

**CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM UNDER COLONIALISM IN NORTHERN  
NIGERIA**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Nigerian press has long been the time-honoured place where the national dialogue on Christian-Muslim relations is conducted. One example is an article written by Prof. A.B. Fafunwa, "Educational Backwardness of the North: A Colonial Phenomenon" (*New Nigerian*, July 4, 1974). Professor Fafunwa's article is well researched and contains a lot of food for serious thought. And even though I am going to disagree with him in this chapter, that does not mean that it does not contain much with which I agree. Please refer to Appendix 1.

Among other assertions, the following occur in Professor Fafunwa's article:

The British officials ... were themselves Christians ... representing as Lord Lugard himself claimed "the most Christian nation" in the world.

British occupation in Nigeria was therefore synonymous with Christian evangelism ... helping the benighted Africans to accept Christianity and Western civilization.... The missionaries by and large were able to carry out their mission with the connivance of the British officials.

The Professor makes mention of

The powerful forces of Church and State combined in an unholy alliance to convert Emirs, Obas, Chiefs and their people into Christianity. Christian-oriented schools, text books, sermons and other built-in educational devices were employed as instruments of conversion.

One of the problems with the article is that the Professor uses southern situations during the 19<sup>th</sup> century to make a point about the far north in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That brings confusion to the critical reader. However, since his main thrust is in reference to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century far north, I assume that his arguments are meant to apply to the Muslim community in the far north as well – and when so taken, the above assertions are far from the truth: the facts are much more nuanced than the simplistic picture Fafunwa paints. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to unmask the popular myths advanced by the Professor.

My purpose is not only to disprove the above myth, but also to demonstrate the very opposite, namely that the regime favoured Islam, often consciously, to the detriment of Christianity.

## **POINTS OF FRICTION BETWEEN MISSION AND COLONIAL REGIME**

That there was a great deal of cooperation between missions and the colonial regime in Northern Nigeria is not to be disputed, even though the motives for such cooperation may not be clear to most of us today. The scope of this chapter does not allow for a

comprehensive treatment of the nature of and motives for such missionary support. You are referred to my writings on the subject listed in the Bibliography. Suffice it to say that the social class from which the missionary force emerged and their implicit definition of colonialism were the reason for their support of colonialism. The missionary concept of colonialism can be summarized as follows:

Colonialism is a form of imperialism based on a divine mandate and designed to bring liberation – spiritual, cultural, economic and political – by sharing the blessings of the Christ-inspired civilization of the West with a people suffering under satanic forces of oppression, ignorance and disease, affected by a combination of political, economic and religious forces that cooperate under a regime seeking the benefit of both ruler and ruled (Boer, 1979: 218; 1984: 56).

It was that definition with its implicit high expectations of colonialism that led the missionary community, together with its supporting constituency, to support colonialism in general and the regime in Northern Nigeria in particular. That high expectation of colonialism was based on the relationship of the missionary constituency in the West to Capitalism in general, a point I cannot pursue further in the present context (Boer, 1979: Ch. 1; 1984: Ch. 2).

Notwithstanding the principal support of colonialism on the part of missionaries, points of friction between the two parties were many and severe. Most of these points of friction arose because of the regime's protection of Islam not only, but its active encouragement of that religion. I will restrict myself to those specific points and refer you to my other writings if you wish to know more about those other reasons (Boer, 1979: 73ff, 141ff, 160ff, 205ff, 268ff, 303ff, 316ff, 397ff; 1984: Ch. 4). In fact, the overwhelming problem of the missions in Northern Nigeria was that of government-imposed barriers to their work in the alleged Muslim areas. From their arrival in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century right up to independence they fought a running battle with the authorities over this issue, a battle that often became fierce and that profoundly coloured even the efforts at cooperation between missions and government.

Though I will be referring to various missions, in what follows the main concentration will be on the Sudan United Mission (SUM), British Branch. For the identity of the SUM, you are referred to my other writings (Boer, 1979: 112-118; 1984: Ch. 2). Suffice it to say here that it is an Evangelical non-denominational mission based in the United Kingdom that has been instrumental in the founding of the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) with its headquarters in Jos. It entered Nigeria in 1904 and is now absorbed in the church it created.

