

Appendix 39:

The Christian Mood

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The subject of this appendix is the Christian mood throughout our period, both BZ and AZ. I consider this an important subject for a book on proposals for solutions, for it is good to understand the general mood in which these proposals are crafted. Nevertheless, since most of the section does not really offer much in the way of concrete proposals, it does not fit well in the book. Hence I relegate most of it to this Appendix—most, not all.

As we have observed throughout the reading of this series, there are a lot of ugly, angry emotions associated with sharia and related developments, among Christians as well as Muslims. Among Christians, anyone showing any degree of sympathy towards anything Muslim is often quickly berated. For a few examples. If you have read earlier volumes, this will sound familiar to you. That's the mood in which many regard as "soft," and thereby inadequate, any rational, dialogic approach to Muslims or Islam. It happens in the highest echelons of Christian leadership.

Those acquainted with this history, know that this anger is of long-standing. Hence, long ago in 1978, Sabiya warned against the danger of religious war. This could only be avoided if there was a willingness "to discuss the issues objectively, interpret each other honestly and truthfully, and do everything out of God-fearing love for the unity and the survival of our beloved country."¹

Christians sometimes competed with Muslims in anger and nastiness. Here is a gem from Joseph Rinyom of Jenta Adamu, Jos, the neighbourhood where I used to live, that would be hard to beat and which you must read to believe:

From the comfort of the branches, the bat plays its nature-eat, throw up and excrete from its mouth. This analogy, though inadequate in its moderation, summarizes the ranting of an ignoramus whose alias is Audu Zango. If there were a dozen of his type in Plateau state, no one needs to seek peace, for then it would be non-existent. His excruciating distortion of facts should not be allowed to go unchallenged, lest those who do not know

¹W. Sabiya, 1978. See J. Boer, vol. 7, 2007, p. 239.

assume his statements to be true. The truth is that if he had only vented his frustration on his poor cyberspace victims without delving into the precinct of falsehood with the aim of maligning the indigenes of Plateau State, I, for one, could not have given him the benefit of a response. Alas, he took upon himself roles that were way over and above his understanding and intellect. It was a wise man that once observed, "There is nothing as terrible as ignorance in action." The vehemence and anger that Mallam Zango employed in scarifying all that he opposes in Plateau State identifies him as an ignoramus whose claim to "facts" are based on tertiary sources who themselves are devoid of any inkling of knowledge about the subject they claim to profess.

Another response to Audu Zango by Dany Ritut betrays a similar mood. Enough said. Plateau indigenes were seething with anger and resentment that must be overcome if peace efforts are to be successful.²

A more recent description of this mood came from John Abayomi in his *Vanguard* article celebrating the life of Chief Awoniyi upon his death:

He was a Christian who was at home with Muslims. Many found this objectionable. Similar contradictions have held our country back. We lament the ethnic and religious divisions that tear the country apart, yet we discourage their resolution in any meaningful manner. Chief Awoniyi was a reliable aide of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the revered Northern leader. Some hold this against him, as it would conflict with their arguments that the North did not tolerate outsiders. The demise of the Chief has further depleted the ranks of those who believe that a single Nigeria is workable, he held firmly to that belief, which again was used against him.³

As I said earlier, that's the mood in which many regard as inadequate any rational, dialogic approach to Muslims or Islam.

Danjuma Byang, writing before the collapse of the USSR, bemoaned the fact that foreign ideologies were competing for the soul of Africa. He identified the three most obvious ones as "Western capitalist imperialism," "Marxist ideology" and "Arab religious and cultural imperialism." These were pulling Nigeria in different directions. "Poor us!" he exclaimed. Then he asked, "What is the way out of all this?" He suggested we "look at ways by which our distinct

²J. Rinyom, Gamji, 2004. For the reason for this anger see my vols 3 and 5 throughout, but especially vol. 7, ch. 8.

