

*Appendix 35:*

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## Christian Proposals and Solutions

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**Boer—Need to go through this chapter to straighten out the most outstanding irregularities.**

**NOTE: NOTES BELOW TAKEN FROM DIFFERENT FILES. EACH FILE SECTION BEGINS AT \*\*\*\*\*. HAVE COMPLETED THROUGH <2003 NOTES> HAVE NOT YET DONE FILES FOR 2004-2007**

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**Appendix 27 is mixed. Hence, perhaps make ref to it in this chapter under Majority/Census issues. This subject has a heading at +++++ but nothing else.**

**Check on all the files under Misc Arts/Sharia....**

<b>Recommendations (from end of Turaki chapter in vol. 7)</b>
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<i>Note from Boer</i> : The recommendations that Turaki lists here are included in Volume 8, the one dealing particularly with that subject.
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### FINAL OUTLINE 8-3

**NOTE: The order of the outline and of the text are not the same right now. However, the flow of my life at this point in this project has prevented me from finalizing the small points. Nevertheless, I offer both the outline and the chapter, divergent as they may be, so that you can get an idea as to what this rather significant chapter is all about.**

**INTRODUCTION    xxxx    iiiii**

**NO NEED FOR SHARIA    nnsnns**

**SECULARISM    xxxx    ssss**

**SPIRITUAL RESOURCES xxxx spsp**

**CHRISTIAN MOOD xxxx cmcm**

**PACIFISM pppp**

**ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS xxxx rrgg**

**POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL MEASURES pgpg**

**Political Issues and Solutions xxxx pspsp**

**Citizenship and Indigeneity ciscis**

**Census Issues cencen**

**Reports, White Papers and Punishment xxxx rwprwp**

**Security and Compensation Issues SISISI xxxx**

**Proposals for and Role of Government gggg**

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC MEASURES SESE**

**NATIONAL UNITY cucucu**

**EDUCATION eduedu**

**WOMEN ISSUES WIWIWI**

**YOUTH ISSUES yiyi**

**LEGAL ISSUES lili**

**RELATIONS WITH MUSLIMS rrmr**

**Advice to Muslims atmatm**

**Dialogue and Cooperation dcdcd**

**BZ Developments -- bzdbzd**

**Haruna Dandaura hdhd**

**AZ Developments dddd**

**Dialogue and Co-operation during the AZ Era dadada**

**NIREC   nirnir**

**Dialogue in Joint Action   dadada**

**Southern Political Scenarios   spssps**

**Population Control   pcpc**

**HIV/AIDS Campaign   hachac**

*Northern Christians Opposed to “The Phantom Crescent”*   phantom

**PHILOSOPHICAL AND WORLDVIEW ISSUES   pwipwi**

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS   xxxx   rprprp**

**INSETS**

**Inset 1--Emman Usman Shehu    eush**

**Inset 2—John Onaiyekan   jonjon   xxxx**

**Inset 3—Yusufu Turaki   turtur   xxxx**

**Inset 4: Ali’s Recipe for Peace   xxxx   arparp**

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### Christian Proposals and Solutions xxxx

*It creates severe religious distortions when religion is used as a tool of subjugation, subordination, domination, discrimination, differential and preferential treatment of fellow human beings, no matter what creeds they believe.*

**Y. Turaki<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Introduction xxxx iiiii**

This chapter is about *Christian* solutions. However, sometimes recommendations and solutions come from inter-religious bodies and thus represent both religions. Where this is the case, I am forced to choose the chapter in which I place the materials. I cannot promise faultless judgement. Furthermore, Christian solutions are not always easy to identify, at least, not for sure. Sometimes the name is the main clue. Often Christian writers do not overtly so identify themselves, for they are employed to write “objectively,” a task few of them manage fully. A solution may be offered by a Christian, but it may be heavily influenced by the secularism that has afflicted Christians. Is it then a Christian solution? But at least it will have been offered by a writer who has sympathy for the “Christian side.” The Muslim community sometimes feels burdened by people who claim to be Muslims but whose thinking or actions have non-Muslim motivation. The same is true for the Christian community. The solutions offered by Christians are thus not always inspired by the Christian faith; they not infrequently receive their inspiration from other sources, especially ethnocentrism and secularism.

Though certain newspapers in Nigeria may identify themselves as overtly pro-Muslim, most newspapers do not identify themselves that clearly, preferring to go under the flag of neutrality, objectivity or even secularism, even if their sympathies are on the “Christian side.” Not many newspapers identify themselves openly as Christian as does *The Guardian*. An article by its Religious Affairs Correspondent began thus: “The efforts of *The Guardian* at propagating the Gospel and its commitment to religious harmony....” This policy was confirmed by the paper’s editor, Debo Adesina, who “expressed the commitment of the publisher to the cause of the Christian faith.” The paper donated free space “to propagate the Christian faith every Sunday.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Y. Turaki, 29 Mar/2000; 10-12 July/2003. See J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 314-315.

<sup>2</sup>D. Adeyanju, 21 Oct/2004.

There is a general consensus that a solution to the Christian-Muslim friction is imperative, but not everyone is hopeful that this imperative can be reached. One senior friend of mine of Fulani background, wrote to me, “I am a skeptic as far as any meaningful Christian-Islam relations are concerned with the present generation of Muslims in Nigeria.” His personal experiences with Northern leaders of the Saradauna generation had been positive. They were

*men of high honour, integrity and the fear of God. You could play ball with them. But with the present bunch, no way. Look at the sharia issue. That a man like Shehu Shagari, who ought to be a neutral statesman above politics, could take the stand he now takes, means there is no hope. He knows it is unconstitutional, that it has nothing seriously religious about it; it is dishonest; it is first and foremost a political instrument to topple Obasanjo’s government and probably to disintegrate the country in the spirit of “What I cannot have, no one else should have it.”*<sup>3</sup>

As much love and respect as I have for this friend, and as much insider’s knowledge to which he has access, my heart does not allow me to rest in his skepticism and abandon all hope.

As Anglican Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon of Kaduna put it, “Whether we like it or not, Islam in Africa has come to stay, just as Christianity has come to stay. This is the only continent we have. Because the African is incurably religious, we must find ways and means of living together.” “We need to begin to learn more about each other so as to respect each other.”<sup>4</sup>

This is a chapter on Christian proposals and recommendations. These have been forthcoming for decades, ever since the 1977 CA. There are enough of them to fill a volume. The sad part is that no one seems to have listened or acted upon them. They are basically the same, year after year, organization after organization, from BZ to AZ. Due to lack of space I am forced to place most of the BZ materials in appendices and, thus, on the *Companion CD*. Once again, sorry for the inconvenience, but, you must admit, that is better than none at all. But *do* get hold of that *CD*,<sup>5</sup> for it contains priceless materials on the subject of proposals, including the extensive proposals of the “Apostle of Unity,” a title I have bestowed on Tanko Yusuf. Since female authors are rather scarce on this subject, BZ women writers or speakers are featured in the book itself.

<sup>3</sup>Anonymous, personal letter, 23 Aug/2000.

<sup>4</sup>S. Obassa, 29 Jan/2005, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>If you need help locating the CD, feel free to contact me at <[boerjf@hotmail.com](mailto:boerjf@hotmail.com)>.

The two most prominent persons in this chapter are Dr. Yusufu Turaki of ECWA fame and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan. You have met Turaki in full force if you read Volume 7, Chapter 7. You can find even more from him on the *Companion CD*.<sup>6</sup> Turaki is unique among writers in that he and his people have not only experienced Muslim internal colonialism<sup>7</sup> in Southern Kaduna, but he has dug deeply into the roots of his own people and discovered how they have been distorted in the depth of their psyche. He courageously exposed them not only but even reprimanded and challenged them to rise up and take their future in their own hands. He has dug deeper than anyone I know, at least among Christians. And apparently has never heard of political correctness! I fault him for too many generalizations without supporting them with concrete examples. To fully appreciate his materials, you can flesh out the details by reading this series! Turaki is a challenging read indeed. Thank you, brother Yusufu.

#### **NO NEED FOR SHARIA    xxxx    nnsnns**

There are those who, without expressing strong opposition to sharia, simply see no need for its expanded version. John Gangwari, A Catholic scholar, asked what seemed a rhetorical question: “Is it really true that the Nigerian Penal Code... is inadequate?” Much of his article is devoted to a negative answer. “The Nigerian Penal Code has incorporated a large corpus of Islamic criminal law.” “Islamic Civil Law and Sharia Court of Appeal are adequately provided for in the Constitution.”<sup>8</sup> Isaac Odeh of *NN* voiced the idea popular among Christians that everything important in sharia is already covered in the Penal Code, which was designed to do just that. According to Odeh, instead of clamouring for sharia, it is more important for all Nigerians to embrace the crusade against corruption introduced by the FG. Once that crusade has achieved its purpose, “nobody would be tempted to do bad things and, therefore, there would be no basis for sharia.”<sup>9</sup> The CCC Report stated that the 1979 Constitution “has worked fairly well for the past 20 years.”<sup>10</sup> President Obasanjo himself declared the two to be almost the same, except that the

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<sup>6</sup>*Companion CD* <Misc Arts/Turaki Arts/...>

<sup>7</sup>See J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 86-88; 205, vol. 4, p. 102; 2008. Y. Turaki in J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 284-335. D. Dung, 2005, Appendix 37.

<sup>8</sup>J. Gangwari, June/2001, pp. 4-5.

<sup>9</sup>I. Odeh, 12 Dec/99.

<sup>10</sup>CCC, p. 2.

Penal Code replaced amputation and death penalty with imprisonment.<sup>11</sup> Even a Muslim sharia stalwart like Sulaiman Kumo agreed that the Penal Code “needs only one or two amendments to bring it into total conformity with the sharia.”<sup>12</sup> Another Muslim, Mohammed Sani Aminu, at the time AG of Kaduna State, also agreed that the Penal Code embraces most of the sharia concerns.<sup>13</sup>

Chief Dodo of NIREC claimed that before they left, “colonial masters” had studied the entire constitutional situation, including the sharia and the diversity of the Nigerian population. Then, “using their wisdom, experience and vision, they decided in consultation with Muslim leaders in 1959, that for the peace, stability and peaceful co-existence of the peoples of Nigeria to adopt the Penal Code for Northern Nigeria.” It has been used for the past 40 years without serious problems or crises. “Are we tired of the peaceful co-existence?”<sup>14</sup>

In addition to arguments about the Penal Code being very similar to sharia and its success in enabling co-existence for 40 years, Wilson Sabiya and Yusufu Turaki both advanced an additional argument for not needing the extended sharia. Sabiya, influenced by both his Lutheran background and his overriding concern over governmental partiality in favour of Islam and sharia, emphasized that “each religion...can establish such morality-building institutions at their own expense.” Government having decided for secularism, it “has no business establishing, appointing and financing religious institutions to enforce sectarian morals.”<sup>15</sup> Besides, such government intervention is not needed, according to Turaki. “A devoted Muslim does not need the Government...to legalise his application of sharia upon himself.” “For a true and practicing Muslim, sharia has nothing to regulate in him, for his entire life is already in total conformity to the tenets of Islam.” Turaki does not mean that Muslims do not need sharia: They do not need

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<sup>11</sup>O. Obasanjo, 2 Mar/2000. R. Eyube and A. Adekunle, 2 Mar/2000, p. 2. For more reports on this statement see M. Aluko, 22 Mar/2002, pp. 4-5. Appendix 3.

<sup>12</sup>I. Modibo, 8 Nov/99, p. 1. I. M. Umar, 9 Nov/99. Appendix 4.

<sup>13</sup>S. Obassa, 22 Jan/2000, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup>D. Dodo, 2000, p. 22. Dodo may not have known the following facts published by Ibrahim Ado-Kurawa: “The Sardauna, the first Premier of Northern Region, confirmed that economic pressure was used on him to allow for the imposition of the British inspired penal codes, when during the debate in the parliament he stated that: ‘If there is any lack of confidence the result will inevitably be that **we shall fail to obtain foreign capital and investment, which we need in order to expand our economy and develop our social services**’.”(I. Ado-Kurawa, “Islam and Non-Muslim Minorities...,” 2000, p. 8). In other words, acceptance of the Penal Code by Northern leaders may not have been merely on basis of its merits.

<sup>15</sup>W. Sabiya in J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, p. 244.

*legal* sharia sanctions. Legal sanctions are needed to reform un-Islamic behaviour, but the faithful Muslim theoretically does not engage in such.<sup>16</sup>

The upshot of this section is, thus, that Christians see no need for a legalised version of sharia, not even for Muslims. Almost all of its provisions are already in the legal system. The faithful can adhere to it without legal sanction and without spending tax money. Obeying sharia voluntarily without forcing it on anyone, is a major recipe for peace among Muslims not only but throughout the country. It would not only prevent oppression and force on Christians, but it might even have a spillover effect on them. The co-operative model now developing between the Presidency and the Catholic Church could become an illustration of such a spillover.<sup>17</sup> In the course of his NIREC lecture, Badejo stated, “After all is said and done, after all the good theoretical arguments of Muslims especially, in pluralistic Nigeria, a sharia beyond the long-standing compromise of the Penal Code, is simply impractical and should be given up.” “The bottom line, which is absolutely non-negotiable, is that the status quo should remain; i.e., the application of sharia should be confined to Islamic Personal Law.” The expanded sharia meant for him that the Qur’an would become the constitution for Muslims. Two constitutions in one country—that is impossible, he argued.<sup>18</sup>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS xxxx rprprp**

There are various organizations and media as well as individuals that have offered lists of proposals and recommendations about how to establish peace and co-existence in Nigeria. Many of them have been bundled together in the folder <Appendices/ Proposal Lists>, Appendix xxxx to xxxx.

I draw your attention to one of the earliest on the list, an editorial in the April 6, 1987 edition of *ThisWeek (TW)*,<sup>19</sup> a national weekly at the time. Its cover screamed: “Religion: Stopping the Fire.” In addition to the editorial from which I have culled the list in the Appendix, Amuzie Akpaka, with the cooperation of five colleagues, produced an article under the title “Stamping out the Scourge,” the scourge being religious conflict, while a number of sidebars dealt with

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<sup>16</sup>Y. Turaki in J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 297-298. When the majority of Muslims insists they need legal sharia, then I find it very slippery for a Christian to “correct” them. Most Muslim interpretations of classic Christian tenets are off the mark. I suspect the same to be true in the reverse, even though the argument may seem logically correct.

<sup>17</sup>See p. xxxx below.

<sup>18</sup>W. Badejo, 2000, pp. 14, 16-17.

<sup>19</sup>Appendix 57.

related issues. The editorial list contained mostly familiar items that are still on the table twenty years later. They include retention of secularism, government to recognize fanaticism and how to deal with it, government to keep out of all religion, issues of security agencies and police, indigene status, government to establish code of conduct for religious leaders, dialogue between religious leaders, including holding conferences and seminars. It seems that very little has changed—another way of saying that much blood has been shed--so far, it seems, uselessly! I also draw your attention to the proposals of Major General Chris Alli, who was appointed by President Obasanjo as temporary Administrator of Plateau State during its Emergency Rule in 2004. His proposals were forged in the heat of battle and therefore are worthy of attention. I refer you to Appendix 58.

One publication that contains a myriad of proposals and recommendations is the *Plateau State Gazette* of 11 November, 2004. They are, in fact, so many that I cannot even begin to summarize them. If you really want to read them all, I can only advise you to obtain the document yourself. But there is one section titled “Religious Factors” of which I reproduce the main headings in Appendix 59 with an occasional expansion. If you have read previous volumes of this series or if you have experienced Nigeria’s religious discrimination or upheavals, you know what these headings refer to and what needs to be done. Other sections in the chapter discuss many of the issues in these lists in greater depth. So, these appendices kind of foreshadow the rest of this chapter. You will notice that there is a great deal of overlap and duplication in them.

### **Secularism xxxx ssss**

Readers of Volume 5 know that the major solution to religious discord offered by the Christian community is that of secularism. Having devoted an entire volume to that subject, there is no need to spend much time on it here. For the benefit of those who have no access to that volume, I will present a short run of pro-secular opinions in this section. I also include here some opinions more hesitant towards secularism, especially that of US-based Nigerian scholar, Simeon Ilesanmi, to help prepare you for my own “onslaught” on secularism in the main book itself.

Secularism, it is important to remember, in the Nigerian Christian mind stands for objectivity, neutrality and equality. You have hopefully read Chapter 6 on Wilson Sabiya in Volume 7, who did much to set the pattern for the Christian response. He showed how the major Nigerian structures favoured Islam at the time of the first CA in 1977 and how Christians were

forced to support Muslim causes via taxation. He then emphatically stated, “The secular state is the only answer to our ills.” Again, “We reaffirm our belief in the fact that the only hope for unity in this great country lies in a strictly secular state. The right to this belief constitutes for us the *sine qua non* of any meaningful life in this polity, just as the sharia is the *sine qua non* for its ardent protagonists. The only difference is that while some people advocate diversity and thinly-disguised apartheid, we emphasise unity at the federal level.”<sup>20</sup> This point was central to Sabiya’s campaign against sharia; he re-iterated it repeatedly. It set the tone for Christians for years to come. Secularism *uber alles* became *the* solution—while for most Muslims, secularism represented *the* problem. The reason for Sabiya’s insistence was that his “understanding of a secular state... allows all forms of religion to co-exist without any of them being the religion of the entire country.”<sup>21</sup> This had profound implications for his view of government and legal system that will be examined below.

A decade later, TEKAN submitted a memorandum to the Constitutional Review Committee of the day in which TEKAN proposed a “very specific amendment to the Constitution, with the express aim of strengthening the secularity of the Nigerian state and opposing the impulse of religious discrimination at work in Nigeria.” In the mind of Nigerian Christians, these two go together, secularism and neutrality. TEKAN recommended a constitutional amendment that was to read: “The state shall not, by action or inaction, enact a law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting its free exercise.”<sup>22</sup> Sabiya was the chairman of the committee that produced the memo.

Osa Director of *TELL* magazine referred to a movement he detected in the Near Eastern Muslim world, where, beginning with Turkey, the trend is towards secularisation, development and “protection of the minority Christians.” Turkey has “shed its toga of primitivity and inward looking approach,” and “is fast being integrated into mainland Europe and becoming a modern state.” Countries like Egypt, Lebanon and Indonesia “have over the years, embraced secularity as a state principle of a multi-religious and plural society.” Continuing, Director wrote, “There are probably no more than two countries in the world where strict Islamic laws are the directive principle of the state. These are Afghanistan under the Taliban Movement and Saudi Arabia.” Neither of the two is multi-

<sup>20</sup>W. Sabiya, 25 Feb/78. See J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 264, 276-277.

<sup>21</sup>W. Sabiya, 25 Feb/78. Quoted from M. N. Elechi, Hansard. See J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, p. 264. In keeping with many Nigerian Christians, Sabiya is confusing “secular” with “neutral.” I try to unravel that confusion in my vol. 5, 2006, pp. 125-176.

<sup>22</sup>TEKAN, 1987, pp. 1, 47.

religious. He then asked, “Can any state within Nigeria absorb the extremism of the Taliban?”<sup>23</sup> Director’s colleague, Dele Agekameh, also held up Turkey, Tunisia, Syria and Iraq as countries showing the way to a secular solution.<sup>24</sup>

Turkey is the favourite example for many opponents to sharia. The conference of women NGOs pointed to that country as one with laws worthy of emulation. Turkey allegedly protects women from domestic violence. Or take the laws of Iran, Tunisia, India or Egypt, all of which are said to have a better deal for women than that provided by Zamfara’s sharia.<sup>25</sup> For me the question about all of these countries is about the place of both women *and* Christians, whether women or men. And in the case of India, what of her caste system? The reality is often shaped by the law of the people rather than the law of the land. Remember Governor Sani’s comments about apostasy. Remember the story of Pastor Zacheous Habu Bu Ngwenche in Chapter 4 in Volume 7, that took place in non-sharia Nasarawa State under Nigeria’s secular common law. *In Muslim-dominated societies neither secular nor sharia law protect Christians, women or minorities effectively.* Recommending these countries can only be done on basis of ignorance or outright denial.

Emmanuel Oyelade, participant in the Olupona Conference,<sup>26</sup> was shown there to favour secularization, but secularism was to him another kettle of fish. He advocated that both religions “should fight secularism,” for it “is an ideology, an attitude to life that rejects spiritual values and religious outlook. This naturally leads to a humanistic programming, which sets man at the

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<sup>23</sup>O. Director, 15 Nov/99, p. 15-18. Director’s almost naïve recommendation of the secular models of these countries gives the appearance as if he were totally unaware of the Nigerian Muslim strong resistance to secularism. I know he is familiar with it. Whence then this naïve-sounding recommendation? In addition, he seems to be unaware of the persecution and harassment of Christians in most of his secular “model countries.” If it is not the government or the legal system, it is the people themselves. The Barnabas Fund prayer request for *today* reads as follows: “Christians in Turkey are often made to feel socially inferior at work, in the neighbourhood and when doing their obligatory military service. Even in educated Turkish society, it is common to hear extremely racist comments about...Christian peoples. The Christian minorities are not allowed to use their historical facilities to train future leadership. Although there is no law against missionary work amongst Muslims or against leaving Islam, police still arrest and charge many who engage in evangelism” (Barnabas Prayer Bulletin, 22 Aug/2006). I recommend the following websites to Director and all others who either do not know or refuse to acknowledge the harassment of Christians in many Muslim countries, including these “model countries:” < [www.righttojustice.org](http://www.righttojustice.org) >, < [www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org) >, <[www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org)> < [www.persecution.net](http://www.persecution.net) > and < [www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org) >. For harassment of Muslims I refer you to the books of the Indian Muslim author Asghar Ali Engineer on< [www.gyanbooks.com](http://www.gyanbooks.com) >and his own website < [www.sccc-islam.com](http://www.sccc-islam.com) >.

<sup>24</sup>D. Agekameh, 15 Nov/99.

<sup>25</sup>NN, 31 Oct/99.

<sup>26</sup>J. Boer, 2006, vol. 5, Appendix 13.

centre of all affairs and undermines or even neglects and rejects the centrality of the Deity and His spiritual values. This is dangerous to peace.”<sup>27</sup>

Oyelade’s rejection of secularism may be rare among Nigerian Christians, but it should not surprise us, since he has a Muslim background and likely carried it with him into his new faith. Neither was he the only one. The LCCN conference of 1995, probably under the prodding influence of Habila Istifanus as discussed in Appendix 38, ended up rejecting secularism as “not compatible with the background, upbringing and life style of Nigerians, because religion permeates all facets of Nigerian life.”<sup>28</sup> It is hard to fathom the seriousness of the majority of Christians at the conference on the issue. Nigerian Christians often express agreement on issues in multi-religious conferences that they reject in other contexts. I suspect the Nigerian penchant for politeness and communalism may have played a part here.

Another negative opinion was that of Pandang Yamsat, who at least during his earlier days as TCNN lecturer, rejected secularism outright. He had three reasons for this rejection. First, the question of unity that will be discussed under its proper heading further down, where he argued that religions should not insist on things that divide the nation, not even if they are important to them. Secondly, “the idea of ‘secularism’ enshrined in our Constitution is alien to the teachings” of both religions. Few Nigerian Christians agree to that one and I am not sure just how serious Yamsat was about it. I have seen no further discussion of this point from him, not even after he became COCIN President during 2004, the year of turmoil in COCIN and Plateau State. Thirdly, as it has been argued with reference to Muslim opponents to sharia, so he did not trust the Christian “pro-secular state advocates.” “It would appear that those who are comfortable with this position” are not so much interested in “freedom of religion as such, but they do not want the high ethical and moral standard of the Holy Scriptures to interfere with their mischievous and exploitative political activities.”<sup>29</sup>

Not all AZ Christians were enamoured with secularism either. Ishaya Audu was not fond of it, but, he wondered, “what is the alternative?” “At least it allows for mutual tolerance, live and let live and is the lesser of unsatisfactory alternatives.”<sup>30</sup> Haruna Dandaura warned that secularism is dangerous. The Christian fear that “if Nigeria is not declared a secular state,”

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<sup>27</sup>E. Oyelade, 1992, pp. 188-189.

<sup>28</sup>Second International Conference, 1995, “Communique,” p. 137. For its Recommendations see Appendix 49.

<sup>29</sup>P. Yamsat, n.d., p. 10.

<sup>30</sup>I. Audu, personal correspondence, 23 Aug/2000.

Muslims will declare it a Muslim state is without foundation. He discounted this fear as “mere impossible speculation.” He also declared opposing sharia dangerous, since it is such an integral part of Islam, though he was opposed to it.<sup>31</sup> In other words, Dandaura was quite out of sync with mainstream Christian thought on this score. The Hausa/Fulani Muslim background of these gentlemen, both “fathers” in this project, had no doubt an influence on their desire for something more wholistic.

Simeon Ilesanmi also rejected secularism as a solution.<sup>32</sup> He argued that Nigeria needs “to develop a public ethic capable of serving as a common standard of political judgement for Nigeria’s citizens and its varied groups.” He insisted on this requirement, for, quoting from Jacob Olupona, “any coherent society must rest on a set of moral beliefs which ground the political order on a transcendent basis.” Contrary to the opinion of most Nigerian Christians and of secularists everywhere, secularism is too weak for that purpose. I refer you to Ilesanmi’s discussion as reproduced in Volume 5 of this series. For one thing, the mythical secular platform of religious neutrality does not exist in Nigeria. And thus “there cannot be a religiously neutral political life.” He resolutely debunked

*the myth of a...state that prescribes political norms that are alien to its citizens’... experiences. Not only would such a state be antithetical to the real experience of the Nigerian people, it would ultimately be found to be based on its own narrowly defined value of life, thus revealing the hypocrisy of any attempt to establish a value-neutral state. Writing about a different society, Subrata Mitra argues that “no concept of the state is value free; the values inherent in the prevailing concept of the state determine the parameters of political, social and cultural engagement within a society. Religions often have a great deal to say about what values are incorporated into such a concept of the state.”*

Though he rejected secularism, Ilesanmi did accept pluralism and diversity. “The unity of religion is not a prerequisite for political unity.” The multi-religious composition of the country “need not be a hindrance to ... this goal. What might be an impediment is the refusal... to come to terms with this diversity. Having said that, he proceeded with an entire chapter to explore “the positive contributions of diverse religions” to the country.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>M. Gaiya, 2003, p. 90-91, 74, 83, 85.

<sup>32</sup>This section about Ilesanmi may be difficult reading for some. If so, simply skip it.

<sup>33</sup>S. Ilesanmi, 1997, pp. 197, 214

Ilesanmi wanted “the references to religious idioms in the...Constitution” regarded “as an indicator of the desire to create...’an institutional structure...that enough of its citizens would find sufficiently congenial to allow it to function.”<sup>34</sup> He rejected the idea of civil religion as it tends to reduce religions to their lowest common denominator and because it tends to uncritically support the *status quo*.

Ilesanmi sadly ended up on a negative note. He called into serious question “Nigerians’ preparedness to become a people...united by a common agreement about laws and rights and a common desire for mutual, not just selfish, advantage.”<sup>35</sup> Basing his arguments on various sources, he recognized that Christian and Muslim demands are “diametrically” opposite, with Christians demanding a secular separation of church/religion and state, however inconsistently argued and applied, and Muslims insisting that such separation is impossible and undesirable. To steer the way through this morass, he suggested a need for a “theoretical framework” about “religion and civil life.”

Ilesanmi still managed to squeeze a measure of hope out of the situation. “The contending factions have more common ground than they realize,” he argued. The framework he suggested above is given a name: “dialogic politics.” He proposed that the 1989 constitutional guidelines on religion and state “be construed as complementary co-guarantors of a single end, which is ‘to promote and assure the fullest possible scope of religious liberty and tolerance for all and to nurture the conditions which secure the best hope of attainment of that end.’”<sup>36</sup> The chief objective of this approach “is to discern a common political ground among religious people with major perspectival differences by encouraging each side to cultivate a sufficient level of trust as the basis for enjoying the good faith of the others.” I take this to constitute a plea for a certain degree of pragmatism and compromise—fullest *possible* scope and *best* hope of attainment—not so much *away from* religious principle but *enrichment* of application that takes into consideration local circumstances and the limitations it imposes. As Nigerian lorry owners know only too well, no circumstances are permanent. So, this in effect is a plea for patiently accepting the present condition and its limitations with the understanding that legitimate means may be used to change

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<sup>34</sup>Quotation from Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 315.

<sup>35</sup>S. Ilesanmi, 1997, pp. 157, 159, 162-163, 172.

<sup>36</sup>S. Ilesanmi, 1997, pp. 176-177. Quotation from Arlin Adams and Charles Emmerich, *A Nation Dedicated to Religious Liberty: The Constitutional Heritage of the Religion Clauses*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990, p. 37.

both circumstance and limitations to conditions more favourable to your perspective and goals. Of course, Muslims have in the past practised compromise. The sharia arrangement of independence itself is a compromise that was acceptable to the Nigerian population at the time, but this trade off eventually gave birth to dissatisfaction. Ilesanmi wanted this compromise continued, since it avoids the extreme positions of both Christians and Muslims. On the basis of this long-standing compromise, he wanted both sides “to become agents of mature dialogue by subordinating their narrow interests to the civil well-being of all.”

Such dialogue requires at least two “contingencies.” The state needs to “be alert to its duty and responsibility by providing creative space for dialogue in order that a climate of tolerance might grow.” Whatever the level of commitment on the part of the people, it needs the “appropriate political context” to grow, something that has been missing in Nigeria. Secondly, *especially Christians have to abandon the secular idea that “morality is merely a personal matter, and that the development of public policy is a purely secular or political endeavour.”* Both religions have the common task of reminding society that all national problems have these moral and religious dimensions so that they “be taken into consideration in the development of public policy.”

The principle of institutional separation of church/mosque from state, Ilesanmi insisted, “must be considered an unbreachable contract by the state.” Absolutely necessary. The separation principle means to avoid an unholy alliance of ecclesiastical and state institutions to avoid partiality on the part of the latter and undue influence on the part of the former. It was never meant as “an evacuation of religious symbols and values” from politics and marketplace. Ilesanmi acknowledged that Muslims have good reasons for being suspicious of the secularist arguments. However, he reasoned, this separation neither requires a secular society as Christians have argued, nor does it demand “exclusion of religion from political discourse—in other words, separation of religion from politics.” Though aware of its weakness, he did concur with certain writers who recognize in modern secularism “a higher realization of the Christian spirit.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>S. Ilesanmi, 1997, pp. 182-183, 214, 234-235, 256. See J. Boer, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 220-223 for further explanation of this principle. Let it be understood that we are talking about the separation of institutions, namely of church/mosque from state or government. This is distinctly different from the separation of religion from state and politics. While I support the first, I reject the second. The distinction, in turn, is based on the distinction between church/mosque and religion. Religion is much wider than its central institutions.

Ilesanmi referred to the 1977 government takeover of Christian hospitals and secondary schools. Christians, of course, interpreted the move as another step towards the Islamizing of the country. It led to an almost complete collapse of medical and educational services. Ilesanmi still saw some hope. He suggested that “the nation can still benefit immensely from a reconsidered policy that allows the participation of religious institutions in the supervision of these hospitals.” In education, both religions lacked clear definitions of their goals. So, it is now “vitaly important” for the two religions “to articulate their roles and objectives in a pluralistic setting.”

Ilesanmi realized full well that Nigerians will not wake up one fine morning and suddenly smell the aroma of peace in the air. It needs hard work to succeed. He quoted from the Indian Wesley Ariarajah:

*The time has come to “institutionalize” the reconciling potential of religion.... Inter-religious councils, multi-religious fellowships of religious leaders, peace education, studies in peaceful methods of conflict-resolution, education for justice and peace, exposure to each other’s prayer and spiritual practices, etc., may have to be the new “institutions” that supplement the institutions that brought education, healing and service to communities. Peace does not come about by wishing it; we have to be peace-makers. One has to work for and build peace, and strive to preserve it.*

Ilesanmi knew that “religious groups are [not] always going to...agree on all issues perceived to be in the interest of everybody. Conflict of views is a fact that history will not let us deny.” Even if they were to agree on rejecting “a secularist domestication of their religions, they may still disagree on the mode and the extent to which religion should shape public policy.” The remaining questions are still very problematic, but despite them, “dialogic politics offers one promising way of achieving peaceful conflict resolution, political tolerance and cultural negotiation.... Only then can people learn to substitute fear and paranoia for hope and trust....”<sup>38</sup> Ilesanmi’s final word was to acknowledge “that there is no single solution of the problem of Nigeria’s religions and the public life.” Adherents “must recognize that they cannot escape the inevitable ambiguity...of life.”<sup>39</sup>

A few comments are in order as I close this section on Ilesanmi. He provides a number of important parameters for peace, some of which I have not heard before from a Nigerian Christian. I will use them in “my own” chapter with appreciation. *I refer especially to his*

<sup>38</sup>S. Ilesanmi, 1997, pp. 237-244. S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Current Dialogue*, 3, 1987, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup>S. Ilesanmi, 1997, p. 257.

*“explicit theoretical aim” which was “to challenge the conceptual dichotomy between religion and secular life, or between private and public life.” That, in fact, is a major point of my entire series as well and I am more than grateful for this “mother of all coincidences!”<sup>40</sup>*

He also suggested a number of tools and methods available to Nigeria that, I am grateful to report, are already in use. It is good to have a stamp of approval on them from a reputable scholar like Ilesanmi. But at the end of the day, it appears to me that he has not brought us far beyond where home-based Nigerian Christians and Muslims have already taken us, except that he has provided other parameters which, if adopted, have the potential to open the door to renewal, reconciliation and cooperation. That is exactly the purpose of this series as well.

Also a final question to Ilesanmi. In your final paragraph you speak of “national integration” as if that were your real goal. That is where your book ends. But what if that is *not* the goal of some religionists, especially radical Muslims who have no respect for the Constitution, the nation, its laws or its people? You have been silent about that possibility—or reality? If you had taken that into consideration, where would your theories and opinions have taken you? Ignoring them is not possible, but that, as far as I can see, is what you did. Whether I will do any better in “my own” chapter, remains to be seen!

Sam A. Aluko, a professor of economics at different times serving the WCC as well as the government of Babangida as consultant, offered Muslims rich advice on sharia. He revealed that during his WCC dialogue work he had close contacts with Muslims and retained friendship with “important Muslims” across the globe. Hence, he explained that “few Christians are as sympathetic to the Muslim religion as I am.” This relationship has not prevented him from warning Muslims that the current revival of sharia in economic affairs will “do more damage to the Muslim faith and to the Muslims than ever before.” For him it was a matter of historical differentiation of Muslim society. As it expanded and increasingly interacted with the world, functions initially handled by religious leaders had to be distributed to experts in such fields as administration, military, religious, judicial and more. The application of sharia has become an “impractical notion. Atatürk’s switching Turkey over to secularism led to it becoming both a modern state and the most developed in the Islamic world.” Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Kuwait, Tunisia, Iran and Indonesia have all “embraced the virtues of secularity as a principle of governing a multi-religious and plural society.” Only Afghanistan under the Taliban

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<sup>40</sup>S. Ilesanmi, 1997, p. 253 It is not a totally unexpected coincidence, for he refers to at least one American scholar with Kuyperian connections.

and Saudi Arabia have embraced sharia, but they were/are not multi-religious. Sudan is the only multi-religious country that has tried, and we all know the resulting misery. “There is the vital need to avoid social and political crises in a multi-religious society where Muslims predominate. Rather, there should be an adaptation to the modern secular demands of the state and its citizens.” One of the hopes of sharia was that it would eliminate social vices and corruption. Aluko was equally interested in their elimination but thought sharia was not needed to accomplish it. It is the responsibility of modern [secular] governments and religious citizens, both adherents and leaders, “to put in place policies and programmes that will reduce the vices that are plaguing our country. Otherwise we will be deceiving ourselves by using any legal system to fight the consequences rather than the causes of the social and economic vices in our country.”<sup>41</sup>

Aluko also wrote political essays. In one lengthy document, he suggested Nigeria had five political options, but going beyond a few comments, I would digress too far. One would be to “continue the current fake federation,” but “in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious Nigeria, that is too much power at the centre if we are to survive.” He preferred a confederate system, but saw some dangers there as well. He proposed a “structural ethos” that would have the following features: (1) Commitment to universal democracy and personal freedoms; (2) An inclusive constitution understood by all along with a simple bill of rights; (3) Commitment to rule of law, free judiciary and free press; (4) Participatory governance as close and as accountable to the people as possible.<sup>42</sup> Most of these, it seems to me, are available to the people right now and depend only on their determination.

I use the words of the Anglican Bishop of Kano, Zakka Lalleh Nyam, to represent the mainline Christian *ecclesiastical* opinion of AZ days with respect to secularism. It is basically the same as that of the BZ period. He poured all the concepts and hopes that Christians had into the secularist formula. He called on the FG to “come out openly and explain what the secular state is.” The Christian position, he declared, is “clear:” “We are in a secular country and we must remain the same through accommodating Christians, Muslims and African Religion believers.”<sup>43</sup> Enough said. If you need more, please turn to Volume 5.

I closed Volume 3 with these words of the Catholic clergyman George Ehusani:

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<sup>41</sup>S. Aluko, 28 Nov/99.

<sup>42</sup>A. Aluko, 12 Mar/2000.

<sup>43</sup>K. Dada, 3 Nov/99.

*In the midst of the madness of today, those who still have their heads in place must reflect together and rise up in defence of the secular nature of our national constitution, or else Nigeria may soon become another Algeria. A stitch in time saves nine they say. This latest event in the tragic drama of the Nigerian state is one more reason why it is necessary to hold a round table or a national conference to discuss the terms of our social contract as a nation... We must salvage our country for once from the hands of bandits, hooligans and fanatics. The time to act is now!<sup>44</sup>*

Since then, that National Political Reforms Conference (NPRC) has come and gone, but has it saved the country “from the hands of bandits” and their like? Since Ehusani wrote his article, we have gone through two elections, but, if truth be told, not much has changed. Neither the NPRC nor the sharia, two events that raised hopes high for different constituencies, have fulfilled the promises with which people stuffed them--nor has secularism, the hope of Sabiya, Ehusani and of most Nigerian Christians.

I close this section with the hopeful words of a student of the Nigerian scene who wants to remain anonymous at this point:

*There is a growing contingent of Muslims who recognize that as a religiously plural state, Nigerians of all faiths must learn to get along with one another. A few have begun to call for an end to the “silent majority syndrome” so that extremist Muslims do not represent the public face of Islam to the world, whether in Nigeria or elsewhere. Even within Nigeria, there have been moderate and progressive Muslim voices urging acceptance of a secular state for the sake of peace. Isn’t this what Nigerian Christians are seeking?*

### **The Christian Mood xxxx cmcm**

Most of the discussion about the Christian mood, AZ as well as BZ, has been relegated to Appendix 39, but some of the issues are discussed here. I advise you to first read the material in the Appendix and then proceed with these pages.

A hardening started to set in already during the BZ era that was expressed especially with reference to “turning the other cheek.” Many Christians at all levels were no longer prepared to

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<sup>44</sup>G. Ehusani, 10 Dec/2002. J. Boer. 2004, vol. 3, Appendix 13, p. 299. “The latest event” referred to is the Miss World riot in Kaduna. See “Miss World” entries in indices of J. Boer, vols. 2, 3, 5, 6; *Companion CD* <Misc Arts/Miss World>.

do it quite so readily. Please read Amunkitou Dolom's 1988 article.<sup>45</sup> And then there are the 1995 stories told by Christopher Abashiya in the Appendix as well. The hardening penetrated the "highest" Christian circles. In the early AZ days, Anthony Okogie, at the time national CAN leader, was interviewed by Fola Adekeye of *Newswatch*. Adekeye asked Okogie whether he agreed with the popular opinion that "Christians are not confrontational." Okogie replied, "No, my brother, no. When you see a lion sleeping, pretending to be friendly, it is not all that friendly." Christians are urging Muslims that it is better "to live in peace and not in pieces. But if they take that as a weakness, good luck to them. I wouldn't say more than that. I appeal to all religious leaders to warn their adherents."<sup>46</sup>

Like Muslims, Christians often felt pushed to the wall and developed an impatience that occasionally made them militant. In Sokoto, in response to Muslims' kidnapping Christian children, Christians were beginning to sport guns, especially since the government did nothing.<sup>47</sup> Yes, guns. Probably the ultimate example of this Christian hardening is the story of the Muslim slaughter at Yelwa, Plateau State, in 2004. James Wuye's confession, told later in this chapter, about his militant days tell the same story. Driven to the wall, indeed. Understandable, absolutely, but recommended?

This process of hardening on the part of Christians allegedly led to greater Muslim openness to dialogue. Saidu Dogo of Northern CAN claimed, "Only when we started reacting did the Muslims see a need for dialogue. They saw that our people have resolve, and that's when the decision was made to form a consultative forum of religious leaders." That conclusion may seem abhorrent to outsiders, but Nigerians say their hard experience bears it out.<sup>48</sup>

Contrary to the above leaders, Dandaura wanted to retain Christ's emphasis on the other cheek. He wanted Christians to obey "Jesus' injunction on non-violence" and lamented the newly developing trend: "I have heard many statements credited to our priests and leaders—some saying that the time for 'turning the other cheek' has passed. While some are saying, 'Sharpen your weapons. It is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth now.' What is today's Christianity turning to? Is there any difference from Christian suffering now from that suffered by our founding fathers?" Dandaura believed that, if Christians were to obey God, He would fight on their behalf. His opinion was not widely shared by Christians. He was criticised that,

<sup>45</sup>A. Dolom, 6/88, pp. 11,15 or in Appendix 39. J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 24-25.

<sup>46</sup>F. Adekeye, 6 Mar/2000, p. 13.

<sup>47</sup>O. Minchakpu, 14 Mar/2007. *Daily Champion*, 27 Mar/2007. Appendix 39.