## **GOVERNMENT OBSTACLES TO CHRISTIAN EXPANSION**

From the very beginning, Lugard followed the policy of indirect rule. That is to say, he retained the existing political structures and governed through them. This was necessary because the alternative would have meant designing new suitable structures not only, but to keep a large army with all the expenses that would have entailed. After all, the regime was established not primarily to re-organize Nigerian society so much as to create proper conditions for commerce. In order to ensure the support of the rulers of the northern people, Lugard had promised them that the "Government will in no way interfere with the Mohammedan religion. All men are free to worship God as they please. Mosques and prayer places will be treated with respect by us." This statement is said to have evoked a "deep and most impressive murmur of satisfaction" from the crowd (Shaw: 452-453). This Lugardian promise was subsequently used by his successors to prevent missions among Muslims, though wrongly so, according to Crampton (p. 48). Lugard himself did not mean to exclude missions from Muslim areas. In fact, he allowed Miller, a missionary of the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS), to preach anywhere in the North. He himself suggested to the SUM that they settle initially at Wase, a community under Muslim control. It was only when he noticed that missionaries did not always exercise political caution in a potentially explosive situation that he began to prevent them from entering Muslim areas.

Lugard's successors tended to oppose missions in general, but especially amongst Muslims. Girouard, his immediate successor, a Canadian Catholic, is said to have had bitter hatred for missions and considered them a "menace to the peace and good government" (Ayandele: 146). And he was not alone.

In many areas in Africa, colonial governments not only restricted missions among Muslims, but they were accused of aiding the extension of Islam while they were suppressing Christianity. They would, for example, employ Muslims in comparatively prestigious positions among Traditionalists. Kumm, the founding father of the SUM, told the dramatic story of the Bongo tribe as related to him by their young Chief. He was told of this people's hatred for the Muslims because Arabs had for years waged war against them until they were reduced to an insignificant few, though they never succeeded to enslave the Bongo. After the arrival of the Europeans and the resulting peace, Muslims were sent to the area in various colonial capacities and clothed in considerable prestige. What the Muslims had been unable to achieve through violence, the British achieved through peace. Aided by government appointment, Islam infiltrated the tribe. Young Bongo warriors had begun to wear Muslim robes – "fettlers," according to the young Chief. The young were beginning to follow the Muslims to their mosque (Kumm, *Khont*: 201-205). A Chief in Bauchi province told Kumm that while he needed Christian teachers, the government had sent him a Muslim secretary to enable him to carry on correspondence with the British Resident. Kumm had heard rumors that the government had plans to train Muslim teachers to work among Traditionalists in

government political action at home through “some of our members of Parliament.” Kumm also wrote how the Traditional tribes in the Eastern Sudan who had formerly successfully kept Islam at bay were now subjected to it through the direct policy of the government which had introduced Muslim teaching, appointed Friday as the day of rest for the soldiers instead of Sunday, saw to the teaching of Islam to the children of these soldiers in regular classes under government supervision. These soldiers were predominantly of Traditional origin, but immediately upon their enlistment they would be circumcised and turned into Muslims. Likewise, the German regime in Adamawa was supporting the spread of Islam by teaching children in a freed slaves’ home the rudiments of Islam and by sending them regularly to the mosque on Friday (Boer, 1979: 142).

It was a common problem. At the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, an international ecumenical missionary conference, an American missionary quoted a British colonial official as saying that missions may as well pack, for “we make ten Muslims to your one Christian.” It was a problem, moreover, that persisted through the decades. Smith, an Anglican bishop, mentioned cases of Traditional boys forcibly enrolled in government schools where they were taught by Muslim teachers. He reported that Christian boys attending industrial schools were compelled to work on Sundays. Doris Spencer, an SUM missionary, charged that the government was prescribing school textbooks that were as good as handbooks on Islam. A secondary school student tried to resist Muslim pressure, but when a white government officer visited the school he warned the students to conform to the Muslim way. At a conference held about 1947 that included one hundred and seventeen Africans, complaints were heard that “the few secular schools in the Northern Provinces are in most cases pro-Muslim in their outlook” (Boer, 1979: 211, 281, 395).

