims generally deny any connection.

¹⁵²For Buhari, see index entry in J. Boer, vol. 5, 2005. For Governor Sani, see J. Boer, vol. 6, Chapter 3.

¹⁵³S. Rabiu, “On Obasanjo....”

Lateef Owoyemi, a Yoruba Muslim, expressed his disgust, if not anger, about the behaviour of the media. See here his paragraph:

I feel sad about the way Sharia has been portrayed thus far, and the media may have to carry a lot of blame for fanning the embers of discord, by not caring to find out about Sharia or Islam, before making public the Christian writers' and readers' ignorance, bias, and half truths. Which media house has sent a crew of intelligent Muslim and Christian reporters to visit Zamfara State, investigate and report on the situation there – post-Sharia?¹⁵⁴ How many media houses in Nigeria have as policy the bridging of understanding between the faiths? How many commissioners taught contributors to educate us, including this Muslim professional, on what Sharia truly is and what it is not? Instead, regrettably, Christian reporters and even senior citizens have tended to push their prejudices, fears and ignorance as the only one view and none else, notwithstanding repeated assurances to the contrary! From the media coverage of Sharia so far, one would think Muslims form no more than an insignificant one per cent of our populace. Yet, even, if Muslims are that few, that one per cent, if they are believing Muslims, they would not have enjoyed religious freedom without their lives being largely regulated by Sharia. There is no halfway practice. Even in the predominantly Christian United Kingdom, today, Sharia is not taboo. So enlightened have others become that the UK government this year, sent a group of officials to look after British pilgrims to the last Hajj! Our media must begin to show judgement and balance in their handling of religious disputes. The views of Muslims would appear deliberately drowned out thus far, even, as highly respected Christian senior citizens condescendingly refer to Sharia as "this thing" and heap insults and abuses on the Zamfara State Governor.¹⁵⁵

By now the harsh critique by Aliyu Mashi of Kaduna of the Southern press is to be expected. He wrote, “Colossal mischief, misinformation and distortions have been fed through the South-West press. *Punch, Guardian, Vanguard* and others have not hidden their antipathy to sharia in Zamfara. They often hide behind pan-Christianity to unleash their opposition, knowing well it is only by pitching one faith against the other that their diabolic objectives are to be met.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴The answer is, “Quite a few.” Without trying to defend the Southern press, the facts stand, as you will notice while you are reading this volume. Owoyemi may be guilty of the same failure of which he accuses the press.

¹⁵⁵L. Owoyemi, 12 Apr/2000.

¹⁵⁶A. Mashi, 30 Nov/99.

As Adegbite put it, the sharia development “raised a hue and cry among non-Muslims, notably in the media. Some sections of the latter threw objectivity to the wind and heaped all manners of abuse on Governor Sani, scandalizing Islam in the process and describing sharia as barbaric, especially following the amputation of the hand of a cow thief in Zamfara State.” The sharia struggle “has exposed the deep anti-Islamic posture of most Nigerian media houses, who made it a pastime to ridicule, vilify and scandalise Islam and sharia.”¹⁵⁷

Mohammed Haruna’s report on Olisa Agbakoba’s human rights visit to Zamfara fully corroborated the accusations against the press in these pages. The group’s own report stated that the media is guilty of “grossly distorting and misrepresenting the implementation of sharia in the state.” In the spirit of Kurawa, Haruna added, “Only one newspaper, *TD*, reported this finding, and even that in one of its inside pages. It is not difficult to imagine what treatment the report would have got if it had reached negative conclusions about sharia in Zamfara.”¹⁵⁸ Kurawa reported a *NN* story about one Dr. Sylvester Ugoh, an anti-sharia Christian who cannot see any relevance in the sharia for the 21st century, but who nevertheless “described Zamfara as peaceful despite the sharia rancour.” “I do not see any problem. There is peace in Gusau,” he said.¹⁵⁹ Colonel Herman Keizer, a retired Christian chaplain in the US Army, was part of a US delegation to investigate the Nigerian sharia situation. He told me that within very few days he recognized the same press bias. There you have it directly from an unexpected source.