<sup>48</sup>J. Allen, 30 Mar/2007.

being a Hausa man, he “wanted to sell out Christians to his Hausa Muslim brothers. Some thought he wanted Christians to behave cowardly, so as to allow Muslims to butcher them as lambs.”<sup>49</sup>

There is another aspect to the question of mood. According to Idowu-Fearon, a negative Christian mood prevails in the North that needs to be shaken up and be replaced with a greater sense of responsibility. He was impatient with a speech at a Northern governor’s summit delivered by his cousin Professor Adamu Baikie. Fearon challenged him:

*When will we stop this lamentation and take action, positive action towards empowering our people? Here, the Christians in the North, we are always looking back and blaming colonial masters. When they came, they did put the Hausa-Fulani above us. For how many years have we been talking about marginalisation? We have professors. We have senior lecturers. We have engineers. We have people in politics just as the Muslims have people in politics. We have very wealthy people here in the North who are Christians. We have some of them in influential positions. What have they done for the people? You put them there and they turn around and begin to treat you as nobody. Our leaders are not making any difference. That is number one. We need a complete change of mind-set in this country.*

*We are all involved. The senator, governor, minister, president, pastor, imam, journalist are all involved. We need a complete change.*<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>M. Gaiya, 2003, pp. 78-79, 113-114.

<sup>50</sup>S. Obassa, 29 Jan/2005, p. 29.



## Spiritual Resources xxxx spsp

In both this section and the one on government further down I begin by highlighting statements made by President Obasanjo in a national broadcast after the Kaduna sharia riots of 2000. He denied that all this violence has roots in Nigerian cultures and religions. “There is nothing in our culture that even remotely justifies the cynicism with which so many of us today respond with acts of lawlessness and wickedness. We have lost our sense of outrage and moral sensitivity. The casualness with which we react to corruption and other forms of criminal behaviour does not come from religious faith or from cultural tradition. We do not have any such religions or cultures.” He then proceeded to heavily emphasise the responsibility of lawless governments for this moral degeneration. With those governments now behind us, Nigeria needs a revival. “I enjoin all Nigerians to embark on the urgent task of reconciliation and confidence-building.” He proposed the motto, “Reconciliation for Development.” “We must return to the fundamental faith that life, all life, is sacred.”<sup>51</sup>

Years ago, Matthew Kukah advised, “We must seek to ask God to show us what role we have to play in restoring peace and harmony in our nation, which now seems to be under the grip of forces of great concern to us.”<sup>52</sup> A few years later, Professor Ishaya Audu asked, “How do we face the situation?” His answer was similarly spiritual and in keeping with his recognition that spiritual and “natural” explanations go together: “Be alert, be on the watch, your enemy roams round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Be firm in your faith and resist him” (I Peter 5:8-9). Secondly, he held up evangelism as an antidote. Through his and many other Christian outreaches, “many are being saved and brought into His Kingdom.”<sup>53</sup>

Like Islam, Christianity is a many-splendoured thing with many different colours and hues, sometimes contradictory, sometimes embracing extremes. One extreme found in certain traditions is the pitting of the spiritual against the material, soul against body, world against church, spiritual—divine or satanic—against “natural” causes amenable to scientific explanation. In Nigeria such tensions sometimes come to expression between different Christian traditions. One Pastor Enoch Adeboye, General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, a Pentecostal type denomination,<sup>54</sup> was reported to have “prayed and decreed that every curse

<sup>51</sup>President O. Obasanjo, 2 Mar/2000.

<sup>52</sup>M. Kukah, 12 Dec/95.

<sup>53</sup>I. Audu, July/2000.

<sup>54</sup>See their website [www.rccg.org](http://www.rccg.org).

placed on Nigeria be broken.” Bishop Ola Makinde, President of CAN Abuja, chimed in with the declaration that “with the successful inauguration of Obasanjo, the future of Nigeria is very brilliant, because Nigeria has been removed from curses.” John Onaiyekan rejected that approach to Nigeria’s problem. “I don’t believe in those things. I don’t believe Nigeria is under any curse, except the curse that is over everybody. I simply believe that Nigerians have not tried enough to live according to God’s will,” he countered. “We are killing ourselves.” As far as he was concerned, the problem lies not in curses that render us helpless, but they are due to our own actions. People must take responsibility for their actions and not resort to spiritual excuses. Yes, there is a spiritual reason for Nigeria’s problems: failure to follow God’s will. That’s spirituality combined with human responsibility.<sup>55</sup>

Onaiyekan’s attitude was similar to that of Yakubu Gowon, former Military Head of State. Gowon was, of course, the author of the slogan, “To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done.” It apparently remained his slogan indefinitely. In 2003, speaking at the World Congress of Unity for Africa, he reportedly said that “Africa had all the potential to become an exemplary continent, but said that its future depended on its embrace of God. Africa would continue to be regarded as the Dark Continent, if it failed to embrace Christ, but added that the continent will be the envy of the world if it embraced God in all spheres.” To assume “true greatness,” Africa needed to practice “bridge building, which should be championed by Christians and church leaders.”<sup>56</sup> Clearly, Gowon’s recipe for the continent was also his recipe for Nigeria. Embrace Christ and it would be “the envy of the world.” Great spiritual hope. A great spiritual recipe. Great faith that most cold, rational, Western “Christians” and secularists would consider naïve. This was the faith of a man who had seen it all.<sup>57</sup> I encourage you to read his speech on “Prayer and the Nations” in Appendix 40.

Another ex-Head of State, President Obasanjo expressed himself similarly. Addressing a delegation of the Christian Council of Nigeria, he said, “Everybody, whether clergy or not, has a responsibility in prayer and work to lift this country up,” adding that he believed God has “decided to do special work in Nigeria.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>C. Ohadoma, 1 June/2003.

<sup>56</sup>C. Odittah, 13 Aug/2003.

<sup>57</sup>Army general, Military Head of State, President of the Organisation of African Unity, waging a civil war without bitterness, overthrown by a coup, political exile for years. That same man was also the founding leader of Nigeria Prays, a national prayer movement for peace in the nation that includes both Christians and Muslims (Y. Gowon, 18 July/2003).

<sup>58</sup>J. Lohor, 13 Aug/2003.

Emmanuel Oyelade presented a paper on various spiritual topics at the 1995 Second International Conference, the major one being forgiveness. He emphasized that “no matter what painful history the Church has experienced, the ‘forgiving spirit’ moves the Church closer to other religious groups and interests. This forgiving spirit has the capacity for forging reconciliation which will eventually heal the injuries caused by misunderstanding, selfishness and pride. It is this forgiving spirit that will open new avenues for an operation needed to surmount the depressing challenges.”

The conference reporter summarized another aspect of Oyelade’s presentation. Holy living is a way “to avoid religious problems,” “a life of obedience.” We must all “allow God to live in us” so that we love what He loves. This is “the spiritual way to overcome our religious problems. The physical problems can be overcome by avoiding exploitation, selfishness and anything that will harm the image God loves.” Oyelade provided some indications as to how these spiritual acts should work out, but these are discussed under other headings in this chapter.<sup>59</sup>

Christopher Abashiya addressed the same 1995 conference on the subject of conscience and moral codes. Muslims have on occasion misinterpreted the Biblical response to violence as weakness and consequently dared attack them. I believe he is referring to “turning the other cheek.” After describing a process of hardening attitudes on the part of BZ Christians, Abashiya insisted on the “importance of having an absolute moral code to guide the actions of Christians” over against Muslims. Ignoring this absolute code will lead to disobeying God not only, but will also “lead to a worsening relationships” between the religions. “Should Christians throw overboard the moral codes in the Bible? It is my humble view that this is where the importance of moral conscience *must* come to bear as Christians interact with non-Christians. Christians must never allow relativism, situation, experience and/or other influences”—all issues he dealt with in his lecture—“to replace their moral conscience in their relationship with non-Christians.”<sup>60</sup>

You may have met Binta Faruk Jalingo earlier in the series.<sup>61</sup> She is a convert from Islam and member of a military family. Christians are to be waging a spiritual battle. She is heavily

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<sup>59</sup>E. Oyelade, 1995, pp. 90, 14.

<sup>60</sup>C. Abashiya, 1995, pp. 133-134. Appendix 39.

<sup>61</sup>J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 72-74, 102..

burdened by the ungodly lives of many Christians. They are destroyed by lack of knowledge. Love of money has derailed them. She warns, “Don’t allow material things to block your eyes. Remember who you are and why you are here. It baffles her that those who are to be the salt of the earth are “walking disorderly with God...that their lives no longer compel others to become Christians.” “Your disorderly walk with God has cost many people their lives in hell fire, because you failed to recommend Christ to them.” She reminds us that mere power politics will not help Christians in their opposition to sharia, which she considers “a test-run of a long-term agenda for total Islamization of Nigeria and...Africa.” “Once our connections and moorings in God are severed, no legislative power under the sun can perform miracles of transforming the society.”<sup>62</sup>

Though it has proven difficult for many Christians to retain an acceptable level of spirituality in the heat of Nigeria’s religious battle, there were some strong voices offering important spiritual proposals for the solution to the Plateau cauldron. Two especially vigorous COCIN writers come to mind. Evangelist Kephaz Gumap was one of them. You will find not a trace of the dualism between spirituality and the world that plagues so many Christians. Yes, it was there in the past, he explained, when the gospel was defined by missionaries who were “more concerned about the heavenly kingdom, forgetting that Jesus said you are the light of the world.” Their emphasis was on the spiritual rather than political, so that Christians left the latter to “unbelievers.” It resulted in Plateau State being stolen right from under the noses of the indigenous people. The time for that is past. He jubilated, “Glory be to God, because today indigenes of Plateau State are taking their stolen possessions gradually. It is because of this awareness that our eyes are beginning to open to take over our resources that the devil is raising his people from all angles of Plateau State to cause confusion and destruction in the State.” He challenged Plateau Christians, “Arise, Plateau indigenes. The victory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ [is ours.] Take back all that the thief has stolen from us. What we need in Plateau State is to do the will of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Then he outlined sort of a “programme” that included true repentance, true preaching, true Church, true prayer and true leadership. As he enlarged on these “trues” Gumap sounded like a genuine Old Testament prophet, weeping for the ruins of Jos that he equated with Jerusalem, while the people were seen as Judah. He thundered down upon the sins and shortcomings of both people and leaders, but

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<sup>62</sup>B. Jalingo, 2001, pp. 31, 35-39.

also showed the way out to reclaim what was lost. He especially called upon the leaders in various sectors, including church and society, to adopt the attitude of the servant leader Jesus described in Matthew 20:25-28. It is then that “we shall maintain the peace.” “Come, let us rebuild the city of Plateau.” “We should give the Government the maximum cooperation by giving our best to restore a sustainable peace. Always remember that Plateau is greater than any individual or selfish ambition. Let us bury our political and tribal differences to build the new Plateau.” Those who supported, advised and sang praises to Governor Dariye “should now repent or face the wrath of God. Everybody in Plateau State should be security conscious, because the enemies of progress are bent to take over the state.” To achieve peace, “we must get aggressive and militant spiritually. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). As to the identity of Gumap’s enemy, they are those who follow the devil, who destroy the land and who steal the inheritance of the people. In this article they are Muslim invaders as well as Dariye and his praise singers.<sup>63</sup>

The second strong COCIN revival writer, Yiljap Abraham, was convinced of the need for revival and called for it more than once. He wrote a review of V. J. Lomak’s book, *Sacrilege on the Altar*. It is mainly a collection of writings on the Plateau crisis written by various people. Abraham pointed out that Lomak challenged his readers “to rise and seek heaven’s intervention in Plateau.” “The book pulls readers to their knees. It nudges our soul toward *repentance*, towards *reparation*, and makes us wail heavenward for *restoration*.” Fervent prayer is recommended as an important avenue back to the “true democracy we sorely crave. This is how to stop the Sacrilege on the Altar.” This is not the insight of some overly-spiritual isolated person; the author was chairman of the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees for his own LG and a youth activist.<sup>64</sup>

Early in 2006, he published an article entitled “A Wake-Up Call,” in which he reviewed how Christianity had awoken Nigeria to a new freedom and to productive social structures like schools and hospitals. But now that Nigeria was moving towards another election, which Christian leaders were paying attention and standing guard to make sure the new leaders would not “be promoters of ethnic superiority, regional lordships or religious intemperance?” “Which political leader, elected or appointed, has ever been investigated by his church and placed on discipline for denying his faith on account of corruption?” Even after *LB* published reports about

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<sup>63</sup>K. Gumap, Mar/2005.

<sup>64</sup>Y. Abraham, Dec/2004.

the hardship of Christians in sharia states, Christian leaders were “merely watching, perhaps grumbling in silence.” He also made some suggestions for politics, but that comes in another section of this chapter. He ended with the challenge, “When do we wake up?”<sup>65</sup>

Frank Tardy, a Christian politician from Jos North, in an interview with staff of *LB*, confessed that in Plateau politics with Dariye as Governor, “almost everything was built on falsehood.” However, Christian politicians “should be able to accept our mistakes in order to correct them. We should be able to inform the people the realities on the ground.” Problem is that if you do, “you will not be comfortable.” In answer to the question whether “Christians are failing in politics,” he responded, “As Christians we have to project sincerity and truth and by the time we fail in this, we will definitely have problems on our hands. We should be able to have a sense of forgiveness to move forward. When you look at the happenings in Plateau State, you will discover that there are acts of dishonesty here and there. If our leaders are unable to abide by the truth, they will never see peace. As a leader, one should be able to be responsible for his or her action.”

As to the way forward from the 2004 debacle in Plateau, Tardy’s recipe was “for us Christians to begin by telling each other the truth. We must respect each other’s views. We must be able to tolerate the views of our opponents. For goodness sake, we are in a democratic regime and this is a state dominated by Christians. As the light of the world, we should bring peace and love each other.” He disliked people who look “at the development from a religious perspective,” for they are not helping matters. “The church has a big role to play in trying to ensure that this problem is solved. We must not allow ourselves to be used to destroy one another.” His final message was that “the state belongs to all of us”—a far cry from the reigning Christian sentiment of two years earlier.<sup>66</sup>

John Akume of Inter-Gender offered some religious advice. Adherents of the two religions should study their religion themselves from the official sources and quit being so dependent on their leaders who “have capitalized on ignorance and misled followers.” They should accept religious pluralism and “develop the spirit of accommodation. Their watchword should be ‘Live and let live.’” They should be interested and knowledgeable about the other religion and share their beliefs with each other “in a healthy manner.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Y. Abraham, Feb/2006.

<sup>66</sup>*LB*, “2007 Elections...,” Dec/2005.

<sup>67</sup>J. Akume, Sep/2004, p. 5.

Oyeniran warned Christians “to remain calm” and reminded them that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but are mighty through God.” The devil is trying to divert the attention of Christians from preaching to violence. “Do not allow it. Stand firm in boldness” for, he predicted, “it will lead to a national revival that will sweep through this nation.” And that in spite of his earlier rejection of turning the other cheek.<sup>68</sup> His fellow Pentecostal, Pastor Bashir Ibe of Lagos, “does not believe that the solution...is to ‘fold our arms’ and ignore it. ‘Everybody knows that it is politically motivated and should therefore be tactically handled.’” And what should be the strategy? “I believe that in the power of God, with prayer, it would die out.”<sup>69</sup> Well, look where it is today, early 2008.

Throughout these volumes there have been persistent complaints about the NPF and its corruption. We have seen in this and Volumes 6 and 7 that the Police was often part of the problem rather than the solution. They themselves were aware of their shortcoming and experienced a need “to turn away from the vices that smeared the image of NPF.” And so, reported Frances Onoiribholo, the Delta State Police Command has taken its problem

*to God for redemption. This followed the inauguration of the Delta State chapter of the Police Christian Fellowship in Warri, aimed at inviting God to touch the heart of every policeman and woman to turn away from these vices. In his inaugural speech, the Delta State Police Commissioner, Mr. John Ahmadu, posited that experience has shown that our religious bodies have influenced this nation when it gets to the precipice, with Gowon’s “Let’s Pray” programme as an example.*

The Commissioner described this opportunity as “a golden innovation.” The theme of the event was appropriate: “Redeeming the battered image of the NPF,” now that the FG itself had embarked on an anti-corruption campaign. He felt encouraged by this development and believed that “God will touch our hearts and we will stop all those unethical acts.”<sup>70</sup>

I end this one with a couple of quotations about the Jos riots end 2008—just before the time of this writing. A highly educated and deeply engaged pastor friend of mine wrote, “Actually, Jan, I tend to hold very strong views against Islam. When you are caught up in the crossfire literally, you tend to forget to be objective in your analysis. So bear with me.” That brings tears to my

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<sup>68</sup>A. Oyeniran, 1987, p. 67. See also p. 22 xxxx check for final page.

<sup>69</sup>CC, 13 Nov/2000, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup>F. Onoiribholo, 27 June/2001.

eyes. I so understand. Another Jos friend wrote me the following about the pastor of the COCIN Headquarters Church in Jos:

*The senior pastor there, before celebrating communion, warned the congregation that anyone who had not repented of what he or she had done in the previous week should not take communion unless and until they had confessed their sin and sought forgiveness. He specifically mentioned even the sin of "murdering your neighbour with words." That's pretty strong language coming from a COCIN pastor. Yesterday's preacher in the same church was none other than Governor Jang himself. It was his regularly scheduled Sunday to preach (he is a TCNN grad, though not an ordained pastor), and preached a very fine sermon, sticking to the assigned text, not using the pulpit for political purposes or to defend himself, referring to the past week's events with great sadness.*

The story indicates that Christians were also actively involved in the violence, something corroborated by the stories of other Christians in my files. However, the story also betrays a positive and hopeful mood that we all need more of. I also have at hand various reports about Muslims and Christians in Jos giving shelter to each other from the savagery of the riots, sometimes with Christians defending Muslims against their faith mates and vice versa.

### **Pacifism pppp xxxx**

I have found only one Nigerian who has written extensively on the theory of the pacifist approach to Nigeria's Christian-Muslim violence. I refer to Ndamsai Addua and his TCNN master's thesis, *The EYN Concept of Pacifism and Its Relevance to the Nigerian Context*.<sup>71</sup> His working definition of pacifism is: "an effort by an individual or a group to either endeavor to create peaceful co-existence in a community by managing a conflict or to take non-lethal steps in fighting injustice." According to him, "non-violent peacemaking [meaning the pacifist variety] appears to be the most viable hope."

To avoid a popular misunderstanding, it must be understood that "pacifism is not a passive position. Neither is a pacifist a coward trying to hide behind peace. A pacifist is one who engages actively in peacemaking at anytime and at any cost." Neither is pacifism simply a mechanism to be pulled out of your anti-violence toolkit whenever a crisis occurs; it is a lifestyle.

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<sup>71</sup>Appendix 61.

*Pacifism is called for in every situation. Peacemaking should be incorporated in our daily activities. Looking at it from that perspective would help us to cultivate the habit of peacemaking prior to the emergence of any conflict. Unpreparedness in implementing peacemaking in our daily lives often allows crises to meet us unawares. This has restricted our peacemaking process to nothing more than reconciliation. The moment the crisis is over the peacemaking process is forgotten until another crisis strikes again. That is why pacifism remains underdeveloped. To save pacifism from this neglected position of only reconciliation to a position of more effective peacemaking, it should be incorporated in our daily lives.*

The term “conflict resolution” is central to Addua’s version of pacifism. He wrote, “Christians must be empowered to stand firm on the principles of conflict resolution. In this transformation, evil would be reduced to its barest minimum.” At the time of his writing, Addua envisioned an entire programme of training in conflict resolution for his denomination, which he is currently conducting.

It is interesting to note Addua’s insistence that conflict resolution is not a missionary import, but that it has indigenous roots in some Nigerian cultures. In fact, he devotes an entire section to this feature and gives concrete examples of the traditional approaches of the Margi and Fali peoples in North-East Nigeria. I strongly urge Nigerian readers to turn to that section of his thesis.

On basis of its indigenous roots, Addua is optimistic about the applicability of pacifist-style conflict resolution in Nigeria. His research indicated that at least a good percentage of *EYN* interviewees expressed themselves positively, even though some thought that such an approach is lost on Muslims who allegedly do not understand the language of peace. “31% of the respondents said that pacifism is not applicable to the Nigeria situation. This group considered the heterogeneous mixture of Nigerian society. It would be detrimental to the existence of Christianity for Christians to hold to pacifism. Muslims could take advantage of Christians who embrace pacifism.”

This, then, is the solution *EYN* through Addua offers as an antidote to Nigeria’s violence: *Wars and counter wars have not achieved what is expected of them. Rather it has put the world in a dilapidated condition. Humanity needs to look for an alternative. Humanity needs an alternative that gives a promising future, where mutual coexistence of people would be realized. This is what the EYN concept of pacifism suggests as a solution to the*

*Nigerian situation. Nigeria is a country that is so often threatened with violence. Since the method of pacifism in responding to evil was taught and practiced by our Lord Jesus Christ, EYN considers it as best for those who are His disciples. And the reason for this study is to introduce this method to the other parts of the body of Christ.*<sup>72</sup>

The textual part of Addua's study closes with eight pages of "Suggestions and Recommendations." Education and training received prominent attention, within *EYN*, within the wider Christian community and in mixed seminars and workshops of Christians, Traditionalists and Muslims. There is also further talk of training in conflict resolution.

Addua knows that *EYN* is neither the only pacifist Christian denomination in Nigeria nor the only one to practice conflict resolution. There are the Mennonites, but even though the two traditions have common roots, he claims to know nothing about their approach and restricts himself to his own denomination,<sup>73</sup> perhaps indicating a degree of disagreement. His research would have had a more solid base if he had checked out the Mennonite programme as it operated out of Kaduna.

The Kaduna project was co-founded by Imam Nurayn Ashafa and James Wuye, the former Christian "militia terrorist." It became associated with the peace efforts of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) that engages in a lot of dialogue and other forms of peace building. Through these means, explained Wuye, "those who have been transformed are now a part of the solution." The programme heals "the rejection and hurts and the suspicion we have for one another." Ashafa and Wuye are "leading workshops and training teams of Christian and Muslim youths all over the country in basic conflict management." Presumably due to their urgings, "in 2002, Muslim and Christian leaders signed a peace agreement committing their people to non-violence" in Kaduna. Wuye predicted, "If the Kaduna model were borrowed by other states, it would reduce friction throughout the North." Debra Fieguth, apparently a freelance writer, reported:

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*One of the leaders signing the peace agreement was Anglican Bishop Lamido, who co-chairs the Kaduna peace committee, comprising the heads of all the major Christian and Muslim denominations and organizations and appointed by the state Governor.*

*Dialogue between Muslims and Christians has meant improved relationships, says Lamido, a former Muslim who converted to Christianity as a teenager. "The journey so*

<sup>72</sup>N. Addua, 2006, pp. 13-14, 20, 46, 59, 79, 87.

<sup>73</sup>N. Addua, 2006, p. 80-88, 15.

*far has not been too bad.” The support of the state Governor, a moderate Muslim, has strengthened the effort, he adds. “He even meets regularly with all the religious leaders in the state.”*

MCC is also working in Plateau State, where Gopar Tapkida has been “building bridges between Christians and Muslims” since 2001. “While state and federal governments had formed peace committees and networks and were holding conferences, encouraging debates and discussions, they did little to stem the antagonism between the two religions. People only become ‘more frustrated and more angry,’ says Tapkida.” Please remember here the discussion on political correctness in Plateau State<sup>74</sup> and the hesitancy of Nigerian governments to identify Muslim-Christian conflicts as religious in nature that has been noted in several volumes of this series. Once again, hear Fleiguth:

*MCC’s focus is on personal and institutional transformation. Workshops encourage both Christians and Muslims “to look inward at what it is we have contributed” to the conflict. Solutions come from the participants themselves. “We do not come with answers to their questions but with questions that provide opportunity for them to talk,” Tapkida explains.*

*That approach appears to work. “Many people have been transformed,” says Tapkida. One Muslim woman, militant in her hatred towards Christians, was dragged to a workshop by family members. Secretly she carried a charm which she planned to use to kill Tapkida and make herself disappear. But when she sensed she had nothing to fear from him, she gradually forgot about the charm, let go of her hatred and returned to her community as a peacemaker.*

*The MCC model has been copied throughout the region, with many organizations and churches turning to MCC for training and capacity building. “We work with all the major denominations in Nigeria,” says Tapkida. One umbrella group of churches is now establishing a peace office, and seminaries are beginning to offer courses in peace-making.”*

*Leaders agree that dialogue and understanding are vital. Wusasa’s Bishop Lamido believes the church needs to study Islam thoroughly. “Churches and dioceses should create programmes and centres that include Christian-Muslim relations,” he says. In the*

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<sup>74</sup>J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 341-348.

*Archdiocese of Kaduna, of which Wusasa is a part, that is beginning to happen.*

*Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon, whose academic focus is on building peaceful relations between Christians and Muslims, is a leader in that area.*<sup>75</sup>

*All this leads to a fragile peace in Northern Nigeria. James Wuye describes Kaduna as “peaceable, not peaceful.” And in Jos, despite persistent rumours of an impending outbreak of violence, “the situation seems to be encouraging,” says Tapkida, “though we have a long way to go.”*<sup>76</sup>

According to John Allen, “Some observers credit the MCC with helping to avert violence in Nigeria following Pope Benedict XVI’s controversial comments on Islam at the University of Regensburg last September.”<sup>77</sup> In the Nigerian context, higher recommendation is hardly possible.

Recently, the organization, now under the name of Interfaith Mediation Centre, in co-operation with the Canadian Initiatives of Change Association, has produced a DVD with the title of *The Imam and the Pastor*. It describes their programme and shows both Imam Nurayn Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye in action in an honest way that includes issues of tension between them. The DVD is being shown to mixed groups of Christians and Muslims in British Columbia and, I assume, elsewhere. Having seen it, I totally concur with the comments and recommendations on the back cover. “From vengeance and killing to healing and friendship.” “A moving story of grass-roots peace-building that gives hope to humanity.” Then follow recommendations from Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, and from Aminu Wali, Nigeria’s Permanent Representative to the UN.<sup>78</sup> This is, indeed, dialogue *par excellence*. It is my hope that as the DVD circulates, it will trigger more such programmes everywhere, not just in Nigeria.

The above paragraphs were written a half year ago. Since then this hope has become reality. In November, 2007, Rakiya A. Muhammad wrote a wonderful report in which we are told not only of the programme’s expansion in other Nigerian states, but throughout the world:

12 African, 6 European and 7 Asian countries plus North America and Australia. I strongly recommend your reading this exciting story in Appendix 22 xxxx, for it also provides more of the history not found in the preceding. The article ends as follows: “Imam Ashafa said he remains undaunted by the challenge. ‘For me and my family, we give our lives to follow this

<sup>75</sup>For further information about the Kaduna Centre see p. 80.xxxx? S. Bakoji, 2 June/2003.

<sup>76</sup>D. Flieguth, Winter, 2006, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup>J. Allen, 30 Mar/2007.

<sup>78</sup>D. Channer, 2006.

path of interfaith discussion, interfaith dialogue. If this is our natural home by history or destiny, then we need to keep it safe.’’<sup>79</sup> A good warning from a Muslim peace warrior to all of us.

### **Role of Religious Leaders    xxxx    rgrg**

Babs Mala had a word for the clergy of both religions. They must “utilize their sacred scriptures for the education of their followers, whose ignorance with respect to community relations is a serious source of conflict.” Borrowing from the Aniagolu Tribunal that dealt with the Maitatsine riots,<sup>80</sup> Mala insisted on the duty of the clergy to “vigorously educate and enlighten the public on the necessity for tolerance among Islamic and all other religious groups.” The public needs to be educated on the need for tolerance and co-existence in a plural and non-secular society such as Nigeria. The clergy must “make their presence more relevant.”<sup>81</sup>

Danjuma Byang’s also had advice for “preachers of all religious groups.” He encouraged them “to preach only the good and positive points of their religion and stop condemning other people’s religion. If your religion has something good to offer, highlight it. Then leave your hearers to decide by themselves.”<sup>82</sup>

Yamsat was sure that the religions of Nigeria can “live and walk side by side peacefully.” The problem lies with their manipulators. So, if Nigeria “is not to be consumed by these political zealots, there is a need for these religions to re-examine their faiths in the context of and for the good of Nigeria. More than that, they should screen their camps to know who really represents their religious ideas and who is there only to fulfil his political agenda.” As leaders proceed with sorting all this out, “they should see what this faith could offer modern Nigeria and Nigerians as a [united] entity and still remain faithful to their faith.” Nigeria has sufficient well-trained theologians qualified “to do the reworking of the different faiths for the purpose of the Constitution for our common consumption.” “Any religion that is more interested in the purity of her doctrine than the welfare and security of the people she claims as adherents is better dead than alive.”<sup>83</sup> That was the young Yamsat. I am not sure the older Yamsat would still speak that “radically” as COCIN’s President.

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<sup>79</sup>R. Muhammad, 3 Nov/2007. It should be recognized that, apart from the MCC funding role, Nigerian Muslims should receive as much credit for it as do Christians.

<sup>80</sup>See J. Boer, 2003, vol. 1, pp. 38-39.

<sup>81</sup>S. B. Mala, 1992, pp. 105-106.

<sup>82</sup>D. Byang, 1988, p. 102.

<sup>83</sup>P. Yamsat, n.d., p. 11.

In the Conclusion to his superb study, Ilesanmi had a strong word for all scholars, but especially for religious studies scholars. He complained that they *have largely concentrated on the ritual, missiological and exotic manifestations of faith systems..., while political theorists and scientists continue to perpetuate the secularizing reductivism of viewing religion as archaic and anachronistic. The result is a double disjunction of elements that need to be interpreted in their interplay. Intellectual sectarianism, often a function of disciplinary boundaries or institutional biases, exists to the detriment of all groups. The nature of the present work requires that we find a new approach that diverges from the reigning methodological fad.*

In effect, Ilesanmi is not only rejecting secularism, as we have seen earlier, but also its tradition of excessive compartmentalization both in life and in academia. His African wholistic approach to life has resisted the Western tradition of compartmentalization not only, but trumped it. Ilesanmi, I thank you for the courage it must have taken in an American secular academic environment. Similarly, I am impressed with the way you have demonstrated that the centre of the Nigerian controversy, namely the need to “balance civil unity with religious integrity” is an important “global focus” as well. It turns out that Nigerians are struggling with the same issues as anyone else.<sup>84</sup>

Matthew Kukah, the well-known Catholic activist and author, in a paper delivered to a summit of Northern governors, declared that “religious leaders must see themselves as owing the duty to preach peace where there is injustice.” Not a pretend peace that ignores injustice. They should speak up “when a governor prefers to buy a hand-chopping machine first, instead of fertiliser or a tractor for his poor farmers.” Or “when a governor prefers to shut down his state and carry all his cabinet to Mecca every year, when the classrooms have no textbooks and teachers are not paid.” “The time has come for both Christian and Muslim leaders to be upright by confronting their governors on issues that would retard progress in Nigeria.” He did not wish “to create the false impression that the role of religious leaders is merely to exhort their people on blind obedience in the face of injustice, bad governance and irresponsible leadership.” “The first principle we must establish,” he went on, “is whether the leadership on the ground is legitimate or not. We go further to ask what constitutes the ingredients of legitimacy. It is here that we must see the role of religious leaders.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>S. Ilesanmi, 1997, pp. 254-255.

<sup>85</sup>S. Akhaine, 6 Dec/2004.

I find it interesting that the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Jos, Ignatius Kaigama, in a lecture to the Annual National Conference of the Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria, proclaimed that “it is peculiar to the laity to bring the spirit of the Gospel into all spheres of life, including politics and government.”<sup>86</sup> What Kukah delegated to the clergy, Kaigama reserved for the so-called laity.

Do we detect a difference between the two or is it simply a matter of different contexts?

It would not be the first time different emphases and contexts led to different pronouncements.

In its 2003 Christmas edition, *The Punch* reviewed speeches by President Obasanjo and Cardinal Anthony Okogie in one article. While Okogie’s comments appear in the section on the role of government,<sup>87</sup> the President’s belong here. The former called on the Government to take up its responsibility, while the President emphasized the need for the clergy to shape up, almost as if both were trying to deflect attention from their own shortcomings by blaming “the other guy.” Actually, both of them were right, but failure to acknowledge the roles of their own sectors, their comments seemed like cheap shots and, because of their one-sidedness, close to being lies. Both of them emphasized “the importance of peace,” but they “differed on who should serve as the catalyst.” Obasanjo “called on Christians to show greater commitment to service.” Christians needed to imbibe teachings about and by Jesus. He then listed a number of Biblical virtues that would “stand us in good stead in the ongoing struggle to achieve national renaissance after wasted years of stagnation and decay.”<sup>88</sup>

CAN has said through the Kaduna State Chairman, Joseph Bagobiri, that “it would no longer fold its hands and watch politicians continue to misgovern the country. Henceforth, CAN would monitor the activities of politicians in Nigeria to ensure that citizens derive the maximum benefit possible. Bagobiri said that the Church would not shy away from advising the political class to ensure fairness and justice for all and contribute toward the full development of Nigeria.”<sup>89</sup>

But 17 years earlier a beloved son and preacher of the church as well as its strong critic, blind physiotherapist, Dr. Bitrus Gani, advised a much more aggressive and radical role for the church, one that might have spared Nigeria and all its citizens a lot of pain and violence. He was interviewed by a young journalist friend of mine, Emmanuel Egbunnu, who asked Gani about the church being manipulated by politicians, a frequent assertion. Gani would have none of it. The

<sup>86</sup>*Vanguard*, 14 Dec/2004.

<sup>87</sup>See p. xxxx below.

<sup>88</sup>Y. Odunuga and T. Ajayi, 24 Dec/2003.

<sup>89</sup>R. Buhari, 23 Dec/2006.

church is too smart, educated and developed to be manipulated by them, he countered. “I think the church is just as capable of using politicians. The church should not wait to be used by politicians. The church should create the politicians it wants to use, mobilise them, motivate them, direct them and let them get on with the job, realizing that they have a church behind them praying, watching their morality and concerned with the needs of the people.” Then he went on to trace how the church in Nigeria has been involved in the training of people at every level. He concluded that “because the church produced them, the church has a responsibility to now see how with this massive injection of manpower into the body politic of Nigeria, it can intelligently support nation building.” “The church today is poised to create, together with God, a new social order. Our men and women who will go into the Third Republic will be people who have the conscience of the church, the spirit of God and the realisation that they cannot afford to fail us this time.”<sup>90</sup> Wow! This was back in 1989 *fa!* How different things would have been. Here was one of the prophets that Yusufu Turaki called for. He fared no better than his Old Testament counterparts of long ago. But as to a new social order, Nigeria’s Christian heritage had little to offer, though some, like CAN, TEKAN and the early Jerry Gana did their best to offer their designs. But did anyone follow these up with concerted action?

The sources of advice never dried up. John Akume of Inter-Gender had his advice for the clergy. Elsewhere in this chapter he is overheard advising adherents to become independent from the clergy by becoming acquainted with the official documents of their religion. Now he is advising the clergy to take on the responsibility of teaching the basic tenets of both religions and to encourage adherents to study their religious books. They should weigh their utterances in view of the ignorance of the people. No incitement; no insults. They should develop dialogue with the other religions and teach mutual respect. They are to avoid manipulating the faithful, especially not serve as “remote control appliances” of the government; they are to remain independent from government. Together with adherents they must “respect and uphold the Constitution of the land.”<sup>91</sup> A full clerical plate!

Henry Awoniyi had a real challenge for Nigeria’s Ulama. Their “utterances bear no resemblance to the familiar slogan ‘Islam is a religion of peace.’” At a time when there is so much violence and mistrust, Nigeria needs “concrete contributions to peace rather than bellicose

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<sup>90</sup>E. Egbunnu, *TC* 1/89, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup>J. Akume, Sep/2004, pp. 5, 9. Full text at <Appendices/Proposal Appendices/Inter-Gender/J. Akume>.

noises and war-like moves.” Given their prominence and power, “one would have expected the Council of Ulama to have produced twenty for every Martin Luther King (Jr.) or Mahatma Ghandi, whose weapons were nothing but peace. Until the Council transcends sloganeering and produces peace agents” of similar stature, “it does not deserve a spot on the moral high ground for pontificating to Nigeria. Rather, it should henceforth be regarded as a suspect whenever an ethnic or religious conflict erupts, because of its violence-propelling characteristics.” Awoniyi urged “God-fearing and peace-loving Muslims” to “condemn and distance themselves from the Council.”<sup>92</sup>

In an article reviewing the history of COCIN and describing some of its current goals and programmes, written by Solomon Naanmiyap and five co-authors, there was a strong sense of COCIN’s calling and place in Plateau State. The context of their article was the perceived aggressive Muslim advance since the early days of Dr. Herman Karl Wilhelm Kumm, the German founder of the Sudan United Mission, the body that spawned COCIN. Kumm, according to the article, was deeply aware and challenged by the Muslim advance in Sub-Saharan Africa. He had written, “The religion that has made the white man what he is, seems to lag woefully behind the Muslim in the foreign missionary conquest of Africa.” Islam “is rapidly winning the Negro races for his faith.” Kumm would therefore not have been surprised at the recent “religious crises in the North of Nigeria resulting in the destruction of church structures and properties and wholesome killing of its members.” It is in that context and challenge that COCIN has prepared her response to the Muslim challenge. That response has several parts. COCIN has developed an evangelism programme that is designed to continue the policy of containment of Muslim expansion. Secondly, COCIN is developing an educational system that I will treat later in this chapter. The third branch is that of politics. It can now be said that “COCIN Shapes Plateau Politics,” as the title of an article by Naanmiyap has it. That comes pretty close to the truth when all three gubernatorial candidates are COCIN members! But how does a church insist on members supporting each other when they are political opponents and feel they can thrive only by trashing their opponents? What church has ever faced that one?! COCIN is badly in need of some very creative pastoral insights. Since the subsection of the Naanmiyap article that bears the name of the above quotation has been reproduced in Volume 7,<sup>93</sup> it does not need repetition, but allow me this one quotation:

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<sup>92</sup>H. Awoniyi, 2002, pp. 40-42.

<sup>93</sup>J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 396-399.

*Inasmuch as the COCIN clergy should be dissuaded from participating in secular politics, they should always watch the scene with an eagle eye with a view to excoriating bad government and advice for their amelioration. After all COCIN was built on the foundation of honesty and faithfulness, which have become the cornerstone of its members, both in form and content, and cannot be wished away for other mundane considerations. For any member participating in active politics, especially in the current dispensation, they are challenged to be the light bearer of other Christians and non-Christians alike.*

A reading of that section will demonstrate how seriously COCIN has been taking politics.<sup>94</sup> Due to her analysis of the Muslim push in the state, she sometimes oversteps political boundaries she herself has set. But—an emergency is an emergency. It cannot always wait for the slow pace of established organizational protocol. Whether COCIN did right and represented the unambiguous light she wants to be in supporting her allegedly corrupt son, Governor Dariye, is difficult to judge from a distance. Sometimes being positioned “between the devil and the deep blue sea” makes clear-cut choices difficult to make. But these policies and actions make up COCIN’s recipe for peace in a very ambiguous situation: aggressive outreach in every direction and at several fronts; stemming the Muslim advance everywhere, but especially in Plateau, that bastion of Christian resistance. I have only recently learned that COCIN has established a department for Christian-Muslim Relations. It will be interesting to see what shape that will take. COCIN was challenged to adopt an aggressive stand. Naanmiyap wrote,

*Being the dominant Christian group in Plateau, COCIN should take the gauntlet of defeating anti-Christian forces in this part of the country and must not compromise this position for fear of intimidation. At the moment, COCIN forms the pillar of governance in this state with most top-government officials belonging to this denomination. As such, policies formulated and implemented should always reflect the wishes of the generality of the citizens of the state. If that had been practiced in the past, probably the jihadists’ plans would have been perforated without culminating in human carnage as witnessed in the recent past.*

Though COCIN clergy were not to engage in “secular politics,” a policy of most Christian denominations,

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<sup>94</sup>S. Naanmiyap, Nov/2004, pp. 18-20.

*COCIN should not fail to lead by example, because when it wanes in faith and truth, the Christian community will be affected. In the past, it was accused by some groups of meddling in partisan politics, which was detrimental to good governance and cohesion of the church. COCIN should propitiate itself of such allegations and must be seen to always call a spade a spade no matter whose ox is gored. Above any other thing, the church stands for the truth and COCIN must be seen to reflect this impeccable quality of godliness.*

*As COCIN marks 100 years, it must reappraise itself and come to terms with its lapses in the past with a view to improving upon same, especially now that politics appears to be pervading the church.<sup>95</sup>*

Abraham could be quite emotional about the role of religious leaders in the political realm. Though the 2007 election was still more than a year away, he began to challenge early. He called upon them to search out corrupt leaders and discipline them. The issue of a third term for Obasanjo was a hot button, but have the Christian leaders helped Obasanjo in finding a successor? Or are they simply going to join the crowds on the street protesting? And what of CAN on the issue of the religious question on the approaching census. They have spoken vehemently, but have they ever visited Sama'ila Tanko Makama, the Christian Chairman of the National Population Commission to allow him to "bare his burden, encourage and pray with him?" "Does CAN have the teeth to carry out its threats?"<sup>96</sup>

Simon Bala, the Anglican Bishop of Kubwa Diocese, did what many see as the proper role of the church and its leaders. In a speech to his local CAN chapter he showed from the Bible that Christians should be interested and participate in politics. He also suggested the positive aims that politicians should pursue and reminded them of the need for "the mind of Christ." He also encouraged them to dare to critique the government when needed and even to resist evil, if necessary, by disobedience. The Bishop's stance had become standard fare that is positive and to be appreciated.<sup>97</sup>

## **Women Issues wiwiwi xxxx**

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<sup>95</sup>Y. Abraham, Nov/2004, p. 20.

<sup>96</sup>Y. Abraham, Feb/2006, p. 24.

<sup>97</sup>LB, "Christians Urged...", June/2005, p. 9.

In earlier volumes you will have noticed that there is considerable opposition to the place the fundamentalist and militant proponents of extended sharia give to women. We have seen Muslim women fight back, but Christian women also began to exert themselves in the chaos of religious violence. As Inter-Gender encouraged Muslim women to organize, so they did with Christian women. A seminar sponsored by Inter-Gender decided to organise an umbrella organisation “comprising all Christian women in Jos to articulate the views of Christian women. The body will afford the women an opportunity to open dialogue with government and their Muslim counterparts to avert misunderstanding and distrust.” Though CAN has its women’s wing, for some unexpressed reason it was considered an inadequate tool to achieve women’s purposes.