There was the common British practice of extending the rule of Muslim emirs over Traditional tribes that formerly were not under Muslim rule. Bukuru, a mining town close to Jos, was the focus of fears relating to this practice. As soon as the tin mines were beginning to be developed, a Hausa market sprung up, followed soon by Muslim teachers. By the end of 1912, their call to prayer was heard where only a little while ago there was nothing but wilderness. The government was accused of aiding this practice. The SUM’s Du station report for that year further elaborated. The entire Bukuru area was to be placed under the Muslim Emir of Bauchi politically, while judicially Muslim influence was extended to the appointment of a Muslim judge. The judicial move was initially to be temporary, but would become permanent if proved workable. The government was said to be doing all it could to accustom the Traditionalists to this new Muslim regime. The fear that the mission might be requested to leave by the Emir was not unfounded, for it had its precedent. Farrant reported a similar case with respect to the Mumuye people in what is now Gongola State. The mission had approval for opening a station at Kona, on the border of Mumuye territory. A month later the

approval was withdrawn by the government because of objections submitted by government-appointed Muslim chiefs (Boer, 1979: 211). As late as 1955, a missionary found it necessary to warn a converted chief of “the almost impossible situation of a chief wishing to be a Christian in a Muslim governed province” (Boer, 1979: 398). CMS missionary Miller charged that the so-called policy of neutrality on the part of the government led to the following forms of aid to the Muslim community:

Circumcision of Traditional recruits for the army and freed slave Traditional children; the handing over of little Traditional girls and boys, saved from slavery, to the care of Muslim Emirs, with the probability of their becoming Muslims, and to be members of Mohammedan harems; subscriptions of Government to building and repairing of mosques; attendance at Mohammedan festivals by Government officials as representatives; the gradual reduction of strong Traditional tribes ... and bringing them under the rule of, and to pay their taxes to, these ... old enemies: these and many other things show the tendency of the Government policy (Boer, 1979: 212; *LB*, Aug/1909: 154).

Ruxton was said to be the only official to resist such government tactics. SUM’s General Secretary Dawson wrote, “From all one hears, he is resisting the Government’s pro-Islam tactics as far as Muri Province is concerned; they want to put the traditional everywhere under emirs, but he will not agree to it in this Province.” Though Lugard’s promise was often appealed to as the ground for such policies, in a meeting with him in London arranged by the Conference of British Missionary Societies, the Governor said, “Sometimes when a soldier is told to stand up straight, he is so keen to obey that he falls over backwards” (Boer, 1979: 212).

Government officials used all sorts of devices and excuses to restrict missionary activities. At about the beginning of World War II, suddenly the so-called “18-year” restriction was sprung on the missions. It became illegal to teach the Christian faith to children of Muslim parents under 18 years of age. When missions objected to this restriction, they were informed by the government that, according to the highest Muslim authorities in the land, the Qur’an does not give parents the right to such decisions. Even the Sardauna of Sokoto would not have the right to assent to such teachings. The restriction was to be placed on all permits for new missions stations. Due to strong resistance on the part of missions, it was never really applied. However, it was one of a series of government attempts to prevent missionary progress. Farrant, whose lot it usually was to champion the cause of all Protestant missions with the government, was of the opinion that the controversy was instigated by high government officials who “generated feeling on this among Muslims” (Boer, 1979: 282, 285, 304, 395; *LB*, Jul/1941: 63, Jul/1942: 44).

Another government device was the application of the category of “unsettled.” Since officials were held responsible for the safety of missionaries, they would readily prevent missionaries from entering areas that were not considered safe or fully subdued. The prohibition had some silly results. It meant, for example, that missionaries were allowed to work on one side of the road in the village of Saai, on the border between Benue and Gongola states, but not on the other! That this rule was arbitrarily applied at times for no other reason than opposition to missions in general was demonstrated by the case of the Mumuye and Wurkum people. During the 1920s, the SUM was barred from working with these groups because they were allegedly unsettled. Dawson reminded the government that thirteen years earlier they had invited missions to work the same area! A similar situation developed in Adamawa province. The SUM had been barred from working in a certain tribe because of the unsettled nature of the area. However, when the Church of the Brethren Mission pressed the government for permission in another part of the province to which the latter had even more objections, they were given permission to enter the area denied the SUM (Boer, 1979: 161, 162, 294, 306; Maxwell, *Diaries* [31]: 72, [4]: 15, [5]: 28; *LB*, Jul/1920: 58).