³J. Abayomi, 13 Dec/2007. For additional materials on Awoniyi, see *Companion CD* <Misc Arts/Awoniyi Chief/...>.

identity can be preserved and the diversified segments of our society be made to feel an indispensable part of the whole.” These foreign ideologies cannot be expected to work in Nigeria. “It is mental laziness and habitual indiscipline that prevent us from evolving systems that are suitable and workable for us.” Nigerians must look “inwards to tap the abilities that God has endowed us with, so that we also can make a distinctive contribution to modern civilization. It is time we stopped being a dumping ground for ideological waste from abroad.”⁴ Indeed. Indisputable.

But this raised questions that really still need to be addressed. Is not Christianity also an import? And what of secularism or its derivatives? Byang advocates both. In addition, wouldn't it have been nice if Byang had at least left us some hints as to how to go about developing our own resources and what shape this new approach might take? Byang, you've had 20 years since then to think about it. Any further developments along these lines? We are waiting....

Jesus' comment about turning the other cheek was becoming a problem due to frequent Muslim attacks during the BZ years. Already in 1987, Oyeniran, President of the United Gospel Churches Association (UGCAN), felt that this passage was misinterpreted by many Christians. Yes, it was “the time for Christians to be alert to the words of God and to put on the whole armour of God.” However, he argued, Christians should not allow the ugly incidents like those at Kafanchan to repeat themselves. “You should know that God has given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the powers of the enemy. *You should no longer turn the left cheek.* All that has been happening is from the devil.” Resist him. “You are soldiers of Christ. Fight the good fight.” But whatever Oyeniran meant with all this—he did not spell it out

⁴D. Byang, 1988, pp. 100-101.

clearly-- it definitely did not include killing but certainly other forms of spirited resistance. “We must rule the earth.” Christians ought to claim that function.⁵ One Nigerian writer who does not wish to be identified at this point, wrote, “CAN’s unspoken motto was voiced by Christians fed up with Muslim violence – that the Bible is silent after your cheek has been slapped the second time.” Onaiyekan shared some of this spirit, but for that you have to turn to his Inset in Chapter 4 in the book.

A hardening was setting in. Amunkitou Dolom found CAN’s announcements very annoying, since they were aware

that the moralistic doctrine of turning the other cheek will never help. For more than a decade now, CAN has been turning the other cheek for JN1 and Government to slap. How many cheeks has CAN? Perhaps CAN has 70 times 70 cheeks, but death toll, destruction of property, maimed Christians and the society’s general loss of lives and property has risen to well over the 70 times 70 illusory goals.

What CAN and TC should do now is to ask Christians to return fire for fire. They need not be discreet about it. Nothing less than this can improve the plight of Christians in Nigeria, because the law has been silent over attacks by Muslims. I feel this is the solution to the issue in an ungodly society like ours.

Waiting on the Government to arbitrate in a matter that it has vested interest, will amount to disservice to the Christian faith by CAN. Perhaps one would just advocate that Muslims and Christians should draw the sword in a “winner takes all duel” to ensure who governs Nigeria. In the event of a draw, the survivors would have a government that is truly secular and neutral. This then is my new approach.”

If CAN is such a weakling that it cannot help its members in defending their faith, then it is too bad, because the Government has overtly said “No” to CAN’s call for redress. If CAN can’t fight, I would advise that it lie down and die. No heavens will forgive you for inaction, because the prayer now is, “Father, forgive them not, for they know what they do.” Rhetorics has never saved in the past, does not save now nor will it save later.⁶

In the fourth issue of *TD* 1992, we also run into an early indication of Christian impatience with Muslim fanatics, an early version of refusing the other cheek. One Dauda S. T. of Badawara,

⁵A. Oyeniran, 1987, pp. 68-69. See also inset on Onaiyekan on this subject.

⁶A. Dolom, 6/88, pp. 11,15 or *Companion CD* <Final Essence Editions/Volume 3/ Appendices/ Post-Publication Appendices/ “A Dolom vs CAN.” J. Boer, 2004, vol. 3, pp. 24-25.