At that one-day meeting they covered a lot of sensitive subjects, all of them related to the Plateau mayhem, including the settler-vs-indigene controversy, improving relations with Muslims, dialogue, survival, the peace process, good governance and more. They recorded six observations, two of which were directed to the government. The first: Government is failing the citizens. The second: “There is absence of good governance, accountability and integrity.” Ah, the refrain never stops!

The ladies passed a number of recommendations, some of which are reproduced below. Some look more like observations, but their intentions are clear enough:

1. *The military should remain in the barracks.*
2. *Politicians play unpleasant roles in facilitating conflicts, especially in Jos.*
3. *Government is not proactive and delays response to issues that threaten life and property.*
4. *Government should be seen to apply equity and justice, especially in the distribution of resources and political patronage.*
5. *Government should alleviate the sufferings of the masses through....<sup>98</sup>*
6. *Christians should foster peace amongst themselves and with their Muslim neighbours, practice forgiveness, respect, love, modesty and tolerance.*
7. *Muslims should review the almajiri system of education with the aim of integrating them with the rest of society.*

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<sup>98</sup>Then follow some huge general economic tasks that are easier to demand than to carry out.

8. *Christians and Muslims should avoid provocative language and acts capable of generating conflicts, such as the blocking of roads and streets during worship hours.*
9. *Christians and Muslims should learn to live with one another, tolerate and seek to understand the different perspectives of each religion.*
10. *Women should be taken into confidence as agents of peace and given greater roles in leadership positions to promote dialogue.*<sup>99</sup>

Though the reasons for these various observation/demands are not expressed, Nigerians know exactly why these demands are made. Previous volumes of this series have adequately delineated them.

Gopar Tapkida, whom we met earlier as a Mennonite peace worker, spoke at the Inter-Gender Muslim Women's conference of 2004 described in Appendix 6 (pp. xxxx). He encouraged Muslim women "to aim at sustainable peace, rather than relative peace." Though the campaign for such peace will be long and not achieved in the present generation, he insisted "we have to cultivate it in our children." Christian and Muslim women, he declared, should "move out of self-righteousness and see their roles in generating conflicts in society, so that they could work towards sustaining peace."<sup>100</sup>

One women's issue that keeps cropping up especially amongst Muslims, but also amongst Christians, is *dress code*. It has come up in the context of female uniforms at schools, amongst nurses and even female Corpers. One of the reasons Muslims support the new sharia is the level of immodesty that characterizes women's fashions. They blame British law and culture for this offensive dress code. Christians are not left behind. Evangelist Solomon Vongnan of COCIN Gigiring called attention to this "unacceptable Western tradition that has eaten deep into the fabric of our social life." And then he went on to describe the situation that we all know. "This is too sodomic" and leads to all the well-known sexually-transmitted diseases. Vongnan then called upon the people in general, on the clergy and the church, and on the government to all do their part to "stop this type of madness." He closed his argument with a call "for total war against this type of dress and prohibiting their use."<sup>101</sup> While solving this and similar issues of morality would surely weaken the felt need by Muslims for sharia, for Christian and Muslim women to be cooperating at this front would constitute marvelous dialogue-in-action.

<sup>99</sup>IGPB, Nov/2004, pp. 2-3.

<sup>100</sup>IGPB, Nov/2004, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup>S. Vongnan, Nov/2005, p. 3.

## YOUTH ISSUES yiyi xxxx

A major complaint about youth is that they too often allow themselves to be recruited to carry out the dirty work of demonstrations, violence and riots. They serve as the tools of politicians and other power brokers but are discarded as soon as they have served their functions of disruption, bloodletting and arson. Their economic conditions of illiteracy and unemployment make them easy prey of the manipulators behind the curtain. Plateau-based journalist Prince Charles Dickson, writing about the violence generated by the Danish cartoons and other incidents, commented, “Each time we blame touts, jobless young men for wanton destruction, but what has this society done in encrypting the virtues of the practice of religion into them, be it Christian virtues, Islamic beliefs or traditional and moral teachings? Rather because they are willing tools in the hands of political manipulators, they leave them impoverished, uneducated and diseased in mind, spirit, soul and body.”<sup>102</sup> The “to do’ thing is clear.

Youth did not only serve as objects, as tools of manipulators. They have not infrequently taken bold and positive initiatives of their own. During the incubation period of sharia in Kaduna State, Christians were unhappy with the direction of things.<sup>103</sup> Jacob Magaji and Pius Musa, leaders of a Christian youth group of Southern Kaduna, became militant. They demanded that the state judiciary “remove all the Muslim judges in the area courts in Southern Kaduna and replace them with indigenous judges versed in and having respect for the customs and traditions of our people.” This was parallel to other Kaduna indigenes who demanded their own chiefdoms but somewhat less radical than the call by the Southern Kaduna Peoples’ Union for splitting Kaduna State into Southern Christian and Northern Muslim states.<sup>104</sup> All of these demands had been brewing for some time.

Paul Adujie, a Nigerian based in New York, found that much of the violence was carried out by youths. But what kind of youths are these?

*The students behind this act of savagery should be identified, and made to face the full wrath of the law: these are not students, they are something else, something unnamable,*

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<sup>102</sup>P. Dickson, “An Igbo Reverend Sister....”

<sup>103</sup>J. Boer, 2007, vol. 6, pp. 99-103.

<sup>104</sup>These materials were sent to me without clear identification. I have reasons to believe they are from an April, 2000, issue of *NewsWatch*, a Nigerian newsmagazine.

*and the society that has produced this level of criminality at the level of a secondary school is truly an unfortunate society. That this is the character of young persons in certain parts of the country is lamentable. These are children who are in their teens, and probably as young as 11; we have every cause to worry about the future.*

*There was no one prompting them, no mallam or imam in the background giving them any instructions, they acted out of their own volition as products of a peculiar socialization process in Nigeria, within the framework of which anyone who speaks a different tongue or belongs to another faith, is seen as an outsider, as an enemy to be exterminated at the slightest provocation. What was played out in that incident in Gombe is the terrible story of Nigeria.*

*The crisis did not begin today; the children of Gombe are the great grandchildren of this phenomenon. The conversion of religion into a vehicle for violence takes at least three main forms in the Nigerian context: an intra-religion form, an inter-religion form and the mixture of religion and state politics, but it is the second category that has been most felt.<sup>105</sup>*

But violence is not restricted to religious feuds; it pervades the entire culture, politics as much as religion, as I have shown in earlier volumes.<sup>106</sup> This remains true in 2008, in sharia areas as well as in Christian places. Both national and international media are full of references to violence associated with the 2007 elections. But a red thread throughout all the stories is the participation of youth, who are used as tools of manipulation and who, through the last few decades, have become so brutalized that Adujie could only describe them as “they are something else, something unnamable.”

Turning to the South East, one young man of only 27, Nnaemeka Oruh, addressed his age mates in a moving open letter that constitutes Appendix 62 and that is a must read. I reproduce part of it below to make sure you get a taste. The country was facing the 2007 Presidential and gubernatorial elections. Oruh described the evil scheming of politicians and their supporters:

*I know how hungry and deprived you would all feel now; the hundreds of thousands of jobless youths walking the streets of this country. A whole lot of you have managed to be educated. A whole lot others have found it impossible to get educated. For those of you*

<sup>105</sup>P. Adujie, Gamji Mar/2007. Appendix 69.

<sup>106</sup>J. Boer, 2003, vol. 1, ch. 2 and appendices; indices of vols. 3, 5. See also *Companion CD*, <Misc Arts>, sub-folders <Violence>, <Persecution>, <Conversion>, <Youth>.

*who are university, polytechnic and colleges of education graduates, you have come to find out how false your earlier belief that education guarantees the meal ticket is. You are all angry and hungry. Quite a large number are walking wraiths and your situation has become compounded by societal demands. Who would blame you when you turn to weapons of destruction--and most times self destruction? My beloved fellow Nigerian youths, here is my pre-April general elections message to you.*

*Already, the politicians are perfecting plans on how ballot boxes would be stolen and in-house elections conducted. Political opponents would be violently eliminated and those in power are perfecting plans on how quasi-legal means would be used to disqualify potential strong opponents. And the potentially strong foes that are endangered by quasi-legal elimination are getting ready to cause general disturbances and chaos in the country if they are disqualified. For all these schemes, the instruments of perpetration are you-the Nigerian youths--and it seems that in your anger and hunger, you would have no choice other than to seize this opportunity, get the money that will come from it. And who says you are not aware? You have always been aware that in the process, you may die and the country destroyed. But at your present state, you do not care. But you should care.*

And then he warned his contemporaries:

*For all these schemes, the instruments of perpetration are you-the Nigerian youths--and it seems that in your anger and hunger, you would have no choice other than to seize this opportunity, get the money that will come from it. And who says you are not aware? You have always been aware that in the process, you may die and the country destroyed. But at your present state, you do not care. But you should care.*

*This is not yet our game. The time is not yet ripe for us to throw ourselves into the battle of wrenching power. Whoever will come to power in May, would still be a product of the old brigade whose sole duty in leadership is to destroy the country further. So we should not aid them. We should refuse the guns; we should turn our backs to their pleas that we take money and destroy ourselves and our country. If the hunger in our bellies will not allow us to reject the money, please let us take the money but we should always have the presence of mind not to do what we have been asked to do by the power-crazy and blood-thirsty fools. It is not theft or fraud, we would have only collected a token of what is*

*rightfully ours. Sometime soon, it shall be our turn to make right of wrongs they have done to this country.*<sup>107</sup>

## **Legal Issues    xxxx    lili**

The sharia question brought up many legal issues for Christians. The extensive materials in both Volumes 6 and 7 serve us as important background for this section. Pioneer Wilson set the pace in Volume 7, Chapter 6. In keeping with his general stance, he posited a stark antithesis between the Christian and Muslim positions: “The goals of Islam are about the salvation of human beings and the establishment of a society founded on divinely revealed norms (the sharia). Therefore law, faith and morality are necessarily united to further those goals.” For Christians, on the other hand, “The key doctrine of democracy is that laws are impartial and impersonal. A democratic state cannot be expected to enforce rules based on personal religious scruples. This is the very thing sharia refuses to accept.” Sharia wants to join what Wilson wants to separate: “For a peaceful co-existence, we must separate the demands of law from the demands of morality.” “There is no necessary connection between religion and personal law. Law is an expression of the needs and values of a particular society; the law is inherently distinct from religion.” “Sharia causes confusion by combining legal law and the law of God.” “It will be wrong for the state to assume the responsibility of enforcing the moral scruples of any religion.” So, the solution for the Nigerian religious problem is strict separation on basis of the traditional Lutheran dichotomy of the two kingdoms and the two laws.

Not everyone followed Sabiya here. Though in Volume 5, Byang showed up as a strong advocate for some form of secularity, he deviated from its traditional pattern in that he wanted Nigerian “moral and value systems”—note the plural!—“incorporated into the legal system to ensure that the laws are indigenous to us all.”<sup>108</sup> Here, it appears, he deviated from Sabiya’s demand for separation of law and morality.

But the above represents only one aspect of the problem. Sharia has also brought up the discussion about legal pluralism—one nation with more than one legal system. Whereas in the above paragraph we hear Muslims calling for one system and Sabiya for two, when it comes to legal pluralism, Muslims call for it, while Sabiya opted for a single united system. “We must

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<sup>107</sup>N. Oruh, Mar/2007. Appendix 62.

<sup>108</sup>D. Byang, 1988, p. 101.

introduce a uniform personal law for the purpose of national consolidation.”<sup>109</sup> As with other positions he took, here too Sabiya largely set the tone for the Christian community.

And then there was the related question of single versus plural judiciary. Byang rejected a judiciary “patterned along any one religious line.” “The duality of the judiciary is to be vehemently objected to.” There is no basis for it “where there is harmony and mutual respect for one another’s value systems.” If Muslims had “the overwhelming majority,” there might be an argument for legal pluralism, but experience elsewhere has shown that without such a Muslim majority, a dual system has “*always*” led to chaos. Even in the Sudan, where Muslims are in the majority, sharia has not worked well.<sup>110</sup> In the case of Nigeria, “the percentage of Muslim population is lower in Nigeria than in Sudan.”<sup>111</sup> Byang was and remains till today a non-indigenous resident of Plateau State, a state that practices legal pluralism with its tri-court system.<sup>112</sup> I have not heard him object to that setup. Probably he would argue that the Sharia Court deals only with the pre-Zamfara version and the others are not religious so much as cultural.

W. A. Badejo favoured a plural system on a national level. Though he wanted to retain the old personal-law sharia regime, in his NIREC lecture he proposed: “The Government should, as a matter of urgency, establish the Customary Court of Appeal for Christians and other non-Muslims as provided for in the 1999 Constitution.”<sup>113</sup> He gave no explanation for this stand. A fourth sharia issue is how to solve the question of the legality or constitutionality of the extended sharia. The majority of Christians wanted the President to just nix the whole thing, while others wanted it decided by the judiciary. Bode George, a former military state governor, wanted “the question of the legality or otherwise of the Zamfara State precedence” to be answered only by the judiciary--precisely what was said by parties as disparate as President Obasanjo, Governor Sani, CAN and many Christian and Muslim individuals. George reminded his audience that the unique hodge-podge that is called Nigeria was assembled by the British. We have had “this perpetual problem,” he suggested, because “we have been trying to fuse all these various multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious nations. There is no nation anywhere

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<sup>109</sup>W. Sabiya, 25 Feb/78. See J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 264-265. In Sabiya’s days, the issue of an expanded sharia had not yet arisen. The argument was still about personal law.

<sup>110</sup>Note that Byang here associated legal pluralism with sharia; he almost equated them.

<sup>111</sup>D. Byang, 1988, p. 101.

<sup>112</sup>J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 91-92.

<sup>113</sup>W. Badejo, 2000, p. 16.

in the world that is like Nigeria.” “If you have disagreement on the Constitution, the only arm that can interpret it is the judiciary. I believe, very soon, that the government must act.”<sup>114</sup> Already more than a decade before the Zamfara Declaration, TEKAN started making demands for the reformation of the court system that were very specific and strongly reflected the anti-sharia experience and thinking of Sabiya, the Chairman of its political commission.<sup>115</sup> Its submission included the very abrasive observation that “the court structure, especially in the Northern part of the country, is repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience.”<sup>116</sup> Then it proceeded to outline its demand for a series of very specific judicial reforms, too detailed for inclusion here, but that were for a system open to all religions and would “rectify the unjust structures that allegedly were dominated by Muslims. It included the abolition of *Alkali* Courts and State Sharia Court of Appeal, for “it amounts to treason against the pluralistic state to create courts based on religion.” “In our opinion, the proliferation of different kinds of courts is unnecessary and expensive. We must learn to live together in peace and harmony in the context of a multi-religious state.”

Furthermore, TEKAN called for an “independent judiciary” with powers wide enough “to hold governments to their promises” and to protect the Constitution. They wanted it controlled by a group consisting of retired and senior legal experts in order to isolate it from vested interests and thus enable it to “play a big role in curbing some of the excesses and helping to maintain stability in the country.” As far as TEKAN was concerned, the 1979 Constitution, as embattled as it was, “is a good document. The problems lie in the area of implementation.” That, at least, was the sentiment of the Commission at one time, but in the second submission we read that the same Constitution “is full of judicial discriminatory loopholes.” And “that many religious disturbances are to some extent encouraged by the Constitution”!<sup>117</sup>

It was the latter sentiment that seemed to carry the day for TEKAN. She recommended various constitutional amendments that were aimed at getting rid of all references to sharia—at least 12 in number. On the other hand, she wanted various recommendations inserted about Canon Law and “pastoralia.” She recommended that “not less than three judges shall be learned in Canon

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<sup>114</sup>C. Abiandu, “Bode George Advises.... “

<sup>115</sup>For a fuller discussion of Sabiya’s views see J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 266-270; 2006, vol. 5, Appendix 4; 2007, vol. 6, ch. 6.

<sup>116</sup>That was exactly how the colonialists described the sharia system. In the eyes of Muslims, with this language Wilson strongly confirmed the Muslim opinion that Christians are indeed the heirs of colonialism.

<sup>117</sup>TEKAN, 1987, pp. 41-43, 48.

Law or pastoralia be inserted where appropriate.”<sup>118</sup> She wanted experts in “Canon Law or pastoralia” to sit alongside with and equal to experts in Customary Law and Islamic Law in Area Courts of Appeal.<sup>119</sup>

TEKAN also wanted the term “religious” deleted from a clause that would make government responsible for “adequate facilities for...religious...life.” This clause, she argued, “has encouraged governments to support the building of mosques with public money.”<sup>120</sup> She urged that it be made “unconstitutional for anyone to build a place of worship in a government house or institution.” In fact, she went for the jugular: “No public money should be used for the furtherance of any particular religion. The Government must stay out of religious matters.” Not sure just how to take this exclusion in the light of the demand on the next page for government support of Christian educational institutions!<sup>121</sup>

It will be recalled that Muslims consider Common Law the product of Christianity. Christians, as we have read in Volume 7, reject the notion outright. Danjuma Byang, a sociologist-journalist-pastor rejected it strongly. Lawyer Akinola Aguda, former Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, was a man with a unique combination of ideas. He did reject the “Common Law = Christian” equation. In a lecture he denied even the equation of Common Law with English law. The argument itself would take us too far afield. But he is the same Aguda who has suggested “that Islamic law be taught in all universities as part of the courses required for the award of LLB degrees. This is with a view to integrating it into the general corpus of our single system of law.” And the same Aguda who argued that “it has been settled for ever that in our country you cannot reinstate the rather harsh punishments enjoined by the sharia after nearly a century of disuse.” We’re not done with him. He wanted the similar kind of integration in the judicial system that features a “unifying Court of Appeal and Supreme Court manned by Christians, Muslims and Traditional Religionists.” He also “recommended a similar arrangement at the state level.” These and some other arrangements he suggested would all be possible, “when all presiding officers in the courts are learned in all aspects of our law,” something that would presumably develop via the integrated law system.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>For an explanation of canon law, go to J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 80-90, 431.

<sup>119</sup> TEKAN, 1987, pp. 48-51.

<sup>120</sup>As to mosque building, see J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 107-124, 266-271.

<sup>121</sup>TEKAN, 1987, pp. 48-55.

<sup>122</sup>O. Awogbemila, 24 Oct/88, pp. 21, 24.

Sarah Jibrin, a Vice President of the International Association of Education for World Peace, apparently had no strong objection to sharia. However, like Ibrahim Sangari Usman in Volume 7, she thought that fairness demanded that if sharia is going to be enshrined in the Constitution, then “there should also be a Christian legal council to take care of the interests of Christians.”<sup>123</sup>

## **Political and Governmental Measures xxxx ppgg**

### **1. Political Issues xxxx pspsp**

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If we want to discuss political solutions, we must first know the political problems to be solved. Some of the major ones have already been discussed in earlier volumes. Allow me to summarize the main antithesis between Christians and Muslims in this context. The major problem for many Muslims, especially those advocating for the extended sharia, is that over a century ago the British established a colonial regime that sought to undermine Islam and Muslim culture by replacing it with secularism. Muslims regard the current post-colonial “secular” setup as a continuation of that regime, with Christo-secularists dominating the country. Their major political solution is to overcome that regime and replace it with the former sharia regime. Christians in the Middle Belt have the opposite problem. They complain of colonial imposition of alien Muslim emirs and Muslim regimes on them. So, Muslims oppose the imposition of Christo-secularism, while Christians oppose the imposition of Islam. I invite you to check the indices of previous volumes for relevant entries.<sup>124</sup> Those two opposite perspectives underlie the sharia struggle, including Plateau State. Many of the political and other solutions and proposals offered in this book are based on that problematic.

It was some 25 years ago that the Christian community became aware of a serious problem, namely the avoidance of politics by Christians as a no-go area. Please check Appendix xxxx, where this issue is discussed for the BZ era, apart from Pandang Yamsat. In his undated paper, he wrote that for the sake of the nation, “gone are the days when the Christian shies away from politics or participates in politics with timidity or guilt feeling on the ground that politics is a

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<sup>123</sup>T. Adejo, 27 Feb/2000.

<sup>124</sup>Entries to look for include Bauchi, Tafawa Balewa, Sayawa, Southern Kaduna/Zaria, Kafanchan, Zangon Kataf. See the Turaki papers in J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, ch. 7 and the Turaki folder in *Companion CD* <Misc Arts/Turaki Art/...>. .

dirty game.” Both “Church as an institution and Christians as individuals must be involved in politics indirectly and directly respectively.” Christians not directly involved in party politics “must act at least as statesmen and stateswomen. This is what it means to be the light of the world, to enter into every sector of the society to shape it in the way God would have it.”

Yamsat reminded his audience of the prayer “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” and of the Lord’s promise to be with us “always to the close of the age.” These mean that “He is with us not only in church on Sundays or in prayer meetings, but also out in the political field and in the different spheres of life, shaping this beloved country in the way the good Lord would want it to be until He returns.”<sup>125</sup>

Some years later, now in AZ, at the end of a lengthy speech on democracy, Yamsat offered the following safeguards for the political order, though not all of them political in nature:

1. *Measures must be put in place to arrest corrupt political processes.*
2. *Politics of sectionalism and winner takes it all—[incomplete sentence].*
3. *Teaching the fear of God and love of fellow human beings and working out a theology of tolerance by religious bodies for their members are crucial.*
4. *Poverty eradication programme must be made to work by giving it a human face rather than a political one.*
5. *Issues of justice and equal sharing of resources of the land to every sector must be addressed by Government. The public must be made to understand that the rights of one are the rights of the other.*<sup>126</sup>

Early in the new period Debki, in a voice no longer unusual, summoned Christians: “Now that politics have proved to be religion, wider participation in politics by Christians should be encouraged. If people who prepare [their] daily budget inside someone [else’s] pocket endure and unite in politics, it is possible for Christians to also unite. Go for even tax collectors, village head, district head, emir, garage union leadership, market union leadership, etc.” He also had some political advice for Northern power brokers. He wanted a complete separation of what he called the “political realm” from the “religious arena,” apparently regarding these as two separate parallel segments of life instead of seeing religion at the bottom of everything else.<sup>127</sup> For Nigeria

<sup>125</sup>P. Yamsat, n.d., pp. 11-12.

<sup>126</sup>P. Yamsat, July/2005, p. 21. See also P. Yamsat, 2006, Appendix 42.

<sup>127</sup>For explanation here see J. Boer, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 192-203.

to be healed religiously and politically, “Northern politicians should stop the bloody power struggle, allow religious groups to handle religious affairs, and both to submit to democracy so as to enhance unity in the political and religious arenas.” These statements seem to be taking us into a different direction from what Debki wrote on the next page. The “trick” that “has been played on Nigerian Christians” is that “politics is not religion. Thank God, politics have been proved to be religious in nature.”<sup>128</sup> Well, I have pointed out in various contexts that the dualism from which Nigerians are trying to liberate themselves, often leads to confusion in the course of their journey.

Habila Istifanus had both criticism for governments in Nigeria and various proposals about them. A major complaint of his was that governments are too weak and timid in handling religious conflict. His proposals mirror his complaints:

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*Any religious group that abuses its freedom, the Nigerian government must be strong enough to intervene and arrest and bring to justice those involved. Some key decisions and guidelines on religious issues in relation to public interest must be made very clear and strict methods to observe must be put in place to ensure strict compliance. The general opinion is that a hard decision has to be made against religious groups in Nigeria. For example, any religious group that starts a violent act or demonstration must be made to pay the cost of the resulting destruction. Compliance failure should result in the banning of that religion.*

*Religious freedom does not mean a practice at the expense of the lives or the peace of other people. Nigerian Muslims and Christians are of the habit of polluting the atmosphere with noise through use of powerful loud speakers, which is mostly needlessly used without any control. These are some of the things that provoke anger and stimulate violence. There must be serious restrictions or strong laws against that. There is also the problem of blocking access roads on worship days. This must be checked.*

*All religious pilgrimages to all Holy places must be left in the hands of each religion. The government should leave every religious issue to each religious group. Otherwise there should be a Ministry of Religious Affairs empowered to address all religious issues from the perspective of justice. This must be in line with equity and fair play.*

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<sup>128</sup>B. Debki, 2000, pp. 26-28, 119. Though Debki is a member of EYN, the peace church to which Ndamsai Addua belongs, I detect no trace of pacifism in his book.

*For us to be comfortable and safe in Nigeria, the government should direct that the activity of every religion be as transparent as possible. Every thing must be made public (as much as possible) for public verification and scrutiny. Otherwise, Nigerian government should be completely free from religious affiliations and should make every religion completely independent and should strongly re-emphasize her secular nature as much as she can. The government should make clear to every religion her limitations and responsibilities in the country. The government should make it abundantly clear as matter of policy where religion starts and where it ends in public life.<sup>129</sup>*

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Mary Anfani Joe was the National Secretary of the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri Christian Association of Nigeria, called in Hausa *Tarayar Masihiyawa a Nijeriya (TAMANI)*. She was prepared to take Nigeria where few, apart from loyalist Biafrans and coup plotters such as Gideon Orkar, would want to go. She demanded “the core North to be split. We want a demarcation for the Hausa/Fulani Christians and the Hausa/Fulani Muslims, so that we will now have our own media, schools, etc.”<sup>130</sup> Whether that opinion was shared by senior members of *TAMANI* such as the late Ishaya Audu and the late Haruna Dandaura, I doubt very much. At any rate, I have never heard them talk in that direction, not even the slightest suggestion. Onaiyekan argued strongly against this approach, but, again, turn to his Inset below.

For many decades the Middle Belt (MB) region has felt uncomfortable being part of the North, with its political power concentrated in what many consider till this day its Muslim feudal power. Already during colonialism several political parties arose to represent the interests of the MB, though they did not always see eye to eye, led as they were by politicians with their own agendas. But it remained an issue over the decades with Muslim Northerners and Christian MB-ers writing back and forth. The press would publish articles back and forth on the controversy, interesting details of which you can find in Appendix 6.<sup>131</sup>

In 2003, the MB, through the person of Solomon Lar, puffed up its chest and put the entire country, but especially the North, on notice that the MB had had enough of Northern

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<sup>129</sup>H. Istifanus, 2007, pp. 13-14.

<sup>130</sup>E. Duru and C. Nweje, 4 May/2001. Though the call for a split core North was radical, there is a whole history of talks about and attempts at breaking up the unity of Nigeria itself (Y. Yariyok, May 2004).

<sup>131</sup>Appendix 6, pp. 130-132; Appendix 13.

feudalism. The only way for me to convey the spirit of this declaration is to reproduce the report entirely:

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*The MB is poised to direct the country's political direction in 2007, Acting Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Board of Trustees and leader of the Middle Belt Forum, Chief Solomon Daushep Lar has declared. He said that "those who think that the MB is a misnomer or a myth will soon be made to realise that we are a reality that cannot be wished away." "They will soon see that our pains are real, our fears are real, our frustrations are real, our aspirations are real, our links are real, our solidarity is real, our determination is real and our capabilities are real," he added.*

*Lar, who noted that people who have all along been taking the MB for granted "will do so at great loss;" he tied the civic reception organised by the Middle Belt Forum in Honour of Lt.-General Theophilus Danjuma, former Defence Minister to "the beginning of renewed dynamism in the MB" and "the beginning MB initiative for a great new Nigeria."*

*By way of clarification as to the difference between the geographic MB and the political MB, Lar stated that "the political MB encompasses the marginalised minority groups in Northern Nigeria. These are the nationalities that have historically resisted feudalism, political oppression, injustice, religious discrimination and the political emasculation of the unfavoured masses." Lar added that "this extends from Ilorin to Kabba, to Adamawa, Taraba, Southern Borno, Gombe, Tafawa Balewa to Zuru and every part of Northern Nigeria where the tyranny of a predatory oligarchy had frustrated and is still trying to frustrate the legitimate aspirations of many people groups in the region."*

*"The unity of the minority groups in Northern Nigeria has thus created a new majority, making the Middle Belt Forum the largest progressive nationalist group in Nigeria," he added.<sup>132</sup>*

It was a brave, if not brash, declaration with which I fully sympathized at the time. But we have passed the 2007 election and the Presidency has moved from the South-West to the North, bypassing the MB. I am not sure the MB has reached its goal. But it sounded great and in conformity with claims in other parts of this chapter that Muslims will act positively only under pressure of tough language and action.

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<sup>132</sup>TD, 29 Oct/2003.

About the same time and in similar spirit, the Middle Belt Progressive Movement (MBPM) demanded that MB governors “stop attending meetings of the 19 Northern governors.” The entire article can be read in Appendix 39. It demanded that MB governors and other officials disassociate themselves from the North and expressed disappointment that some continued to fraternize.

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*“Northern speakers’ meeting is not beneficial to MBers, because northerners often look for their slaves to carry out their sinister agenda against other parts of Nigeria, and those who agree to run such errands suffer at the end of the day,” they stated. The statement said governors and speakers from the MB should constitute their own meetings to address peculiar problems of their people.*<sup>133</sup>

Clearly, the spirit of political separation from the traditional Northern establishment was in the air in the MB. Unlike Mary Joe, no political re-alignment of Northern state borders was in view, but political re-alignment definitely was. It was a direction away from the traditional easy mixing of religions within the various parties that has always characterized Nigerian politics. It also went counter to the desires of one of the MB’s most illustrious sons, Yakubu Gowon, who at one time held the chair of the Board of Patrons of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) and encouraged the North “to take unity serious, to regain the glory it enjoyed before the Nigerian civil war.” He warned, “If we are not working as one family, anything to the contrary would not augur well for us, we the *Arewa* [Northern] people. That is the only way we can succeed. Every Northerner, irrespective of religion or tribe, should unite and work for the socio-economic progress of the entire North.”<sup>134</sup> And it seemed also to be contrary to the emphasis of dialogue advocates who promoted working together.

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## 2. Citizenship and Indigeneity Issues xxxx ciscis

The issue for this section has been treated off and on throughout this series, especially in the context of the Sayawa in Bauchi State and Kafanchan and Zangon Kataf in Kaduna State. It once again came to a serious head in 2004 during the clashes in

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<sup>133</sup>A. Madugba, 30 Oct/2003.

<sup>134</sup>J. Lohor, 22 Aug/2002. R. Ibrahim, 28 May/2001. Binta Jalingo was very upset about Gowon’s Northern orientation. She wrote, “Those Christians supporting the so-called Arewa Consultative Forum, should know that they are the Judas that betray the Christians. Let them know it that the so-called politicians and leaders of the North are only using them to get what they want” (B. Jalingo, 2001, p. 45).

Plateau State.<sup>135</sup> I will not rehash all that has been said already, but merely present a couple of statements on the subject from the AZ era.

*ThisDay* published an editorial seeking to redirect the priorities of FG. It complained about the plight of displaced persons in Kano after the May, 2004 riots there. While the editor appreciated the efforts of the home state governments of the displaced in providing them transportation to return home, such efforts only “help to emphasize in the minds of victims that citizenship and nationhood in Nigeria are empty concepts.” He called on the FG to

*recognise the fact that it is its duty to guarantee the citizenship right of every Nigerian to live and ply his trade in any part of the country. When this right is called into question and he [any citizen] suffers as a result, it is the responsibility of the FG, and not that of his state of origin, to remedy the situation.*

*It makes no sense for our government to cater for refugees from other African countries, to provide asylum for renegade leaders and to be concerned with peace in Darfur and other trouble spots, when its internally-displaced persons are turned by their fellow countrymen into destitutes.<sup>136</sup>*

Umar Danfulani of Unijos, decried the priority of religious and ethnic loyalties of Nigerians above nationalist ideals. Contrary to the Western situation, Nigerians are “considered settlers and/or treated as second class citizens on the grounds of ethnicity—so-called ‘sons of the soil’-- or they are regarded as unbelievers, *kafir* or *arna*. Solving this issue is one of the greatest challenges facing the Nigerian nation.” He added,

*The day Nigeria sheds off its scales and cloaks of ethnicity and the settler mentality and provides an enabling environment for its citizens to settle anywhere without ethnic, religious and/or cultural prejudice, without being treated as second-class citizens in their own country, one of the great sources of crises...*

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<sup>135</sup>I refer you to vol. 7, ch. 7 as well as to the Index entries “settler” and “indigene,” along with their derivatives and synonyms in other volumes.

<sup>136</sup>*TD*, 21 Oct/2004. I wonder why the writer let the offending state government off the hook? Should they not take responsibility for the chaos they create? Why the FG? The FG’s role should be to ensure that the offender takes responsibility. The “renegade leader” refers to Charles Taylor, who was provided splendid asylum in Nigeria after destroying Liberia. This was, it must be understood, in agreement with the international community, an effort to restrain him and make space for peace efforts. In due time he ended up in the hands of international judiciary.

*would greatly diminish, because the backbone of ethnicity and religious discrimination...would have been broken.*<sup>137</sup>

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Joseph Rinyom with the perspective of a Plateau indigene, firmly opposed giving Hausa/Fulani residents of the state indigene status. He claimed that they had been “treated with brotherly love,” but have exploited the state’s hospitality. They

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*cannot and should not lay claim to indigeneship in Plateau State. In Kanam and Wase, where they still lord it over the indigenous population and use that advantage to claim indigene status, they have for a long time been granted such status without any qualms. Their recent muscle-flexing in Plateau State, with the help of some conniving and irresponsible leadership in government and persons, has made the local people take a second look at their renowned hospitality. Only a fool takes simplicity for a weakness.*<sup>138</sup>

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Dany Ritut, another MB Gamji writer, wrote a similar vituperative article about settlers, making very clear just who they are.<sup>139</sup>

The 2004 Jos Peace Conference ended up with declaring the Afizere, Anaguta and Berom ethnic groups as indigenous to Jos, “but as to the Hausa-Fulani...we make bold, on the evidence at our disposal, to advice them that they can qualify only as ‘citizens’ of Jos,” that is, non-indigene. They also decided that “indigeneeship can be by conquest, where one group conquers another, occupies and integrates into its society permanently since pre-colonial times.”<sup>140</sup> I suspect that this last provision was meant to provide legitimacy to the emirate of Wase.

### 3. Census Issues xxxx cencen

**If need it, go to Folder on Census and to F. Catch all**  
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### 4. Reports, White Papers and Punishment xxxx rwprwp

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<sup>137</sup>U. Danfulani, 2005, pp. 277-279.

<sup>138</sup>J. Rinyom, 2004. Appendix 43.

<sup>139</sup>D. Ritut, May/2004. Appendix 43, 2<sup>nd</sup> article in the file.

<sup>140</sup>Plateau State Gazette, Sep/2004, p. 31. U. Danfulani, “The Plateau Peace Conference...”.

This is not the first time I touch upon the issues in the above caption.<sup>141</sup> These reports produced by various commissions of enquiry are seldom published. Every one, Muslims and Christians, even ex-governors and other high officials who themselves used to hide them when in office, demand repeatedly that these reports be published. They all warn governments that this failure was partially responsible for the continuation of violence, with the culprits feeling perfectly safe in their destructive pursuits. Peter Jatau, for example, wanted the FG “to make sure that...the guilty are properly punished, in a way that everybody would be afraid. Unless this is done, and unless we make sure that there are no sacred cows in the country, then we would be getting from bad to worse. The Government knows what it should do.”<sup>142</sup>

Probably the most amazing case of torpedoed reports is not directly related to Christian-Muslim relations. I refer to the missing Okigbo Report. Because of its distance from our subject, I will not delve into it further, but I have slipped the amazing story in by way of Appendix 44. I do urge you to read this unbelievable story.

Amunkitou Dolom wrote some strong words on the failure of governments to publish their findings 20 or more years ago, but the same issue is still on the table. Nothing has changed. Everyone knew the perpetrators of violence and everyone knew which religion was responsible, but governments refused to take the actions recommended by the investigative commissions.<sup>143</sup> Plateau State has had more than one peace conference. Apart from the big one in 2004, there was one in August, 2002, also of high profile—convened by the Governor himself and attended by Solomon Lar, the state’s “political icon and leader,” as well as “most of the state’s religious and tribal leaders.” Senator Davou Zang admitted that the perpetrators of crises in the state “are known by all the stakeholders,” but he failed to demand that they be arraigned and dealt with. Almost as if the entire collection of the state’s notables at the conference had thrown in the towel—or were responsible for it. Of course, the current Governor Jang has accused former Governor Dariye of serious shenanigans, as have many others. Or does *everyone* have skeletons that prevent them from naming and apprehending? The Plateau solution, according to Zang, “is to

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<sup>141</sup>See J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, Index entry under “Commissions of Enquiry,” p. 499; this volume, Appendix 6, pp. xxxx.

<sup>142</sup>L. Omokhodion and I. Eguabor, 6 Apr/87, p. 19.

<sup>143</sup>A. Dolom, 6/88, p. 11. J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 24-25. Umar Danfulani of Unijos listed no less than ten reports initiated by either FG or Plateau State Government, none of which were made public, because the governments were not ready to take appropriate action (U. Danfulani, “The Plateau Peace Conference...”).

understand ourselves and give peace a chance.” That’s the only “action” the reporter, Bature Umar, reported.<sup>144</sup> That, if you ask me, seems pretty thin and lame. Was anyone serious? Governor Dariye inaugurated a judicial commission to investigate the crisis the above conference discussed, with Justice Felicia Dusu in charge. Amongst other things, the commission was to identify the responsible parties. But were they not already known? Or was Senator Zang the only knowledgeable one? Dusu “urged the State Government to release the findings of previous commissions to the public!”<sup>145</sup> In her position, would she not naturally have access to them? Who is playing what game? Shall we call it “scrabble?”

Everybody was calling for the release of the various reports of commissions of inquiry. CAN called on the Plateau Government to release them as well as to “ensure that those indicted by the reports were punished.” Yakubu Pam, Chairman of Plateau CAN who became famous for his public clash with President Obasanjo,<sup>146</sup> challenged the State Government “to make bold to fight all acts of terrorism head on by calling a spade a spade.”<sup>147</sup> Former Minister of Federal Capital Territory, retired Lieutenant General Jeremiah Useni, also addressed the issue. He chided the government—not sure which, FG or Plateau State—over its “inability and unwillingness to release the white papers on the earlier crises,” for this “constituted a bane in the search for lasting peace.” He demanded to know, “Why does Government set up committees upon committees and their reports are never released and their recommendations never implemented. Government has not done right; there have been so many inquiries and peace committees. Government should release the white papers and make use of the recommendations. These reports must come out before lasting peace would be achieved.”<sup>148</sup> Prior to the Plateau Peace Conference in 2004, “the forum of former Plateau State Governors, Secretaries to the State Government and Heads of Service published a communique in which they called for the implementation of past reports of commissions of enquiry so as to punish those indicated by the reports.”<sup>149</sup> These were the very people who all along the way had ordered these investigations and never published their findings!

Nankin Bagudu raised the issue in a detailed way after the same Conference:

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<sup>144</sup>B. Umar, 20 Aug/2002.

<sup>145</sup>*TD*, 20 Aug/2002.

<sup>146</sup>J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 266-267.

<sup>147</sup>S. Mohammed and R. Muhammad, 7 May/2004.

<sup>148</sup>F. Peter-Omale, 2 Mar/2004.

<sup>149</sup>I. Lar, July/2004, p. 7.

*We believe that for too long government has set up various inquiries and has spent hundreds of thousands of naira for such efforts. These commissions or summits do their work with all seriousness it deserves. Their reports are in most cases rich in historical and empirical information, critical in analysis and often blunt in recommendations. If many of the recommendations were implemented, they would have gone a long way in reducing and even tackling the problem and conflicts they were set up to handle. Unfortunately, the governments do not give the recommendations the serious attention they deserve, because panels are established to cool tempers without necessarily any intention to implement their recommendations. At times, citizens do not help matters as they see panels as attempts to punish imagined opponents. At times, government does not want to tamper with the status quo or the power structure. At times, government feels that the release of the report could escalate the crisis. There is also the problem of the lack of political will by the government.*

*But unfortunately, in the case of the Plateau crisis, the non-release of such panel reports has led to the intensification of the crisis, the promotion of the culture of violence, gross violation of human rights, increased loss by government of moral authority and legitimacy and increased arms buildup for self protection and defense. With this in mind, the problems of people feeling marginalized, oppressed and even unwanted continues. What would be the fate of this summit, especially now that it has taken a stand on such sensitive issues as indigeneity, land dispute, boundary issues, ownership of Jos, etc.?*

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And so, at the conclusion of the Plateau Peace Conference, Bagudu raised the million naira question: Will the government at both federal and state level “implement the findings?” Some “powerful people are reportedly not happy with some of the outcome.” He warned, “We think the government would be committing a serious blunder, if it fails to implement the findings of the conference or if it chooses to selectively implement those that it finds suitable and leave out those it thinks would hurt some interest too sacred to touch.”<sup>150</sup>

In spite of constant complaints about the failure to publish the reports and subsequent security failures, Christians continued to demand that government enquiries and reports be published. Former Military Governor Yohanna Madaki, an indigene of Southern Kaduna and lawyer for his people, demanded that the FG should set up a commission to investigate the

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<sup>150</sup>N. Bagudu, Nov/2004. For a partial but detailed report on the 2004 conference, see Umar Danfulani’s account (“The Jos Peace Conference...”).

Zangon Kataf riots of 1992.<sup>151</sup> After the 2002 Miss World catastrophe, the Kaduna State Indigenous Pastors Network (KASIPAN) in a press conference presented its “panacea for peace and tranquility” that had several components, all of them the usual kind. They urged Government to rebuild all properties destroyed, including churches, homes and other properties Christians lost. They also called for adequate compensation to the families of those killed.