The 440-yard rule was another troublesome issue. This rule prohibited Europeans from residing within 440 yards from the nearest Nigerian community. The basic rationale for it was to protect Europeans from yellow fever. Nigerians were alleged to be hosts from which mosquitoes were infected with its germ (Kirk-Greene: 162-163). However, the rule was applied much more stringently to missions than to foreign firms. Many foreigners attached to these firms were living within 440 yards. The rule was also used to force missions to abandon buildings not even used for residential purposes.

In 1919, Governor Clifford visited Ibi, the SUM’s headquarters. Farrant had an interview with the Governor, who was accompanied by the local Resident, about the danger the rule implied for the mission stations at Ibi and Donga. The Resident asserted that for reasons of sanitation the Ibi station should be removed to some twenty yards outside the town wall. Three colonial firms also had their facilities inside the town, but they had not received instructions to move. When the resident showed the governor a map of the community, these firms were shown outside the city wall. Upon the Governor’s question whether leaving the SUM at its present location would “adversely affect the sanitation of the proposed European reservation,” the Resident replied negatively. The discussion ended in favour of the mission, for the Governor expressed the opinion that he did not think it necessary to force the mission to move their Donga and Ibi stations, for “when duty and sanitation clashed, duty must come first.”

Of course, the above interview did not solve the basic problem, for the law itself was not repealed. In 1921, Bristow, the SUM’s educational pioneer, referred to the law as a “severe handicap.” Bishop Smith in 1926 still complained of the difficulties. Merchants, miners and

others were allowed to advance; why could not missionaries similarly live close to their work? No stations were ever removed because of the measure, however. Slowly the heat went out of the controversy, partly because of renewed growth of towns that caused stations to be absorbed (Boer, 1979: 203, 292-293; *LB* Sept/1921: 131).

Closely related to the quarter-mile rule were various problems experienced with the getting and renewal of leases for the various stations. If or when leases were granted, they were often of such short duration that the missions felt insecure and hesitated to construct permanent fixtures on the plots in question. Leases of one year were useless. United attempts were made against this measure. The 1910 Lokoja Conference requested leases for twenty-one years. The CMS and the SUM discussed making united appeals, while the mission secretaries of the north agreed also to a joint appeal. It turned out to be Farrant's lot to meet personally with Clifford, then High Commissioner. Again, the issue died a natural death, but in the meantime it generated a lot of steam with respect to stations at Ibi, Wukari, Donga and Numan (Boer, 1979: 204-205).

The presence of single missionary ladies constituted another source of friction. Single ladies employed by the government would travel either alone or in the presence of a European man. Many single nurses were stationed throughout the country without any thought of the proximity of married women. However, this same government objected to the presence of single ladies employed by the SUM. Originally, Kumm was also opposed to recruiting single ladies, his reason being the harsh living conditions. The government, however, pretended to be concerned with the questions of propriety, though this concern did not seem to be extended to those in the civil service. Officials disagreed amongst themselves on the issue as it related to the Wukari station. It caused such confusion to Maxwell that he cried out, "This is not Government; it is interference." He labeled it as "simply gratuitous hindrance, capricious and tyrannical" (Boer, 1979: 156-159; Maxwell, *Diaries* [3]: 52, [5]: 93-94; [12]: 41, 44, 51).

The attitude of many government officials became especially clear in their treatment of Nigerian Christians. At a conference of all Protestant missions in 1913, many instances of rough treatment were recorded. In fact, it was a concern of such proportions that it constituted a separate item on the agenda. One Nigerian Christian asked a colonial officer a question about the Bible, whereupon the officer responded by grabbing the man's Bible, throwing it on the ground and stamping on it, an action that would make a profound impression on a Christian recently converted from Traditionalism. Another Christian, called to witness in court, refused to swear as Muslims and Traditionalists were accustomed to doing. He was subsequently "browbeaten and insulted." A third Christian was instructed by an official to live four hundred yards outside his town. One government representative warned

the people not to listen to missionaries (Boer, 1979: 163-164; Maxwell, *Diaries* [9]: 50-51, *Half a Century*: 103). These indignities conferred by government officials on Nigerian Christians continued right up to independence. Edgar Smith, a missionary of the Christian Reformed branch of the SUM, without providing details, reported in 1954 that there were many “instances of intolerance towards the Christians of Nigeria” (Boer, 1979: 398; *LB*, Jul/1954: 91).