Kaduna, in a letter to the editor wrote, “I want you to use your magazine to appeal to Christian youths not to keep running to the military barracks when they are attacked, but to defend themselves. They must never be the aggressors, but when they are attacked without any provocation, they have to stand their ground.”⁷

An anonymous writer on the same page, expressed his impatience with CAN and *TC*: “I am disappointed that CAN is always talk and no action. If CAN and *TC* will not invigorate Christians like Moses led the Israelites in the wilderness, they had better stop their arrant nonsense that weakness the spirit and annoys the brave. I believe that Christians should now be violent.”⁸ Fortunately, the youthful Editor, Jacob Tsado, responded wisely, “The mission of *TC* is not to preach violence. Neither does the Bible encourage violence. Our mission is to pursue the cause of holiness, righteousness and justice in this country by proclaiming the truth, uncovering falsehood and highlighting the plight of the downtrodden.”⁹ Well said, Tsado. Christopher Abashiya, one of the honorary “Fathers” of this series, told this story at the Second International Conference of 1995 about how the Christian conscience was being whittled down by the constant attacks on them:

After the religious crisis that took place in Kaduna State of Nigeria in 1987, a Christian composed a song in memory of the unfortunate incident. The refrain or chorus to the song which was in the Hausa language went thus: Ba za mu rama ba, Allah ne zai rama mana. Meaning: We will not revenge; God will revenge on our behalf.

Judging from the refrain to the song one can safely conclude that the composer must have been guided by the Biblical injunction as recorded in Romans 12:19 which says: Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.

This song was sung with all commitment and sincerity by many Christians in the northern part of the country. Unfortunately, more religious crises occurred. With the experiences of these subsequent crises some Christians decided to modify the refrain to the song to something like this: Ba za mu rama ba, amma za mu kare kanmu. Meaning: We will not revenge, but we will protect ourselves. The sentence – God will revenge on our behalf – disappeared completely. At that point it was no more a moral code

⁷Dauda S. T., *TC*, 4/92, p. 3.

⁸Anonymous, *TC*, 4/92, p. 3.

⁹J. Tsado, *TC*, 4/92, p. 34.

governing the conscience, but the experiences that some Christians have gone through and the realities of the situation.

The change or shift in the attitude of some Christians has not been confined to words only. For by 1992 when another religious crisis took place in Kaduna State of Nigeria, some Christians in “defending” themselves decided to liquidate their “opponents” physically. How sad to note that in some cases as some Christians were knifing their so-called “opponents” they chanted the following words: “I kill you in Jesus name.”

Certainly such an act could not have been done in the name of the Jesus of the Holy Bible who commands his followers as follows: “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you; do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”

Here again the conscience of these Christians was not guided by an absolute moral code, but by their experiences and the situation they were going through.

Some years back a religious misunderstanding occurred between Christian and Muslim students in a female post-primary institution in Kaduna State, resulting in a bloody confrontation which witnessed the use of every available missile, including bottles. The Vice Principal who was a Christian tried to persuade the Christian students not to behave in a violent manner by bringing to their remembrance the message of the injunction of Christ as recorded in Luke 6:27-29.

It is not only interesting, but also sad to note the response of the Christian students. They responded thus: “Please, Madam, leave us alone. Jesus advocated a peaceful response simply because during his time there was no religious crisis like the one we are going through.” In essence what the students were saying is simply this: Our behaviour should be guided by the situation we find ourselves in and not by an absolute moral code enunciated by Jesus who was never faced with a religious crisis of the magnitude that we are going through. How sad that the Vice Principal could not prevail on those students and the end result was not only unfortunate, but it also brought dishonour to the very God that the Christian students were worshipping and serving.¹⁰

¹⁰C. Abashiya, 1995, pp. 132-133.