The atmosphere was heating up and demands becoming more strident. Joshua Ishaya, the KASIPAN Secretary, demanded, “Both the Governor and the Commissioner of Police must accept full responsibility for all that happened to Christians and apologise for their neglect, insensitivity and disregard to the prevailing signs and security report, thus liable to complicity.” And then, after all the complaints about lack of publication of reports and failure to follow up, there it was: KASIPAN wanted “FG to set up a commission of inquiry.” And these findings must be made public, particularly “the source of the sophisticated weapons used by the Muslim youths and those behind the training and engagement of fake soldiers and policemen in uniform, who executed the violence against Christians.” Then came a catch-all declaration that “all the resolutions and demands already submitted by”—and then follow the names of six Christian organizations, including Kaduna branch of CAN and the PFN—“on the ethno-religious crises are godly and are, therefore, a panacea to peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and progress.” Finally a no-nonsense, unambiguous and brave threat: “Henceforth all Christians living in the state, regardless of state of origin, shall team up with non-Muslims against any future aggression.”<sup>152</sup> FG and Kaduna State Government, you are warned. From now on, no more turning of cheeks. Christians mean business.

Amazing, really. Year in and year out, the reports of enquiry commissions remained hidden deep in the bureaucracy’s files. The people were only too aware of it and of the subsequent increase in violence it generated. Nevertheless, they continued demanding enquiries after every violent incident, as an absolute condition for stability and peace. Joseph Rinyom wrote of “the complete absence of sincerity of our leaders that has made the problem linger this long.” Referring to a “well-articulated onslaught of the Tarok in Wase” in 2002, “it was demanded of the State Government to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the dastardly act immediately.” However, “the Government ignored the issue and did not make any

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<sup>151</sup>Anonymous, *TC*, 4/92, pp. 8-9.

<sup>152</sup>S. Akhaine, 12 Dec/2002.

meaningful efforts” to settle things down. “Justice was denied.” Despair, but yet coupled to stubborn hope and demands that justice be met.

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*Any call for justice must address the injustices of the past; else all shall be in vain. There is no moral right in prosecuting and persecuting anyone on this issue without recourse to unraveling the genesis of it. Not half measures would suffice in this taproot problem. The crux of the problem must be sought and uprooted. The call for arms from any group or person should be regarded as a security breach that can only inflame an already overcharged situation. Leaders on all sides must be ready to apportion blame where it is due without resort to the usual sectionalism that has become the hallmark of leadership.<sup>153</sup>*

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Pandang Yamsat reviewed recent riots and complained: “Well-known government responses are: the setting up of investigating committees; promises to rehabilitate victims and the payment of compensations to the victims.” Then he continued,

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*Besides the fact that compensations can never restore lives taken or build absolute trust, promises to pay compensations have always largely been unfulfilled. Most often too, reports of such committees are never implemented and the ground is once again laid for the next tragedy. The fact that nothing is usually done with these reports shows that these attacks are but calculated attempts to reduce the population of Christians in this country by Muslims even by those of them who are governors. This is clear by the declaration of Sharia Law in states governed by Muslims. We are looking up to the chief securities and accounting officers of the Sharia states in the North to give Christians equal rights as Muslims have in such states.*

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Yamsat then presented his vision of the way forward by giving a number of assignments to Muslim leaders and to Government. Like KASIPAN, he, too, made the old demands that are never being met. Well, you never know....

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*We in COCIN owe this nation the duty to further prick the conscience of Nigeria and call for collective action to make this country safer for all peoples and all religions. COCIN is therefore placing the following before the federal, state and local authorities, as well as religious and community leaders and people of goodwill:*

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<sup>153</sup>J. Rinyom, Gamji, 2004. Appendix 43.

1. *The FG should set up a Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the crises in Maiduguri, Bauchi, Kontagora, Potiskum, Katsina, Enugu and Onitsha.*
2. *The FG should set up a special committee to look at the security lapses, as recorded in Borno, for example.*
3. *The governments concerned should urgently compensate those who lost their houses and businesses so as to reduce unemployment and frustration, while places of worship should be rebuilt with state funds.*
4. *Faithful prosecution of those arrested as well as those found to be involved in the crises by governments of the states concerned.*
5. *We reject the well-rehearsed cliché that such violence against Christians is perpetrated by “miscreants and hoodlums,” or “political opponents.” This is escapist, deceptive and always a way not to take concrete action against perpetrators who in all cases are known. Governments where Christians are attacked must always be bold and sincere enough to call a spade a spade and act with the fear of God in their hearts.*
6. *COCIN also rejects the assertion concocted and promoted by some religious and political leaders and as reported by the media that the attacks against Christians were purely political or mere reactions at a cartoon of the prophet. For if it were political, these violent reactions would have been directed against government establishments, politicians, party offices, the embassy and interests of Denmark as well as people generally. But this was not the case, as Christians and their interests were exclusively the targets of these attacks as in similar reactions in the past.*
7. *Islamic leaders should carry out a radical and effective re-orientation of their members and even some of their teachers, to let them know and imbibe the age-long traditional and modern ways of responding to crises affecting their faith rather than using violence. And they should not only condemn the act of violence by their adherents but come out to show publicly that they are against it by coming out to stop the perpetrators of violence from among their followers.*
8. *All religious leaders should not allow politicians to play politics with religion, and political leaders should always prosecute the religious body that initiates or sponsors any attack rather than see all religions as guilty.*

9. *State governors whose populations have low levels of tolerance towards Christians should always provide adequate security for the Christians feeling threatened.*

10. *Freedom of religion should be adequately promoted and safe-guarded by all sharia states by the FG through ensuring the provision of land to build churches, broadcast of Christian programmes in all state media and the teaching of CRK in schools.*

*COCIN will continue to pray for the peace and progress of this nation and its leaders as well as uphold the laws of the land to enable all of us to practice our faith in peace, Muslims, Christians, etc. We hope that political and security leaders will play their own roles faithfully too. We in COCIN are committed to do our part, as commanded in our Holy Scripture.*<sup>154</sup>

Henry Awoniyi of the Lagos-based Centre for Religion and Public Issues published a hard-hitting study of Nigeria’s Council of Ulama in which he lashed out at the failure of governments to publish their findings by using the excuse of “sensitivity.” He called it the “religion is a sensitive issue syndrome.” This, he declared,

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*is the invocation of the corrupt for covering their tracks, the leverage of the perpetrators of ignorance and inequality for manipulating mass ignorance for political and financial gain, the weapon of retrogrades for inhibiting or aborting promising studies that could to xxxx the emancipation from tyranny, the religious camouflage behind which terrorists hide in order to unleash terror on unsuspecting victims, the sentiment for holding community to ransom.*

*Many... have long recognized this syndrome but felt powerless to do anything about it. They whisper names to themselves in their closets, but in the open they speak nebulously of some powerful handful of so and so.*<sup>155</sup> *We cannot continue like this indefinitely. Responsible citizenship demands better precision in unmasking the perpetrators of terror and calls for collective subversion of this obnoxious syndrome. Hence this clarification in the interest of transparency, accountability, peace and security.*

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<sup>154</sup>P. Yamsat, Apr/2006.

<sup>155</sup>Readers of the entire series may recall that I have occasionally complained similarly that no one dares to name names. The complaints are always couched in the language of anonymity, which renders them powerless and useless—and knowledgeable, complainers cowards. I once challenged the author of a fine master’s thesis on corruption to flesh out the names. He replied that that was “impossible.”

He ended his vitriolic statement with a firm “No to the ‘sensitive religion’ syndrome.”<sup>156</sup> In other words, out with these reports and papers. Let’s get the facts on the table. Expose the names and unravel the dark secrets, so the people can put a stop to the perpetrators. To this all the people would respond with a loud “Amen and amen!” Awoniyi/Oluniyi,<sup>157</sup> you’ve said it well. *You are also one of the educated elite with connections. You really do not know the culprits?! None of them?*

In February, 2007, *ThisDay* published an editorial on the games the FG has been playing with the well-known Okigbo Report that I attach as Appendix 44. After many years of wavering, the Government recently announced the report was lost! There was also significant wavering by the Government during the Plateau crisis of 2004, according to James Wuye of the IMC. He complained that, in spite of apparently determined government peace efforts on the Plateau, there was a

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*lack of political will on the part of government. We would have reached a lot of decisions that the government needs to just add a xxxx little then we will be on. Like what happened in Plateau, we had got the people to agree on certain things, government had to push it a little, but it didn’t happen. Even the crisis that occurred here in 2004 escalated to the point that there was state of emergency. We were in the centre of reconciling people, but the government had another agenda which at a point destroyed the process. So the lack of political will is another major challenge.*<sup>158</sup>

## **5. Security Issues sisisi xxxx**

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Closely related to the issue of unpublished secret reports is that of security. Nigerians, both Christians and Muslims, have long lived under a sense of insecurity. We have noticed it in the Muslim Appendix 6 and now here. Both groups have accused the FG and various state governments of intervening too late in riots and, in fact, of intentional delaying tactics so that the perpetrators were given the opportunity to achieve their violent goals. While the security issues of the BZ era are discussed in Appendix xxxx, I treat the AZ concerns in this section. Be sure to

<sup>156</sup>H. Awoniyi, 2002, pp. 11-12. O. Oluniyi, 2006, pp. 140, 153-154.

<sup>157</sup>Check Bibliography for explanation of this construction.

<sup>158</sup>R. Muhammad, 3 Nov/2007.

read the Appendix in order to realize that this is a long-standing problem on which there appears to be no progress of any kind. The same thing, year after year. It would be nice to hope that the new regime put in place in 2007 will be different....

President Obasanjo, early in his civilian presidency assured the nation of security. "All Nigerians are assured of safety and security in their normal places of residence," he firmly declared in a national broadcast. Security agencies are under order to deal firmly with anyone disturbing the peace in any way. "Those who break our laws will be punished to the full extent of the law. There will be no sacred cows." He ended his speech with the usual invocation of blessing on the people and the nation.<sup>159</sup> Unfortunately the cries heard in the section directly above, continued to be heard right through the end of his reign. As to questions of security, well, just read this section! Nigeria is a tough nut to crack even by Nigerians themselves!

The security issue is not a matter of mere politics; it is a terrible reality. Insecurity everywhere. So bad, in fact, that in 2003, the House of Representatives called on President Obasanjo and the Inspector of Police, Tafa Balogun, to resign if they could not reign in the violence. A few months later, the FG appointed a "28-man Think Tank team to proffer solutions on how to permanently address incessant religious and political crises."<sup>160</sup>

During my 2005 visit it was thick in the air. Having three armed police with cocked guns occupying the front seats of your bus, watching for hold ups is not exactly reassuring! Compounds have been turned into forts. So much violence for so many reasons. Armed robbery, political thuggery and murder, ethnic hatreds, land issues, religious intolerance and turmoil within the Muslim community, especially in Kano, as well as inter-religious.

As with Muslims, so with Christians did the same security issues surface repeatedly. In 2000, Northern CAN called on both the FG and state governments "to do something about the serious issue of the wide circulation of arms and ammunition as reported by the State Security Service." CAN recommended "a house to house search" and confiscation of illegal goods. "This exercise should be carried out in all the major towns in the country."<sup>161</sup> An international Catholic conference held in Abuja in 2006, also raised it. In its press release, its very first point stated, "While we express joy at the growth of democracy in Nigeria as another political transition is underway, our joy is punctuated by the increasing rate of violent crimes that have attended it."

<sup>159</sup>President O. Obasanjo, 2 Mar/2000.

<sup>160</sup>C. Okocha, 6 Mar/2003; 30 Aug/2003.

<sup>161</sup>CAN, 17 May/2000.

Nigeria as a country has, very recently, witnessed hordes of political assassinations, intimidation, witch-hunting and general insecurity. We call on politicians to eschew the politics of bitterness and the ‘must win’ syndrome as they contradict Christ's love for humanity.”<sup>162</sup> Over the years, the circle of violence has expanded to include other sectors, including the political. Of course, a call on politicians is, by extension, a call on the Government.

In one issue of *LB* there were several articles concerned with security issues, an indication it weighed heavily on people’s minds. One was a report of a Taliban invasion in the mountain communities of Bama and Gwoza in Borno State. Almost immediately the State Government organized a two-day security conference for local government officials to teach them to “live up to their responsibilities as chief security officers in their areas. Such training had been suggested prior to the invasion, but no action was taken. Analysts claimed that the violence could have been prevented if security training had taken place earlier. Even some days later, the local people were still nervous and sleepless. “Fear is our main problem,” one local reported.<sup>163</sup> In another article on the same event, one COCIN Pastor Joseph Waziri also observed that “security is not so tight. So people are feeling that the Talibans will come back again. So there is fear amongst our people.”<sup>164</sup>

The same edition contained the farewell speech of Chris Alli. The Dariye government “must develop the necessary security consciousness that will help prevent further conflicts. A lot of damage has been done to the collective psyche of the people. We cannot afford to continue to take things for granted, because that would amount to toying with the people’s destiny.”<sup>165</sup> Dariye accepted the challenge.

Bulus Wakili of *LB* reported on a workshop that dealt extensively with security issues, especially the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Readers of earlier volumes and of the previous chapter are aware of the corruption, bungling and lack of professionalism that has bedeviled that force for many years. The recent replacement of the Inspector General (IG) of the NPF for corruption is still fresh in the memory of the people. Wakili wrote, “It is against this background that the FG and [all] the authorities concerned, must take necessary measures to help sanitize the police force. Monitoring committees should be set up to ensure that the bad eggs are flushed out.”

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<sup>162</sup>Roman Catholic, Communique of the International Assembly of Priests of English Speaking Countries, 2006.

<sup>163</sup>B. Gambo and P. Davou, Nov/2004.

<sup>164</sup>*LB*, “Security Is Not Tight,” Nov/2004.

<sup>165</sup>C. Alli, Nov/2004.

The [new] IG, Sunday Ehindero, must try by all means necessary to restore public confidence in the force. By so doing, the people will no longer live in fear of intimidation from the few bad eggs.”<sup>166</sup>

As the Muslim writer Ibrahim Bashir wrote his heart-wrenching article about the suffering and the corruption of the lowly policeman,<sup>167</sup> so did the Christian Prince Dickson, both of them on the Gamji website. A few selected quotes say it all:

*It is sad to note that the Nigerian Police is the least paid among service personnel. These days a young recruit buys his uniform, buys batteries for his torch, buys fuel for his patrol van, soon they may be required to source for arms and ammunition from the open black market.*

*It seems almost natural that as soon as one wears the black police uniform the soul, spirit and body of the individual becomes black in thought and action. The orientation in the Police is faulty, it is dirty, it is simply a continuation of the old colonial police with their short knickers and short fused brains. Ever seen a policeman ask for gratification at a checkpoint. He barks like a dog on the loose. I have learnt not to argue with them for fear of being accidentally sent to my forebears at the wrong time for the wrong reasons by the wrong persons.*

*The planned police strike has again brought to the front burner the failure that the present administration is. The President met with top police chiefs for over two hours in a closed-door meeting. The issues discussed for yet another time ranged from welfare, recruitment, promotion, training, reorientation and corruption. One cannot be fooled that the primary reason of the meeting was actually to see how serious the junior officers calling for the police action were and also to seek out measures to contain it come February 20<sup>th</sup>.*

*The proposed strike whether it holds or not tells so much about the value our government places on the security of the lives and property of her citizens which is why local vigilante groups have more respect than the taxpayers' funded police. The only area in which the Nigerian Police has succeeded is in being used as willing tools for selfish politicians. May Almighty Allah come to our rescue if there is hope.*<sup>168</sup>

<sup>166</sup>B. Wakili, Oct/2005, p. 24. In May, 2007, the newly-elected President Yar'Adua immediately replaced Ehindero with a man of his own choosing.

<sup>167</sup>See Appendix 1, p. xxxx

<sup>168</sup>P. Dickson, Gamji 316.

As is so often the case in these writings, the solution is implied, not expressly stated. If the people's sense of security is to be restored, Government needs to clean up its security act, especially at the NPF level. Though it is true that the most profound spirituality is sometimes found at the level of deep poverty, suffering and helplessness, it is unrealistic to call upon the lowly policeman to correct this wretched situation. This requires correction at the highest level of IG and even President. Trying to contain a strike without going to the root cause is nothing short of evil.

The international focus on insecurity is on terrorism. Occasionally people claim that the movement has its agents in Nigeria. Henry Awoniyi identified the Nigerian Council of Ulama as a near-terrorist agency and described it as “only one foot away from unleashing terror on Nigeria.” He regarded them as “a challenge to the political will of a democratically elected government” and urged a pre-emptive policy for the Government. Surely, he concluded, “no responsible government can ignore this challenge.” He urged the Government “to isolate the Council and deal with it accordingly, rather than wait until it bombs the National Assembly or incinerates the Supreme Court of Nigeria or sets fire to more markets, petrol stations, sports complexes, mosques of fellow Muslims, and, of course, more churches.” “The situation calls for urgent governance to disable, dismantle, de-programme and disband the Council.” At this point Awoniyi suggested a set of “Policy Points and Action Plan” that is reproduced in Appendix XXXX.<sup>169</sup>

In 2006, he published an expanded follow-up but now under his new name Olufemi Olayinka Oluniyi with John Onaiyekan supplying the Foreword. He re-iterated his concern about the Ulama and suggested that, based on the evidence, there were good reasons to consider them a terrorist organisation. The Ulama, he stated, “has the trappings of terror.” Hence, he warned all “stakeholders in peaceful co-existence” to watch the Council of Ulama. The challenge for the Government is “to trace all such tendencies of threat to innocent citizens and nip them in the bud before they hatch into...mayhem.”<sup>170</sup>

In 2005, the RCC Bishops conducted a seminar on the theme of “Security and its Challenges to the Nigerian Society.” Archbishop of Benin Diocese, Patrick Ekpu, explained that the focus on security was a reflection of growing insecurity across the country, a situation the Federal Government has failed to tackle firmly.

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<sup>169</sup>H. Awoniyi, 2002, pp. 37-42. Appendix 63

<sup>170</sup>O. Oluniyi, 2006, p. 143-144.

*Archbishop Ekpu argued that maintenance of a secure society rests squarely on the shoulders of government adding that if it is failing in that aspect, it means one of its cardinal responsibilities has failed to work. Unimpressed by what the Federal Government has done so far to tame the monster of insecurity, Ekpu said: “To say they are doing something about it is not enough. It must be seen and the result must be felt by the people. The people of this country chose a government and that government has the responsibility to meet their needs, including providing security. If it can no longer carry out such responsibility, it should have the honour to resign.”*<sup>171</sup>

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Christians in Sokoto State face a specific security problem of having their children abducted by Muslims in order to convert them to Islam.<sup>172</sup> Minchakpu reported, “Christian leaders are worried that the kidnapping trend is on the increase, creating tensions between Muslims and Christians. The Nigerian government, they concur, knows of the abductions but has done nothing to protect Christian children from religious predators.”<sup>173</sup> A writer in *Daily Champion*—editor?—demanded the following:

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*The police and other law enforcement agencies should move speedily to free Victor and similar victims from their captors. The suspected offenders must be arrested and prosecuted, and if found guilty, punished according to the law. Furthermore, given the sensitive nature of religion in our society, the government of Sokoto state and Islamic leaders in the state should educate the people on the dangers of abduction and forced conversion so as to ensure harmony and tolerance in the state. While Islamic adherents would naturally frown at such forced conversion if carried out against their faith, it is also right, proper and expected that they should not force adherents of other religions to accept Islam. No religion is propagated by force. It is simply immoral, illegal and unconstitutional to do so.*<sup>174</sup>

The problems, the complaints and the demands for action have basically not changed over the decades. Nothing appears solved. Governments seem paralysed; their strong warnings and brave statements of intentions, a farce.

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<sup>171</sup>U. Abugu, 12 Sep/2005.

<sup>172</sup>For specific stories see *Companion CD* <Misc Arts/ Conversion/Muslims Force Conversion> and <Misc Arts/State by State/Sokoto/2007-03-14>.

<sup>173</sup>O. Minchakpu, 14 Mar/2007.

<sup>174</sup>*Daily Champion*, 27 Mar/2007.

Not everyone depended exclusively on the government. A recent delightful report from the South-West is a *must* read if you want to see Nigerian Christian wholism in action. A high degree of violence had overwhelmed authorities and led to a “security summit” in the Oshodi community that was led by Pastors Chris Egogo and Barnabas Otoibhi, leaders of the local Christian Leaders Forum, and included NPF and others of the community. They made all the expected recommendations like better funding for the police, and so on. The unique feature was the inclusion of prayer and other spiritual issues in the solution. Effective methods applied included “concerted efforts to assist the police,” and “strategic prayer sessions.” The Forum was said to have “assumed corporate, social and spiritual responsibility to chart a new course” for the area. They said a series of measures and divine interventions had already led to a sharp reduction in violent crime. The forum planned another strategic prayer summit soon and promised that community leaders in Oshodi would do everything possible to enhance the image of the area, reduce crime and break all evil spells afflicting the area.<sup>175</sup>

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## **6. Role of Governments** gggg xxxx

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During the BZ decades, Christians slowly moved over from avoidance of politics to embracing it. However, on the whole they wanted to keep government out of religion, including and especially its ecclesiastical embodiment, the church. Archbishop Jatau wanted “to see government not interfering with religion at all,” except in issues of public safety, such as protection of life and property and ensuring that all practice their religion peacefully. “Beyond that, I would not like to see government interfering with religion at all.”<sup>176</sup>

The late 1980s and early 1990s were productive years in terms of reports and recommendations about how to prevent future violence. These proposals originated from both individuals and organizations. I have relegated all BZ materials on this subject to Appendix 23 for Muslims and 46 for Christians.

But before anything else, it will be good to hear the extraordinary confession of the only President who has sat on both military and civilian seats with a prison seat in between. It is an important confession that gives flesh and bone to the complaints and accusations found in this section. After the Kaduna sharia riots of 2000, President Obasanjo addressed the nation, saying

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<sup>175</sup>*The Punch*, 11 Nov/2007. Appendix 64.

<sup>176</sup>L. Omokhodion and I. Eguabor, 6 Apr/87, p. 19.

that there is nothing in Nigerian culture or religions that would lead to such horrendous bloodshed of life-long neighbours. “What seems to have happened is that *after so many years of tyranny and mindless violence, encouraged and practised by the state itself*, we have all grown indifferent to the moral and religious duties that we all owe, one to another. But today, we are no longer hostage of a mean and lawless government.” “In matters of religion and conscience, restraint must be exercised at all levels of government, but particularly at the highest level.” And then he threw in a defence of his own sharia policy: This restraint “has conditioned the FG’s action throughout the sharia controversy.”<sup>177</sup>

James Kantiok straddled the BZ/AZ divide. His doctoral dissertation is dated December, 1999, with almost all of it written during BZ. In total agreement with Jatau above, Kantiok “recommended that Government take a firm stand on the religious affairs of the nation.” To him that meant that “Government has no business interfering with religious questions and should therefore take its hands off and leave religious questions to the religious leaders.” It also implied that Government has no business being member of OIC, a body with a purely Muslim agenda. Ditto both Muslim and Christian pilgrimages. Religious leaders should take responsibility for arranging them.

Furthermore, “Government must check the religious excesses of individuals and organizations that promote violence. There are no individuals that should be considered above the law.” “Government cannot fold its arms and watch precious lives being cut short and property being razed by Muslim fanatics. The era of open support and religious favouritism for Muslims should be over.” Muslim organizations like the Shi’ite Brotherhood and the ‘*Yan Izala*’ demonstrated lack of respect for the continued existence of Nigeria. Therefore, their activities must be checked out under the relevant laws and agencies of government.<sup>178</sup>

Very shortly after the original Zamfara Declaration, Sam Oluko, in a paper long on economic considerations and secular recommendations, warned:

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*The morbid adoption of classical and unlimited sharia law by Zamfara State Government is obviously a journey on the road not only to social disorder and chaos, but also to economic stagnation and suicide of the state that is an integral member of the secular Nigerian nation. All of us should, therefore, appeal to the Government and the people of Zamfara State to limit the exercise of the sharia law to what the Nigerian Constitution*

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<sup>177</sup>President O. Obasanjo, 2 Mar/2000. Italics mine.

<sup>178</sup>J. Kantiok, Dec/99, pp. 408-410.

*envisages, in order to avoid the ruins of the little progress made in Zamfara State since its creation in 1996.*

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Aluko concluded his presentation with an assignment to the Government to overcome the country's social vices, but, because that paragraph is mixed up with other issues, I treat it in the section on Secularism.<sup>179</sup>

The early AZ era was characterized by buck passing, especially in the direction of the FG. Sheikhs, *mallams*, bishops and politicians all fell over each other to reject responsibility for the sharia chaos that had resulted.<sup>180</sup> Pastor-politician Matthew Adams offered a number of concrete proposals to the Plateau State House of Assembly: (1) Declare Plateau a Christian State; (2) Stop road closures for worship purposes; (3) Ban Qur'anic schools that board "*almajirai*"; (4) Ban street begging; (5) Ban all residential worship places for public use; (6) "Perpetual trouble makers" should "be exterminated" from the state; (7) Jos North, South, East and Bassa LGAs should be re-organized with a view to reducing political monopoly. The import of these provisions will escape most foreign readers, but Nigerians will immediately recognize the anti-Muslim nature of each.<sup>181</sup> I have not heard that any of these were ever adopted by the Assembly, though a number of them were discussed at the Plateau Peace Conference. All in all, his list looks rather random and meager, given the great number of complaints Adams and his people had. It has all the marks of hurried incompleteness. But it *was* an indication of the great anger and annoyance with which many Christians dealt with these issues and it did represent the idea of a fairly prominent person on the Plateau.

A major Christian thrust was that government not favour one religion over another and that this posture *be clearly seen*. As John Akume put it, "Government should not openly or clandestinely give undue favour or attention to one religious group." Government, he continued, "should as a matter of urgency make sure that the Constitution not only guarantee religious freedom, but is seen to do so." With undeclared reference to OIC and its affiliates, he also disapproved of the Government joining any religious organisation, whether national or foreign. Neither should Government "involve itself in the activities of any religious group, either directly or indirectly." One exception might be CRK/IRK teaching in public schools, but this should

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<sup>179</sup>S. Aluko, 28 Nov/99.

<sup>180</sup>K. Kolade, 4 Mar/2000.

<sup>181</sup>M. Adams, "The Irony...."

then be done in an equitable way.<sup>182</sup> Archbishop Peter Jatau, insisted, “When governments resort to blatant favouritism and divisive strategies, religion becomes a ready tool for murder and killings.”<sup>183</sup>

Umar Danfulani observed “that while Islamic revivalism of some sort is pursued by sharia-compliant states, great caution must be exercised that FG does not abdicate its responsibility of maintaining law and order.” Governments should not allow “Muslim extremists and fundamentalists take over the reigns of power in the name of pursuing a more strict and utopian type of sharia.” He was referring to groups like Maitatsines of the previous decades and to some militant groups creating unrest in Yobe and neighbouring states within the first few AZ years. Danfulani was not so sure that sharia state governments would have the resolve and strength to resist the increasing encroachment of such forces.<sup>184</sup>

Bee Debki of EYN wanted the FG to be proactive. It “should not wait for the Hausa/Fulani people to finish their entire *jihad* preparations and collaborations with other Muslim countries,” he wrote. Once they achieve their aim, they will be impossible to control. Neither should the FG “keep quiet to see other countries directly sponsoring problems in the nation.” He was referring to the presence of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, Libya and Sudan at the sharia launching. He also wanted the Government to react to the financial aid foreign countries give to the sharia campaign. Gaddafi, for example, gave \$300 million for the construction of an Islamic university in Kano.<sup>185</sup>

As President of COCIN, Yamsat, true to his global pro-active nature, called a World Press Conference in which he announced the COCIN stance vis a vis the recent Muslim violence visited upon the churches. He was his natural direct, blunt self. The entire statement is found in Appendix xxxx, but I reproduce the last part here, as it constitutes a list of proposals by the President of the largest Christian denomination in Plateau State and thus carries extra weight. The section starts with the heading:

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***Our Conviction on the Way Forward***<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup>J. Akume, Sep/2004, p. 9.

<sup>183</sup>*Compass Direct*, 6 Dec/2004.

<sup>184</sup>U. Danfulani, 2005, p. 290.

<sup>185</sup>B. Debki, 2000, pp. 118-119.

<sup>186</sup>P. Yamsat, Apr/2006.

*Gentlemen of the Mass Media, what has happened has already happened, unfortunate as it was. However, we in COCIN owe this nation the duty to further prick the conscience of Nigeria and call for collective action to make this country safer for all peoples and all religions. COCIN is therefore placing the following before the federal, state and local authorities, as well as religious and community leaders and people of goodwill:*

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- 1. The Federal Government should set up a Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the crises in Maiduguri, Bauchi, Kontagora, Potiskum, Katsina, Enugu and Onitsha.*
- 2. The Federal Government should set up a special committee to look at the security lapses, as recorded in Borno, for example.*
- 3. The governments concerned should urgently compensate those who lost their houses and business so as to reduce unemployment and frustration, while places of worship should be rebuilt with state funds.*
- 4. Faithful prosecution of those arrested as well as those found to be involved in the crises by governments of the states concerned.*
- 5. We reject the well-rehearsed cliché that such violence against Christians is perpetrated by “miscreants and hoodlums,” or “political opponents.” This is escapist, deceptive and always a way not to take concrete action against perpetrators who in all cases are known. Governments where Christians are attacked must always be bold and sincere enough to call a spade a spade and act with the fear of God in their hearts.*
- 6. COCIN also rejects the assertion concocted and promoted by some religious and political leaders and as reported by the media that the attacks against Christians were purely political or mere reactions at a cartoon of the prophet. For if it were political, these violent reactions would have been directed against government establishments, politicians, party offices, the embassy and interests of Denmark as well as people generally. But this was not the case, as Christians and their interests were exclusively the targets of these attacks as in similar reactions in the past.*
- 7. Islamic leaders should carry out a radical and effective re-orientation of their members and even some of their teachers, to let them know and imbibe the age-long traditional and modern ways of responding to crises affecting their faith rather than using violence. And they should not only condemn the act of violence by their adherents*

*but come out to show publicly that they are against it by coming out to stop the perpetrators of violence from among their followers.*

*8. All religious leaders should not allow politicians to play politics with religion, and political leaders should always prosecute the religious body that initiates or sponsors any attack rather than see all religions as guilty.*

*9. State governors whose population have low levels of tolerance towards Christians should always provide adequate security for the Christians feeling threatened.*

*10. Freedom of religion should be adequately promoted and safe-guarded by all Sharia states by the Federal Government through ensuring the provision of land to build churches, broadcast of Christian programmes in all State Media and the teaching of Christian Religious Knowledge in schools.*

*Gentlemen of the Mass Media, we are convinced that in this dear country of ours, there is sufficient space for everybody. It is not to anybody's long-term good to make Christians feel they do not belong here or are second-class citizens.*

*COCIN will continue to pray for the peace and progress of this nation and its leaders as well as uphold the laws of the land to enable all of us to practice our faith in peace, Muslims, Christians and etc.*

*We hope that political and security leaders will play their own roles faithfully too. We in COCIN are committed to do our part, as commanded in our Holy Scripture.*

*Thank you very much and may God bless you all. Amen.*

Throughout this series, we have not heard much from or about the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. That is mainly because of its concentration in the deep South East, though you see individual congregations in all the major cities. In 2004, it spoke to our situation. I quote from a communique in which it recommended to the FG a conflict resolution mechanism. The Church expected that such an approach would reduce the religious violence to a minimum.

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*The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria has called on the FG to set up a National Commission for Conflict Resolution, which will bring the recurring incidence of communal/religious crisis in the country to the barest minimum through mediation and social action. The call came in the wake of the recent clashes between Hausa Muslim settlers and Christian indigenes in Yelwa, Shendam area of Plateau State and the*

*reprisal killings in Kano, which reportedly claimed many lives, injured hundreds and displaced thousands of people in the affected areas.*

*In a communique, issued at the end of the meeting of its General Assembly Executive Committee, held in Aba, Abia State, the Church viewed as horrifying the frequent communal/religious clashes in the country resulting in the senseless killing of many people. It urged Government to ensure that all those behind the crisis in Yelwa and Kano are brought to book as a deterrence to the perpetration of other violent acts.<sup>187</sup>*

All these voices sounded pretty much like their BZ predecessors.

A very interesting, significant and hopeful development took place in the early post-Obasanjo regime in 2007, when the RCC pledged to “assist the FG in driving its reform programme to achieve maximum results through character moulding and moral rejuvenation of the people.” This kind of warm, almost cosy, relationship of co-operation was not achieved under the born-again Christian President Obasanjo. Now there is a clean slate with a Muslim President who is not *talking* sharia but who is surely *acting* out the dream of millions of sharia supporters for a clean moral sweep of society. Catholic bishops are too intelligent to fall into a trap; they know what they are doing. So, they decided to play ball with this Muslim President in an area of shared concerns that was overshadowed by the earlier emotional controversies about sharia.

*The church said they would embark on a series of moral development programmes, which emphasizes good moral behaviors and social upliftment of members of the society. Speaking at the just concluded Catholic Church 40th anniversary celebration on the papal encyclical on the development of people, the Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Rev. Fr. Michael Ekpenyong said, the Nigerian government has shown interest in partnering with the universal church in bringing in high moral qualities into our national life.*

*According to him, the Nigerian government “wants to know how the church could bring in high moral quality to bear on the nation.” Ekpenyong said it is for this reason that the Catholic Church has taken up the task today to pursue programmes that effect the socio-economic well-being of the people. The clergyman said it is unfortunate that the country has been bedeviled with the same global phenomenon of moral sickness.*

*Against the background of government effort at reforming the country, Ekpenyong said*

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<sup>187</sup>TD, 17 May/2004.

*that the church could help in the various reform programmes, which includes issues of social development, economic development, health issues, employment programmes, education, global justice and moral development.*

*Ekpenyong also said that the President is working hard with the Catholic Church and the church at large to make sure that high morals and these reform programmes are brought back into our country, because it is seen that our nation is in high need of these reform programmes and great change.*

*The programme, he said, is also dedicated to the development of the entire person. Starting from the universal church at large and individually we would try by all means to promote the development of our neighbors, particularly those who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases and ignorance. For those looking for a wider share in the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities, he said, we would help in bringing in morals. If we want peace, he said, we must develop the human person.<sup>188</sup>*

Now that is quite a distance from earlier calls for government keeping out of religion and ensuring only justice between the religions. There may be some other new developments on the way with a new President and most of the sharia governors off their thrones.

Under the section “Role of Religious Leaders,” I drew attention to the 2003 Christmas greetings of President Obasanjo and Cardinal Okogie.<sup>189</sup> Please refresh your memory by turning to the discussion there. Okogie “observed that only a national restoration through prayer and honesty of purpose by leaders could make the country great again.” The people, he said, “are going through hard times because of the stranglehold of government on the economy. We call on government to lessen the burden on the citizens so that they can breathe the air of economic freedom.” He encouraged all to pray for political leaders and mentioned a number of pressing issues.<sup>190</sup> The interesting thing is that he did not include sharia. Well, he was in far-away Lagos with its own concerns and no longer involved in the national affairs of CAN.

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<sup>188</sup>O. Ezigbo and U. Nwachukwu, 18 Nov/2007.

<sup>189</sup>See p. xxxx above.

<sup>190</sup>Y. Odunuga and T. Ajayi, 24 Dec/2003.

Sunday Agang of JETS delivered a lecture on the relationship of religion to economics that I treat under the heading “Socio-Economic Issues” below. That is where you should go for the meat of his lecture. However, his lecture included recommendations for government that belong here. In keeping with the tenor of the lecture, he called on “our political leaders to pay attention to the role that religion plays in people’s lives. They need to understand how religion permeates belief and behaviour and factor religion into their thinking, economic policies and actions.” Quoting from Coward and Smith, “Political leaders should give careful thought to integrating religion as a force for economic peace into political and civil life, and then try to develop constructive roles for religion and its adherents in making and executing policy.”<sup>191</sup> He wanted government leaders to be aware that “economic transformation depends very much upon cultural or religious values and not just upon the application of methods, models, theories and tools.” Then he provided them with three points about the role of religion in government, but these are similar to those summarized in the next section.<sup>192</sup>

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## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES xxxx SESESESE**

There has long been a general awareness that socio-economic factors play a major role also in the religious strife that has so racked the country. In both secular and Marxist discussions, these, of course, play the *major* role, while religion is regarded as little more than a handmaiden or a manipulative tool. That, as I have explained more than once, is not the stance taken in this series. So, there, too, solutions are offered, sometimes directly and explicitly, more often by gentle insinuation. COCIN, for example, in her 2004 communique wrote that she “frowns at the insensitivity, selfishness and injustices of some state governments, national leaders, oil companies, groups and individuals who are responsible for the poverty and the degrading human conditions in the country generally.” On the other hand, she also “condemns militias and other unlawful armed groups to wage war on the Nigerian State to achieve economic benefits.” But note the difference. She merely “frowns” at those who have impoverished the country, while she “condemns” those who are trying to liberate themselves from that gang of elites.

But COCIN continued. She “emphasizes the need for the Church to speak out against obnoxious policies or systems that keep people under oppression and appalling poverty, while a

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<sup>191</sup>H. Coward and Gordon S. Smith, eds., *Religion and Peace Building*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2004, p. 292.

<sup>192</sup>S. Agang, Dec/2007. Appendix 47.

few continue to rob the nation of her legitimate earnings, and therefore calls on multinational companies to do more for their host communities so as to be a channel of blessing to them.” In general, COCIN is fully aware of the corruption and inefficiencies that bedevil the country and keep its people poor. She wants those responsible to be taken to task. Given the shortage of oil refineries, she wants the FG “to bring to book those who receive licenses to establish private refineries but have not done so.” She “observes that colossal money is being pumped into NEPA and turn-around maintenance of refineries without achieving the desired target and so calls on the federal authorities to set up a commission of inquiry in line with its anti-corruption posture to investigate this.”<sup>193</sup> So, wide awareness of the problems and with her traditional African sense of connectedness, she recognized that if the religious problem is to be solved, all those issues need to be handled. In that way COCIN—and many other Christians as well-- was not so far removed from Ado-Kurawa’s comprehensive perspective in Chapter 2. Under this rubric all the major actors, especially church and state, are called upon to co-operate in the resuscitation of the economy, each in their own way.

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We have already overheard Sam Aluko’s discussion of historical differentiation of Muslim societies under the heading of secularism. This differentiation also took place in the economic sphere. He produced a long list of international Muslim economic organizations and concluded, “With all these multifarious agencies in so many countries and interacting worldwide, the application of sharia becomes more and more ridiculous.” This expansion of economic activities has made “ridicule of any attempt to return to the primordial sharia to regulate economic affairs” of nations. He then recommended three types of reforms to sharia economics he considered necessary for “Islam to move forward economically:

1. The enthronement of secular-liberal policies aimed at bringing about a homogeneous and integrated economy and society.
2. Social reform which acknowledges respect for the fundamental human rights of all citizens and the religious freedom and social needs of all citizens.
3. Abandonment of undue radical Islamic fundamentalism, which is incipient in Zamfara State.”<sup>194</sup>

Sunday Agang of JETS wrote the most wholistic Nigerian Christian paper I have seen on religion and economics. He completely rejected the prevailing dualism that tends to separate the

<sup>193</sup>COCIN, “Communique...,” Nov/2004.

<sup>194</sup>S. Aluko, 28 Nov/99.

two. At the beginning of his discussion he asked, “Do we really need religion, faith and ethics in economic planning?” Again, “How can religion, faith and ethics help promote good economic attitudes? What have religion, faith and ethics got to do with economic matters?” These are the questions he wanted to deal with in his search “to unravel the place of religion in Nigeria’s determination to have an economic breakthrough.”

*We need a true and unadulterated religion: monotheistic religion. A monotheistic religion, as a creator of moral values, has the capacity to encourage social and economic order, freedom and justice. Hence this paper is pushing for the need to re-instill a value system, particularly character virtues such as honesty, truth-telling, trust, hard work, selfless service, moral rectitude, integrity, God-fearing, compassion, love and justice. This paper also wants the Nigerian people to grasp the symbiotic relationship between faith and economy.*

Though Nigerians are reputed to be most religious, “we tend to leave religion in the periphery in our discussions of crucial matters. We do not always make a deliberate attempt to include religious perspectives in our discussions of such issues as socio-economic transformation.” He explained that this neglect of religion in national issues “emerges from the assumption that religion is a private matter and must therefore be confined to home, church or mosque.”<sup>195</sup> “Religion can become a delivering resource when it is understood in all its truth. But when it is misunderstood, it becomes ‘a weapon of mass destruction’ as the Nigerian situation illustrates.” Over the past decades “we have witnessed not only the *polarization* of religion but the *distortion* of religion.” It has been used “as an instrument of divide and rule, resulting in religion becoming a weapon of massive social and economic destruction.” Agang was

*pushing for a thicker (more substantial) religious perspective that would allow for human flourishing and the harnessing of a social and economic lifestyle which fosters God’s reverence in every aspect of our community’s polity, truthful dealing with one another, trust and dependence on each other, respect for the God-given human dignity and human rights of each other, and the pursuit of love, justice as well as peaceful co-existence. A misplaced religious perspective makes people see and treat others as less than human beings.*

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<sup>195</sup>Vol. 5 of this series is devoted to these issues in details.

He then proceeded with a discussion of the familiar theme of religious manipulation that I have touched upon often throughout this series. From there he moved on to issues of wholistic religion: “Religion permeates every aspect of human behaviour. It is all-embracing because of its natural ability to provide a transcendent moral perspective.” As Nigeria searches for “sustainable transformation” of its economy, we “must not ignore the vital role of religion as one of the cardinal dimensions of the Nigerian social landscape. I am arguing for an enabled moral agency in our quest for economic transformation.”

Agang pleaded for “an authentic understanding of religion,” for that will encourage the development of “an inclusive community” where people trust and depend on each other, “exercise their social responsibility and obligation to each other.” Such religion will make us aware that “God has given us the mandate or the responsibility of making the world habitable to all and sundry, living in peace with one another and the environment.” He then brought in Christ who should serve as the model for “Christian faith and practice” and reminded us of the compassion He showed especially to the outcast.

Agang finally came to the central point of his paper, which is to show how religion can promote economic transformation. He offered six points that I will summarize here, but strongly suggest that you turn to Appendix xxxx to read the full version.