The anti-mission attitude among government officers being what it was, the system of indirect rule was bound to have its negative effects, though cases are on record where some British officers contained some of these negatives (Boer, 1979: 289). The case of Fobir, a Traditional village, is illustrative. In 1930, the local Chief had invited the SUM to his town, but before the required chain of authorities, culminating in a Muslim Emir, had given their stamp of approval, almost a decade elapsed, during the course of which the Chief had changed his mind! Then government officials and even the Emir sought to have him revert to his earlier position, but to no avail. Missionary Bristow was sent to persuade the Chief, who then blamed the village elders for opposing a station, though Bristow thought the Chief himself opposed it. The system being what it was, the Chief had his way despite pressures from superiors.

The above was a unique instance of government and Emir unsuccessfully pressuring a Traditional chief to accept a mission. The opposite was more often the case, namely of Muslim rulers seeking to prevent a Traditional chief from agreeing to such establishments. The normal process was for local Christians to approach the cumbersome chain referred to above. It was so cumbersome a process that it often proved an effective barrier, especially since certain officials in the chain were almost sure to have personal antipathy. An example was that of the Chief of Igbetti. He agreed to the request of local Christians to build a church, but the resident insisted the Chief discuss it with his superior, the Alafin of Oyo, of whom the Chief was very afraid and therefore failed to pass on the request.

Even though legally the highest traditional ruler of an area, often an emir, had the right to decide such issues, missions asserted that “in almost every case the native authority will follow what he knows or believes to be the wish of the white official.” It was well known that in Muslim areas or adjacent ones colonial officers did not generally favour the establishment of Christian institutions. However, the assertion was difficult to prove, for it would involve securing evidence of Nigerians against their chiefs and officials. Stronger still, missionaries suspected that officials would often make “unofficial” suggestions to rulers so as to leave them in no doubt as to the decision the former would prefer. When confronted with this suspicion on the part of missionaries, the government would deny it and claim that their

policy was to “educate” Muslim rulers slowly in the matter of religious freedom so that the government hoped to “secure progressive relaxation of barriers....”

Missionaries discussed this item at a number of conferences and by 1931 were becoming impatient. The government countered that emirs could not be educated by simply pointing a pistol at their heads. The Governor himself warned that “to force the pace would do mischief; what was required was caution in conjunction with political sense.” There are indications that the government did at least occasionally make stabs at inculcating tolerance, but missions were more than a bit suspicious that their efforts left much to be desired (Boer, 1979: 290-292; *LB*, Mar/1938, Sept/1937: 92; Temple: 217).

Two fascinating documents exist that deal with government opposition to missions. One is a strong speech by Bingham, the founder of SIM, that he gave at a missionary conference at Miango, Nigeria, in 1929. He outlined the history of such opposition so lucidly and forcefully that, according to Farrant, he had caused a change of attitude on the part of missionaries and that they would move to a more militant position (Boer, 1979: 288, 500-504. See Appendix II).

The other document is a memorandum Farrant wrote in which he accused the government of two evils. First, he charged, the government had encouraged the spread of Islam. “The net result of twenty-nine years of rule by a Government which professes to see a menace in Islam is that by their encouragement and policy there are more Moslems and Islam is better organized and more of a force than when the British occupied the country in 1900.” It was, he asserted, the colonial government that opposed missions, not the local people. Farrant’s second point was a political one. While southern Nigeria had been drawn into the western orbit, the north was directed to the Arab world and thus the government had supported the Muslim bid for spiritual hegemony (Boer, 1979: 504-505. See Appendix III).

