

Appendix 10:

BZ *Da'wa*: Muslim Mission

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NOTE: This appendix contains brief discussion of BZ *Da'wah*. The more recent AZ developments are in vol. 8 ch. 3 itself. BZ=Before the Zamfara Declaration for sharia, late 1999; AZ=After that declaration up to the present.

In 1989, Tijani El-Miskin of the University of Maiduguri, delivered a paper at the International Conference on Islam in Africa, entitled “*Da'wa* and the Challenge of Secularism: A Conceptual Agenda for Islamic Ideologues.”¹ *Da'wa* or *da'wah*, according to M. A. Bidmos, “means an invitation to the way of Allah. It involves the spread, propagation and consolidation of Islam. It means bringing Islam to the doorstep of all and sundry. Any effort towards maintaining the sanctity of the tenets of Islam falls within the framework of *da'wah*. It is a divine exercise which is obligatory on the Muslim *ummah*.”² Already in those days, it was recognized that the basic challenge to secularism was sharia. The term is not used much in the paper, but its presence is clearly felt throughout. He presented an agenda: how to create an open door for sharia, for Muslim culture, for Islam as a whole in a secular environment.

The starting point for such a programme, argued El-Miskin, is “the critique of secularism.” “Muslims are instinctively conscious that their religion inherently rejects secularism and consider it a dangerous misrepresentation of the interests of the human community.” Once that critique has sunk deep into the psyche of Muslims, then a two-pronged action programme must take off. That includes (1) “expanding the demographic zone of Islam through large-scale conversion” and (2) “consolidating the existing constituency of Islam through mobilisation of the *ummah* to be conscious of and live according to the Islamic alternative”—sharia.

El-Miskin then discussed four challenges such a programme has to face with respect to the non-Muslim community. “*Da'wa* activists” [Muslim missionaries and other strategists] must “establish a definite mode of interaction with the secular order.”

¹J. Boer, vol. 2, 2004, pp. 81-82; vol. 4, Appendix 2, pp. 166-176. Check also his name in the Index for more pagination.

²M. Bidmos, 24 Nov/89.

That is to say, they “must have the long-term vision of establishing and promoting a political model that is in consonance with Muslim aspirations.” And this must be done in view of “the specific local conditions and dictated by circumstances.” The eventual models developed will “differ from place to place.” In other words, no universal “cookie-cutter” models.

The second political challenge is to establish the machinery for the “actualisation of the [above] model.” The third is to “establish enlightenment procedures of the way in which the institutions of non-Muslims will benefit from the new political model.” In other words, find ways of effectively recommending the Muslim way to the general public. Still another challenge is to attempt to create Islamic alternatives to fit the reigning political model not only but other cultural institutions as well. When disasters strike, the Muslim community must learn to be prepared to jump in, the same way Christian and secular institutions do. El-Miskin is especially strong in emphasizing the need to get involved in technology and break the monopoly of the West “so as to free the Muslim world” from its own backwardness. This is really the challenge of the entire secular culture that is being exported globally.³

Western thinkers who feel the most comfortable when they can isolate things in different boxes, may wonder in what box this programme fits. Political? But it has a religious smell to it. And then there are the references to technology and culture. They could end up scratching their heads and might wish that Muslims would think a little more systematically. To El-Miskin and fellow believers, this is all part of their all-encompassing religious approach to life.

Muhib Opeloye in his lecture to the 1989 multi-faith conference convened by Jacob Olupona at the Obafemi Awolowo University, was an advocate of a dynamic approach to the sources of Islam as explained further down in this chapter. This tends to lead to moderation in inter-religious relationships. Given the obligation of *da'wah*, he was not ready to ban proselytization, but it “should be pursued with caution.” He advocated that

it should be done without offending the adherents of other religions. Qur'an 6:108 specifically admonishes believers to avoid reviling the deities of

³T. El-Miskin, 1989, pp. 7-12.

unbelievers. Recent experiences have shown that religious disturbances often emanated from the provoking manner of proselytization. If the doctrines enshrined in the religions had been observed without recourse to abuses, sarcasm and mockery, and provocation would have been reduced to the barest minimum. To our mind, this is not impossible, though it may be difficult. The proselytizer must have the ability to employ subtle arguments to convince his listener.⁴

⁴M. Opeloye, 1992, p. 89.