1. We must allow religion to affect our communal life and not restrict it to individuals.
2. We must recognize that religion is the foundation for a just economy.
3. The vistas for love, mercy and justice that religious worship holds up must spill over into the economic and political spheres.
4. Religion emphasizes that hoarded wealth leads to frustration, humiliation and from there to violence.
5. The peace that is central to true religion must be translated into economics and politics.
6. It is the responsibility of everyone to apply the insights of religion to the marketplace.

In addition to these points, Agang expressed some concerns for dialogue and government, both of which are treated in their respective sections in this chapter.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup>S. Agang, Dec/2007. Appendix 47.

Ordinary people may not often be consulted when it comes to government tasks, but an anonymous staff of *LB* interviewed Salamatu Bogoro, one elderly lady in Yelwa, Plateau State, the scene of great atrocities in 2004. It is with her words that I close this section. She echoed a common sentiment, including that of the people who complained about the failure to publish the reports of the various commissions of inquiry. Asked what advice she had for Government, she replied, “In my opinion, Government has not taken any action on these people. If not, it wouldn’t have been like this. That is why people do anything they want and get away with it.”<sup>197</sup> This was a common negative way of demanding more concerted Government action against perpetrators of violence and division.

## NATIONAL UNITY    cucucu    xxxx

The question of unity, both national unity and Christian unity, has been uppermost in the minds of many Christians. I begin the discussion with Professor Blaikie’s speech at the launching of CAN in 1987. I proceed to discuss the views of a number of individuals and organizations, with as centrepiece the views of Ambassador Tanko Yusuf, whom I dub “the Apostle of Unity.” However, all this BZ history is found in Appendix xxxx. The rest of this section deals exclusively with the AZ period.

Like his BZ forebearer, Bee Debki similarly pleaded for unity in his own unique style.

“Christians all over Nigeria should remain [Boer: remain or become?] united and resolve existing denominational and cultural differences and fight against sharia implementation to the very end. The fact of divide and rule is still fresh in our memory and so divide and kill should not be permitted whatsoever.” Referring to the unique LG-by-LG sharia arrangements in Kaduna State, he warned, “The Hausa/Fulani are still planning to implement sharia LG by LG.”<sup>198</sup> State-wide unity, in other words, will help Christians stand together in this divisive Muslim approach of LG-by-LG, bit by bit, one after another.

In Chapter 2, under the heading “*Jihad*,” I told the story about Emir Mustapha Jokolo’s call for *jihad* against the FG. The call was rejected by Muslim leaders. Their rejection earned them

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<sup>197</sup>*LB*, Apr/2004, p. 20

<sup>198</sup>B. Debki, 2000, p. 119.

acolades from Umeh Ugochinyere, Senate President of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS). He stated, “NANS is using this forum to commend and doff its hat for the patriotic peace-loving Muslim leaders who stood their ground and maintained that evil should not be allowed to triumph over a common good agenda by frustrating them from having their way. May God bless them for being true Nigerians.” But the smile was followed by a frown and a warning:

*Ugochinyere also made it clear that NANS will resist any such move. Such moves must be nipped in the bud immediately, for they are dangerous and can lead to violence and bloodshed. On the one hand, he was disappointed that a meeting of Muslim leaders allowed the issue to appear on the agenda. He found it disturbing that an emir could champion such a cause.*

*The unity of this nation is of great importance to NANS and we cannot allow the likes of Jokolo to rob Nigeria of peace under the cover of religion and ethnicity. We urge him like a father to retrace his steps and resign as an emir, if he wants to play politics rather than hide under the cover of his position to settle deep-rooted political animosity to the detriment of his people and Nigerians’ welfare in general. Obviously, Jokolo and these emirs and traditional rulers fanning the ember of religion cannot be speaking for the missions of Nigerian Muslim youth/students.<sup>199</sup>*

Even Chief Emeka Ojukwu, the leader of the former break-away Biafra, sometimes referred to as “warlord,” declared his uncertain support for national unity. Speaking to a CAN seminar in Kaduna, he “called for compromise and sacrifice on the part of Nigerians in the interest of the country’s corporate existence.” Unlike the past, it was no longer a question of unity, but rather of *how* Christians and Muslims can “live together in keeping with the divine will.” That “how” was a matter of human rights which need to be treated with an utmost sense of responsibility. Every Nigerian should be given a sense of belonging, irrespective of their religious and ethnic backgrounds. “Religious fanatics should not push the nation to the brink of another war.” He advised that “Christians and Muslims embrace one another as there was no available alternative to peace and harmony, saying Nigeria should have one set of laws and one Constitution.”<sup>200</sup> Ojukwu pretty well mouthed the popular Christian stance, nothing new.

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<sup>199</sup>J. Taiwo, 8 May/2005.

<sup>200</sup>S. Obassa, 1 Feb/2000, pp. 1-2.

However, coming from the mouth of this former leader of secession makes these sentiments significant.

The call for unity was a constant echo. Isaac Odeh insisted that the “indivisibility of the country should be paramount in the minds of our leaders. Laws that will bring conflict with the general interests of the nation will be avoided and we should not get involved in issues that could lead to avoidable debates and chaos.”<sup>201</sup> In 2006, Peter Akinola, Anglican Primate and, at the time, National Chairman of CAN, was asked by an interviewer of the American monthly *CT* what he was hoping for. His response:

*Muslims cannot claim that Nigeria is theirs. Now Christians are doing the same. All of us agree that we have to learn to live together. From my point of view, the unity of this country is a done deal. They can't begin to talk of dividing along religious lines. They can't do that, because everywhere you go there are Muslims; everywhere you go there are Christians. But in some parts there are more Christians, in other parts there are more Muslims. But you cannot say "southern Christian" or "northern....”*<sup>202</sup>

At state level, in his 2006 Christmas message, the Kaduna State chairman of CAN, Joseph Bagobiri, “appealed to all Christian denominations in Kaduna State to remain united, adding that the Church of Christ is one at the spiritual level which makes it a communion of saints, which transcends all divisions. The Church, as an interior and divine reality, includes all Christians; no matter what ecclesiastical loyalties they may claim, all are disciples of Christ.”<sup>203</sup> But—and this seems a very curious “but”—as frequently as we hear demands for unity, when someone tries to live out that unity by embracing both North and South, he runs the risk of derision and mistrust. That is what happened to Chief Sunday Awoniyi. Upon his death, John Abayomi wrote, “We aspire for national unity, but when a man like him explored his origins that straddled the South West and the North, in the same demand of national unity, he was treated as a supporter of northern causes. His services, his reasoning, his convictions, and his attitudes were then dismissed in the most simplistic of hand waves.”<sup>204</sup>

But when you think it through a bit farther, perhaps it is not so curious after all. Abayomi was only partially right. When Christians talk of national unity, it is not about the continuation of the Northern feudal regime’s traditional hegemony over the MB. Earlier, in the section on

<sup>201</sup>I. Odeh, 12 Dec/99.

<sup>202</sup>*CT*, 6 Apr/2006.

<sup>203</sup>R. Buhari, 23 Dec/2006.

<sup>204</sup>J. Abayomi, 13 Dec/2007.

politics, I discuss the current MB emphasis on their political separation from the core North. But, like the Christian Yakubu Gowon, Awoniyi was a member and a one-time chairman of the ACF, an organization that sought to resuscitate and protect that traditional Northern hegemony. He seemed to represent the very opposite of MB aspirations. Unity, yes, but no longer in terms of one inclusive North so much as equal partnership of MB with the rest of the country, including the North.

## **EDUCATION xxxx eduedu**

Karl Kumm, the founder of SUM, who could be considered the father of COCIN, was a great advocate of education already in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A famous statement of his immortalized by COCIN runs, “Christian education will help to avert the danger of Africa becoming a Muslim continent.”<sup>205</sup> COCIN rightly picked up on this and decided during its centennial year to establish the Karl Kumm University. In addition, COCIN, in response to the Muslim challenge, is continuing to develop an educational system that is truly remarkable in its scope and spread. That is her answer to the question, “Which way forward?” The system includes 17 theological institutions, 17 secondary institutions and it is hoped, soon a Karl Kumm University. Without these, the authors asserted, “our society would have been like in the dark ages, in terms of ignorance, misery, poverty and hopelessness.”<sup>206</sup>

At the 1995 Second International Conference on Christian-Muslim Mutual Relations, Emmanuel Oyelade pointed to a number of educational activities that should help create the spirituality he envisioned as explained earlier in this chapter. Starting close to home, he advocated serious training in Islam for the Christian clergy that would avoid all negative polemics but, instead helping them to “identify and appreciate the good in Islam.” He further advised conferences and seminars be held that would bring Christians and Muslims together and that should include women and youths. They would then take what they have learned back to their communities and spread it out there. Christians should invite Muslim leaders and scholars to the opening ceremonies of synods and conferences and even present welcome and other addresses. Electronic media should also be harnessed to allow Christian and Muslim scholars to debate for ordinary people to hear and expand their understanding. Literature should be produced to counter the “increasing number of negative books that deepen the existing hatred” between the religions.

<sup>205</sup>*LB*, 8 Sep/2005, p. 24. A single quote at the page mast.

<sup>206</sup>Vol. 7, ch. 7? Xxxx, pp. ?xxxx

During the discussion following Oyelade's lecture, the hope was expressed that religion be included in the public school system so that people will learn more about each other's religion. It was also suggested that religious scholars should specialise in the other religion. All such measures would help to increase knowledge about each other in the two communities.<sup>207</sup>

At the same 1995 conference, its leader, Bishop David Windibiziri of LCCN, "emphasized that the great problems do not exist among our leaders, but at the grassroots level, where most of the confrontations take place, mostly because of extensive ignorance among our various adherents. He mentioned some examples of episodes that developed into unfortunate events because of sheer ignorance." From this perspective, it was only natural for him to call "for ways in which we can enlighten our people and lead them to mutual respect and understanding."<sup>208</sup>

You will remember from earlier volumes and the last chapter that Islam places a lot of emphasis on knowledge and education as a way of solving bad relationships with Christians. Christians make similar sounds. Umar Danfulani complained about the widespread ignorance about the sharia among both Muslims and Christians. This ignorance extended to Muslim judges who are supposed to be experts. This led him to advocate serious educational endeavours for all "so that we will have the proper perspective and orientation on what sharia is all about and stem the tide of misunderstanding and misapplication of sharia." Echoing both Sabiya and Turaki, he agreed that "there is nothing wrong with the nature, virtues and values of sharia." Many of its provisions are also found in the Bible. The problem was "with the wide-ranging misapplication.... It is only when they are thus misapplied that they appear unacceptable to the majority of Christians...." It affects the underdogs in society and is applied by "non-experts of both Muslims and non-Muslims alike in a society where the weak are not protected in accordance" with Islam and to the exclusion of "the powerful and wealthy or sacred cows...." "The enormity of the challenges of justice as envisaged by the sharia is still to be fully comprehended and appreciated by... Muslims...." Ignorance of sharia has led to a reduced version that concentrates on the harsh *hudud* sentences that have drawn international attention but does not address the harsh poverty of the people." Under these conditions, "Nigeria is not yet ripe for...sharia."

This general lack of education deeply affects the condition of girls and women in that it encourages the canonization of customs that have no basis in Islam. Here, too, there is great need

<sup>207</sup>E. Oyelade, 1995, pp. 16-17, 89-91.

<sup>208</sup>Second International Conference, 1995, p. 2.

for an “awareness campaign and education concerning the meaning of sharia.” With all of that, Danfulani, the Christian, agreed with Ali Ahmad that “the challenge facing sharia critics is to modernise Islamic law, not banish it from public life.” Furthermore, socio-economic conditions had to improve before the implementation of sharia. “The application of *hudud* punishments...is anachronistic, not because the laws are faulty, but because the prevailing socio-economic circumstances of Nigerian Muslims is still detrimental towards true worship.” He then approvingly quoted from Sanusi, to whose paper he responded in his “Comments:” “The Islamic movement...is to be judged primarily on the basis of its success in formulating an ideology, articulating a programme and implementing strategies that promote the interest of the Muslim *ummah*.”<sup>209</sup> And that means education.

## **RELATIONS WITH MUSLIMS rrmr xxxx**

In this section I treat you to a glimpse of what people thought should be done to improve relations between the two religions. The subject is relations in general, but with a heavy emphasis on dialogue and dialogic relationships as I have discussed them in Chapter 2. The BZ situation has mostly been relegated to Appendix 42. That Appendix contains a lot of important information that you should read. Here I largely restrict myself to the AZ situation. An exception is the story of Justice Haruna Dandaura, most of which took place during BZ, but whose person and work are too significant and interesting to place on the more remote CD.

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<sup>209</sup>U. Danfulani, 2005, pp. 280-291. Whether such misapplication will be corrected by education remains to be seen. That seems to assume it is done in benign ignorance, a position that would need further discussion. Danfulani himself shows that this kind of oppression is also perpetrated by the educated elite who are “in wanton disregard” of the situation.

## 1. Advice to Muslims xxxx atmatm

Economist Sam Aluko advised Muslims to remember “that there is not much that is uniquely sharia that has no counterpart in the Christian Bible. Like the Qur’an and other Muslim books, the Bible abhors adultery and even sanctions with the death penalty,” stealing, drunkenness, homosexuality, murder, usury, false witness. He supports this list with Biblical references. “The difference between us and our Muslim brothers is that Jesus Christ came to redeem the Christian from the brutalities of sin, from which our Muslim brothers still need to be redeemed. The Christians believe that they do not live only under the law, but also under the grace of God.”<sup>210</sup>

Okezie Chukwumerije of San Francisco advised Muslims to take a clue from “Muslim countries such as Bosnia” that “demonstrate a different approach” to things. They have shown that Islam can be “compatible with modernism.” There are strands of Islam “that reject a literal and fundamentalist interpretation. This modernist strand ensures that the practice of faith does not inhibit other objectives of society: social progress, economic development and multi-culturalism.” Muslims have to choose between “the opening of the mind to new ideas and new ways of looking at the world” that “is not inherently incompatible with the practice of faith” and “the deliberate closing of the mind” that “is patently incompatible with human progress.” Chukwumerije concluded that Muslims should emulate the more liberal version of Islam as suitable “in a cosmopolitan and multi-religious society such as Nigeria.”<sup>211</sup>

Idowu-Fearon spoke his mind on a number of topics in his usual uncomplicated language during his interview with Shittu Obassa. “There cannot be peace in Nigeria until we have peace among Islam and Christian faithfuls. That is the simple solution to the problems we are facing in the Northern states.” But Christians give favourable treatment to Christians where they are the majority and Muslims to Muslims where they are the majority.

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*We cannot continue like that. What we are asking for as Christians is simple, and I always say to my Muslim friends that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) once said: “All people are equal as the teeth of the comb.” In other words, the sharia itself advocates social equality. I’m telling you there is no amount of money spent on conferences,<sup>212</sup> on brainwashing, or on politicking until Muslims begin to take this statement seriously.*

<sup>210</sup>S. Aluko, 28 Nov/99.

<sup>211</sup>O. Chukwumerije, Gamji, 2003. For the Muslim conversation see J. Boer, 2007, vol. 6, pp. 255-260.

<sup>212</sup>The reference is to a Northern governors’ summit to which he was invited to speak.

*There can be no peace. This is because I don't feel equal and we are not treated equally. Until we do that, we cannot see peace and enjoy it.*

*There will be no need for these conferences. The answer is there. Let them treat all of us equally. Let our politicians, let our religious leaders give us equal treatment.*

*So as I was saying, "To you, your religion; to me, my religion—and there is no compulsion in religion. Give me what I deserve. I carry out my mission and you carry out your own mission. Under this circumstance, I am telling you, the Northern states will be the best developed parts of the country."*

*So, our leaders should please lead with the fear of God in them. Most of them do not lead with the fear of God.*

*Let Muslim scholars begin to talk. Let them speak. I am a Christian, but I'm a student of Islam. It is better to hear Muslim scholars themselves talk about it. Let them present the positive side of sharia and stop making a ridicule of sharia.<sup>213</sup>*

We have met Femi Awoniyi in the guise of an anti-Fulani warrior earlier in this chapter. In this context, he advised Muslims to fight this Fulani scourge. "True Muslims in Nigeria must make their voice more audible in the defence of their faith, a religion of peace, which is being ruthlessly politicised to cause trouble in our land. When the Fulani leader talks about Islam we accord his words importance instead of outrightly dismissing him as a merchant of deceit. If true Muslims do not challenge the Fulani elite, Islam in Nigeria will continue to be soiled."<sup>214</sup>

## **2. Dialogue and Co-operation dzzddz xxxx**

I introduced the notion of dialogue in Appendix 1 and indicated there that dialogue had become a veritable industry. Christians were highly productive in writing on the subject during the BZ years. Dialogue is, of course, just one dimension of the relationships between the two religions, though there is a tendency for some to consider all positive joint activities as dialogic. Fair enough. It all depends on how far you want to stretch it.

Readers of earlier volumes of this series will recall the unrelenting bickering that went on between the two religions. Bala Takaya was tired of it all.

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<sup>213</sup>S. Obassa, 29 Jan/2005, p. 29.

<sup>214</sup>F. Awoniyi, "Political Shariah...."

*The often-repeated demands for balancing of advantages or public exposure each religion enjoys are not only nauseating but also seditious in essence. Does the average Nigerian need to worry about the number of public holidays [and] mark important dates on any religious calendar? Is it necessary to demand the withdrawal of such colonial, now international, legacies like the Gregorian calendar, the work-free Sunday, the school calendar, etc., whether or not they relate to any religious practices? Do we need to count and balance the number of people of each religion serving in public offices, even when such persons were picked on their own merits, even persons who owe no allegiance to their religious organisations whatsoever?*<sup>215</sup>

From his BZ perch, Danjuma Byang, in spite of the harsh words he had written about Muslim treatment of Christians, found good grounds for more amicable relationships. Adherents of both religions “need to remember the close affinity that exists between their respective religions. It can be the basis of closer co-operation. Both claim Abraham as a common ancestor. Both revere Jesus Christ greatly. They share many stories in their scriptures. Apart from the Appendix, Byang ended his book on a hopeful note. Referring to all his proposals scattered throughout this chapter, he concluded, “These are all areas that we can explore towards co-operation and dialogue. Such exercises can help us to live together in mutual respect and harmony. Let’s try it.”<sup>216</sup>

Recommendations about relations with Muslims, as you can imagine, ran a wide gamut from aggressive hostility to amicable cooperation. Christians for the most part have always realized that the two must work together. E. Adeolu Adegbola of the ICS in Ibadan and my boss for nearly a decade, wrote a paper that, true to his nature, was full of ideas and practical suggestions. In terms of co-operation, he wrote:

*A government which undertakes to foster without controlling the advancement of religions ought to foresee and take into account the problems of religious freedom and the need for inter-religious cooperation. It is therefore proposed that the Constitution should provide for an inter-religious body or bodies with moral and legal competence to ensure that religious freedom as enshrined in the Constitution is protected, and where the freedom is infringed, to take appropriate action for a redress. It should also be part of the positive duty of the body on its Federal and State levels to promote an active inter-religious cooperation in nation building. Religious groups should together search for a*

<sup>215</sup>B. Takaya, 1992, p. 122.

<sup>216</sup>D. Byang, 1988, pp. 103-104. For his other suggestions, check “Byang” in the Index.

*more adequate basis for their contribution to national development, should jointly bring their religious perspective of social concern to bear on development plans, and should cooperate to promote the spirit of selfless service and loyalty to God in the citizenry. Government money is probably better spent in fostering this inter-religious cooperation than in advancing the practices of each individual religion. The new Constitution should provide the basis for this new possibility.*<sup>217</sup>

A number of such bodies have been appointed since, but, because of their close association with the federal regime of the day, they were short lived.

Pandang Yamsat, currently the President of COCIN, wrote a paper during his days at TCNN in which he suggested that Christians and Muslims should act in the interest of the unity of the nation. They “should agree and desist from the manipulation” of both sharia and secularism “in the interest of unity.” “Nigerians have come of age and as such we must work out our own Constitution to suit our unique sensitivity to religion and life.” If they are serious about their religions, then all Nigerians “must agree to turn over a new leaf for the good of all.” Anything in the Constitution that can be supported by only one religion should be rejected by all. This holds for secularism and sharia both. Both religions should bring to the table things that are “vital to the faiths and will be of benefit to all Nigerians.” Hence, Muslims must not insist on sharia, for that would amount to “a constitution within the Constitution to serve their own exclusive interests.” Yamsat rejected calls for sharia come what may. “Threats like ‘Either we have sharia in the Constitution or there shall be no Constitution or even peace in this country’ are not only unwelcome but dangerous.” He warned, “A Constitution for a sensitive and multi-religious Nigeria is an awesome task that must not be taken lightly, but must be addressed squarely, cautiously and faithfully, no matter how long it takes and how much it will cost,” for this would constitute “the anchor of poor Nigerians on stormy days,” their only refuge.<sup>218</sup>

B. S. Wadumbiya, a Christian educator, finds that in Nigeria we "are too much ruled by our religious beliefs and philosophy." This brings problems because of the plurality of religions. We should therefore "all understand and obey the rules and regulations of the secular government for a better mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence. All groups and religions should be given their due rights, while discrimination should cease." His suggestions as to how to solve the religious crisis include the following: (1) All governments in Nigeria should keep their hands out

<sup>217</sup>E. A. Adegbola, Mar/77, p. 7. Also in J. Boer, 2006, vol. 5, appendix 6.

<sup>218</sup>P. Yamsat, n.d., p. 10.

of religious affairs; (2) Religions are to enjoy equal treatment; (3) There must be a clear demarcation between state and religion. In another lecture, Wadumbiya insists that the government should not be involved in any religious affairs such as pilgrimages and building houses of worship. These should be left to private religious bodies. The role of the government is to "promote religious harmony and mutual respect" by maintaining a peaceful atmosphere. All religions are to be treated equally.<sup>219</sup>

In the 1987 meeting called by Mambula, it was agreed that it was "sensible to work with Muslims, as we cannot rule the nation without them."<sup>220</sup> This would be true especially, of course, when Christians are in the majority.

Not all Christians have been positive towards dialogue. As among Muslims so some Christians used to refer to it contemptuously as a "dialogue of the deaf."<sup>221</sup> Wilson Sabiya had problems with dialogue. Though he affirmed the principle, he did not think that Muslims had the right attitude for it. He presented a paper on the subject at a dialogue conference in 1993, held at TCNN, Bukuru, near Jos. In this article he first described the congenial atmosphere between Christians and Muslims that existed in his childhood days. Informal dialogue was taking place everywhere. After relationships became more difficult due to events described throughout this series, Christians continued to be "always ready for dialogue." However, it became increasingly difficult as the various governments in the country began to discriminate against Christians in favour of Muslims. Riots between the two religions made it even more difficult. The FG tried to organize an Advisory Council of Religious Affairs, but it soon stranded on the issue of leadership. Besides, dialogue requires mutual respect, something that Muslims do not have for Christians. In fact, they feel superior to Christians and consider themselves as the "natural leaders." Dialogue requires cooperation in society, which Muslims are not interested in, according to Sabiya. He concluded that "dialogue is relevant and necessary, but it is not practicable." He ended his lecture with the suggestion that the Interfaith Dialogue Centre "go into deep research to discover how we can make dialogue practicable, meaningful and fruitful."<sup>222</sup> He presented the same paper a few months later at the First International Conference on Christian-Muslim Mutual Relations held in

<sup>219</sup> B. Wadumbiya, 1991, pp. 4, 8; 1993, p. 24.

<sup>220</sup>J. Mambula, 29 June/87.

<sup>221</sup>S. Ilesanmi, 1997, p. 171. He borrowed the term from M. Kukah, *Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria since 1960*. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of London, 1989, p. 1. For Muslim usage of the same term see Appendix 6, p. 47.

<sup>222</sup>W. Sabiya, 23 June/93. J. Boer, vol. 7, 2007, p. 279.

Miango, near Jos. That conference agreed on “the obvious and apparent difficulties in achieving sincere dialogue.” They also agreed that the Centre should take up his challenge and that these difficulties should not discourage people.<sup>223</sup> And with this encouragement, we move over to more positive voices.

In spite of Wilson’s later hesitation about dialogue, in his earliest publication available to me, he spoke of discussions among religions. He suggested that “we can help the adherents of such religions to see how others understand their religion,” provided they are “conducted with concern for the stability, unity and faith, peace and progress of our beloved country,”<sup>224</sup> an important insight I have stated several times in earlier volumes.

During the BZ years, a number of Southern scholars, mostly Yoruba, wrote significant papers on dialogue and related topics. Prominent among them was the late Yoruba scholar Sam Babs Mala of the University of Ibadan. The lone Ibo I have come across is V. C. Chukwulozie of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their papers were wide-ranging. Herewith a selective summary of their contributions.

Babs Mala began his lecture on “Christian-Muslim Dialogue” with reference to the dialogue programme of the World Council of Churches (WCC) that “sponsored dialogue among people of living faiths.” He described it as a “genuinely open and free dialogue” that had the potential “of bringing together African Muslims and Christians in an atmosphere of love, respect for one another’s faith, and actively engaged in trying to solve the burning issues of life.” Mala then proceeded to explore “areas where dialogue can help eliminate tension in order to bring about the realisation of a truly united community of believers searching for the truth.” Implicit in his discussion is the notion that dialogue covers the entire range of relationships between the two religions. It is not confined to explicit events organized specifically for purposes of dialogue. In the next few paragraphs I summarize selective features of dialogue as Mala described them and that I consider useful and relevant in our context. That excludes certain signals of relativism found in his papers.

It is interesting that Mala appeared not to share the notion of conflict between dialogue and proselytism that usually surfaces in discussions on such issues. Islam, according to him, got its foot in the West African door through dialogue that included proselytism and trade. Decisive factors were “the tolerance of traditional rulers and the gentle persuasion employed by Muslims.”

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<sup>223</sup>International Conference, 2-6 Nov/93, p. 104. Appendix 49

<sup>224</sup>W. Sabiya, 1978. See J. Boer, vol. 7, 2007, p. 238.

Trade “naturally led to increased communication” between them. Mala presented valuable history about early struggles about dialogue in which he especially highlighted the contradiction between the approaches of certain African missionary pioneers like James Johnson, Edward Blyden and Ajayi Crowther on the one hand and Western missionaries and colonizers. By independence, it was a mixed bag. There was a tension marked by mutual suspicion and hostility, but also cooperation between the religions in government, politics, trade and in social life. Nevertheless, mutual fear, hatred and suspicion dominated.<sup>225</sup>

Mala cautioned that sometimes dialogue has led to “unwarranted self-criticism” on the part of some Christians for their historical participation in aggressiveness. Though self-criticism has its place and is even a “necessary technique in dialogue,” it “must not be pushed too far.” It will “give Muslims the undue advantage of doubting our sincerity and the illiterate *malams* [Muslim teachers] a potent tool in their unnecessary attacks on and confrontation with Christians.” And if I may add to this, self-critique in this context is useful and genuine only if it is mutual—but it seldom is!

Furthermore, though dialogue is not mission, according to Mala, it does not “presuppose neglect of mission.” The real core of dialogue is “to be more open to other.” But this “should not make us less committed to Christ. “Humility, love and concern for others as displayed by Christ Himself is what should be paramount in our minds when talking about dialogue.”

I find it interesting that Mala felt “it is up to us Christians to take the first step to initiate a dialogue.” However, this does not rule out the possibility of the initiative coming from Muslims.” The Qur’an authorises dialogue,” but it limits “its scope very carefully.” In fact, he pointed to various occasions where Muslims did take the initiative as in, among others, the “Islam-Christian Congress in Cordova, Spain. Similarly in Tunisia and in October, 1974, a visit of a delegation of Saudi Ulama to Geneva. Unfortunately, he does not explain why Christians ought to take the initiative.

A number of crucial principles of dialogue are the motivation of love, willingness to learn from each other, avoidance of denunciation and blame, abstention from injuring each other. Here he condemned, for example, an incident he witnessed where a group of Christians in front of some Muslim *malam*’s house in Jos were “hurling abusive language and assuring him of everlasting fire if he does not repent now.” On the other side, Christians were not allowed to live in the

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<sup>225</sup>B. Mala, “Christian-Muslim...,” pp. 1-8.

centre of Bauchi town because of the Muslim fear of being polluted by Christians. “Our sacred books contain copious examples of toleration of one another.”

Mala then embarked on an exploration of various topics and activities that might be covered in dialogue. They include issues like the community versus the individual, holding joint prayers, exchange of goodwill messages at feasts, exchanging information and research in the context of centres established for such purposes, joint publications, teaching of the two religions in schools, challenging situations of injustice and other forms of suffering.<sup>226</sup> In his 1992 paper, he enlarges on this feature. Quoting from the ecumenical Indian dialogue leader, S. J. Samartha, he called upon both religions “to take a firm stand together on the side of the poor, exploited and oppressed in their struggle for social and economic justice” as a “significant contribution religions can make to the search for a most just global community.” Mala considered this a “clarion call” to the Nigerian faithful, where “verbal or written proclamations or declarations of support for peace without active involvement to create conditions for peace and work for peace” are common, a tendency to which I have also called attention elsewhere.

Again following Samartha, he recommended dialogue for “providing significant opportunities ‘to demonstrate how people of different religious persuasions can live and work together in a manner which goes beyond mere co-existence to the sharing of community life in all its aspects.’” Both religions had “yet to make a very serious and genuine effort to engage in true dialogue.” This was a dangerous failure, for there were “powerful skeptics within and outside the two religions, who consider Islam and Christianity irrelevant in the desire for peace” because of a dismal record of intensifying conflicts and dividing people.” Religious leaders from both sides must heed these warnings and “start *now* to utilize their various institutions to plan for and execute inter-religious dialogue meetings.” They should do so “without government pressure as in the [FG’s] Advisory Council on Religious Affairs.”

A related joint effort should be to “maintain constant vigil against the misuse of power, be it of a state” or economic powers or “the power of religion itself, its institutions, authority and affluence with a sense of self-sufficiency and exclusively marching forward while rejecting fellow pilgrims on the way.” Muslims and Christians must bear “in mind the guilt of religious bodies in this

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<sup>226</sup>Unfortunately, though the paper continues, that is the end of the pages in my possession. And since the author has passed on.....

regard.” “The resources of Christians and Muslims are richly and firmly based in their scriptures.”<sup>227</sup>

V. C. Chukwulozie disseminated an undated lecture on dialogue that I introduced in Chapter 3 under the section on “Dialogue.” I will summarize selected parts of it at some length. His aim was “to examine the various ways in which religions can begin a dialogue, thus contributing towards achieving true national unity.” At the same time he described the context in which he presented his lecture as pluralistic, peaceful and tolerant. “Tolerance in religious matters is a feature of our life that often impresses foreigners,” he asserted.<sup>228</sup> “The time has come,” he proposed, “to go beyond this mutual tolerance and engage in real dialogue, if we are to make progress at mutual understanding and national harmony.” It would appear that his description of Nigeria’s tolerance was less a matter of fact than an effort to create a positive and receptive mood among his audience.

Chukwulozie spoke about different levels of dialogue. Being a Catholic, it was natural to him to give pride of place to the clergy. Everyone is called to dialogue, but he should recognize his proper place and the limits of his capacity. Dialogue is to be conducted “in a spirit of fraternal charity and intellectual honesty,” but since it easily degenerates into controversy and “sharp exchange of views where one’s most cherished beliefs are concerned, this type should be engaged in only by experts such as priests and others theologically trained. It requires “a mind at the full strength of its powers” and a “sensitivity engaged in and enriched by the coherent multiplicity of the Christian tradition.” He emphasized the need for openness to the contemporary world and a readiness to learn not only from Christian colleagues and tradition, but also from Muslims. It is possible that “some new aspects will be revealed to us by our discussion with out non-Christian brethren. So, we should come to the dialogue with open minds to receive all the new aspects of the Truth which the Lord may be showing us by means of the dialogue. It may well be that by the grace of God which is in them, they are emphasising some aspects of Christian Truth which are providentially suited to our times.”

First of all, dialogue is not a matter of philosophical or religious systems so much as one of relationships. Comparing systems is not dialogue, since it does not “lead to an encounter. Ideas may be compared, but that does not established relationships between either people or with

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<sup>227</sup>S. B. Mala, 1992, pp. 104-105.. S. J. Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Interreligious Relationships*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981, pp. 124-126.

<sup>228</sup>Chukwulozie’s paper is undated. His reference to Benue-Plateau State (p. 12) and to a 1974 date (p. 15) places his paper in the second half of the 1970s.

God. We usually “find it much easier to study religious systems or to compare one social-cultural environment with another than to contact the people living within these systems.” Doing so is not illegitimate, but it is not dialogue because of relationship vacuum.

These afore-mentioned relationships are at two levels. There is that personal contact between individual humans. It is meant to facilitate “encounter of minds” with a view to “lessening prejudice and eliminating obstacles” to understanding. But that relationship presupposes a relationship with God. “This is an intimate and deep relationship, which is difficult to analyse, but which is the basis of all dialogue, particularly religious dialogue. It is a relationship which is extremely important for us all, as it establishes the fundamental link uniting every intelligent being with the supreme Truth and ultimate Goodness which for us means God Himself.”

Dialogue must deal with current reality, “with the real problems of life and is actively engaged in trying to solve them.” “Man as he is today and as he would like to be is both the subject and the object of every form of dialogue.” “We should not waste our time bemoaning our past history and emphasising our past hatreds and bitterness. We should rather seek to repair whatever was not good by removing prejudices and other offending characteristics on both sides.”

Chukwulozie preferred dialogue to concentrate on current common problems like materialism, secularisation, abortion, nepotism, bribery and corruption. “Surely these are enough problems to exercise any man of faith. The dialogue can afford us all a common platform, where we can concert measures to meet these and many other evils plaguing society today.” Perhaps it could be said that Chukwulozie preferred working dialogue to talking dialogue.

Furthermore, dialogue presupposes a sharing of the lives of our dialogue partners. This is a fundamental feature all too often ignored. “We must admit that all too often both Christians and Muslims are strangers to each other. Few have taken a real interest in the other. We must break down this wall, if real dialogue is to be possible. Until this has been done, no intellectual knowledge of each others’ faith or ideology will be productive of much good.”

At this point, Chukwulozie asked, “In what spirit then must this task be undertaken?” Somewhat contrary to earlier statements of his, he acknowledged that the relations have “too often been marred by opposition and conflict. The two communities have tended to go their own separate ways.” To rectify that situation, he charged that *Christians must take the first step* “under the impulse of divine hope.” Dialogue “must lead to some sort of communion of mind and heart.”

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Without a minimum of goodwill towards others and sympathy with them, there cannot be any real dialogue.” In addition, participants must have “sufficient knowledge” of each others’ culture, language, values, etc. and not be satisfied with outmoded ideas about the other. “We ourselves are put out when we meet a well-intentioned Muslim who clings to ideas about Christianity and the Church which we find grotesque. The Muslim is equally pained to discover how little we know about him and that we misinterpret the little we do know.” “We must listen to the explanations the Muslim gives us about his faith.” “Unless you know these people, you can have no respect for them, and without respect, you can have no sympathy or openness towards them.”

Another component to the spirit of dialogue is that all thought of conversion be rejected. Where proselytism has entered in, it is preferable to avoid all semblance of dialogue, for it will end in a stalemate and misunderstanding. Dialogue “is not essentially a means of converting others. Its main purpose is to make us accept, in peace and joy, other people just as they are, so as to help one another to proclaim more perfectly the existence in all mean of that truth and goodness, which God has revealed in His creatures.” This is likely to result in “finding that we share certain religious affinities and that to a certain degree we are spiritual cousins, if not yet brothers.”

Chukwulozie embraced the spirit of Vatican II with its “sincere respect for those ways of life and conduct, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.” Yes, there is an “element of risk in all dialogue” from both sides and “there are plenty of people to warn us of the dangers!” Only frankness and respect can see us through.

The paper concluded with the problem of government takeovers of Christian schools and turning them into Muslim institutions. Chukwulozie suggested that it would be “in the interest of peace, justice and fair play between Christians and Muslims” for everyone to “insist on keeping the religious values that existed in each school prior to the take-over.” Then he proposed that Christians and Muslims work together to achieve this fair play in the schools.<sup>229</sup> Since this was more of a Christian than a Muslim problem and, in fact, a problem that *favoured* Muslims, it was not likely that Muslims, for the sake of dialogue, would be interested in rejecting the advantage

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<sup>229</sup>V. Chukwulozie, “Christian-Muslim Relationship....”

offered them. Perhaps that is why the project as a whole never got off the ground. It was almost a foregone conclusion.

In the year that Sabiya expressed his doubts about dialogue, Matthew Kukah affirmed it under the heading “The Imperative of Dialogue with Islam.” Let’s hear him out:

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*For democracy to take roots, the churches must strengthen the bonds of dialogue. So far, Islam has been portrayed in too negative a light. However, as Christians, we are called to greater ideals beyond those offered by the fleshpots of political expediency. It may seem convenient for politicians to want to reinforce the otherness of Muslims or Christians as a means of building up their constituency. This question was well addressed by Professor Adebayo Adedeji, erstwhile Executive Secretary of the Africa Economic Agency. Emphasising the imperative of dialogue,*

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He urged Christians and Muslims to form the vanguard together to “save Nigeria from decay and collapse and give its people hope, dignity, integrity and prosperity.”<sup>230</sup>

One of the reasons Nigeria is not moving forward, according to Kukah, is “that there are certain seeming irreconcilable difference which we need to deal with.” He sought the answer in dialogue. “Elsewhere in the world, there are great steps in Christian-Muslim dialogue,” but that is hardly so in Nigeria. The Catholic Church has moved on to dialogue with other religions, but Nigeria is the only country where the Muslim refused to dialogue with the Pope during his visit in 1962. He warned, “We really need to make progress in this regard as we strive towards a viable polity. And time is not very much on our side.” Muslims have moved from negatively rejecting secularism to “talk of Nigeria being a multi-religious state.” That may seem like a small step, he suggested, but such moves are really “stepping stones to dialogue.”<sup>231</sup>

Onaiyekan defined dialogue as “the readiness to allow other have their say and to listen with an open mind.” It is “communication which dispels misunderstanding, leads to a recognition of the real differences and to a discovery and appreciation of the areas of agreement.” It includes the expectation that “basic differences will remain. The task is to identify and define which differences are indeed basic and which are non-essential and, therefore, negotiable.” This process lays the foundation “for cooperation in mutual trust and confidence. The more people lay aside

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<sup>230</sup>M. Kukah 16 Nov/93.

<sup>231</sup>M. Kukah, 24 Feb/94.

needless squabbles and quarrels, the more will they be able to collaborate in making the world a better place.”<sup>232</sup>

Also in the same year, B. S. Wadumbiya of the College of Education, Hong, Adamawa State, affirmed that, “above all”—in other words, very important—

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*there is great need for open amicable opportunity for serious dialogue between the top leaders of the two religions. Such dialogue will aim at arriving at mutual understanding and not that of disapproving each other's belief or faith practices. It is not to judge or evaluate the faith of one's partner, but, rather, to clarify and state positions. It is to understand and be understood, but not to gain a victory or win points. Such a dialogue does not require to underplay differences or dilute them. Participants must be honest partners that can speak out of deep conviction and commitment. They should be people of scholarship and self-knowledge. Such dialogue may bring about the development of a spirit of acceptance of differences as a desirable goal. Dialogue can bear witness that religion has a stake in society, that it is a relevant and powerful force for social betterment. The common moral and social attitudes of religious groups must result in a complete religio-political partnership. The abolition of religious misunderstanding is a necessary precondition of an existential partnership in a pressing problem of our country.*

*A number of things could be discussed through such dialogue, e.g. constitutionality or what is a secular state? How can we fight for human rights, against poverty and all forms of prejudice and inequality? All along our problem has been lack of communication between the two faiths. A famous humourist described this situation as “knowing so many things that aren't so.” It is also said, “for that which makes you in my eyes a Muslim, makes me in your eyes a Christian.” Dialogue can enable us to work together toward “perfecting this our country, Nigeria, under the Kingdom of the Almighty God.”<sup>233</sup>*

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Speakers at the conference convened by Jacob Olupona dealt extensively with various ideas about dialogue. It was a unique conference in that it was not dominated by the usual clerical class. Instead, professionals from other fields formed the majority—economists,

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<sup>232</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 1985, pp. 5-6.

<sup>233</sup>B. Wadumbiya, 28 July/93, pp. 23-25.

sociologists, linguists, political scientists, lawyers—, so that there emerged a much wider range of opinions with their consequently wider ramifications.

Starting off with Olupona himself, he described traditional dialogue as nothing more than an academic exercise by clerics, who get together to discuss religious and theological issues. These occasions are usually devoid of openness to each other. They are based on a reductionist view of the scope of religion that excludes “most of the relevant constituencies in our national life” and the main actors in other fields of endeavour. We need to involve specialties such as history, politics, economics and law. His conference was an embodiment of this insight in that it included a majority of non-clerics.

Olupona’s second consideration was the already oft-mentioned “practical aspect” of dialogue. Yes, it must include trans-religious discussions at every level, but also “joint participation of different religious organisations in social services and economic development as a symbolic expression of common concern for the freedom, dignity, social and moral growth of all people.” He may not be quite true to his own vision by his apparent restriction to “religious organisations.” Why this restriction? And why mere “symbolic expression,” when the need is for actual, real expression?

Olupona appears to have regarded inter-religious borrowing and adaptation as an aspect of dialogue. He recognized that it was taking place “without necessarily showing any sign of syncretism.” Christians adopt and adapt the Muslim tradition of pilgrimage. Muslims copy and adapt Christian songs. Such adaptations in themselves can be considered quite trivial,<sup>234</sup> but they *can* degenerate into more serious cases that approach syncretism, that is, combining two antithetical perspectives into a new unity, but one that inevitably contains serious tension. This was a conference of mostly Yorubas who, by their own confession, easily succumb to syncretism, as even a conference speaker admitted and detailed<sup>235</sup>

A more blatant example of such syncretism was the lecture by His Royal Highness, the Olufi of Gbongan, Dr. S. Babayemi, formerly Research Professor at the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ibadan. He declared, “I make bold to say that now I am a Christian, a Muslim and a worshipper of Ogun, Obatala and other traditional deities. That is the essence of being Oba, the essence of preserving and promoting inter-religious dialogue

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<sup>234</sup>J. Olupona, 1992, pp. 2-6.