Like Muslims, Christians often felt pushed to the wall in the AZ period and developed an impatience that would occasionally go beyond words. In Sokoto, Muslims were recently reported to have kidnapped Christian children with the aim of converting them to Islam. Pastor Tayo Atiniku, Secretary to PFN Sokoto, told this story: “A daughter of a Christian police officer in Talata Mafara town, was recently abducted, forced into Islam and married off to a Muslim man without the consent of her parents. ‘It took the father the use of a gun for him to rescue her from these Muslims,’ Atiniku added.” Minchakpu commented, “The Nigerian government, they concur, knows of the abductions but has done nothing to protect Christian children from religious predators.”¹¹ Yes, a gun. 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 about his militant days tell the same story.¹² Driven to the wall, indeed. Understandable, absolutely, but advisable?

Professor Jerry Gana has played a very prominent role in the FG under several administrations. During his earlier academic days at ABU he was the leader of the Christian community there under the ABU leadership of Professor Ishaya Audu.¹³ In about 1988—the exact year is not sure-- he delivered a lecture on the political system of Nigeria that he envisioned for Nigeria. He presented himself in an upbeat mood at a time the sharia issue had already been on the table for a decade. He challenged Christians: “As ‘salt of the earth’ and ‘light of the world,’ we cannot afford to be cynical and apathetic about the great issues facing our society. Others may get tired, discouraged and frustrated. The Christian should never get tired and never give up, because he should have access to the deeper spiritual resources of Christ Jesus. He should have a creative HOPE and Faith in the One who the risen Lord of Glory.”¹⁴

Ibrahim Yaro expressed his disgust and impatience with the violence of Islam or that of Muslims—he could not make up his mind about that distinction. “Some religion seems to be intrinsically violent in its approach to social and religious issues (as a result, perhaps, of the ignorance, dwarf rationality and limited sympathy of the practitioners).” He was looking forward to the time that “each religion will describe, in a clear and objective way, what truths it has discovered in its own

¹¹O. Minchakpu, 14 Mar/2007. *Daily Champion*, 27 Mar/2007.

¹²See p. 25 ?xxxx

¹³On a personal note, it was with Audu and Gana that I had to negotiate during my bid for the position of Associate Chaplain at the university back in the 70s. The deal was cut short with the overthrow of the Christian General Gowon and the subsequent replacement of Audu, both replacements being Muslims.

¹⁴J. Gana, 1988, p. 18.

message which might advance the humanisation of the world: the defeat of egoism, the attainment of peace and justice.” He declared that he could never join a religion like Islam:

Why should people propagate their religion by hook and crook, and with unjust and violent means? If God who created man desires that man employs unjust means and shed the blood of his fellow man who is regarded as an unbeliever or an infidel just for the sake of God or for conversion, I will never believe in that God. Neither will I ever practise that religion which uses such means of conversion, I will go further and despise the agent (be he God’s prophet or God’s messenger) who preached such means as being inspired by God. I will see his message as a mere hoax which should not be believed by a sane fellow. God (who we rightly believe is good and merciful) does not want the death of the wicked man or an infidel; rather, he wants him to change from his evil ways and live. This is the God whom alone I will believe and worship. I believe that our creator, God (father) would like us, his children, to serve and worship him in peace and freedom, each of us according to the dictates of his conscience. And so, religion should aim at peace and freedom based on justice and not violence, injustice, oppression and slavery (as is the case in Sudan where there will be peace if only all the citizens profess one religion – that of the leadership)? It is only with this end in view that religion will contribute to human development and social progress.¹⁵

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I personally had a negative reception in a mild sort of way when I introduced this series of studies at a special meeting of TCNN students in 2005. Though a former teacher there and, I believe, fairly popular, I was faulted for presenting the Muslim case too sympathetically. I was dismissed offhand as not understanding the situation—and that after living there longer than did most of these Nigerian students: 30 years of *adult* and *educated* life and an additional ten years of research! Actually, my experience of anger and dismissal was minor compared to that of others.

The following story by Anthony Ndamsai, a TCNN student at the time, provides the explanation for my experience

¹⁵I. Yaro, 2000, p. 2.