Nigerian understanding of the government as being anti-Christian is a recurring theme in the documents. Farrant related the treatment accorded to the CMS in Zaria. They had been invited by the Emir to settle in his city and Lugard had given permission in 1905, but in 1928, the government forced the mission to retreat from the city. Palmer apparently had made a gentleman’s agreement with the CMS concerning additional stations in the Zaria emirate but did not keep his promise, even though he did go through the motion – but let Farrant tell his own story:

Palmer went the length of instructing the Resident to ask the Emir whether he were willing that CMS should have the extra two sites. The Resident told Miller that he was about to do this and Miller replied that was tantamount to a refusal on the part of the Government, since they had been instructing the Emirs for twenty years past that they were against extension of missionary work in their Emirates, and the Zaria Emir, though a friend of his, would have no other course but to say he did not want the CMS. The Resident demurred to this, but Miller

told him the thing was a farce. Later, the Resident solemnly told Miller that the Emir had refused. What a game it is. Meanwhile, the Emir had told Miller that not only did he wish him to remain in Zaria, but that he was willing for him to work anywhere, but that he had to say what the Government told him.

Farrant bitterly concluded the story with the comment that the Emir had learned his lesson so well that he refused further openings to the CMS even when the government had already promised them (Boer, 1979: 308-309)!

With all such friction going on, it is no surprise that the relations between government and mission were so fragile that the latter prohibited all missionaries from engaging in any official correspondence with the government. This matter was considered so important that it received a place in the SUM's Principles and Constitution of 1907:

In view of the particular difficulties incidental to missionary work in Traditional and Moslem lands, recently brought under the control of a European Government, and the danger of political complications, too great care and prudence cannot be exercised by the missionaries, and no step likely to involve the work in such complications should be taken without consulting the Field Council, who will immediately report to the Director if likely to develop into a matter of importance or difficulty. Any correspondence or negotiation with Government officials locally should be immediately reported to the Council of Directors.

A field secretary was to be appointed who would conduct all communications with the government on behalf of all the SUM branches. In addition, the International Council of the SUM was charged with the responsibility of settling basic policies and political matters pertaining to government in order to ensure a unified approach. These restrictions on the missionaries were taken so seriously that when Barton broke the rule, Dawson threatened to quit his post of field secretary unless disciplinary action were taken (Boer, 1979: 191-192, 275).

The time has come to ask what the SUM did about the problems it experienced with the government. There were a variety of responses. One of these was prayer, an item frequently requested in *LB*. Prayer did not mean simply leaving the whole thing passively in God's hands; it was truly a question of *ora et labora*. Maxwell's reactions were typical. He engaged in frequent and, sometimes, almost violent complaints. Typical of him was his reaction upon receiving a letter from the government in which he was prohibited from holding services in the allegedly Muslim town of Rumaisha: "Perfectly absurd, as Rumaisha is not a Mohammedan town, nor is the chief a Mohammedan. I'd risk a good deal on the behalf that Farrant thinks the chief and his people are Moslem. However, the letter contains no order, only an 'opinion.' I also have my opinion." In another document he wrote that "it makes me angrier than I have been for a while with the Government...." He vowed, "Notice that the

letter is not an order but merely an expression of opinion. I shall not notice it in any way, but shall keep on preaching in the market as heretofore, unless I receive orders to the contrary from government. I am too hot over it to think or write coolly about it." He signed the letter, "Yours, somewhat 'again' the government."

Maxwell tended to ignore such restrictions, without really lodging an official protest or taking any other action. However, in one case related to the presence of single ladies he suggested that the London headquarters take up the matter there. Several entries in his diaries that report confrontations with the government were accompanied by a prohibition to the mission's public relations department to publish the incident(s) (Boer, 1979: 158-160, 164, 316-319; Maxwell, *Diaries* [5]: 93-94, *Half a Century*: 103). The mission as a whole was reticent to publicize some of the problems they faced (Boer, 1979: 398) and often preferred behind-the-scenes pressures and negotiations. "All the government men around here read the 'LB' as a rule; hence our anxiety at times regarding its contents" (Boer, 1979: 192).

Without distracting from the previous paragraph, it must also be pointed out that on certain issues the mission went to great length to keep the constituency informed by publishing articles in the *LB*. The problem of freedom of religion in the constitution of independent Nigeria was given extensive coverage during the closing period. The basic problem of restrictions on the movement of missionaries received attention throughout. The articles on this last issue tended to be long and frequent and often possessed a great deal of punch.