<sup>235</sup>J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 66-68, 82, note 12. See also J. Boer, 1992, p. 120. See also Appendix 6 p. xxxx and Appendix 50. R. D. Abubakre, 1992, pp. 124-125.

Yoruba style.” He described the Yoruba style of religious toleration as “the earliest form of secularism of the state in Nigeria.” The Yoruba chiefs or *Obas* participate “actively and piously in the worship of God Almighty in the shrines, in the mosques and in the churches.” They also “actively protect the interest of all the religious groups and constantly seek their involvement in efforts at ensuring economic, social and political order in the domain through prayers, sacrifices and fasting.” Part of that approach is the Obas’ function to foster dialogue. “Traditional rulers have a responsibility to this nation in enhancing inter-religious dialogue. We in Yorubaland have long recognized this responsibility and have been most active in promoting religious harmony, freedom and tolerance.” “Ours,” the Oba boasted, “as you will readily acknowledge, is the best guarantee against the eruption of fratricide. It is this approach that I recommend to this conference to examine with the possibility of its adoption by the government and its extension to those parts of Nigeria where traditional rulers would seem to be sitting on a keg of gunpowder which could explode without a warning and over which they do not seem to have any control.”<sup>236</sup> Olabiyi Yai, author of the Postscript to the report, described the above presentation as a “model in ecumenical academic discourse.”<sup>237</sup> I suspect that at least some non-Yoruba Christians and Muslims must have cringed at the Oba’s statement and even more at Yai for dubbing it a “model.” When dialogue is discussed, fusion is usually far from anyone’s mind, at least, in Nigeria. As Olupona put it, “It is not the purpose of interfaith dialogue to seek to displace or absorb other’s religions by ours.”<sup>238</sup> But I do laud the pluralism component of the Oba’s presentation. Whether that could be retained in the Yoruba environment without the syncretism, I am not sure.<sup>239</sup>

Emmanuel Oyelade, a Yoruba Christian student of Islam, without using the term, argued that syncretism is widespread throughout Nigeria and Africa, not just among the Yoruba. He affirmed the “desire of Africans to cherish and uphold their cultural heritages,” but I detect a confusion here in the relation between religion and culture. Just how does Oyelade see that relationship? He seemed to almost identify them. The confusion does not clear up any with

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<sup>236</sup>S. Babayemi, 1992, pp. 199-200.

<sup>237</sup>O. Yai, 1992, p. ix.

<sup>238</sup>J. Olupona, 1992, p. 5.

<sup>239</sup>There is at least one model of neutral pluralism that requires neither secularism nor syncretism. I refer to the Dutch model, one that has recently been accorded high international accolades and that is based on the Christian-inspired pluralism of Abraham Kuyper (H. ten Napel, “*Het Dooyeweerd-Kabinet: De Overheidsvisie van het Kabinet Balkenende*,” *Beweging*, Summer, 2007, pp. 5-9).

what followed: “This is important because both Islam and Christianity see them as unbelievers who do not count for much good. This is unjust. God is the Lord and King of all mankind in spite of their religious differences.” Is this lack of clarity leading Oyelade towards a vague undefined syncretism? He favoured us with a free translation of the following significant Yoruba lyric:

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*We shall observe our family rituals.*

*Islam does not, O, yes!*

*Islam does not stop us from observing our ritual rites.*

*Christianity does not, O, yes!*

*Christianity does not stop us from observing our ritual rites.*

*We shall observe our family rituals.*<sup>240</sup>

Ikenga-Metuh, a Catholic theologian, was concerned with the question how Nigeria’s three major religions can “contribute towards minimizing the dangers of conflict and promote the cause of peace.” His solution was: “The greatest contribution religion can make to peace is discovering and harnessing the motivations in all religious traditions for promoting peace and taking stock and putting together all its powers and resources for the promotion of peace.” He repeated the popular truism that any attempt at imposing a specific religion on the people “will breed disharmony and threaten the cause of peace. The only road to harmony and peace in a pluralistic society is the path of dialogue.” Due to the tension, dialogue was more necessary than ever. This could be done through education at different educational levels, where people would be taught to “know about and respect other people’s faith.” He also recommended the FG-initiated pre-NIREC Consultative Council of Religious Leaders to advise government on matters that have religious implications.” However, it needed greater autonomy than the government allowed it. He also proposed a “Panel of Experts on Inter-religious Affairs” that was to “be a standing committee, which should meet regularly to ensure smooth inter-faith relationships to pre-empt inter-faith conflicts.” “Dialogue,” Ikenga-Metuh concluded, “breaks down preconceived notions and artificial barriers among religions. Solidarity and common action will minimize the sufferings and misery of the people and bring joy and peace to all.”<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>240</sup>E. Oyelade, 1992, pp. 189, 178-179.

<sup>241</sup>E. Ikenga-Metuh, 1992, pp. 12-19.

Danjuma Byang advised that in dialogue situations, the participants should be orthodox in their religion. They would emphasize only the positive teachings of their own religion without attacking the teachings of the other. Such programmes should be organized at the national level and could be televised. He held up the example of the published dialogue by the Christian David Shenk and the Muslim Badru Kateregga.<sup>242</sup> He also approved of the method used by the Christian Josh MacDowell, an American apologist, and the South African Muslim apologist Amhed Deedat. These gentlemen went further than Shenk and Kateregga in that they also “tried to resolve the misunderstandings of the adherents of the two faiths have about each other’s.” In both cases the audience was placed in a position where they could make their own judgement. “This practice is very good.”<sup>243</sup>

Habila Istifanus is known to us from Volume 7. More so than most Christians, he had a positive attitude towards Muslims and frequently urged Christians to listen to them. It was natural for him to engage in dialogue and to encourage the same for others. During his years with the Jos office of ICS, he started a “Christians-Muslims Dialogue Programme”. In his own words:

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### **Christian – Muslim Dialogue Programme**

*Christian-Muslim Dialogue is another special programme initiated with an aim of neutralizing all forms of uprising or conflict in Nigeria that has religious backing. The organ through competent and careful hands of ICD staff liaise with CD officers to map out communities with these uprising to interact with them towards neutralizing these differences. This special arm through dialogue and seminar will widen the understanding of the conflicting communities towards peaceful co-existence and make them take initiative and be creative to develop themselves.*

*This organ or forum will preach the fact that individuals in a given community should socialize together and share ideas on all economic, commercial, social and political issues towards developing their environments. The following objectives have been carefully framed to help our teeming rural populations in their different religious*

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<sup>242</sup>B. Kateregga and D. Shenk, 1997.

<sup>243</sup>D. Byang, 1988, pp. 102-103.

*faiths to harmoniously work together towards improving their rural lives. The programmes are as follows:*

### Christian-Muslim Dialogue Action Plan

By Pastor Linus Bapman

Program	Prospect	Activities	How	Who	When
Public enlightenment services in all zones	To enlighten church elders and workers on the importance of dialogue with Muslims	Discussion and Dialogue	Seminar	C.D. officer and resource persons	Feb – April 1998
Enlightenment programmes in the four zones	To enlighten both Christians and Muslims	-DO-	-DO-	C.D. officers, Christian and Muslim elders	June-July 1998
National Conference	To enlighten Christians and Muslims within Northern Nigeria	-DO-	-DO-	-DO-	Oct – Dec 1998

### *The Vision of Christian-Muslim Dialogue*

Habila M. Istifanus:

*The desire to start a program that would bring Christians and Muslims into dialogue for peaceful co-existence grew stronger and stronger for many years. Within a certain period of time it was dying down as there were no funds to make it a reality. But the challenge continued to strike every now and then as I was confronted with daily misunderstandings between Christians and Muslims. Most of the time these resulted in serious crises and sometimes even terrible catastrophes. In 1994 I came into contact with a group of young boys whose lives were made miserable by the Maitatsine riot of Yola and the Bauchi riots. One evening as a social gathering, as if they had planned to talk to me, they all came up to me at once. After introducing myself as a staff of ICS Jos, they said to me, “Can’t an organization like yours do something to bring Christians and Muslims together for mutual understanding?” After I observed the seriousness on their faces, I was able to imagine what prompted them, to speak to me in that way. I noticed there was a genuine desire for peace.*

*Towards the end of 1994 I started making contacts with individuals and organizations to find out if we could be given moral support to organize seminars and workshops. We could publish the results and distribute pamphlets that will promote peace, understanding and openness between Christians and Muslims.*

*From the ICS Board the approval was not difficult. The Chairman, Hon. I.S. Gofwen, was even happy and proud to identify himself with such a move to promote peace.*

*We had planned to go straight into organizing dialogue sessions with the Muslims. However, because of some reactions from certain individuals from the Christian circle, we felt the need to first start an enlightenment seminar with the Christians to open their eyes to the need for such a programme. One of the Christians who happened to be my classmate while in college, an open minded person met me at Bauchi Road motor park, stopped me and asked, "I heard that you people are going into dialogue with the Muslims; kun hauka ne? (Are you crazy?) What has darkness got to do with light?" He demanded an answer from me promptly. I was able to answer right away that the responsibility of the light is to shine in the darkness.*

So this very effort is intended to enlighten Christians and the general public to see the need for relating more positively to the Muslims. It is really an eye opener.<sup>244</sup>

At the 1995 Second International Conference held in Miango, Oyelade presented a novel challenge to the conference about joint prayer meetings. In the context of his talk on forgiveness, he advised:

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*It is only with a forgiving spirit that Christians and Muslims can come together for prayers in order to solve oth national and international issues. Such prayer meetings should be well publicized through the media. The forgiving spirit will spread faszter if church prayer requests include the welfare of people of other faiths. Experiences in Africa have shown athat the welfare of others ensures our own welfare. The insecurity of others threatens our own security. The function of the Holy Spirit should be seen not only as church-centred, but also as society-centred. The Holy Spirit that breaks the resistance in hearts of Christians can also break the resistance*

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<sup>244</sup>H. Istifanus, 1998, pp. 18-19.

*in the hearts of our Muslim neighbours. He should therefore be invited through prayer to spread the love of God into **all** human hearts, not only in the church.*<sup>245</sup>

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**a. Haruna Dandaura: “The Apostle of Religious Harmony” hdhd xxxx**

If Tanko Yusuf was the apostle of unity, the other “father” of this project, Haruna Dandaura, was the “Apostle of Religious Harmony” according to his biographer, Musa Gaiya. Dandaura straddled the BZ and AZ eras. Already back in 1978, at the time of the first CA, he called for dialogue, a means he hoped would avert violence. Gaiya devoted an entire chapter to the subject. Dandaura initiated wide correspondence with Christian and Muslim leaders, 128 in all, to encourage dialogue, going to the very highest in the North, including Sultan Abubakar III, the details of which can be read in Gaiya’s story. Unfortunately, the Sultan never replied, but a number of others did, both Christian and Muslim. The letters were read in Christ Church Fagge, Kano.<sup>246</sup> He was disappointed in the lack of enthusiasm among Christian leaders and so he wrote them more letters. Even personal contact did not yield any more support for his campaign. In fact, the issue raised the hackles of Plateau State CAN, within whose jurisdiction Dandaura lived. They were furious at his letter to the Sultan, which they regarded a sell-out, even though some, like Ezekiel Makama, a congenial COCIN leader, approved the idea of dialogue itself. Gaiya explained the probable reason for this rejection as resistance to the person Dandaura himself, not to dialogue per se. The Honourable Justice did not understand the politics involved, for he was not a politician. His Hausa background and his generally different approach to things made him too suspect for them to join him. Tragically, Gaiya reported, this “dialogue never took place.” Tragic indeed, for, as Gaiya suggested, effective dialogue could have averted some of the needless violence that ensued.

Some years later, Peter Jatau, long-time Catholic leader in Kaduna and now Archbishop, tried to start a dialogue initiative to find a solution to the crises. Dialogue would lead to “peaceful co-existence and social learning.” Dandaura latched onto this effort with renewed enthusiasm and wrote him a letter explaining his hopes for dialogue.<sup>247</sup> “I had thought that if

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<sup>245</sup>E. Oyelade, 1995, p. 91. For further information about this Conference see J. Boer, 2006, vol. 5, Appendix 13.

<sup>246</sup>For the church in Fagge see J. Boer, 2003, vol. 1, pp. 39-41; 2004, vol. 3, pp. 168-171. In an earlier volume I have explained the mix-up of names for the Fagge church. The correct name is indeed “Christ Church,” not “St. George’s.”

<sup>247</sup>In the course of this correspondence, Dandaura discovered that his earlier circular had not reached Jatau, because it had been misaddressed (H. Dandaura, 10 Jan/1983).

Muslims agreed to talk, we would bring [Christian] complaints before them. After this, we would ask the Muslims to table their own complaints against Christians. This done, we would try to find out among ourselves and work out some guidelines for harmonious living together.”<sup>248</sup>

In 1996, Dandaura made yet a third attempt by writing to some Christian leaders. Again, he received only three replies, but they were significant replies. One was from Professor Adamu Baikie who responded by suggesting a guideline for discussions. While Dandaura wanted to put the census issue on the table, Baikie suggested that it was irrelevant. He declared, “What is important to us is that we should be given *all* the freedoms that the Constitution stipulates, even if our population is 1%.”

The second affirmative reply came from Jabani Mambula of TEKAN. Jabani put the letter on the TEKAN agenda and they wrote an appreciative acknowledgement along with a request for Dandaura to help them write a document. Dandaura wrote the paper within a month. This combined project apparently led to greater activity among Christian leaders that generated various proposals for “things to be done.” Nuhu Hassan’s proposals can be read in Appendix 65.<sup>249</sup>

Though it took long for Christian leaders to respond to Dandaura’s prodding, his efforts were honoured in other quarters. The FG gave early recognition to his efforts. As early as 1979 he was appointed Member of the Order of the Federal Republic (MFR) by then Military Head of State Obasanjo in recognition of his efforts for peace and dialogue.<sup>250</sup> Maitama Sule, a highly respected Muslim civil servant, politician and UN diplomat,<sup>251</sup> described him as “the ideal Christian, one of the most detribalised Nigerians that he has come to know. He believes Nigeria needs such a person, if she is to get out of the...problems she has found herself in.” He thought of Dandaura as personifying the perfect leader that Sule described in a prayer.<sup>252</sup>

## **b. AZ Dialogue Developments dddd xxxx**

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<sup>248</sup>That actually is basically the hopes and dreams I have for this series, except that I have collected the complaints, opinions and insights in prepackaged format. Both groups can now listen to themselves and each other’s problems and solutions. This series provides the basic tools for such an approach and could speed it up.

<sup>249</sup>M. Gaiya, 2003, pp. 99-100. Appendix 65.

<sup>250</sup>M. Gaiya, 2003, pp. 78-100. H. Dandaura, 10 Jan/83.

<sup>251</sup>See <[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maitama\\_Sule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maitama_Sule)>.

<sup>252</sup>M. Gaiya, 2003, pp. 124-125. For the prayer itself, see pp xxxx above (in ch. 3).

As was the case with Wilson Sabiya in the BZ era, so in the AZ period not all Christians were equally enthusiastic about dialogue, though they were only a small minority. As among Muslims, so some Christians used what has become a contemptuous cliché to describe it: “dialogue of the deaf.”<sup>253</sup> One of them was Matthew Adams, a former staff of mine, a pastor and a one-time Chairman of the Jos South LGA, who was very skeptical about dialogue with Muslims. He regarded Muslims as deceitful, who break agreements at any time. Besides, the nature of religion is such that its “obligations and loyalties must never be violated.” Hence, “one would wonder if any amount of dialogue can truly resolve the crisis.” Especially the Muslim “orientation will hardly tolerate other beliefs, let alone dialogue,” for it cannot compromise any of its tenets. However, if it is to take place, then “Christians, Muslims and government must be prepared and willing to go beyond what was obtainable in previous dialogue.” In other words, be done with political correctness and move forward fearlessly toward the truth. “This requires courage and steadfastness.”<sup>254</sup>

Olufemi Oluniyi, like Sabiya, seemed disappointed with the fruits of dialogue. “Whenever dialogue is organized,” he observed, “compromises or hot peace usually ensues, but genuine dialogue hardly ever takes place.”<sup>255</sup> My perusal of dialogue documents and reports leads me to the same disappointing view, but, instead of leading me to rejection of dialogue, it serves mainly to bolster my conviction of the need to try harder.

Pentecostals have, according to one of their own scholars, long specialised in demonizing Islam, but they have come around to a more positive position. The writer, who wishes at this point to remain anonymous, described the change as follows:

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*There are signs that some Pentecostals are recognizing that different attitudes need to be cultivated that will allow them to listen to, understand, and work together with Muslims for the peace in Nigeria. In some cases, Pentecostal involvement with CAN has helped to moderate intolerant and negative perceptions of Islam among their constituencies so that by the mid-1990s, Pentecostals were participating in the inter-faith dialogues that were held under the auspices of CAN. Leading the way has been Pentecostal pastor James Movel Wuye.*

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<sup>253</sup>S. Ilesanmi, 1997, p. 171. He borrowed the term from M. Kukah, *Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria since 1960*. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of London, 1989, p. 1. For Muslim usage of the same term see Appendix 6, p.47.

<sup>254</sup>M. Adams, “The Irony...”

<sup>255</sup>O. Oluniyi, 2006, p. 56.

In the context of the Muslim discussion on dialogue in Chapter 2, I pointed out that not all discussions between religions qualify as dialogue. Some discussions are little more than angry shouting matches, diatribes or just plain cantankerous exchanges. Such exchange took place between Yusuf Yariyok and some Muslim correspondents. Yariyok wrote a strong paper on Gamji.com website against two Muslims, Lawal Murabis and Tafiq Abiola, in which he denounced their discussion style as “gross misrepresentation and distortion of facts.” “For some reason, either due to their lack of etiquette in a public forum or uncontrolled emotions, they resorted to personal attacks and gross distortion of the facts.” How could they claim a Muslim majority when the last censuses did not even include the information? And how could Muslims reject the status of Christ as Son of God, while they denied Christians the right to reject the status of Muhammad as Prophet? How could the latter be classified as blasphemy but not the former? Yariyok commented, “If Nigerian Muslims cannot stand people criticizing their religion, they must desist from speaking against or looking down on other religions.”<sup>256</sup> Though Yariyok’s arguments may have been right on, it is not likely that his paper created friendship or sympathetic understanding.

A major component of dialogue is tolerance. Patricia Williams has left us with a clear description from BZ days. Using various sources, she wrote, it “is the quality of accepting opinions, beliefs, customs, behaviour which are different from one’s own.” It is “the disposition to be patient and fair towards those whose opinion and practices differ from one’s own. It is also freedom from bigotry.” It is, furthermore, “mutual comprehension of each other’s meaning, thoughts, etc. It is a state of good or friendly relations between persons.” Thus, by extension, it means “showing friendly disposition and accepting without prejudice the religious beliefs, customs, behaviours and practices of others.” There is a degree of sloppiness about this description, but it gives an adequate picture of a spirit of tolerance, provided you realize that acceptance is not the same as agreement and that it does not preclude all critique. Tolerance does not mean you expect Muslims to agree with Christian dualism or Christians to accept the Muslim sense of superiority or their views of mosque-religion-government relations.

Williams applied her idea of tolerance especially to Muslims. She chided them for their frequent failure “to demonstrate this cardinal virtue. In a blind determination to rid society of its corrupt elements and their wish to take Nigeria back to the precinct of Islam, adherents have

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<sup>256</sup>Y. Yariyok, Feb/2003.

often been excessive in their display of religiosity. They often forget that Nigeria is a plural society, both ethnically and religiously.” Hence, “there is need for Muslims to take into consideration the feelings and reactions of the other religionists before they embark on wild displays of religiosity, utterances and actions.”

But to be fair to her, it should also be mentioned that she similarly chided Christians for intolerance, but theirs was, in her article at least, more of an intra-Christian intolerance that they must seriously overcome. She ended up advising both groups: They “must learn to practice the true tenets of their religions, which stress peace, tolerance and understanding. They must learn to accommodate each other.” That should then develop into dialogue, “during which thorny issues would be peacefully ironed out.”

As it was, she found that “in most places where a religion is entrenched or dominant, there is insufficient tolerance and understanding shown towards the other religionists.” It was, moreover, “erroneously believed” that Nigeria’s economic “ill fortune” would be relieved only when people practise their religion “aggressively.” She disagreed and argued “for more display of tolerance and understanding” rather than aggression. Not only are tolerance and understanding inherent in Nigeria’s three religions, but to act otherwise, i.e., to impose your religion on another, is likely to lead to “the disintegration of the nation.” Dialogue and all its components are a *sine qua non* for the country’s survival.<sup>257</sup>

Calls from the Christian community for dialogue were frequent. After the Kaduna 2000 riots, President Obasanjo advised the nation, “We must rediscover the value of dialogue.”<sup>258</sup> The Catholic Church has emphasized dialogue more than most. Hardly any public statement from a church official lacked reference to dialogue. Just as one random example, at a press briefing in Abuja, Father Michael Ekpeyong “called for the intensification of religious dialogue and enlightenment among all religious groups in the country as a way of engendering understanding and peaceful co-existence.”<sup>259</sup> Barely nine months into sharia, Catholic Bishops appeared to have divided opinion. While the majority were annoyed with the President’s refusal to take a firm stand, some of them seemed “sympathetic to the Government’s belief that a confrontational stance would not be helpful. They would prefer a behind-the-scenes dialogue with Muslims” on the subject.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup>P. Williams, 1987, pp. 163-164, 171-173, 175.

<sup>258</sup>K. Kolade, 4 Mar/2000.

<sup>259</sup>O. Ezigbo and C. Ohadoma, 4 Dec/2002.

<sup>260</sup>B. Phillips, 11 Sep/2000.

Musa Gaiya of UJ, amicable by nature, recommended that the dialogue around sharia should be conducted according to African tradition. “As Africans, whose tradition provides means of communal settlement of problems, we should be able to discuss this problem in our legislative houses with a view to arriving at a workable arrangement. These matters can be negotiated if approached with sincerity of purpose.” Not only did he advocate a more indigenous method of dialogue, but he also supported Professor Kalu, who “called for the indigenisation of the sharia—a pragmatic sharia, a sharia with a human face.”<sup>261</sup> Unfortunately, he did not further tell us what that would look like.

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### **c. Nigeria Inter-Religious Council   nirbir   xxxx**

I introduced NIREC in Chapter 2. In general, NIREC enjoyed the co-operation of Christian leaders. President Obasanjo himself expressed his appreciation for their work. In his national broadcast about the Kaduna carnage of 2000, he said he appreciated their work to promote co-existence. With the Kaduna carnage perhaps giving the impression that they had failed so far, he urged them “not to relent in their efforts. Perhaps through their work we shall begin to build the Nigeria that we all dream of but seem unable to realise.”<sup>262</sup> CAN advised churches that, when they are refused land for building churches, “they should channel their complaints through CAN Northern States to NIREC for redress.” At the same meeting, Nath Oye, representing Adamawa State, complained his people did not know NIREC, except from what they heard from Muslims. After Archbishop Achigili and Saidu Dogo explained NIREC to a CAN meeting, members agreed that “NIREC should not be disbanded.”<sup>263</sup>

In Appendix 6, I wrote about some of the earlier ventures of NIREC in the area of reconciliation services. One of them took the two co-chairmen to Ilorin to soothe the city’s spirits after a 4-day upheaval. Sunday Mbang, CAN’s co-chairman of NIREC, explained to the people that the leadership of both Christians and Muslims “were now one and that anybody who may want to foment trouble in the name of either religion, should have a rethink, because such would not get the blessings of their leaders.” He advised that Nigerians should “place national

<sup>261</sup>M. Gaiya, 2005, p. 171; 2004, p. 43.

<sup>262</sup>President O. Obasanjo, 2 Mar/2000, p. 3.

<sup>263</sup>CAN, 5 Sep/2000.

interest above any other consideration.” They should also remember the tragedies of Lebanon, Sudan and Israel and realize Nigeria could be next.<sup>264</sup>

Not everyone was that positive. Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon, a post-graduate student of Islam at ABU, though strongly insisting on dialogue, was not so sure about NIREC, at least, not at the beginning. He stressed that its members are all government appointees. Hence, it is regarded with suspicion. “Personally, I am watching and studying the group before making any comment.” He did say, however, that people were still “to see the impact of this body on the nation.”<sup>265</sup> After its revival in 2007, Daniel Okoh, Vice President CAN, was also a bit suspicious. He “questioned the sincerity of religious leaders on the issues of tolerance and dialogue among adherents of Islam and Christianity.”<sup>266</sup>

HERE DO CHRISTIANS AT FIRST NIREC   nimir   xxxx

In Appendix 6, I already discussed the revival of NIREC at the hands of President Yar’adua in 2007.<sup>267</sup> At the second revived NIREC meeting, co-chairman John Onaiyekan

*assured the Sultan of the cooperation of the leadership of the Christian community in Nigeria, particularly in the common commitment, not only to defusing religious tensions and conflicts but above all to channeling the religious fervour of the people in the direction of peace and harmony for the good of the nation. He observed that while NIREC must retain its autonomy in order to be able to discharge its function, the body, nevertheless, expects government to give it full support to facilitate the good work the group is doing for the people. Stating that many people place high hopes on what NIREC was set up to do, Onaiyekan noted that the task of repositioning the body for the efficient discharge of its mandate should be a major concern of the meeting.*<sup>268</sup>

With Onaiyekan, National President of CAN, as co-chair of NIREC, the Northern branch of CAN expressed its strong support for NIREC.

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<sup>264</sup>M. Lamidi, 30 Dec/99, p. 2. See Appendix 6, p. 62 for the Muslim contribution to the Ilorin visit.

<sup>265</sup>J. Idowu-Fearon, 2001, p. 59.

<sup>266</sup>*Vanguard*, 19 Oct/2007.

<sup>267</sup>J. Boer, Appendix 6, pp 48

<sup>268</sup>Association of Nigerians Abroad, 17 Oct/2007.

In keeping with Muslim members, Daniel Okoh, in spite of his hesitation expressed above, also wished to expand its programme. “He stressed the need for religious leaders to teach adherents of their faith the value of human life. ‘Not only in terms of religious conflicts but also to the wider society because many Nigerians have lost the sense of value of human lives,’ he said. He also suggested that the committee on education and public enlightenment of the Council should press for the teaching of the value of human life in schools.” Another CAN member, John Achimugu, Director of CAN’s legal services, “said the knowledge of Islam and Christianity should spread to the grassroots. He called for the issuance of a periodic bulletin to be circulated in higher institutions and among the grassroots, to promote the culture of tolerance.”<sup>269</sup> In Chapter 2 we already learned about similar educational concerns and involvement in combating corruption. So NIREC would not vanish for lack of vision or work.

In Chapter 2, I introduced the work of a NIREC committee that met in September, 2007. Caleb Ahima, General Secretary of NIREC, wrote a report that included a summary of a speech at that meeting by Engineer Samuel Salifu, National Secretary of CAN. Salifu emphasized the need for a wholistic or comprehensive approach to both religions, that recognizes the need for “wisdom from God to guide in all human endeavours” and “a life which hinges completely on the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” He proposed a “practicalised” style of dialogue “where we talk to each other with all the frankness that is undergirded by genuine intentions for peace, co-existence and achievement of our common dreams and aspirations as citizens. We need to think of common projects that bring harmony. Through NIREC, we can make sensible demands and contributions to government and relate to international bodies that share the same vision and values.” Christians and Muslims must “think fast about corporate efforts for nation building, holding each other’s hands in this effort.” Christians and Muslims must together bring reformation to politics and work towards a democracy of “righteousness, respect for one another, truth, holy living and true brotherly relations.” They must “jointly rise against evils in the country.”

Part of the agenda of the meeting was for both religions to hold separate sessions where they listed their complaints about the other. Christians produced a list of ten items that are all familiar to Nigerians and to readers of previous volumes. When they re-assembled to discuss their findings, they discovered that “both sides were found to be involved, though to varying

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<sup>269</sup>*Vanguard*, 19 Oct/2007.

degrees.” They worked into the early morning, by which time “the group had successfully put together a tentative work-plan for transmission to NIREC.”

Ahima was happy with the results and recorded the following positive and hopeful “personal observations:”

1. *For long, the conflicts between Muslims and Christians were like a no-go area, because everybody feared that it just wasn't possible to sit together and frankly face the issues. This avoidance approach did not help matters. Fear, ignorance and suspicion had the day without interruption, giving birth to occasional eruptions between Muslims and Christians.*
2. *Now that both Muslim and Christian leaders have seen the need to take this dreadful bull by the horns and have taken a bold step in charging at the dreaded ground, we now know that we can face it with hope after all. No matter how serious and potentially explosive the issues may be, we now know that we can allow our genuine intentions to find peace, tolerance and respect to each other's sensibilities to help us push on. Under God, we will pave the way for a better, peaceful and hopeful future for the faith communities.*
3. *I suggest we keep meeting and talking. To do anything else is to embark on a journey that has the potential, promise and threat to deny all of us enjoyment of our God-given country with all the blessings in it.<sup>270</sup>*

In 1993, LCCN started on a dialogue journey that became one with significant events along the way. The communique of the 1993 conference can be found in Appendix 49. In previous volumes we have richly benefited from the many lectures delivered at its series of conferences it organized under the name Nigerian Association of Christian-Muslim Mutual Relations (NACMUMRE).<sup>271</sup> It is a joint effort in which Muslims are deeply involved as well. Apart from conferences and “pure” dialogues, it also worked on a few action dialogues. It conducted advocacy visits to religious and traditional leaders such as the Chiefs of Jos and Kafanchan, the Sultan and others. Such visits helped dispel fear or suspicions of such alliances from both religions. It also went on television to foster peace and understanding and enhance co-existence. It was responsible for a peace treaty in Kaduna and worked on conflict resolution. The

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<sup>270</sup>C. Ahima, 16 Oct/2007.

<sup>271</sup>An alternative name for “International Conference on Christian-Muslim Mutual Relations.” Things can get complicated: in Bibliography see entry “Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa.”

Association also intended to involve the youth of both religions in community projects. So far, so good. But it also adhered to the politically correct that is common to most dialogue projects in Nigeria, in that it carefully meted out blame for religious conflicts to all and sundry—except for religion itself! The same old story that was blamed especially for the deterioration of relationships in Plateau State: refusal to call a spade a spade.<sup>272</sup>

A few months into AZ, Anglican Bishop of Maiduguri, Emmanuel Mani, expressed his concern over the agitations and violence that marked the country. He advised youth to desist from their part in it; instead, they should adopt the attitude of “live and let live” as well as learn to “discuss all issues through dialogue.” He advised that “we should close our eyes to things that divide us and open our eyes to see those that unite us and practise them.”<sup>273</sup>

Just today, December 17, 2007, a friend of mine from Jos sent me the following letter about ongoing grassroots dialogue in the Jos area:

*It was this afternoon I collected your books. I hurried home to begin reading. It is interesting. I started with Volume 2. As you have stated, not many Christians will be patient to hear Muslim views on conflict, because it is assumed that they are violent. Recently, I attended a peace conference organized by CEPAN ( Center for Peace Advancement in Nigeria). One Muslim scholar presented a paper in which he asked why Islam is always attributed to be a violent religion, even when someone acted on individual interest like Hitler. He raised so many issues in the paper that generated a lot of argument during the conference. However, the conference was an avenue where Christians and Muslims interacted freely and discussed among themselves. That was not the only time such a conference was held. I'm optimistic that the more we create a forum like that, the more we will get to know each other and work towards peace building. Today, we have been inaugurated as Jos North Peace Team, at the local government Hqts. We are also organizing a dinner party on the 27th of this month to invite our Muslim friends to celebrate Christmas with us. This will take place at the ECWA Good News Church.*

All in all, Henry Awoniyi was optimistic about dialogue, especially at grassroots level. He commented, “It is gratifying to note that well-meaning Nigerians, especially at the grassroots, have initiated a lot of bridge-building to promote inter-religious discussions and programmes for

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<sup>272</sup>NACMUMRE, 14 Oct/2002. For full details see Appendix 49, article 3.

<sup>273</sup>A. Tapidi, 4 Feb/2000.

respect for and freedom of conscience, belief, expression, etc. It is also encouraging to note that peace-loving Nigerians will continue to bend over backwards to achieve religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence.”<sup>274</sup> To him, the problem was with the elite, not the people. Similarly, Joseph Bagobiri of CAN was happy with improved relations. He said, “We have made significant progress in promoting mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna state. We shall see to it that we continue building on the gains of the past, towards ensuring better understanding among us, which is a prerequisite for peace in a religiously plural society such as ours.”<sup>275</sup>

John Akume also considered dialogue as the only way to reconciliation, peace and unity. “This aspect of religion surely needs salvaging from the religious problems that have become a reality.” “Nigerians should be ready to stand in brotherhood, religious differences notwithstanding. There is great need for tolerance and accommodation for every person in Nigeria,” in view of the fact that Nigerians want the country to continue as an entity. In order to achieve this goal and establish tolerance and accommodation, Akume offered a set of recommendations that appear in Appendix 66

#### d. Action Dialogue dadada xxxx

In the previous chapter, I emphasized that dialogue is not to be restricted to discussions, conferences or books. It also involves active co-operation of the faithful across the religious divide. Actually, almost all dialogue ends up in action, if not joint action, so that it is difficult to separate them into different categories. Catholic Archbishop of Jos, Ignatius Kaigama, published a booklet entitled *Dialogue of Life: An Urgent Necessity for Nigerian Muslims and Christians*. “Dialogue of life” here “means a cross fertilisation of our lives, an interaction in concrete daily life between Christians and Muslims which opens up their relationships at a deeper level.” Embattled Governor Dariye at the launching of the booklet called on the author to translate it into the Hausa language to make it more widely accessible. Deputy Senate President Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu, no friend to the Governor, said at the launching that if it had been published earlier, the Plateau crisis might not have happened.<sup>276</sup>

<sup>274</sup>H. Awoniyi, 2002, p. 11.

<sup>275</sup>R. Buhari, 23 Dec/2006.

<sup>276</sup>G. Benjamin, Feb/2006.

In 2001, a committee headed by Pastor Ifeanyi Omife originated action that was to lead to the official establishment of an annual national thanksgiving day in which Nigeria's three religions all were to participate. It was to give "official national respect to God and introduce a new cordial relationship between Nigeria and God." The stated point was, "We may be worshipping God in different languages, but the major religious groups have agreed to look at the things that unite us spiritually, so that we could begin to dismantle those instruments that have perpetually pulled us apart." The committee had a religiously mixed membership and had the support of CAN and NSCIA and others. C. O. Williams of National CAN and Lateef Adegbite of NSCIA both wrote letters of support for the endeavour. The programme included certain prescribed ceremonies to be observed by the national President, governors and chairmen of LGs. All the preparations had been made to ensure the bill's smooth sailing through the Senate with the programme slated to begin in 2002.<sup>277</sup> Alas, it seems to have died somewhere along the way and nothing further came of it.

More successful was that of former Military Head of State, Yakubu Gowon, who established a movement called "Nigeria Prays" that I already mentioned in the section on spiritual resources. In a speech delivered to the Kenyan Government, he explained both its reason and its history. During its early stage, Gowon deliberated with the then Head of State, General Abacha. The latter not only endorsed the idea but also proposed that it should include Muslims as well. Eventually, after discussions with Christian and Muslim leaders, it was decided that Nigeria Prays would be for both religions, "but undertaken separately to respect some fundamental religious sensitivities on both sides. The Muslims will pray on Friday and the Christians preferably on Sundays." That, the story ended, "has been the practice in Nigeria ever since."<sup>278</sup>

Habila Istifanus of LCCN can always be trusted for worthwhile and sometimes for unique insight or attitude. He is irenic and by nature inclined to dialogue. It is possible you read of his contributions on the subject in Volume 5. For a more adequate introduction to his 2007 paper I refer you to Appendix 67. Under the caption "Christian-Muslim Mutual Relations," he proposed that

*various programmes, which will bring Christians and Muslims together, should be continuously promoted. Communities could be brought together and be encouraged to*

<sup>277</sup>T. Agbaegbu, 30 July/2001.

<sup>278</sup>Y. Gowon, 18 July/2003.

*jointly embark on a number of activities and projects. To diffuse emerging signs of conflict, flash points should be sought and identified. People in these marked areas should be provided with a joint project to engage them especially in such a project of joint economic interest. They should also be given opportunities to embark on exchange visits. Making communities to accept visiting each other's camp to see what the other is passing through creates a situation of empathy and warmth.*

Istifanus is President of an organization named "Justice, Peace & Reconciliation Movement" (JPRM). He recommended the following programme to bring people together. The idea was to bring

*together conflicting communities or people that have signs or pointers to eradicate conflicts. They are brought to engage in a social or entertainment programme, which will make them discuss naturally and willingly. Certain difficult and sensitive issues are brought forward and talked away but in a lighter mood. The result of this type of free and natural discussion is used later as the basis of further discussions at conferences and interactive programmes. The programme is informal with no specific topic known to the attendants, and the attendance is not officially controlled.*

Conflict resolution is really a form of dialogue. Istifanus recommended conflict resolution with a difference, namely "Trado-African conflict resolution." There is, he wrote, a "need to resuscitate and integrate African traditional method of conflict resolution." This "is necessitated by the fact that globalization poses enormous challenges to Nigeria, especially its spiritual void." "In Africa, the participation of the community in resolving issues or conflicts is very essential." Some even have a specific word for it in their language. E. g., Istifanus' own people, the Chamba, call it "*mumpirikenen*." "Resolving conflict in the trado-African method makes it impossible to handle it as an individual issue." The method demands many participants if there is any hope "of attaining sustainable peace."

Another unusual suggestion by Istifanus was to "declare a Decade of Nonviolence." Such a programme could include the organization of "well-planned bi-annual inter-ethnic and inter-religious conferences." Presentations to be made would be at the level of the "average Nigerian"—no *dogon Turanci!* An organizing committee would do the preparation and the

dissemination of its results. It would have to be “a free and frank, safe and secure conference.” Istifanus gave credit to Dennis Ityavyar of Inter-Gender for first broaching this subject.<sup>279</sup>

In its 2004 Newsletter, Plateau CAN wrote the following under the heading “Inter-Faith Dialogue:”

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*Conscious of the need to live in peace, CAN [Plateau branch] has been spearheading an inter-religious body inaugurated by the State Government. The reason to be involved in this dialogue is to achieve peace and unity amongst religions. So far, a number of dialogues have been held between CAN and JNI with an understanding to close ranks so as to achieve development, protect lives and property [in view] of the violence that has claimed so many lives in the past.*

*Because of this, the group has been assisting much in the on-going peace process currently taking place in the State, following the declaration of the State of Emergency in May, 2004. We have paid visits to the Emir of Wase, Haruna Abdullahi, and the Long Gumai of Shendam, Hubert Shaldas II, in their palaces, where we sued for peace in their domains. Also substantial progress was recorded in both Wase/Kadarko, Yelwa and Shendam, where both the Muslim and Christian communities accepted to sheathe their swords and embrace each other. They all signed memoranda of peace, pledging not to go to war again.*

*We thank God for this effort so far and we hope to continue to use persuasion to ensure that we achieve this goal. It is only through this, that the church shall succeed in her outreach and development in all communities.*

*The church is planning to hold workshops, seminars and conferences and to call for both moral and financial support, so as to help tame the spread of further violence and religious intolerance. We have realised that the lack of unity and dialogue between the two religions has not been to our interest. We pray that the Lord shall do away with the spirit of deception and replace it with the spirit of self-control, tolerance and peace.*

Then, under the next heading “Peace Fiesta,” CAN announced plans “to hold an annual Peace Fiesta amongst the different tribes and religions.” This will be in cooperation with the Plateau Government’s own Peace Festival aimed at celebrating “the return of peace.”<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>279</sup>H. Istifanus, 2007, pp. 14-16. Appendix 67.

<sup>280</sup>CAN Plateau Branch, 2004. The history to which this Newsletter refers is all described in J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, ch. 7.

One organization that has been working hard for decades to help Christians develop a dialogical approach to their Muslim neighbours is PROCMURA or Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa. As Tereza Adamu, author of a doctoral dissertation on the subject and lecturer at TCNN, put it: “The project is well known for its conferences, seminars and training with the intention of helping the churches to know Islam and the Muslims in their region.” It has successfully encouraged three ministers of her denomination, the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ, to enter politics. She also reminds us of the series of conferences sponsored by LCCN, from whose reports I have freely drawn in various volumes.<sup>281</sup> But it appears that Adamu judged that, after all these decades of hard work with limited resources, much remained to be done. In 2003, she called for more of the same: “The church will have to engage itself and enter into dialogue with Muslims in order to understand each other and to develop mutual respect, tolerance, harmony and cooperation that will lead to peaceful co-existence. It will have to equip itself with a deeper knowledge of Islam and Muslims.” Borrowing from Sigvard van Sicard of the University of Birmingham and consultant to PROCMURA, she encouraged Christians and Muslims “to look for those dimensions that are common to them and to confront together the forces that threaten people of faith.” These include “their common humanity, their common religious heritage and their common call to serve humanity.” In addition there is their mutual strong emphasis on justice. All of these need to be explored. Of course, there are also the divergencies that can lead to misunderstandings that need to be resolved. It is especially their shared evangelism or *da'wa* instincts that can lead to clashes. All of this can be explored through dialogue. She ended her article with an exhortation for churches not only to join hands with themselves, but also with Muslims “for the sake of peace and unity.”<sup>282</sup>

Nigeria’s archbishops tend to be all pro-dialogue. Idowu-Fearon, a beneficiary of a PROCMURA scholarship in his youth and current Chairman of the Northern PROCMURA Area Committee, has not forgotten his training and became a leader in the field. Nigerian Christians, he proposed, “must intensify training so as to equip its members for productive living amongst their Muslim neighbours.” His proposals are typical of PROCMURA’s approach. He had in mind education on three levels. First, high academic post-graduate studies of Islam at some of the most famous Western centres like Selly Oak in the UK and

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<sup>281</sup>T. Adamu, 2003, pp. 67-68. See also E. Oyelade, 1992, pp. 188, 193 for further information. Oyelade was the first Nigerian teaching staff. I gratefully recall the 3-month course my wife and I took from them in 1967 in Ibadan. It was my serious introduction to Nigerian Islam.