It was about 8:00 A.M. when two Muslim boys went to their farm adjacent to the campus of the TCNN. The boys were seen on their farm by a passer-by who suspected the boys to be spies sent by some Muslim fanatics. Without any inquiry the man sent a message to the married students' quarters of TCNN that there were suspicious persons hiding on a farm. Within a very short time the news had spread throughout the community. As it is with hearsay, the information received carried various versions of the real story. Some people heard that there were unfamiliar people within the community. Others heard that Muslims had come to attack the TCNN community. With a situation like this, multiple reactions took place. While some people were running towards the direction where the boys were said to be, other people were running for their life. I do not know exactly what happened to those that ran seeking refuge because I was among those who ran toward the direction of the farm.

Surprisingly, I noticed men and women with heavy sticks, cutlasses, and pestles. All had gathered around the boys who had nothing to protect themselves. The boys were stripped naked and forced to lie flat on the ground. Questions were thrown at the boys from every direction, such as; "Who are you?" "What are your names?" "Who sent you?" These questions were asked without any opportunity for response. Nobody among the interrogators seemed interested to listen to the boys' side of the story. They had no chance to defend themselves.

The boys were severely flogged. The villager, who first saw the boys, drove away and shortly came back with gallon of petrol and a box of matches. He instigated the TCNN students stating that the boys had already gathered all the information that they were sent for and it would be a big mistake to let them get away.

By letting them go it would place the college and the environs in danger. All these allegations were based on assumption because even the man did not bother to question the boys. The mob insisted the boys should be killed. The reason they gave was that many Christians at Anguwan Rogo in Jos were killed in a similar manner. For that reason they (Muslims) needed to be paid in kind. To my consternation, the gathered crowd, students of TCNN many of whom were pastors from various TEKAN churches and associates, unanimously concluded that the boys deserve death.

Tragedy was averted by the intervention of some brave students from the EYN, a pacifist denomination, but only after they themselves were threatened. Some accused them of being non-indigenes from another state, foreigners even, who did not appreciate the full force of the trials of Plateau people at the hands of Muslims.¹⁶

An argument developed on the Gamji and Kwenu websites between two Ibo Christian gentlemen, Chudi Ikwueze and Eddy Oparaoji. The latter accused the former of being “a jihadist’s apologist, whose only aim is to serve your jihadist masters.” Among Ibos, that is about as insulting as you can get. Oparaoji apparently also warned Ikwueze, “*Do not, and we repeat do not, ever draw Ndiigbo [Ibo spelling of “Ibo”] into fulfilling your obligations to your jihadist masters.*” Ikwueze commented, “Obviously, these guys need prayers and I will pray for them.”¹⁷ If you have read earlier volumes, this will sound familiar to you. That’s the mood in which many regard any “soft,” rational, dialogic approach to Muslims or Islam. It happens in the highest echelons of Christian leadership, as we will see in this chapter.

This bitter mood has suppressed the sense of compassion for the suffering in the hearts of many Christians. Dan Manjang, son of a COCIN pastor and himself a pastor, told of his father, who before he was killed by “Muslim extremists,” had strongly advocated peace and reconciliation. He used to house displaced Muslims and hide them from extremists. His house had become a veritable “house of refuge” for such victims. His church also accommodated victimized Muslims and cared for them for over two weeks. Not only Muslim extremists hated him but “even fellow pastors hated him as they believed he was protecting Muslims who were attacking Christians. They frequently sought counter-attacks, but he would not consent.”¹⁸ The mood was ugly indeed. Christians felt pushed to the wall and could no longer think straight, let alone Christianly.

Sometimes the mood becomes one of downright discouragement. There is no sense to a positive approach, according to some. Or, we must not expect much from it. Matthew Arin Adams from Jos warned against making agreements with Muslims: “We must be mindful of the fact that reconciliatory agreements or promises with Muslims are subject to change without

¹⁶A. Ndamsai, . . . , pp. 1-4. These two stories are not meant to berate TCNN. Instead, they are meant to portray the very high degree of anger among Christians. If a respectable and responsible community like TCNN could get caught up in the ugliness of the times, then one can only imagine the mood of the people on the street.