However, the nitty-gritty of the freedom question seldom received such publicity; that was dealt with in more restricted documents. There was a lot of negotiation going on behind the scenes both by correspondence and interviews. Such personal contacts would often degenerate into hostile discussions and include mutual recriminations. It was especially to Farrant upon whom fell the lot of having to conduct these negotiations, since he was for many years not only field secretary of the SUM, but also the general secretary of Northern Missions Council. Thus much of his work was on behalf of the entire Protestant missionary community in Northern Nigeria. It was in this capacity, for example, that he wrote memoranda for Oldham of the International Missionary Council (IMC). This organization was taking up the question of missionary freedom and this brought the SUM into the sphere of international ecumenical action.

Sometimes these ecumenical organizations would speak very forcefully against restrictions. At an all-mission conference held in Northern Nigeria in 1910, a strongly-worded resolution was passed in which it was asserted that missions "are unable to recognize restrictions ..." that are based upon considerations other than the maintenance of peace and order (Boer, 1979: 143). In 1926, the Conference of Missions in the Northern Provinces asked the member missions to collect concrete data on the various ways in which the government was

suppressing Christian progress. The data thus collected eventually became the basis for the memorandum written by Farrant (Appendix III). In previous pages we have already provided a smattering of an interview Farrant had with the highest official in the land, sufficient to indicate the spirit in which such were conducted. We have only to add that such interviews with the highest officials occurred not infrequently and that they would often come close to showdowns between the parties. It could become so tense that at one point Farrant employed military language to describe the relationship with the government: "We fight as armies henceforth." A letter from the government was interpreted "as meaning war" (Boer, 1979: 309). On at least two occasions meetings were arranged between representatives of northern missions and government officials in London.

When one considers all the evidence, it is clear that the missions, though very careful to keep the peace as much as possible, were in no way afraid of the government. When deemed necessary, they would carefully plan their moves, make sure they had the support of the missionary community in general, and then "sock it to them."

It is time we inquire as to how missionaries interpreted the reasons for the obstacles placed in their way. Did they relate these problems at all to colonialism?

Few missionaries seem to have addressed themselves to the question as to the basic reason for all these government obstacles, though many clearly recognized it as an expression of personal aversion to Christianity on the part of the government officials. Farrant was exceptional in that he discussed the reason he recognized at length. He found the primary cause in "the purpose of God." It is easy to blame governments, he wrote, but it could be demonstrated that "it was the purpose of God to turn the messengers of the Cross first to the pagan and not to the Muslim." In a subsequent report to headquarters, he asserted that missions in the Sudan aimed at the Muslim community, but were prevented and instead ended up building a virile Christian community amongst Animist peoples, "kin in race to the Mohammedan tribes." Thus the Muslim witnessed a new phenomenon of the "Christian church ... wise in the knowledge of God, taught of the Spirit, honest in character, growing apace in the wholesome and good things of Christian civilization." Such a community was prepared by God "in order that the Mohammedan people should become dissatisfied with what they have and reach out for reconciliation with Him through Christ Jesus...." The argument, it is obvious, was borrowed from Romans 11.

As far as the human motives were concerned, Farrant recognized a clearly anti-Christian sentiment as the main cause and reserved rather strong language for it. He declared the administration guilty of a crime. He compared them with the "spirit which in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia has destroyed personal liberty and make the State the dictator of ideas." The government was upholding "a principle that is repugnant to ideas of British rule."

Thus the restrictions were contrary to the spirit of British colonialism, according to Farrant, not an expression of its deepest motivation. Farrant heavily criticized the colonial government, but never colonialism itself.

## RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT: UNEASY PARTNERS

The forms of cooperation with various levels of the colonial government were myriad. In this summary we can only give some indication of its extent. Besides extensive social intercourse, there were many instances of unofficial relations from which the mission especially profited. Kumm studied Hausa in Tripoli. When the Resident of Bauchi Province spent time in that city, Kumm's house became the former's headquarters. When Maxwell was building a house, the local government engineer offered technical advice. At another time, Maxwell was allowed to purchase supplies from a government department, even though such was against department rules. On a more personal level, we read of Ruxton's wife lending her "fancy hammock" to Mrs. Guinter, a missionary, for the strenuous trek from Ibi to Wukari. (Boer, 1979:155; Maxwell, *Diaries* [1]: 28, [3]: 14, [2]: 10).