<sup>282</sup>T. Adamu, 2003, pp. 67-70.

Hartford Seminary in the US.<sup>283</sup> This would eventually lead to such a centre in West Africa. Second, training within local churches to teach Christians how to listen to and communicate with Muslims. He lamented that so far this programme has met with little success among Northern Christians. His third level seems to be a combination of the first two.

At the end, these educational endeavours should help Christians to “rethink and restate their faith.” In their dealings with Muslims, they will discover “how difficult it is to express oneself in a way that Muslims understand. The painfulness of this experience ought to drive one back to the Bible in order to learn new ways of understanding the Christian faith and relating it to the Muslim mind.” He then picked the example of the unity of God versus the trinitarian formula.

Christians also need to be trained in the use of the Qur’an. This is a controversial subject among both Christians and Muslims. Idowu-Fearon identified five theories among Christians about their use of the Qur’an and selected the approach of using the Qur’an “as a source of truth.” That means you do not berate it, but you make use of the truths it contains. He defended this approach on basis of the way Bible writers used external materials as sources of truth.<sup>284</sup>

Like Adamu above, he similarly challenged PROCMURA to be more serious about helping Christians develop a dialogue style. It has taught Christians about Islam, but, regrettably, it has not brought them together. That is to say, it has not been able to forge Christians into a unity to face Islam together.

In order to make up for shortcomings, he created another life for himself outside of PROCMURA. He proposed a “Christian-Muslim dialogue forum.” He felt along with most writers on the subject, that dialogue is not just a matter of talking but also of doing things together. He proposed “dialogue of life and by this I mean both faith communities working together on some social ills within their communities.” He then proceeded to list a number of dialogue efforts. There was *NIREC*. There was the *Kaduna State Committee on Religious Harmony*, of which he is a member. Like *NIREC*, the government—Kaduna State Government in this case—organized and facilitated its work, but, unlike *NIREC*, members are appointed by the religious communities. The Committee recommends solutions to the

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<sup>283</sup> I have participated in training at the second level in the North during the 70s. I was invited to consider becoming its General Secretary, an offer I turned down due to other priorities of mine.

<sup>284</sup>J. Idowu-Fearon, 2001, pp. 56-58.

Governor and, Idowu-Fearon was pleased to announce, “We have succeeded in resolving most of the crises that would have brought about more deaths.” There was the *Muslim-Christian Youth Forum* that held religious discussions, organised conflict resolution courses and together cared for the victims of religious conflicts in Kaduna. The Forum was planning to “rebuild together as faith communities one of the mosques damaged during the latest religious crisis as well as a church building.” The Archbishop himself was the founder of the *Kaduna International Centre for Reconciliation*. Participants are invited to share their experiences as Christians and Muslims. Sometimes the process was painful, for it occasionally involved people who had fought each other during a riot. Its main ongoing programme consists of conflict resolution workshops for Christians. He concluded his lecture with a “plea that we do something to stop this unnecessary waste of valuable lives in the name of religion.”<sup>285</sup>

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However, always friendly and open to others, for him there was not enough dialogue action happening. After recommending a change of mood or attitude on the part of Northern Christians, he urged Christian business people to

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*go into partnerships with Muslims who are honest. There are Muslims who are honest. Let us stop using this lamentation, as I call it, at killing ourselves. If you find a Muslim who is honest, go into business with him. But if you say you want to stand on your own-- ba za mu yi aiki tare da su ba kaza, kaza--, we are only killing ourselves. We need to move forward. Let us stop all this crying about the Muslims and the Hausa-Fulani. Let's put up our best.*<sup>286</sup>

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A few years later, Sunday Agang made similar suggestions. You will remember his paper on religion and economic transformation. His major thrust was the “repositioning” or transformation<sup>287</sup> of religion so as to make it an integral component in economic planning. In order to achieve his goals, he recommended that such a transformation of religion “entail encouraging interfaith and interdenominational interactions.” Such “activities offer opportunities to collaborate, to share the work of economic development that results in peace building.” Quoting from Coward and Smith, he advised that “teaming up with other religious and non-religious entrepreneurs...models the behaviour required to promote peace.” Such “initiatives

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<sup>285</sup>J. Idowu-Fearon, 2001, pp. 59-60. S. Bakoji, 2 June/2003.

<sup>286</sup>S. Obassa, 29 Jan/2005, p. 29.

<sup>287</sup>Agang is talking about the transformation of both religion and economics. For the sake of clarity, it appears, he reserved the term “transformation” for economics, while he used “repositioning” for religion.

also offer opportunities for the personal and interpersonal transformation required to build peace, which is a necessary ingredient in economic transformation.”<sup>288</sup>

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*i. Positive Southern Political Scenarios spssps xxxx*

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Actually, the situation looked a lot better than these pages or Idowu-Fearon indicate. Christians and Muslims have been working together in a myriad of activities, especially in government and politics, in business and professions, in academia, but usually without the motivation of dialogue. Most political parties are partnerships of Christians and Muslims, though often governed by principles of pragmatism rather than religion. The cabinets of FG and of many non-sharia states with considerable Muslim populations contain both.

Let me give you in summary some examples of Southern state governments who have given Muslims special recognition in various ways with a measure of success. The fuller stories can be found in Appendices 55 and 56. In Volume 5, I told you how the Christian Governor of the Southern Ogun State, Gbenga Daniel, organized a special *iftar* or breaking-of-the-fast for Muslims. Muslims, I wrote, jumped all over him and each other with praise, including the Muslim Oba Sikiru Adetona of Ijebuland, who urged everyone to emulate him and encouraged Muslims “to support Daniel’s administration.” The occasion also happened to give Daniel the opportunity to list other pro-Muslim steps he had taken.<sup>289</sup> It all signaled genuine dialogue to the Muslims.

Well, I did say that government and politics are hard to separate!

Now Ogun State has a large Muslim population, so that it was politically wise for the Governor to embrace them. But what of states with only a small Muslim minority? The story of Ebonyi State, a Southern “Christian” state, proves that equal treatment can go a long way to settle things down. The Chairman of Ebonyi’s Pilgrims Welfare Board, the Muslim Bello Amadi, described Governor Sam Egwu as “the best and most magnanimous governor in the country.” He praised him for his non-discriminative education setup that “allows every citizen in the state to benefit from its free education and other welfare packages.” The state, declared Amadi, “is regarded by Muslims in Nigeria as one of the best states in terms of peaceful co-existence of Muslims and Christian.” Then he added that the Muslim community grades all states and their governors

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<sup>288</sup>S. Agang, Dec/2007. Quoted from H. Coward and Gordon S. Smith, eds., *Religion and Peace Building*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2004.

<sup>289</sup>*TD*, 11 Nov/2004. J. Boer, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 101-102.

according to their treatment of the pilgrimage. Ebonyi came out on top “at 100 per cent,” even above Muslim states like Sokoto.

Governor Orji Kalu of Abia, an Ibo state with very few indigenous Muslims, recently built a mosque in Umuahia at US\$5 million with a seating capacity for 2000. It included an Islamic school, a conference hall and “other facilities--” in other words, a full-service mosque. The Governor explained, “It has to do with humanity and my conscience and my consideration for other religions.”

The gesture did not go unnoticed by the Muslim leadership. The event was attended by several Northern governors, including Shekarau of Kano and Sani of Zamfara, the two primary sharia states, as well as Ado Bayero, the Emir of Kano. In his opening speech, Shekarau described Kalu as a “true and excellent Christian who appreciates the beliefs of other religions.” He called on all Muslims “to respect the religion of other people. If this was done, it would mark the beginning of a new era for the country. If we respect the religion and culture of one another, we shall live as brothers and sisters for ever.”

It was not Kalu’s only pro-Muslim gesture. A couple of years later, he appointed six Muslims as special advisers to his cabinet. One of the appointees, Salisu Idris, declared this to be an unparalleled overture in the South. He praised the Governor for carrying everyone along in spite of detractors. This move was “to give us the sense of belonging.” He intended this situation to lead to dialogue with the local people to help them “understand the peaceful and accommodating nature of Islam.”<sup>290</sup> Beautiful sentiments these, but many Christians would not be able to suppress the question: *What of some reciprocity in sharia states?*<sup>291</sup>.

Another South-Eastern state to move into a similar direction is Akwa Ibom, again, a state with few indigenous Muslims. The need for a central mosque for Uyo, the capital, was recognized by both religions. Hence, CAN and “other religious organizations” participated in fund raising. This cooperation created a warm atmosphere in the State, when the Sultan from Sokoto came to lay the foundation stone. He “expressed willingness and determination to work with CAN to end incessant religious crises.” He “stressed the need for the full and unconditional restoration of the ethos of religious tolerance and understanding upon which the nation was built.” The Sultan recognized that CAN hereby gave “a great testimony to the new spirit of understanding.” This ceremony of laying the mosque foundation, he declared, is

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<sup>290</sup>M. Ajah, 4 Jan/2006.

<sup>291</sup>O. Minchakpu, 15 Mar/2004. Appendix 51

symbolic of “the foundation stone of greater religious harmony and tolerance.” The local Muslims affirmed that “they have been fully integrated into the state and have lived, prospered and enjoyed peace, saying the State Governor had sponsored more than 200 Muslims to the pilgrimage since he came to office.”

Of course, Governor Attah capitalised on the Sultan’s sentiments. He “appealed to the Sultan to use his good offices to promote harmony and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims.”<sup>292</sup> The message between the lines was clear. He wanted the Sultan to work for similar positive relations in the core North, where Christian Easterners are having a very difficult time under sharia regimes. What could the Sultan say? You probably wonder with me why such situations do not exist in the reverse in sharia states!—except, of course, Kaduna that has its own internal south. The words of Don Richardson quoted earlier in that letter from a friend come to mind.

Individual Christians and private organizations also have been known to help build mosques. Professor Moses Adeniji of the University of Ibadan built a mosque. He explained that “he was directed by God to build a place of worship for Muslims.” Though a Christian, almost all his family were Muslims who had no place for worship. “So I prayed and God showed me that I should provide them with a place.” He did not see any contradiction, since both faiths honour Jesus, just using different titles for Him.<sup>293</sup> Well, something you can expect from a Yoruba more than from other Nigerians.

There was some reciprocity, not much, but at least the little should be acknowledged. A few similar situations arose in sharia states, whether in response to the above or to internal local situations. Governor Makarfi of the semi-sharia state of Kaduna appointed quite a few Christians in acknowledgement of their multi-religious situation.<sup>294</sup> Shekarau of the core state of Kano also appointed a number of Ibos, in response to which they similarly gushed all over him, even though the positions were mostly of a liaison nature between indigenes and Ibos, little to do with actually running the state.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>292</sup>O. Bassey, 15 May/2007. Appendix xxxx

<sup>293</sup>O. Minchakpu, 15 Mar/2004.

<sup>294</sup>Appendix 6, pp. 101-102.

<sup>295</sup>H. Karofi, 15 Dec/2008.

And then, to go a step further, there is a movement known as “Chrislam” that tries to combine the two religions. With this we have left the subject of dialogue, for dialogue is not meant to result in syncretism. If you are curious, be sure to consult this endnote.<sup>296</sup>

## ii. Population Control *pcpc xxxx*

Sonny Ekwowusi stumbled upon a national project of co-operation that would involve not only the “faithful,” but even irreligious folk. You may recall his report on the 2007 speech of Sultan Muhammadu Abubakar.<sup>297</sup> Now we could dismiss that speech as a typical Muslim cry about anti-Muslim conspiracies and keeping women in their place. Please go there and note the highlighted sentence in the quote. Here is one place in Nigeria where Christians and even non-religionists concurred with Muslims, the other one being football. And here is one time even Wole Soyinka, that thorn in the Nigerian Muslim flesh,<sup>298</sup> concurred with Muslim opinion in no uncertain way. It seemed like a typical case of a common enemy uniting opponents. Ekwowusi explained further:

*One cannot agree more with the Sultan. As the preserver of the great cultural heritage of the North; as purveyor of great Islamic values and as a respected traditional ruler in the country favoured by many across the geo-political, ethnic, religious and cultural divides as the man we need to forge ahead in the task of building one virile Nigeria devoid of religious violence, the Sultan’s alarm should not be dismissed with a wave of the hand. You will recall that about two weeks ago, Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka raised a similar alarm that the West is destroying other nations by importing its bad values to them. Also, if you have been a keen watcher of world events, you would have observed that over the years the West has been consistently ambushing Africa and trying to throttle it to death with all kinds of strange Western values and lifestyles. Last year, aided and abetted by some foreigners, some sick Nigerians took to the streets in agitation for the legalization of homosexuality in Nigeria, all in the name of rights. These days one can hardly watch any entertainment program on TV because it is filled with trash. Look at the shameful revealing dress of our daughters of Eve, all in the name of freedom; all in the name of modernity. This is the conflict between modernity, our traditional values and*

<sup>296</sup> *Companion CD* <Misc Arts/Syncretism...>. Google “Chrislam” and you will get a screen full!

<sup>297</sup> J. Boer, 2009, Appendix 6, pp. 159-160.

<sup>298</sup> J. Boer, 2005, vol. 4, p. 234; 2007, vol. 6, pp. 321-322.

*religious values. Agreed, culture is dynamic, but it is suicidal for Nigeria to continue to swallow wrong Western values hook, line and sinker. If Nigeria must grow, it must grow with its own cultural heritage. Our democracy will remain stunted unless it is firmly rooted in our cultural values.*

Ekwowusi did not write from mere suspicion or ignorance. He described his own credentials as follows: “As a lawyer and a writer who has attended most of the international conferences where the idea of legalization of abortion, homosexuality, prostitution and contraceptives in Nigeria was mooted, I think I am qualified to explain the real meaning of CEDAW and reproductive health.” Unfortunately, space prevents me from going into further details, but I do strongly urge you to read Ekwowusi’s article in its entirety. It addresses issues that also worry other nations.<sup>299</sup>

### iii. HIV/AIDS Campaign *hachac xxxx*

One specific area in which practical dialogue is already taking place extensively is that of HIV/AIDS education and prevention. Kaine Nwashili was/is National Director of the Inter-faith HIV/AIDS Council of Nigeria. It serves as an “interfaith group offering its services to the faith community in Nigeria.” I offer an expanded version of the story, including sections of Nwashili’s speech to clarify this programme of dialogue in action involving Christians of all stripes and Muslims, all at the highest leadership levels. You will recognize some of the names.<sup>300</sup>

With Onaiyekan and Adegbite at the helm, two genuine gentlemen, the organization enjoys the support of the giants of the land. I cannot imagine a more hopeful dialogical situation. Though they respectively head organizations that are often at loggerheads with each other, there is no way that this new partnership will not force them into more positive relationships that will also affect their other relationships. Of course, it does help that both of these men have always been more amiable, moderate, tolerant and well spoken even in tense situations.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>299</sup>S. Ekwowusi, 17 July/2007. Appendix 52. On this very day of writing, the CBC, Canada’s premier TV system, featured a programme on the lack of births in many nations and its dark implications for the future.

<sup>300</sup>K/ Nwashili, 15-17 Dec/2003; 1 Sep/2004. J. Boer, 2009, Appendix 68.

<sup>301</sup>I have at hand a report by a participant at the initial meeting of the Council. He wrote: “I attended and participated in the meeting in 2002 at the Yar’adua Centre. It was a good meeting. Unfortunately, from my point of view, it was typical of a lot of AIDS-related things. It made a big splash on the news that evening, and spent the money allocated for that purpose, but nothing much has come out of it. I think I have heard of one follow-up meeting. More meetings may be good for dialogue, but they are not very good for fighting HIV/AIDS. There was a good spirit in that meeting that day.”

At the end of this section I also draw your attention to another action dialogue venture described in Appendix 53 and initiated by Professor Danny McCain of Unijos in partnership with a wheelchair-bound Unijos law graduate, Ayuba Gufwan. It is an amazing story of dramatic hope and action dialogue, a *must* read.

***Northern Christians Opposed to “The Phantom Crescent”*** XXXX

In Appendix 22 I gave you a summary report on the drama surrounding the play “The Phantom Crescent” written by Muslim human rights activist Shehu Sani. Here we have an unusual case of indigenous core Northern Christians supporting the Muslim community in their defence against accusations by a fellow Muslim, even though Binta Jalingo, an MB convert from Islam, described Sani as a man receiving Muslim threats for being a man of his word.<sup>302</sup> Christians usually approve of Muslim human rights workers, but in this case there was a significant exception. A group calling itself “Concerned Northern Christians” disassociated itself from the play and supported the ban for a number of reasons. They disliked Sani’s denouncing the Muslim icon Usman Danfodio, for whom they expressed “high regard and respect.” Yes, Christians initially opposed the expanded sharia, but that was because they “were only fighting for justice and freedom,” while they agreed that sharia “was a divinely prescribed way of life for every Muslim which is allowed by the Constitution.” The group’s spokesman, Mr. Yunana Shibkai, a former Senior Special Adviser (Religious Affairs) to former Governor [now Senator] Sani, described the play as “a grand design by some foreign powers using Nigerians like Shehu Sani to ignite another bout of religious crisis in the North.” It represented an attempt “to destabilise the North and the FG by hiding behind a dubious authority to instigate Muslims against Christians and we are strongly opposed to it.”

These were unusual sounds for Christians and they lead directly to the question of identity. Who were these “Concerned Northern Christians”? Whom did they represent? “We Christians in the Northern states”—the self-identification used by Shibkai-- is a pretty wide designation that normally would surely include CAN. I have never heard of them before and find it difficult to interpret their statement. This statement was so contrary to main stream Christian thought. This is an another example of the different attitude and approach of core Northern

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<sup>302</sup>B. Jalingo, 2001, p. 44.

indigenous Christians that has occasionally led to friction between them and CAN.<sup>303</sup> Opponents of sharia often accuse its advocates of trying to destabilise the country. Now an opponent is accused of the same by Christians! And that by indigenous core Northern Christians who are reportedly so oppressed by sharia folk! Go figure! I confess to being a bit lost!

## **Insets    xxxx**

### **Inset 1--Emman Usman Shehu: The Christian Response    eush    xxxx**

Emman Usman Shehu of Sokoto, wrote a paper around 1995 that I introduced in Volume 3.<sup>304</sup> Here I reproduce two sections of his paper, namely “The Christian Response” and “Our Strategies.” The response and strategies are Shehu’s reaction to the alleged Muslim plan to overtake the country. Though sharia is not mentioned much, it definitely is there in the shadow. A name that is not mentioned here but that is always in the shadow of these discussions on both sides is that of the Sardauna, Ahmadu Bello. Shehu published a couple of articles about this man that supports the picture painted of him by Tanko Yusuf. Between the two of them along with the sympathetic but telling biography of the man by John Paden we get a picture of a master politico-religious manipulator far from the mythical image that especially Muslims have of him.<sup>305</sup> A more realistic understanding of him provides you with a more solid foundation for understanding the religious friction in Nigeria.

#### **1. The Christian Response**

*Our situation in Nigeria, especially in the North has come about because of our lack of discernment, complacency and refusal to stand up for what we believe in.*

*Truly as Christians we are not given the mandate to establish a Christian republic.*

*Christ wants us to be the salt of the earth so that His blessings may show forth wherever we are. There cannot be a Christian country until Jesus comes. We make a mistake to think of America and Britain as Christian countries; they are not. The West is not*

<sup>303</sup>S. Babadoko, 15 Oct/2007. J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, p. 178. See Appendix 22 for this and more articles on the subject.

<sup>304</sup>J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 40-41. Another part of his paper is reproduced in vol. 3, pp. 263-264, but credited to another organization who used the same material. I have in my possession only sections B-D, pp. 4-9. Since I do not know the title of the entire paper, I use the title of Section C for the whole part of the paper reproduced here: “The Christian Response.”

<sup>305</sup>E. Shehu, 28 Sep/2000, 5 Oct/2000. Appendix 54. L. Grissen, 1995, pp. 80-81. J. Paden, 1986, especially chapter 6.

*essentially Christian. Some of the countries were founded on Christian principles but have long strayed away, following the philosophy of secular humanism.*

*As Christians in the North we have to see ourselves as the instruments God can use to save this country before “the harvest is past, the summer ended, and we are not saved” (Jeremiah 8:20).*

*Truly ours is a spiritual warfare, but the battle is not only in the spiritual realm, because the physical is also a manifestation of the spiritual. Thus every Christian in the North is automatically called to service. He has to be involved wherever he is, whatever his calling is. Every profession is a potential mission field. So every Christian is a missionary and a soldier of Christ.*

*The underlying purpose of our response is that of love. Our God is a God of love. We cannot fold our arms and watch so many people placing their trust in Islam, heading for destruction, and destroying us also in the process. If the followers of Islam are increasing their efforts to win the hearts and minds of the world, we must redouble our own efforts to reach [everyone] with the Gospel of Christ.*

## **2. Our Strategies**

[Note from Boer: Here and there I will make a comment in non-italics.]

*a. Personal Evangelism: The mass crusades and revivals are clearly not working in our favour; instead they make it easy for the establishment to confine us within our churches. We must now emphasise personal evangelism so that every one witnesses to at least one Muslim, no matter where, everyday.*

**Boer:** I know a number of ex-Muslim Christian evangelists who regularly conduct public preaching sessions with considerable success. Bonnke, of course, is an extreme example with his huge crowds. Is time for this *really* past in Nigeria?

*b. House Fellowships: Emphasis on building churches has also made it easy for the spread of the Gospel to be curtailed. We must encourage house fellowships as it was in the beginning, so that secret disciples can be ministered to and those seriously seeking the truth can be reached without compromising their safety.*

*The Bible exhorts us to receive those weak in the faith and such reception calls for wisdom in some circumstances.*

**Boer:** Shehu's advice ignores the experience Christians in sharia states have with house churches. Probably a combination of the two will be the most useful.

- c. *Ideas: Christ has given us wisdom. We should not be afraid of expressing our Christian perspective on issues as they arise in our communities, our country and the world. If we refuse to express our ideas, we should not blame anyone if anti-Christian policies are implemented. Hence we should write letters, articles and books covering every sphere of life, not only about Christianity per se.*

**Boer:** Notice the wholistic thrust. Shehu has carried some good things of Islam with him into his new faith.

- d. *Education: We should encourage each other to be educated, not only formally but being abreast of every development. We must not abandon self-education. The lure of materialism is forcing a lot of people to abandon education.*
- e. *Electoral Process: Christians must be involved in politics at all levels. But those running for elective posts must be sure of God's leading, because they, like ministers, will become the yardstick of assessing Christianity in the eyes of non-Christians.*
- f. *Protest: As Christians we have Christ as the Prince of Peace. But because God's foundation is righteousness and justice, we cannot keep quiet when things are done contrary to our convictions. Christ threw out the moneychangers from the temple. He was protesting against a house of worship being turned into a den of thieves. He acted decisively as the... [missing line].*  
*Our protest can be through letter writing, picketing or civil disobedience. Although we recognise that the government in any country is allowed to exist within God's plan and therefore we have to be obedient, we also have the additional responsibility of showing leaders the truth that they are there by God's grace. So if they act contrary to what God has laid down for us, we must make them know this and also show them the way. Civil disobedience is Biblical. Moses' parents, Daniel and friends, Peter and John, all openly defied the authorities when it became necessary.*

- g. *Media: We must have Christian journalists, reporters, actors, writers, singers, film directors, etc. So too Christians who own newspapers etc. The media is too powerful a tool to be left in the hands of people who do not care what goes in and what goes out. The numerous cases of misuse and abuse are all too familiar.*
- h. *Exposure: We must be able to tell ourselves some home truths, especially when we are wrong. We must be on the lookout for wolves in sheep clothing.*
- i. *The Family: The family is society's basic building block. We must strengthen the family and teach our children the Word, so that even if there are no Christian schools, we have no fear. We have to be careful too about the nursery schools and day care centres we send our children to and see to it that we provide home-education after school.*
- j. *Intercession: We must live prayerful lives. Christ showed it is possible. As his disciples, we know that this is the key for overcoming. So we must soak our houses, streets, communities, offices, state, country and the world with prayer. We must encourage vigils, jogging prayers, drive-around-prayers, Friday cell prayers, all kinds of prayers we can think of.*

*The aforementioned are only a tip of the iceberg of our strategies. Just as there are diverse gifts, so too strategies. If we are open to the Spirit, He will show us more.*

*Our strategies are not those of violence. Our strategies arise from the relevance of the Christian faith. Our strategies are based on the politics of love. Our strategies are inspired by Christ who is not only the Saviour of the world but also the Prince of Peace. Our strategies are drawn to honour the one and only true God who created Hausas, Ibos, Fulanis, Idomas, Igalas, Gbagyis, Yorubas, Nupes, Ogonis, etc., and sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for the sins of all. And He resurrected as assurance of salvation for all those willing to accept Him as the way, the truth, and the life.*

### **Inset 2—Archbishop John Olurunfemi Onaiyekan xxxx jonjon**

You may have met Archbishop of Abuja, John O. Onaiyekan, in earlier volumes and you certainly have met him already in this chapter. He has been an ascending star both within the

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Catholic Church and in the country's ecumenical circles, climaxed in June, 2007, by his election as National President of CAN.<sup>306</sup> John Allen, self-described American Catholic Vatican journalist, surmised, "No one gives voice to African Catholicism better than Archbishop John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan of Abuja, Nigeria, the elected president of both the Nigerian Bishops' Conference and the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar."<sup>307</sup> In Volume 7, I have honoured him for his wisdom, moderation and honesty in the struggle for reconciliation and unity. Throughout his writings and actions he displays respect, fairness, eagerness for dialogue and co-operation, but he can also bluntly draw the line. John Allen, describes his attitude as "tough love."

Of course, this inset does not cover all Onaiyekan's output on sharia and related issues. This is a chapter on steps and attitudes required for proposed solutions. Other writings of his are found in other volumes. Check their indices. I am happy to share with you many of his insights on solutions to sharia and related issues.

a. Secularism and Lack of Clarity *xxxx scscsc*

Throughout this series I have pointed to secularism as a great divide between the two religions in Nigeria, at least when it comes to sharia. Onaiyekan's opinion on the subject was largely main stream Christian. A major problem with the notion of secularism, according to Onaiyekan in 2000, is the lack of clarity. Here we have a concept that is—*is*, not simply "is at"--the very eye of the storm between Christians and non-Christians, but about which there is no clarity. He felt that "the debate on secularity has to continue until better clarity is achieved in the matter." Well, as important as that is, we've been here before and will let it go at that.<sup>308</sup> In another lecture he concluded: "It is not enough to keep shouting and saying we do not want sharia. It is important to know exactly what we are talking about. It is also necessary to try all we can to let others understand how we feel."<sup>309</sup> The key word here is "clarity." Bemuddling things only leads to mudslinging and beyond....

b. Political Issues *xxxx pipipi*

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<sup>306</sup>See the following sources about this election: Catholic Information Service to Africa (CISA), 22 Jun/2007. P. Dada, 26 June/2007.

<sup>307</sup>J. Allen, 10 Mar/2006.

<sup>308</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 21 June/2000, p. 6. J. Boer, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 24-33.

<sup>309</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 2001.

Onaiyekan believed that the Zamfara sharia issue was a political problem that required political solutions. He wrote:

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*Those who have introduced the sharia as state law have taken political decisions. There is no greater proof of this than that these decisions are being taken by politicians, governors who claim to pass laws and bills through state assemblies. There is nothing more political than this.*

*The challenge for Christians therefore is that the political move must be met by a political response. Religious rights are political rights. The right to follow whatever religion I choose is not a religious issue. It is a political matter. Therefore it is the duty of the Christian politician to ensure that his religious rights are respected, as much as his economic and social rights. In fact, in the case of the sharia, we have found that the injunctions of the sharia have economic and social implications for the Christian. It is up to him, as a Christian citizen, to adequately respond to such challenges.<sup>310</sup>*

*What has happened in Nigeria is that the conflict provoked by an Islamic agenda has brought out in very clear terms what the dynamics before us are. The single greatest factor in the conflict is sharia, and we're in the fifth year of its application. In the last five years, it's become very clear to most Nigerians that most of these conflicts are politically manipulated. The promoters of sharia are not motivated by the love of Allah, but because it's one way of getting an edge over non-Muslims. In other words, it's a selfish political agenda.*

*Our conflicts are not over theology, but over issues often cloaked in theology that have social, economic, and political implications. If you control the law, you control the people. Non-Muslims have nothing against Islam, but they're not willing to accept that one must be a Muslim in order to have full rights under the law.*

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*It's interesting that for the most part, it's not the religious leaders pushing for sharia, but the Muslim politicians. Christians have seen this very clearly, and have learned not to allow the politicians to manipulate things in this direction.<sup>311</sup>*

In his 2001 Enugu lecture, Onaiyekan wanted “to look on the whole sharia phenomenon and identify what the Christian should be doing about it, for the good of the nation and obviously for the good of the Christian faith as well.” He began by tackling some negative approaches that

<sup>310</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 23 Mar/2001.

<sup>311</sup>J. Allen, 10 Mar/2006.

“have only led to dead ends.” The first one he rejected was that of *violence*. “At the end of the day the violence does not resolve anything.” “We have to do our best to remain non-violent. Our Christian faith enjoins us to live in peace with everyone. It is difficult to justify violence on the basis of our Christian faith, even though at times legitimate self-defence can justify a proportionate violent reaction.”

*Partition* was the second response he rejected; that is, “that we divide the nation into Muslim and Christian zones in order to have peace.” “Is it really impossible for Christians and Muslims to live side by side with equal rights, in every state of the federation? I believe that it is possible. In fact, we have been doing so to a large extent in most parts of the country until recently.”

The third rejection was the *Canon Law* approach, that would include leaving Muslims with their sharia. This proposal, he submitted, was based on ignorance. Every church has its own rules. “How does one handle such a variety of laws in a country like Nigeria? It would be a recipe for chaos. We must therefore look for a more realistic and positive response to the challenges of sharia in our land.”<sup>312</sup>

One of the things that needed to be understood is that sharia has both a religious and a political dimension. The religious aspect should cause no problem, since there has never been a riot over the different views about central issues such as views about Jesus or God. In the matter of “public morality” the most important issue is “the basic assumption of the sharia that we must live according to God’s law.” Christians agree. There are many shared views about stealing, dishonesty, need for peace, etc., etc. The problems are more in the political sharia. The entire sharia saga in the North is political and operated out of the political realm by politicians. In these sharia states, it is the right of the majority that is given priority, while the rights of the minority are ignored or even suppressed.<sup>313</sup>

Onaiyekan also felt the need for greater clarity in the political realm. The time had come for “a proper civilian administration” to take the time to review all the constitutions that have come and gone “so as to come to agreement on the guidelines for the life of the nation.” He was hoping that perhaps this could be achieved by a “sovereign national conference” that eventually was held as the NPRC, but that ended up avoiding all religious issues, including sharia. A

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<sup>312</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 2001. J. Boer, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 38, 51, 65, 257 and Appendix 6; 2008, vol. 7, pp.80-90, 431 and Appendix 1.

<sup>313</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 2001.

constitution needed to be hammered out that “will be approved and promulgated by the people of Nigeria as a whole. This is a challenge that still lies before us.” “It is within that kind of general review that the issues of sharia will find their proper and final solution.” That challenge included not only the need to clarify but also to solve various contradictions. A most blatant example was the declaration of an extended sharia while denying having declared an official religion. And then: Is legal pluralism possible in a nation, with every major community having its own laws? He gives his own answer: When “we say ‘No’ to sharia, it is because we see that the good of our nation demands that the laws of our land should be equal for all. We see this as the only way to ensure a future that is strife-free and promote the free and happy collaboration of all citizens in the task of nation building.”<sup>314</sup>

Census and majority issues have often emerged as deciding factors. Onaiyekan was ill at ease with that emphasis. He argued,

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*We are told by the governments that have imposed sharia that they are acting on the basis of the wishes of the majority in the various Houses of Assembly. It is necessary to state clearly that there are areas where majority position must prevail. But there are other areas where even the minority has rights. One of these areas is precisely the area of fundamental human rights, like the right to freedom of religion. It is expected that Christians who feel themselves deprived of their fundamental right in this area, will pursue the matter resolutely through the law courts, from the lower courts to the highest level. A great challenge on the Christian community in general is to devise ways and means of supporting and encouraging such moves. Unfortunately it is the poor people in the villages, unable to fight for their rights, who are most oppressed in this way. Generally, the elites are able to take good care of themselves.*<sup>315</sup>

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In a 1985 lecture Onaiyekan had words of caution for the FG as well as suggestions for corrections that he regarded important. The architects of the Constitution made a wise choice, he declared, and then warned, “Any attempt to alter that arrangement would be to invite trouble.” Though the Zamfara Declaration was still 15 years away, attempts at broadening the sharia coverage in one way or another had already been made since the first CA of 1978 and were in the air all those years. He warned against that attempt as it would undermine the secularity of the

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<sup>314</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 21 June/2000, pp. 8-9, 13.

<sup>315</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 2001

Constitution as Christians understood it. “To preserve our religious peace, public authority should scrupulously avoid giving the impression that the FG is giving special treatment to a particular religion,” he warned.

In the Nigerian situation of pluralism, there are two major roles for any government to observe, a positive and a negative one. Positively, “the role of the State should be to ensure peace, tolerance and fair play.” It should furthermore “respect the autonomy of religious authority in its specific areas of competence” and give space for each religion to carry out its functions. If a religion demands pilgrimage, the Government should not obstruct. Same for running schools and hospitals. Negatively, “the State should not command what a religion forbids.” E. g., “it should not force religions to practise birth control or abortion if these offend a religion. Enforcing teetotalism may be favoured by one religion but not by another.” And then Onaiyekan listed the traditional issues that Christians have complained about ever since: land for churches, teaching of CRK, access to mass media and others. Here there is need for “equity and fair play” if there is to be peace. Onaiyekan did not utter any threats or even complaints, but the thrust was unmistakable.<sup>316</sup>

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#### c. Unity and Mutual Support *xxxx umsums*

Like others, Onaiyekan insisted strongly on unity and mutual support among Christians, but also for the entire citizenry, including Muslims. Speaking on religious education in schools, he mourned that “at times, the problems are aggravated by the inability or unwillingness of the religious bodies to work together in mutual tolerance and understanding.” That being the case, he insisted on the great need to hold seminars on that subject.<sup>317</sup>

He was especially concerned that Christians in non-sharia states stand by their fellow Christians under sharia pressure. “The Christian community must learn to be one another’s keeper. We expect that the poor Christians in the villages of the sharia states will not be left to fight alone a futile battle. Christians all over the country should be ready to come to their aid, not to shoot, burn or kill, but to insist on the respect of the religious rights of everyone.” “We must also take the trouble to visit those places and show solidarity to our brothers who are often in a weak and minority situation. There is need for practical strategy for resolving the matter in a way that leads to peace, unity and tranquility in our nation.”

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<sup>316</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 1985, pp. 8-10.

<sup>317</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 12985, p. 2.

Onaiyekan was concerned also about national unity, including a sense of belonging for the two religions. “We need to insist that it is better for us all to live together as one nation. Fortunately, most Muslims do not support partitioning the country.” Again: “One of the problems of the sharia controversy is that it has tended to split the nation down the middle into Muslims and non-Muslims. Luckily many Muslims do not want that kind of split. But we need to continue to insist that it is better for us all, if we should live together as one nation.”

His interest in national unity was not only political, also religious. The sharia controversy has split the nation in two, but Christians have the mandate to live in peace with everyone.

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*The Christian in particular has the duty to do all he can to live at peace with everyone. We have the mandate to work for the unity of the human community, to struggle for the common good, not just for the good of Christians. It is hoped that those who tend to give the impression that they are only concerned about Islamic rights will eventually understand that there are others too who have rights and that it is best for the whole community if we pursued the rights of all. It is a basic element of the Catholic social doctrine that the common good must be pursued in all our political efforts. It is indeed the pursuit of the common good that justifies giving authority and power to rulers. A ruler who does not pursue the good of all citizens has no right to be obeyed. A lot of challenges therefore are before us in our country today.*

*In the long run, it is certainly better for the whole nation if we can work together, each one enjoying full freedom to practise one’s own religion but imposing nothing on anybody else. That is the position that has been devised in many countries that we consider progressive. We have to learn from others. Our country is such that we cannot afford to start a religious war between Christians and Muslims. We have no choice than to live together and we cannot live together if we do not have the same rights and common objectives. This is a challenge not only for us Christians but for our Muslim citizens and neighbours too.<sup>318</sup>*

*d. Morality* xxxx mormor

A major issue in the sharia clash has been that of morality. Though Muslims have repeatedly berated Christians for alleged indifference to morality and even for being responsible

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<sup>318</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 2001.

for its low public level, you will have noted earlier in this chapter that the Catholic Church and President Yar'adua are working on a co-operative plan to elevate the moral level of the nation. In consonance with every Christian tradition, Onaiyekan insisted that Christians are as concerned as Muslims. However, it is not a matter of needing new laws, but, rather, of applying existing laws.

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*We want also to observe that we say "Yes" to greater efforts to improve public morality. No one is satisfied with what we see around us. We are talking not only of little thieves and hungry pilferers, who are more likely to have their hands chopped off. We are talking also and especially of the big thieves in high places who steal and loot in billions of naira without ever facing trial in any court. Most of these VIP brigands and bandits often appear very devout in whatever religion they claim to practice. Therefore, there is a need for a better application of the laws that exist.*<sup>319</sup>

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Let us hear how he saw issues of public morality as he put it in his 2001 Enugu lecture:

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*A greater challenge, however, is for us Christians to identify the areas where we share common values with Muslims in the matter of public morality. The most important of this is the basic assumption of the sharia that we must live according to God's law. Christians agree with Muslims in this regard and there is a lot of room for joint action in this matter. While in some areas we may not agree on what God's will really is, in many cases we have complete agreement. For example, we all agree that it is wrong to steal. It is wrong to be dishonest. It is right to live in peace with one another. It is important to live a disciplined life. It is important to pray to God and acknowledge his sovereignty. All these are values that we share together and we should do all we can to promote them, supporting one another in our efforts to live according to those shared values. One of the great tragedies of the sharia controversy is that it tends to blind us to these many areas where we agree and where common action can do a lot to improve the moral tone of our society. For example, much effort is expended breaking the pots of "burukutu" [locally brewed beer] of poor villagers, and nothing is done to restrain the corruption and high-handedness of high government officials. We surely know which is more serious in God's eyes. It is a challenge for Christians and for Muslims too, to find ways and means of joining hands with one another to promote those religious values that we all have in common.*

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<sup>319</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 21 June/2000, pp. 8-9, 13.

*The sharia as religion also has the pre-occupation to improve the moral tone of society in line with God's will. That too is a pre-occupation for us as Christians. In the prayer that the Lord Jesus taught us, we pray everyday that "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven" and we believe that this world will be a wonderful place if we all lived according to God's injunctions. Here Christians and Muslims can join hands to ensure that their respective membership live as much as they can according to their religious convictions.*

*e. Tough Love xxxx tltrl*

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We have already overheard how during the AZ years some Christian leaders developed second thoughts about turning the other cheek. Onaiyekan was one of them. His thoughts here were triggered by the general insecurity plaguing Christians. Bahago reported that Onaiyekan had “accused the government of failing to protect Christians during religious riots that have left more than 200 dead, and he urged church followers to defend themselves. Obasanjo's government had failed to "ensure safety and security of life", Onaiyekan said. Though no one can accuse him of warmongering or of encouraging violence, Onaiyekan did observe that “Nigeria's Christians are tired of turning the other cheek.” “It is a Christian duty to protect yourself.”<sup>320</sup> Onaiyekan did not elaborate, but it was not the only time he expressed himself in this vein. John Allen interpreted the general Christian attitude: “Whatever rough peace exists today... comes with a sobering footnote. Most Christians, as well as some Muslims, believe it has been achieved in part because Christians learned to fight fire with fire – in other words, because the Christians answered violence from the Muslim side with violence of their own.” Then he reported the following scene:

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*During a mid-March lunch at the Abuja residence of Archbishop Renzo Fratini, the papal Nuncio in Nigeria, a visiting journalist was asked for impressions of the country. When he summarized what Nigerian Christians had told him, Archbishop Fratini expressed reservations, saying that self-defense in a Christian spirit should be nonviolent. Archbishop Onaiyekan insisted that Christians have the right to disarm an unjust aggressor, with force if necessary. Virtually every Nigerian Catholic head around the table nodded in agreement.*

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<sup>320</sup>H. Bahago, 28 Nov/2002.

Allen commented:

*Archbishop Onaiyekan embodies an approach to Islam one might call “tough love.” He’s every inch a man of dialogue, as his session at National Mosque illustrates. Recently, the Catholic church in Abuja and a grass-roots body called the Muslim Consultative Forum co-sponsored a panel on the 2007 elections in Nigeria. Yet Archbishop Onaiyekan also told National Catholic Reporter that he feels the church’s approach to Islam has suffered because too many policy makers had their primary experience of Islam in the Middle East, where Christians are a tiny minority, and hence mere tolerance is considered a major achievement. In fact, he said, Christians should push Muslims for much more – specifically, to recognize the legitimacy of a non-confessional state in which all religions are equal before the law. What has taken shape in Nigeria under his leadership may thus be a model of Muslim/Christian relations well-suited for the “frank and sincere” spirit of Pope Benedict XVI. Nigerian Christians know peaceful co-existence with Muslims is possible, because most have Muslim neighbors, colleagues and friends. At the same time, they believe experience has taught them that in dealing with religious zealots and bullies, strength has to be answered with strength.<sup>321</sup>*

f. Tolerance, Dialogue, Co-operation *rtrtrt xxxx*

Onaiyekan pointed out that there was never a valid *religious* reason for the violence and riots of the past decades.

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*From the purely religious point of view, it is my strong conviction that there is really no need for any controversy. After all, Christians and Muslims have learnt to live together with very different dogmatic positions. It is interesting to note that the most important area of difference between Christians and Muslims has never been a cause of conflict in Nigeria. That area of difference is precisely with regard to the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whether he is God or not. It is this which clearly distinguishes the Muslim from the Christian. We have been able to live with our differences in this serious matter. Therefore we can live with our differences as far as the religious dimensions of the sharia is concerned.*

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<sup>321</sup>J. Allen, 30 Mar/2007.