Haruna adduced the words of Arthur Schlesinger Jr., an American historian, who reputedly said, “If once Karl Marx held that history was shaped by control of the means of production, in this day and age, history is shaped by control of the means of communication.”¹⁶⁰

Concluding Remarks

I begin this concluding section with the words from Justice Abdulkadir Orire:

Those who hated sharia, and they are many, through cultural or religious bigotry, concentrated their attack on a few aspects of Islamic criminal punishments such as amputation, stoning and lashes, the proof of which are difficult to marshal. We should therefore not throw the baby away with the bath water. We should remember that the aim

¹⁵⁷L. Adegbite, “The Constitutional and Legal...,” 2000, pp. 5, 12-14; “Sharia in the Context...,” 2000, pp. 62-63, 69, 75-77; 12 May/2000.

¹⁵⁸M. Haruna, “Class, Religion...” May/2005.

¹⁵⁹I. Ado-Kurawa, 2000, pp. 331-333.

¹⁶⁰M. Haruna, “Class, Religion...” May/2005.

of any effective law should be to protect life, property, honour and dignity of the citizens as well as maintain peace and harmony in the nation, which has never and could never be achieved by the law being operated in this country.

In fact, a research some years back on the effectiveness of sharia, showed that Saudi Arabia, using sharia for the past 25 years, has recorded only 25 cases which warranted amputation of hand, while Egypt, which has abandoned the sharia for another system, has recorded well over 30,000 of such cases during the same period.¹⁶¹

A major characteristic of the Muslim reaction towards Christian behaviour is the almost total lack of objectivity and neutrality, let alone sympathy, sensitivity and respect. With the exception of Salisu Bala—see below--, the atmosphere is one of annoyance and anger, suspicion and accusation, contempt and smug self-confidence, but also a sense of being oppressed by the Christo-secularist machine.

Two similar events so far not mentioned in this book evoked contradictory responses. You may recall the deep suspicion towards the sharia conference at Unijos. A major reason for the suspicion was the fact that it was funded by Germans and Americans.¹⁶² In January, 2005, a Muslim women's conference was held in Abuja for the purpose of improving their advocacy skills. The event was openly funded by the US Government, but no one objected to its funding arrangement.¹⁶³ That was probably because there were no jealous scholars lurking around who felt left out and no scholars predisposed to anger at the West. It was a meeting where no one had any axes to grind—but also likely characterized by a degree of naivete!

On the whole, the Muslim attitude towards Christian opposition to sharia is mostly negative. That, of course, does not make it wrong. In Volume 6, for example, I have quite a number of times expressed my agreement with, say, Ado-Kurawa. Though in more recent writing he has begun to display a measure of appreciation for some things Western, on the whole he wrote in negative tones—but mostly based on square facts that cannot not simply be wished away.

In this chapter, a new star of more objective expression has come to the fore in the person of Salisu Bala of Arewa House, Kaduna, who wrote a master's thesis about the Kaduna riots of 2000. Though he is definitely pro-Muslim, he critiqued Muslims where they deserve it and supported Christians where they deserve it. There are not many like this young man. He definitely rejected

¹⁶¹A. Orire, 2000, p. 12.

¹⁶²J. Boer, 2007. Vol. 6, pp. 261-267.

¹⁶³A. Haruna and A. Umar, 4 Feb/2005.

the Christian accusation of a Muslim plan to Islamize the country. He presented various versions of the origin of CAN in an objective manner without the customary scathing comments that many Muslims find hard to resist. He described the behaviour of both Muslim and Christian media during the OIC controversy in an objective manner that may be standard elsewhere, but is rare in Nigeria. While both Muslims and Christians adamantly insist on being the majority in the country, Bala calmly recorded that both try to dominate each other and that both issue provocative statements. The new sharia caused violence on both sides, a rare admission among Muslims. He sided with Christians about the unbalanced Muslim composition of the Kaduna State sharia committee and wondered how they could produce an objective report. Well done, Bala. Congratulations for your courage. We need more of your kind!