¹⁷C. Ikwueze, 11 Feb/2007.

¹⁸O. Minchakpu, 10 Oct/2005, p. 2; Compass Direct, 23 Sep/2005.

notice as long as it is convenient and advantageous to them. Probably out of experience some one will bear witness to this fact.” Besides, “there are many such extreme positions in Islam that seem to make it impossible for peace to gain ground.”¹⁹

But there is also an aggressive positive mood, one that may not necessarily result in peace immediately, but could contribute to it in the long run. It is the mood of resistance and of refusing to give up. The Gangare section of Jos is dominated by Muslims. Several of the Christian churches there have moved out of the area to escape Muslim violence in which churches and other Christian properties were destroyed. The local ECWA congregation has been terrorized over the years, with the result that most members have relocated. The church is left with only 120 members. Muslims claim the property is theirs, but their claim has been invalidated in a court. They have refused to abide by the court decision. This is the only church left in the area, and it intends to stay. Sani Damisa, the pastor, explained that the remaining “members do not want to give in to intimidation and suppression.” They “have resolved never to give in to persecution.” The Muslim strategy, he explained further, “is that if they attack us and we flee, they then appropriate our land and homes as spoils of war and then consolidate their hold on the area, and then move on to attack us again in the new area. In this way, they gain ground by spreading the tentacles of Islam. We do not think it is wise for Christians to take to their heels any time they are attacked by Muslims. How can we run away from the land the Lord has given us?”²⁰

This is, indeed, the only language the perpetrating Muslims seemed to understand. I am sure that these church members wonder why the combined efforts of JNI, the Council of Ulama and other Muslim organizations and authorities cannot stop these shenanigans of their fellow Muslims. Do they even want to stop them? This harassment started before the 2004 Peace Conference and is continuing into 2006! Draw your own conclusion.

This ugly mood was not something restricted to Plateau or to sharia days. Pastor James Wuye, co-founder of the Kaduna-based IMC (IMC), in his younger days during the 1980s, along with a gang of other young Christian men, had formed a Christian militia that had “decided they shouldn’t just run away when attacks happened, but should retaliate. ‘I hated the Muslims so much that at the slightest opportunity I could pounce on a Muslim and I could kill.’ By God’s

¹⁹M. Adams, “The Irony...” Adams may be referring to his own experience with Muslims during his term as Chairman of the Jos South LGC.

²⁰*Compass Direct*, 20 June/2006.

grace, he never killed anyone himself.” Wuye had become an outraged Christian and in effect had become spiritually marginalized, though he was probably considered a hero by many Christians for his militant and violent posture. Today he is a peace activist with one artificial hand to remind him of his violent past.²¹

Femi Awoniyi, residing in Germany and author of three Gamji papers listed in the Bibliography, had it in for the Fulani people. He saw them as “the source of the evil plaguing our land.”²² They “are always causing trouble in Nigeria by sowing seeds of hatred and demagoguery.” All the ethnic and religious violence in the country “is the result of a grand Fulani conspiracy.” I explain his stand more fully further on in this chapter, but it was an ugly mood he displayed in all his papers and it evoked angry reactions.²³

At the end of 2007, a Nigerian friend of mine wrote in a letter:

The Muslim definition of peace is not the same as the Christian one. A Muslim is one who literally believes the Koran to be violent, suppressive and domineering where they are the majority. The book, The Secrets of The Koran by Don Richardson,²⁴ seems to state the truth so far as we know from this part of the world, past, present and the future. If they talk peace, "It is only when they are powerless or in the minority." In Khartoum, I read this definition: "Peace is a dagger in the heart of your enemy."

²¹D. Fieguth, 2006, pp. 4-5. D. Channer, *The Imam & the Pastor*, a DVD documentary. R. Muhammad, 3 Nov/2007.

²²For Muslim attitudes towards Awoniyi see ch. 2, p. 41 xxxx.

²³F. Awoniyi, “Sharia in the House....”

²⁴California: Gospel of Light Ventures, Regal Books.