Again differences in culture and custom should not lead to hostility either. Differences with respect to alcohol, polygamy or inheritance are real, but we should be tolerant of these differences and not force our practices on each other.

*Muslims say that all alcohol is forbidden by God, that is their understanding of God's law. All that is required is that no one forces them to drink alcohol. It is not necessary that the law of the land forbids it to all, including those who do not accept that law. Similarly, Catholics believe that marriage should be monogamous and indissoluble. That is our conviction about God's law, and no one or law should force a Catholic to marry more than one wife or to divorce his wife or husband. Just as we cannot forbid Muslims to be polygamous, so must Muslims not forbid us drinking alcohol.*

Indeed, Onaiyekan observed, "we have been getting on with one another peacefully in these areas." Nevertheless, "it is a great challenge for the Christian in every part of our country to insist on his or her right to live according to his own faith."<sup>322</sup>

We are talking about tolerance. Onaiyekan delivered an extensive lecture on the subject. He pointed out that the need for this "is so obvious that there is not much to say about it beyond stressing it again." The survival of Nigeria needs "readiness to co-exist" and to do so peacefully. "This demands an attitude of tolerance which, in its lowest form, is the readiness to acknowledge that the other is different and has a right to be what he chooses." As history has taught us, the alternative includes "wars, hatred and violence."

There are three types of tolerance, according to Onaiyekan. They are tolerance based on ignorance, on indifference and on "truth and conviction." The first is too fragile. When people learn more about each other, this kind of tolerance dissipates. The one based on indifference is held by "people with shallow convictions" who "do not consider religion a serious matter." The third type is a "tolerance that has clear ideas about religion and firm convictions about one's own stand and still finds room in the heart for those who differ." This kind is a "difficult type of tolerance, but also the truest and most genuine, for it is based on mutual respect and trust. It is the only type that can consciously move from the negative to the positive affirmation that, in spite of all our differences, 'we are friends and brothers.'" This genuine tolerance begins with dialogue.

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<sup>322</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 23 Mar/2001.

Tolerance includes the important recognition of “religious pluralism.” It involves the recognition not only of various religions, “but also that every one of them has a right to exist within the provisions and under the protection” of the Constitution. We all have the right to choose our religion, to change it when we choose to do so or even “have no religion at all.”

Tolerance also includes the freedom to propagate one’s religion. “We all have our own ideas of the ideal religious situation. Christians make no secret of their ardent desire that all men should accept Jesus as Saviour and Muslims have every right to wish that every Nigerian should embrace Islam.” In fact, “everyone has the right to use all the legitimate means to work towards the perceived ideal.” “Tolerance cannot mean that we shall no longer preach and seek adherents.” Furthermore, we cannot create religious “zones.” Christians should not resent Muslims preaching where the former are dominant nor vice versa.

Tolerance for the right to propagate, however, does have its limits. It is neither acceptable for a Christian group to set up loudspeakers in front of a mosque on Friday afternoon nor for Muslims to do the same in front of a church on Sunday. We should “agree on some ground rules” for public preaching. For one, it should be *positive* about what your religion offers without condemning or ridiculing “what others consider sacred.” There is need for *humility*, for none of us can “grasp the whole truth about God.” We must accept the notion that “God might have something different, yet true, to say about Himself to others.” Then there is the need for *gentleness*. “If God is love,” then “we cannot preach Him with hatred and bitterness in our hearts. We must consciously suppress all feelings of rancour against others, and refuse to be angry even when provoked.” Onaiyekan ended his lecture with advice to Christians. He reminded them of Romans 12:18—“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live peacefully with all.” “It is the advice which Christian in Nigeria should observe.”<sup>323</sup>

The upshot of this section is that Onaiyekan was a fervent advocate of dialogue and co-operation between the two religions. He had come to recognize the need for Christians to know and understand sharia. Often Christians have inadequate appreciation for sharia. “Maybe, if more effort were made to explain what the sharia means, it will be easier for Christians to respond in a positive way. This symposium programme [Boer: the one at which he was delivering this lecture] is therefore a step in the right direction.” The same, of course would be true for Muslims who also often do not “understand the feelings of Christians.” It even seemed

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<sup>323</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 1985, pp. 3-8, 10.

“that Muslims are at times not too well informed about the *sharia*, and therefore give Christians a wrong impression.”<sup>324</sup> He regretted that “one of the great tragedies of the sharia controversy is that it tends to blind us to these many areas where we agree and where common action can do a lot to improve the moral tone of our society.”<sup>325</sup>

Onaiyekan was eager for dialogue with Muslims as the materials below testify. However, he did not consider it an easy task. John Allen asked him, “Christian leaders are seeking genuine Islamic partners with whom to talk. Are you finding them?” Onaiyekan identified various difficulties with dialogue, most of them within the Muslim community.

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*It's not so easy to do. There are no bishops in Islam. I can find a theologian who may have brilliant ideas, but he has no pastoral authority. We can meet with the emirs and sultans, but often they have very little theological preparation.*

*The politicians often get their fuel not from the emirs and sultans, but the imams, who are sometimes young, hotheaded Islamic fanatics. Many have studied in Iran, Afghanistan, at Al-Azhar in Egypt. These imams have a power base among the poor people.*

*The emirs originally didn't like the sharia, and they claim to be the legitimate leaders of the Muslims, pointing to the caliphate that existed for 200 years. They're often skeptical of what they call the “little preachers” in the squares. The imams, meanwhile, say there's no room for emirs and sultans, that the Quran makes no provision for these offices. The governors who are elected in Muslim-majority regions need popular support and generally line up with the imams. The emirs thus end up going along with the currents. One told me personally that he was opposed to sharia, but if he said so publicly, they would burn down his palace tomorrow.*

*By the way, the Christians don't have a common position either. There's a wide gulf between the relatively positive view of Islam of Catholics, and those Pentecostals and Evangelicals who say that Allah is nothing more than an idol in the Arabian desert. That complicates things.*<sup>326</sup>

Onaiyekan showed he had style in the following incident told by John Allen:

*On a sunny afternoon in early March, an unusual delegation arrived at Nigeria's National Mosque in downtown Abuja. It was composed of Archbishop John Onaiyekan of*

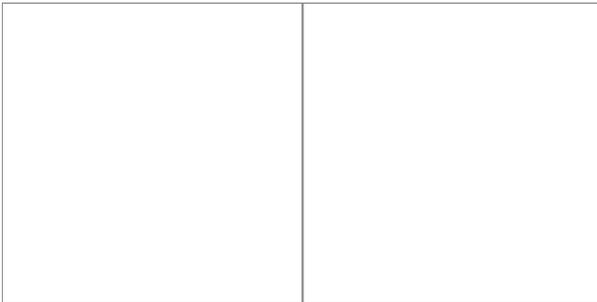
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<sup>324</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 2001.

<sup>325</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 2001.

<sup>326</sup>J. Allen, 10 Mar/2006.

*Abuja, plus the Jesuit president of a local Catholic school and a visiting American Catholic journalist. For more than two hours, the group spoke with Abubakr Siddique Mohammed, a noted Islamic commentator, and several other leading Nigerian Muslims. The group included several Muslim women, one of whom took an active role in the back-and-forth.*



*Archbishop Onaiyekan and his Muslim*

*hosts found much common ground. Yet they sparred too, especially over sharia. One Muslim argued that since Nigerian civil law is based upon English common law, Nigerian Muslims are already subject to a Christian legal code, so it's hypocritical of Christians to say that law and religion should not mix. When another Muslim said that Christians could take a case before a Sharia Court, Archbishop Onaiyekan shot back, "That's not a right we recognize. ... It's not a right we want."*

*Always, however, the conversation was civil and deeply respectful, and both sides repeatedly returned to the need for consensus.*

*After the meeting broke up, one of the Muslims escorted his Catholic guests on a tour of the enormous domed mosque, just as afternoon prayers were ending. Archbishop Onaiyekan was dressed in a red-and-white clerical gown with a pectoral cross. As the group stood in the center of the mosque, a knot of men approached the guide. They angrily demanded to know by what right Christian clergy had been invited into the mosque. One of them spit out a Hausa word which means, roughly, "abomination." Before things could get out of hand, Archbishop Onaiyekan made a quick exit.<sup>327</sup>*

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<sup>327</sup>J. Allen, 30 Mar/2007.

I have introduced you to NIREC in the previous chapter.<sup>328</sup> Onaiyekan was most impressed with the NIREC model. By 2006 it had proliferated to other African countries and he highly recommended it for all of Africa. He concluded a speech delivered in Burundi with these words:

*Coming from Nigeria, I know how important it is for religious leaders not to allow themselves to be manipulated by politicians. The best way to prevent this, and to make it possible for religious groups to work together for the common good is a sincere and effective structure for inter-religious collaboration. This should of course start with those who are supposed to be closer to us as followers of Christ. We are not unaware of the challenges of ecumenism in Africa in general. We must nevertheless try our best to draw our fellow Christians closer to us. There is also the approach to Muslims. Here in the Great Lakes Region [of Burundi], the Catholic Church is everywhere the dominant religious group. We should resist the temptation to feel that we do not need to open up to others. On the contrary, our numerical dominance puts a greater responsibility on us to draw others nearer for collaboration. A good and well-tried formula for this are the “National Inter-Religious Councils.” Where these are set up with sincerity of purpose, and at the initiative of the religious communities themselves, with full independence and autonomy of the government, they have been very effective for the promotion of the common good. The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda is working very well, with Cardinal Wamala as President. It can be a model for other countries around here.*<sup>329</sup>

I find it interesting that he refrained from touting Nigeria’s own NIREC, given Nigeria’s reputation among some Africans as the “ugly Nigerian.” Well-placed restraint, Your Lordship!

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g. Onaiyekan’s Concluding Comments and Muslim Praise xxxx *concon*

Onaiyekan’s closing words at the 2000 NIREC conference are also a fitting closure for this inset about him: “Finally, we hope that we shall soon be able to put this debate behind us. There is so much work to be done, to rebuild and renew our nation. We want to be able to put all our energies together on this common journey to make Nigeria a great nation. Government should be more forthcoming with words and deeds that will refocus the citizens away from

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<sup>328</sup>Appendix 1, p. xxxx?

<sup>329</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 28 July/2006.

sterile debates and controversies.”<sup>330</sup> In to his 2001 lecture, he concluded that we must resolve the sharia matter “in a way that leads to peace, unity and tranquility in our nation. Until this matter is resolved, there can be no real peace in our land”<sup>331</sup>

In Appendix 1 we read the very harsh condemnation of the clergy by Alhaji Lai Mohammed, leader of Action Congress (AC), one of Nigeria’s opposition parties.<sup>332</sup> He selected the name of one exception to the crowd—the name of John Onaiyekan. He was one clergy who dared speak up against the new political regime about their illegitimacy. “AC has commended the Most Reverend John Onaiyekan’s call for fresh elections, describing the call as a forthright and fearless comment on the last general elections.”<sup>333</sup> Honour to whom honour is due. Archbishop, *na gaishe ka*.<sup>334</sup>

### **Inset 3—Yusufu Turaki turtur xxxx +++++**

We have met Turaki in different volumes, but most extensively in Volume 7, Chapter 7. In this section we will examine his recommendations as well as his solutions to the problems caused by sharia. My sources are the papers he shared with me, not his books. He addressed these issues in various contexts, especially in lectures. He disliked superficial, band aid or short-term solutions, but would often go straight to the bottom or root of things, even to the extent of re-writing or deconstructing the standard history of the Danfodio *jihad* in front of his Elders: “How should this historic event be interpreted today so as to give room for justice, peace, rights, freedoms and equality? The *sarakuna*, *talakawa* and *arna* mentality imbedded within the interpretation of this historic event needs exorcism to make way for peace and equality in many places in the Northern States. I do not see Muslims doing that, but Christians. This is the task for Christians to right the historical and religious wrongs.”<sup>335</sup>

In a lecture about the causes of religious conflicts and recommendations in 2002, he began by saying, “Right at the beginning, I wish to make three fundamental assertions,” all of them negative. The denials were:

(1) *It is not possible for us as Nigerians to have a proper grasp of the nature of*

<sup>330</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 21 June/2000, p. 13.

<sup>331</sup>J. Onaiyekan, 2001.

<sup>332</sup>P. xxxx

<sup>333</sup>C. Okocha, 18 Aug/2007.

<sup>334</sup>See Vol. 5, Appendix 1 for more Onaiyekan material.

<sup>335</sup>Y. Turaki, “Social, Political and Economical...,” 2003.

*religious and communal clashes, riots and conflicts in Nigeria today without understanding our primordial and colonial past, what we were and thought about ourselves before the colonial masters came, and what we became and thought about what we have become during the colonial and post-colonial period.*

*(2) It is not possible for us to solve contemporary religious and communal clashes, riots and conflicts in Nigeria without correcting the inherited primordial and colonial structures and negative values, and redressing these legacies if contemporary Nigeria is to be reoriented along the paths and principles of justice, equality, freedom and equity in socio-political relationships of all Nigerians and in the distribution of national resources for the benefit of all by the Government.*

*(3) It is not possible to achieve peace, unity and respect for human dignity and worth if we have not personally and collectively made a deliberate effort and commitment to these noble virtues as the primary goal or end of our dialogue and discourse. First, we must be committed personally and collectively to peace, unity and human rights and see them as the ultimate goal which must be attained, before we can even start to deliberate with each other.<sup>336</sup>*

Turaki broached this type of subject more than once. Philosophical and worldview issues may have been underlying many of the discussions in these volumes, but they have not often been brought to the surface for clear examination. Yusufu Turaki is one of the few Nigerian writers who has long been conscious of underlying subconsciously-held worldviews and considered them very important for the healing of Nigeria. He discussed this in depth in a lecture at NIPSS while he convened a conference on the subject in 1989.<sup>337</sup>

“It is important first of all,” he declared, “that we consider very seriously the problems of political, economic and social development of the Nigerian state and society.” “What have been the major obstacles hindering Nigeria's attainment of good governance and good leadership since independence in 1960?” “Those Nigerian obstacles are not necessarily imbedded in the political, economic, social and religious theories and models of development as proposed by the social scientists, policy-makers and nation-state builders, but are the fundamental ethical and cultural elements imbedded within the Nigerian social environment. They are imbedded in the hidden cultural and ethical values of Nigeria's people groups. They govern the behaviour of groups, regions, religions and individuals.”

<sup>336</sup>Y. Turaki, 7-10 Apr/2002.

<sup>337</sup>Y. Turaki, 30 Oct/89.

“We need to identify those ethical and cultural foundations that have become obstacles to national development, but which are also necessary for good governance, good leadership and stability in Nigeria.”

“Secondly, it has become necessary that we have a second look at all the hypotheses, assumptions, theories and models of political, economic, social and religious development that have been applied by various political regimes in Nigeria.” “Practice and behaviour do conflict as a result of their different cultural and ethical backgrounds. But these can be moderated and resolved if we understand this thoroughly and then move to moderate, harmonize and integrate our practices and behaviour. Intolerance is an attitude that refuses to recognize differences in individual personality or cultural differences among people groups. Given the current national state of affairs, Nigeria needs desperately to address this very import issue in its national life.” “We need to identify the primordial values that have persisted as authority codes that shape, mold and condition our social relationships and interactions among Nigerians and Nigerian ethnic and religious groups.”

“The colonial legacy created a new orientation and focus for the colonial societies.” The ancient values and orientation were replaced by Western ones. All indigenous initiatives were destroyed. The very psyche of the people was undermined. Even after independence, the new colonial values and ethical ideals were upheld. After listing these colonial values, Turaki wrote that they “were incorporated and entrenched in the colonial social order, were later to become the motivating political factors and values” for and of the governing elite. “*The root causes of most of our religious and communal conflict in Nigeria can be traced back to the practices of these negative social values.*” “We need a theoretical frame of reference to help us understand the relationship between culture and modernization. This will shed more light on our understanding of the nature of conflict of values in Nigerian society.”<sup>338</sup>

In a lecture to the Christian Elders’ Forum, he put it this way:

*The loss of our past, origin, identity and primordial values is indeed a serious crisis in the Northern States. This grave loss has contributed immensely in producing crisis and conflict between Christians and Muslims in the Northern States. Who were WE before the arrival of Islam and Christianity? What were our origin, destiny and identity? This great loss is contributory to unnecessary violence, conflict and crisis between Christians and Muslims. Some have lost this sacred origin in the name of religion and foreign*

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<sup>338</sup>Y. Turaki, 18 Feb/2003.

*culture. Instead of using religion and foreign culture to enhance and promote the dignity and rights of one another, some have sought to hide under that and destroy their kith and kin.*

*There is a great need for us to recover our common origin and destiny and use religion to strengthen and protect that. We need to recover the loss,, our common origin and destiny. We need also to uncover our ignorance in matters of religion and foreign culture when used wrongly.*

*The Forum should spearhead a project of recovering our common roots, common grounds and common origin. A lot of unnecessary violence, conflict and crisis between Christians and Muslims can be avoided if we recover all of the common grounds and uncover all our ignorance (jahilci).*

*Christianity has the capacity of preserving a language and culture since it only transforms them and does not destroy them. On the other hand, Islam has the capacity of destroying a language and culture since it eradicates them. Through Bible translation, the missionaries have preserved the languages of many ethnic groups. The greatest social contribution of Christianity to our society is the preservation of our mother tongues through Bible translation. This aspect hardly exists in Islam. Islam does not enculturate, but imposes its language and culture upon a given people. It takes over and eradicates the givens. The contemporary Hausa have lost the original Hausa name of God. They are stocked with only an Arabic name of God, namely Allah. Christian missions have done a profound service by preserving and transforming the Hausa language through Bible translation and orthography. This is one of the greatest achievements of Christianity in the Northern States. The Forum needs to take up this challenge seriously as Hausa language, traditions and culture tend towards Arabization.<sup>339</sup>*

These passages of Turaki need careful reading in order to distill the assignments embedded in them. I am reminded of Ibrahim Sulaiman's writings about how colonialism has distorted the Muslim personality and deconstructed their history. As we have seen so often, Christians and Muslims face the same problems, though often perceive them from different angles. Colonialism with its handmaiden of secularism has largely twisted their entire

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<sup>339</sup>Y. Turaki, Christian Elders' Forum, 2003.

perspectives so that they hardly know themselves anymore. Remember Turaki's story about Nigeria's Christian generals who wallowed in ignorance and, some, in guilt. They were totally cut off from "the historical roots and destiny of their peoples."<sup>340</sup> Not only that, they were "spiritually bankrupt," "morally bankrupt," without "a strong moral base" or "effective ethical structure" and they represented "total failure," according to a Turaki interview with *TC* back in 1993. His description of the utter hopelessness of the military included both Christian and Muslim generals without distinction. "It is a tragedy that the military class was unable to create a conclusive political, social and economic atmosphere and a viable political structure, where people of different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds can live in harmony and peace. What that means is that the military class did not engage itself in a meaningful and successful nation-state building and national integration."<sup>341</sup>

There is no way Nigeria will return to peace unless Nigerians understand themselves, their roots, their culture and undergo a spiritual revival. And there is no way until they are personally committed to peace and all that goes with it. The issues cannot be solved with mere legal tinkering of the Constitution; they go way too deep for that.

Yes, spiritual revival. To secularists, this will sound like a whimpy proposal and in the hands of many Evangelicals it could be, for they have a history of spirituality devoid of worldly savvy because of their dualism. They would pray and pursue their mission without bothering to study political and economic dynamics seriously, let alone do something about them.<sup>342</sup> Turaki's is a wholistic spirituality that encompasses the real world and encouraged him to study it and look for solutions that included spiritual remedies. Nigeria can go on with its destructive path "in infinitum, unless something happens. Our way out of this vicious circle is for us to turn to God and confess our sins and our failures." All leaders, religious and military, are "to call the entire nation to prayer and fasting." These are "indispensable tools for nation building. No nation can become great without having a strong moral, spiritual and ethical basis. Structural engineering without a moral, spiritual and ethical basis leads to nowhere, but only to total doom and ruination."<sup>343</sup>

It was to be a case of *ora et labora*—pray and work. The sad situation being what it is, Turaki challenged the Elders:

<sup>340</sup>Y. Turaki, Christian Elders' Forum, 2003. See J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 5, 287-288.

<sup>341</sup>*TC*, 4/93, pp. 4-6.

<sup>342</sup>J. Boer, 1979, pp. 456-460; 1984, pp. 134-137.

<sup>343</sup>*TC*, 4/93, pp. 6-7.

*For us to succeed in defining who we are and what is our destiny, I want to challenge us to take very seriously the issues raised by this paper. Our situation is not getting better, but getting worse every passing regime. Given this condition, we have to forge a plan of action in order to salvage our destiny which is fast slipping through our fingers. Chief Dr. Solomon Lar suggested that more of us join active politics, with the view of using politics to change our lot. This is good, but would that change our lot?*

He continued his challenge to the Elders: “May I suggest that the Elders Forum engage our politicians, civil servants, the military, scholars and religious leaders in finding our own solutions to our own problems within the Northern States and the Nigerian polity. Indeed our condition will never change, and no one is going to help us change it, unless we do so by ourselves. Nobody ever grants freedom to his slaves, unless forced to do so. Freedom is what you earn.”<sup>344</sup> In 2002, Turaki turned to challenge his own people at Kafanchan, the scene of the first major riot in Kaduna State<sup>345</sup> along similar lines, but now more concretely. He lectured them on their history, culture, religion, etc., and at the end challenged them to rise up and make something of themselves:

*This paper has one singular purpose: to provoke the people of Southern Kaduna to rise up and do something for themselves and for the survival of the destiny and political geography of the area. They cannot blame the colonial masters or the Hausa-Fulani rulers. They can only examine how they have been variously treated and the impact of that upon their socio-political development. What needs to be done is to take history as a starting point and learn lessons for the future. Blaming others and self-pity are not sure ways of solving problems. They only compound them. What political action must the people of Southern Kaduna take to correct the past injustices done to them? The answer lies in their hands and in their God. They need a new liberating exodus. Is that Moses? Or a Prophet? Perhaps, they are so used to slavery and servitude and would want to remain perpetually as slaves. What is the choice? Except if there is a **WILL**.<sup>346</sup>*

This was the deep voice of life-long experience as only a son of the soil could see it and say it—and get away with it! Everyone else would be told to go get some anthropology to learn respect for African culture.

<sup>344</sup>Y. Turaki, Christian Elders’ Forum, 2003.

<sup>345</sup>J. Boer, 2003, vol. 1, pp. 50-55. For additional information check the index entries for “Kafanchan” in all previous volumes.

<sup>346</sup>Y. Turaki, 2 Feb/2002.

The circle continued to widen from Elders, to his own people, to Christians in general. In the face of government silence that will receive attention below, Turaki called on Christians to speak up. They should “express their democratic rights and demonstrate peacefully.” They “must rise up and defend themselves against the use of state machinery, which robs them of their religious, cultural and human rights.”<sup>347</sup> He recognized various weaknesses in the Christian approach to sharia, but declared it of “more value to this debate for Christians to state very powerfully their own historical *experience* of sharia in the Middle East and to some extent in Northern Nigeria.” This is a repeated emphasis of his. Muslim ideas and arguments, some of which may be very good, are not as important for the Christian cause as bringing their experience of sharia to the fore.<sup>348</sup>

Turaki also had words of advice for Muslims. Nigeria is a multi-religious and multi-cultural country. It is a fact no one can escape, and everyone, like it or not, must take into consideration. It is and always will be an imperfect society from both Christian and Muslim perspectives. “And once having come to terms with the situation, we must arrange a social order that is amenable to a rich religious life.” It is incumbent on Muslims “to practice Islam faithfully within an imperfect environment that is dominated by non-Islamic values.” “They must be encouraged to be committed, loyal, and faithful to the Islamic faith and practice sharia to the best of their abilities within this imperfect human society.” Muslims must realize that, “given the imperfect nature of human societies and states, sharia is hardly ever practiced fully, but mostly in some modified form as dictated by the contingencies surrounding Muslims, whether within an Islamic theocracy or outside of it.” In other words, Muslims are urged to allow some compromise and not expect a situation 100% to their liking. The perfect sharia has never happened anywhere.

In these imperfect situations human rights sometimes get squeezed.

*Claims of human rights are actually claims in conflict and which must be moderated if they are not to lead to chaos, conflict and violence. Constituent partners, colleagues, ethnic or religious and cultural entities in dialogue and consultations with each other, must moderate such. It is consensus and agreement that produces the best solution to claims of rights in conflict. A Muslim who calls for the claims of rights in a non-Islamic state, should be aware of the constraints already imposed upon him/her by the fact of this*

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<sup>347</sup> Y Turaki, “Government Involvement.... See J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 293-295.

<sup>348</sup> Y. Turaki, 10-12 July/2003.

*very context alone. Islamic wisdom dictates that a Muslim must make and take a wise decision.*

Again, these clashes must “be moderated through consultation and dialogue. Mutual respect and moderation and, to some extent, a healthy compromise and consensus can be reached as foundations for peaceful and harmonious co-existence of peoples of various cultures and religions.”

Like almost everyone, Turaki was interested in dialogue. He wrote, “In a non-Muslim state like Nigeria, Muslim-Christian relations and dialogue should have developed to a high level. In our situation, both Muslims and Christians must pursue these with great zeal and dogged determination. We have no choice but to engage in serious dialogue in order to arrive at suitable socio-political arrangements that will promote peaceful-coexistence, unity and stability.” The discussion “must go beyond the debate about sharia to finding common ground. We must seek to understand each other and reach some agreement with respect to religious, legal, constitutional and political issues that affect us all.”<sup>349</sup>

Turaki strongly felt that it was the responsibility of the politicians and the Government and its agents to speak up clearly and act in the sharia crisis. While the country was burning, “political cowardice and paralysis” reigned. There was this “uncomfortable silence on the part of the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.” He described it as an “odious and haunting silence.” “Their lips are sealed and sense of justice numbed.” In spite of this paralysis, he insisted that “the FG should probe the manner in which these governors have conducted the sharia agenda.” He asked, “Are they above the law in that they cannot be probed and brought to book?”<sup>350</sup> Turaki kept returning to this theme: “The FG and well-meaning Nigerians must step in and rescue Christians of Northern Origin [CNOs] from the clutches and fangs of sharia strangulation.” “The FG must set up a human rights commission to study and monitor the case of CNOs.”<sup>351</sup> Turaki, more of the same?! You still have faith in that route? I am surprised. Have you forgotten your own experience of a commission of enquiry having dealt with issues only to have them resurface again elsewhere?<sup>352</sup> In the meantime, of course, various governors *have* been probed, but for their role in corruption, not in sharia. By 2008 *that* issue has been allowed to fizzle out—for the time being, at least.

<sup>349</sup>Y. Turaki, 10-12 July/2003.

<sup>350</sup>Y. Turaki, “Government Involvement.... See J. Boer, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 293-295.

<sup>351</sup>Y. Turaki, 10-12 July/2003.

<sup>352</sup>J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 175-179.

In a paper called “Violence,” Turaki addressed issues of non-violence and pacifism. He clearly had respect for these approaches. However, he was not clear on whether he would recommend these as avenues to peace rather than the other classic Christian position of a restricted use of the sword.<sup>353</sup>

But he did offer clear recommendations with respect to the sharply divided population of his home state, Kaduna, in a 2000 memorandum about riots and rights in the State:

*For the sake of peace, unity and stability of Nigeria, the following measures are being recommended:*

1. *The political and religious motives of the Northern Governors sponsoring Sharia debacle in their states must be unearthed and exposed. What would a governor gain by sponsoring sharia in his state?*
2. *Islamic Personal Law in the Penal Code and the Constitution are enough provisions for the Muslims. It is impossible to operate Nigeria or any state in Nigeria as a Theocratic Islamic Republic. Nigeria being a multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country, it is impossible for Nigeria to adopt Islam and make it a state religion. If Muslims reject Islamic Personal Law, than there is nothing left but to divide Nigeria along religious lines. The historical and incessant war of words, religion, ethnicity and land between the peoples of Northern Kaduna and Southern Kaduna demands that they be divided and be given their separate states.*
3. *In Kaduna State, Muslims should continue with the Islamic Personal Law. But if Muslims want full “primitive” sharia then the State must be divided on the basis of territory or land. The boundaries must be drawn based upon tribal boundaries prior to 1900, the inception of the colonial imposition of Hausa-Fulani Muslim rule. We cannot accept colonial boundaries because they were not drawn on the basis of ethnic and religious equity. The boundaries of ethnic nationalities are not yet extant. We cannot take the lands or the territories belonging to the various ethnic nationalities and religious groups in the sate and give it to Islam of colonial construct in the early 1900s.*
4. *It is injustice to CNOs if an Islamic Theocracy is created for the Muslims out of their own state without creating also a similar Christian Theocracy for Christians in the same*

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<sup>353</sup>Y. Turaki, “Violence.”

*state. If Muslims have 100% claims of state, Christians also have the same 100% claims of state. It is matter of justice, equity and basic human rights. All Northern States must know that the Northern Penal Code had separate laws for Muslims and non-Muslims. For this reason, they cannot be partial and unjust by excluding Christian Law.*

*Even without the issue of the Kaduna Sharia riots, the peoples of Southern Kaduna deserve a state of their own. They have been denied consistently what has been freely given to others who do not even deserve it.*

- 5 *FG should set up a Human Rights Commission to monitor Human Rights abuses in Nigeria.*
6. *The National House of Assembly should define what constitutes human rights in the Constitution and legislate provisions to safeguard same for all State Houses of Assembly.*<sup>354</sup>

A separate state for the peoples of Southern Kaduna—also called “Southern Zaria”—as in point 4 above, has long been a Turaki concern. It was the basic issue underlying the Kafanchan (1987) and Zangon Kataf (1992) riots. It was in response to these 1992 riots that he presented a memorandum to the commission investigating them. Representing the voice of his people, he warned, “Unless some ethnic groups in Kaduna State...have their own chiefs and chiefdoms..., there cannot be social justice, as their cultural, political and religious rights have been deliberately and consistently denied them.”<sup>355</sup>

Finally, Turaki called on Christians to copy the Muslim style of expansion by developing a more wholistic form of the religion that will reconstitute the entire culture.

*As Islam re-asserts its dominant position in the region, Christianity must find ways of responding to such dominance without jeopardizing its apostolic and New Testament witness. We must take a fresh look at the historical model of our Lord Jesus Christ and apostolic Christianity as means of finding a relevant model of Christian witness. Christianity has a lot to learn from the missiological factor of Islam that helped entrench it in West Africa. Christianity should not copy the methods of Islam, but do what will make Christianity become a way of life and culture of the people. This is not to turn Christianity into a culture or adapt it in such a way that it fits into African culture, but*

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<sup>354</sup>Y. Turaki, 29 Mar/2000.

<sup>355</sup>Y. Turaki, 11 Aug/92. J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, p. 285. For detailed background check Index entries “Turaki Y.,” “Kafanchan” and “Zangon Kataf” in vols. 1 and 3.

*rather, the way people see, understand, interpret and apply life to be fundamentally Biblical and Christian. The challenge of Islam is not a call for a peaceful dialogue between Christianity and Islam or for a mutual understanding of each other, even though these should be desired, but it is a call for a better Christian witness which characterizes the entire life of a Christian in an African society that is increasingly becoming Islamic in nature and potentially dangerous to live in.<sup>356</sup>*

#### **Inset 4: Chris Alli's Recipe for Peace xxxx arparp**

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Retired Major General Chris Alli was appointed by the FG to administer Plateau State during the emergency regime in 2004. On the completion of his six-month assignment he delivered a farewell speech to the people that included recipes for peace. His intense involvement in Plateau's scuffles qualified him well for leaving them with authoritative recipes. Since he is a Christian, I treat them in this chapter.

He had started what he called a "legacy" of "exchange visits by traditional and religious leaders." Such visits "helped in diffusing tension and pulling down the invisible walls of prejudices, misconceptions and mutual suspicion." His experiment was "a clear proof of what dialogue can achieve towards the forging of unity and the diffusion of tension. The greatest honour that the people can accord me is to extol the virtues of dialogue and constant interaction. This is the only way that our present effort will not be rubbished into the junks of history." Part of the dialogue process is to have mechanisms for conflict resolution that needed to be strengthened greatly in Plateau.

Alli also emphasized the economic problem of poverty, especially as it made youth so vulnerable to manipulation and to be used as "cannon fodder" by the architects of violence. There is a great need "to evolve a youth policy that will insulate them from falling victim to the mischief makers." Plateau is over-dependent on the public service sector and needs to be freed from that by economic diversification. Of course, easier said than done.

He joined the chorus of calls on government to implement reports and recommendations that have come out of the Peace Conference. Implementation was just begun by the time his assignment was completed, but he called on the restored Dariye administration "to continue with the implementation to its logical conclusion in keeping with the wishes of the people." And then

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<sup>356</sup>Y. Turaki, 25 Apr/2003.

the real call to the people: “It is time to rise up to the challenge of developing a collective consciousness that made Plateau the centre piece of our advocacy and aspiration. Otherwise, we will continue to give room for local cronies, whose loyalty is not to the State, but to their self-serving ambition. We should redefine our roles in the new dispensation and ensure that the past is not allowed to repeat itself.” “It will be tragic if we open up old wounds by engaging in acts of revenge and recrimination. *The greatest need of the moment is for the government to concentrate on promoting tolerance and reconciliation.*” The restored government is “to provide leadership for all and work towards allaying all fears, so as to promote justice and equity.” Finally, the government must provide for the “internally displaced persons,” encourage the development of “peaceful politicking, control the politicization of religion” and “ensure continuity in the distribution of relief materials.” That was Alli’s farewell to a state he found in the depth of terror, violence and hatred.<sup>357</sup>

It is good to know that others in Plateau praised Alli for his work, including COCIN in a communique that “commends the Administrator of Plateau State Chris Alli for working hard to restore law and order in the State and for introducing the Plateau Peace Conference which report is fair and just.” COCIN also called “on the Government to ensure that it fully implements the agreement reached at the Peace Conference.”<sup>358</sup>

Another one to thank Alli was Governor Joshua Dariye, who was temporarily shunted aside, re-surfaced as the restored Governor and then soon was impeached, replaced and disappeared dishonourably. Shortly after the 2007 elections, he was apprehended and imprisoned, waiting for someone to provide bail at a multi-million figure. He is generally considered to be part of Plateau’s and Nigeria’s problem rather than solution, so that I do not wish to honour him with much space. It is amazing how an allegedly almost totally corrupt Governor<sup>359</sup> can deliver such an upbeat and pious speech to his people without apparent embarrassment. But he did thank Alli for his efforts to restore sanity to the state and promised to give serious attention to the problems that ripped the state apart. First, his apology: We might have made mistakes in the past. We apologise to all for our inadvertent lapses.” This, he assured his listeners, “has sharpened our vision for a more virile and lasting posture.” And then the admonitions and promises that were aborted due to his impeachment. He did address some of

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<sup>357</sup>C. Alli, Nov/2004. Italics mine.

<sup>358</sup>COCIN, 12 Nov/2004.

<sup>359</sup>I refer you to the *Companion CD* <Misc Arts/Corruption/...> with various folders containing articles about Dariye.

the core problems needing serious attention. “This new beginning offers us the opportunity to forgive one another and forge ahead through genuine reconciliation. Unity and love must serve as the basis of our strength.” So-called settlers may have been comforted by the assurance that “every individual citizen of Plateau State is important” Civil servants, long suffering from non-payment of salaries, may have been encouraged at his promise to give “prompt attention to the payment of salaries.” He also warned, “We cannot salvage the current situation through rumour mongering and antagonism. Neither will bickering and political adulations meet our dreams. Only commitment to the Plateau cause is what is needed.” Dariye promised “to continue from where Alli left off and bring the people together so that those unfortunate circumstances will never repeat themselves.” And then again that final word: security. “We shall maintain our charter of peace. Security and law enforcement will be given topmost priority. You therefore have no cause to fear.”<sup>360</sup>

Julius Nyerere, former Tanzanian President, allegedly said that Nigerians are only aware of their failures, not of their strengths. That certainly does not apply to every Nigerian. John Onaiyekan declared the future of Nigeria as “wonderful, brilliant, beautiful and it is mostly in our hands.”<sup>361</sup> Olufemi Oluniyi has no such problem either. He recently suggested that Nigerians, both Christian and Muslim, have reasons to celebrate, even “if the world will not... acknowledge their unique and collective achievement.”<sup>362</sup> It is pleasant to include in this conclusion the predictions of Idowu-Fearon of Kaduna. Always an optimist, while almost every Nigerian can only think of negatives, he pronounced the year 2004 “a good year with our governor. I mean it has been fantastic and I hope 2005 will be a better year.” As to Christian-Muslim relations, he predicted, “I can assure you that the relationship will get better.”<sup>363</sup>

The *NN* editor must have had a positive day as well. In the same issue with Obassa’s article there was one by Judith Adama of TCNN in which she also expressed a positive and hopeful attitude about Christian-Muslim relations in the post-Peace Conference days of Plateau State. While she recognized “unmistakable hostilities” on the part of the Plateau Council of Ulama towards the controversial and corrupt Christian Governor Dariye, “whom they had accused of planning their extermination,” after “countless underground moves and secret meetings, the ice is beginning to thaw.” Muslims gave indications that they “were prepared to work to sustain the peace building

<sup>360</sup>J. Dariye, Dec/2004.

<sup>361</sup>C. Ohadoma, 1 June/2003.

<sup>362</sup>O. Oluniyi, 2006, p. 152.

<sup>363</sup>S. Obassa, 29 Jan/2005.

efforts of government. The Governor was able to break the ranks of the Hausa community by getting the youth on his side” by supporting some of their projects, including buying a bus for the Mighty Jets Football Club fans. And then there was the establishment of a new Hausa post in the local political structure that officially recognized Alhaji Inuwa Ali as *Turakin Jos*, thus giving the local Hausa an official voice. The Governor attested “to the desire of the people to chart a better course of life.” “Striking evidence of the pervading religious harmony now existing” was the COCIN centenary celebration that was attended by Muslims as well as Christians, including Haruna Abdullahi, the Emir of Wase, the place that has been at the eye of so many religious storms. “That occasion, more than anything else, was portrayed as the return of peace. Expectations by the people are high, believing that the hostilities of the past have indeed been buried for good, never again to be exhumed.”<sup>364</sup>

In October, 2007, during the week I am writing this paragraph, I received a telephone call from a Northern Anglican Archbishop, who assured me that some solid lessons had been learned. Governor Sani is now Senator Sani. He finds himself among colleagues who will not allow him to play havoc with his brand of religious politics or political religion again. Politicians have learned some hard lessons. As to the current status of sharia, the Archbishop confirmed that it has largely fizzled out. Bishop John Danbinta of Zamfara wrote me the following:

*As for for the issue of the Sharia in Zamfara State, when I was at home it was not a serious issue as it was before and even the Muslims themselves were making mockery of it. I believe that what our former President Obasanjo had said about sharia is what has actually happened. Obasanjo said that it was a political Sharia and will fizzle out. **So it has, I believe.** Babangida is a Muslim and a strong supportor of Sharia law in Nigeria. However, we will now wait and see what the new Governor elect of Zamfara State and other States will do about Sharia. Our new President too is a Muslim from Katsina State.*

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<sup>364</sup>J. Adama, 29 Jan/2005. This was the second time Wase was the scene of a COCIN anniversary celebration. In 1954 the golden jubilee of the SUM British Branch, the progenitor of COCIN, took place there as well. Henry Farrant, a long-time General Secretary, wrote, “I listened to Rev. J. L. Maxwell speaking of his party’s first coming and how in that year he could look eastwards and know that for two thousand miles there was no Christian witness and that for a good long way in the other directions there was none. Standing round me while he spoke were godly and long-experienced African pastors and elders who represented a great company of the redeemed. Wase, the Mohammedan stronghold, had greatly declined in size since 1904, but the church had grown and all over the surrounding plain...there were congregations of worshippers. It was a moment of praise and one of dedication to further effort” (H. Farrant, pp. 44, 50).

*So, we have not comment yet, but we will wait and see how they treat the issue now that they have a Muslim as President.*

In another optimistic letter he wrote, “Nigeria has new leaders now. In Zamfara, a deputy to the former Governor is our present Governor now. As for the issues of sharia law, it seems, that’s not an issue to pay attention in Nigeria again, especially in Zamfara State, though they still talk about it to their people as politicians always do.”<sup>365</sup>

That, of course, was a long-standing prediction. Was now-retired President Obasanjo right after all with his prediction that it would fizzle out or, as an unnamed CAN leader predicted that “the sharia will die a natural death?”<sup>366</sup> Similarly, the Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Honourable Okosun, was interviewed on TV on November 9, 1999. During the interview he also predicted—“arrogantly,” according to Isah Abdullahi—that “the sharia will die a natural death.”<sup>367</sup> Christians are bound to welcome the end of this saga, but I predict that Muslims will not allow it to fizzle out that easily. Sharia is too central for them to let it go just because it was mishandled. In fact, contrary to all hope, in Plateau State “Muslim militants attacked Christian community a month after state of emergency lifted.”<sup>368</sup> And in November, 2008, they struck again.<sup>369</sup>

Nigeria has gone through much bloodshed, including a full-scale civil war, but it has remained one. It has not fallen apart. That, given all the stresses and strains and given the fact of its unsolicited, artificial creation out of 400 nations, *is* an achievement, for which I indeed congratulate Nigerians. In spite of some writers’ declarations that it *has* fallen apart and US government predictions that it *will* fall apart, I have written all these pages and volumes in the full confidence that there will be a country to distribute them in and Nigerians to read them! It is in that confidence that I offer you Part B as closure to this series and as my contribution and, indeed, my heart-felt offering, to that enduring unity.

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<sup>365</sup>John Danbinta, 22 May/2007, 13 Nov/2007. Published here with his permission.

<sup>366</sup>I. Umar, 9 Nov/99.

<sup>367</sup>I. Abdullahi, 30 Nov/99.

<sup>368</sup>O. Minchakpu, 7 Feb/2005.

<sup>369</sup>I refer you to *CCD* <Misc Arts/State by State/Plateau/2008 Plateau Riots>.