In closing this chapter, we listen to the voice of Governor Ahmadu Mu'azu of Bauchi State. He had been a student at one of COCIN's schools at Gindiri, Plateau State. When a classmate of his, the Christian Suleiman Bogoro, lost his father in the violence at Yelwa, the Governor went to greet the family. At this occasion, probably most embarrassed, he lamely appealed to Christians not to see all Muslims in a bad light. "It is only few Muslims that are committing this kind of evil. So, do not look at all of us Muslims as bad people. There are good ones, too, just as there are evil minded as well as good Christians." He then "called for forgiveness and prayers to bring about true reconciliation and harmonious co-habitation among communities with diverse differences."¹⁶⁴ Lame though the speech may have been in that particular context, since the occasion called for a more vigorous message, such sentiments might have prevented the Plateau massacres and did point the way to the future.

Postscript to Chapter: Michakpu Report

¹⁶⁴Y. Abraham, Apr/2004.

Obed Minchakpu wrote a rich article in 2005, that should have been noted and used already in Volume 6. Unfortunately, it came to my attention too late. This Postscript is simply a device to allow me to include the article in the discussion. I present you with a brief synopsis of some issues raised in the article, some of which have been dealt with already in earlier volumes. The article itself constitutes Appendix 19 in Volume 7.¹⁶⁵

One surprising and dismaying feature of the article is that it leaves the impression there never was a Plateau Peace Conference, that it had no effect of any kind. The discussions and complaints are no different from those before the conference. This is true for the Christian as well as the Muslim part of the article.

Minchakpu wrote that Muslims and Christians in Plateau agreed with each other on the issue of religion and political manipulation. In earlier volumes, I have indicated that Muslims usually insist that religion and politics are intertwined, inseparable, almost identical. But when it comes to violence between Muslims and Christians, Muslims often deny that connection. According to Minchakpu, Plateau Muslims agreed with Christians in that they both insisted that it is political manipulation of religion that undergirds all this violence, rather than religion itself. That, at least, is one side of the Christian mouth. Sheikh Zakariya Balarabe Dawud, chairman of the Council of Ulama in Plateau State, said, “Political officials have manipulated religion for their causes. The conflicts in Plateau State have their bearings in politics and jealousy. Politicians use religion to stir up sentiments among their followers.” I repeat my own theory that, though other elements are present, the most basic inspiration comes from and is triggered by the wholistic religious impulse of Islam. I also repeat my contention that the reason Muslims resort to the political explanation is that it frees Islam, in distinction from Muslims, from blame and responsibility.¹⁶⁶

The charge of manipulation often has in its wake the accusation of discrimination. The Sheikh “believes that Christians have discriminated against Muslims. They do not want to see Muslims in leadership positions in Plateau State. They do not want to see Muslims prosper economically, and that is why they have discriminated against us.” Christians answer this charge in Chapter 3.

And then there is the issue of leadership of Jos. “Right from the beginning,” the Sheikh asserted, “Jos was under the leadership of Muslims. The Hausa and Fulani had 11 leaders that ruled this city before the colonialists came. The colonialist usurped us of this position and gave it to

¹⁶⁵O. Minchakpu, 10 Oct/2005; Compass Direct, 23 Sep/2005.

¹⁶⁶For discussions on manipulation see the entries “Manipulation” in the indices of earlier volumes.

Christians. It is this that has infuriated us, the Muslims, and that is why we are demanding that this injustice be corrected.”

The Sheikh’s explanation contradicts claims we overheard in earlier volumes, where Muslims claimed that it was the colonialists who installed Muslim leadership in Jos to begin with. In other words, Muslim hegemony was of recent colonial vintage. Sheikh Dawud would have us believe Muslim power over Jos preceded colonialists. Since Muslims insist on the importance of this history, they better get it right. Contradictory stories here seriously weaken their claims.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷J. Boer, vol. 2, 2004, p. 91; vol. 7, 2008, p. 400.