Of course, official relationships were much more numerous, and sometimes they would overlap so that it is hard to know whether to classify them as official or unofficial. It was only natural that upon the arrival of the initial SUM party of four missionaries in 1904, the members should be distributed among the senior government officers in Ibi and that their loads were removed by a "detachment of convicts, guarded by policemen with guns." Kumm was the guest of both Lugard and his deputy. Lugard allowed the SUM to import their supplies duty free, he granted a reduction to missionaries using government steamers and he promised help for building a road to the Wase station. Even Girouard, known though he was for his antipathy for missions, granted Kumm various amenities, including the rent of a complex of government buildings for the ridiculous rent of one shilling per annum! He also arranged for a special train to take Kumm to Barejuto (Boer, 1979: 138-139; *LB*, Mar/1905: 8, 12, Nov/1904: 4-5, Jul/1905: 10). Though at first the SUM used the services of the companies for her financial transactions, later it was done through government channels because the latter would do it free of charge. The government built a church at Lokoja by means of prisoner labour at no cost to the CMS. The government physician at Ibi would charge missionaries only about one quarter of the normal fee. The death of Mrs. Hoskins, a missionary, provided the occasion for full cooperation of the colonial team members. All the Europeans in Ibi, nineteen in number, attended the funeral. While the Niger Company provided the casket, the government had the grave dug, supplied the pallbearers in the form of a police squad and draped the coffin with the British flag. Mrs. Ruxton sent a cross of

flowers. It was not all one-way traffic. Maxwell used to teach Hausa to government officers, while missionary Hayward served for a while as district officer.

During the middle period, i.e., the period from 1918-1945, the SUM received the support of the government in stopping certain traditional practices they considered undesirable, such as "child murder and ritual murder," the killing of twins and the practice of having barbers operate on women's breasts, which caused abscesses. The mission persuaded the government to exempt from paying taxes leprosy patients in recognized camps as well as to exempt farmers from forced paid labour in the mines during World War II during the farming season. Having found a government truck that had gone off the road, missionary Potter took it to Ibi with one hurt passenger and then drove it for the government a whole week to haul materials needed for the construction of bridges. The mission provided a supervisor for the construction of a government building at a monthly rate of fifty pounds. The mission community as a whole requested reduced fares when travelling by railway. One enactment that really pleased the SUM was the recognition of Sunday as the official day of rest in certain parts of the north. Missions hoped that the measures would be made to cover the entire north, including the Muslim area (Boer, 1979: 277-279). Farrant was appointed to the Board of Control of the government-owned Gaskiya Corporation. In 1931 Maxwell invited the district officer and other whites for dinner on Armistice Day. Three days later the officer sent a gang to cut down the tall grasses around the mission compound (Boer, 1979: 302, 315; Maxwell, *Diaries* [25]: 92, [27]: 75, 49, [17]: 40, [18]: 17). Several occasions are recorded of the government's introducing either individual missionaries or the mission as a whole to Nigerians. The arrival of missionary Baker, a Black Jamaican, apparently presented a potential problem to the Resident at Ibi. In order to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of the Chief of Ibi, the Resident required of the former that Baker be received "with the respect due to a white man." The SUM was introduced to the Chief of Yergam people by an assistant resident. During the final period, we read of a missionary who trekked through the Gwoza area with a high government official. During this same period, missionary Timmer was seconded to the government's Gaskiya Corporation. Missionaries helped in the 1959 elections as supervisors. Bachelor, the mission's agricultural expert, was sought by the government for cooperation in fertilizer experiments (Boer, 1979: 179, 190, 394; *LB*, Mar/1907: 63, July/1954: 49).

Having summarized a great variety of miscellaneous forms of cooperation between the mission and the government, we now wish to examine the large areas of cooperation, the greatest of which was that of education. According to Maxwell, the main reason the mission should cooperate in education was to reduce the need for the government to produce her own teachers, teachers that were invariably recruited from among Muslims. He regarded it a critical matter. "Missions, it's up to you to provide teachers that Government will recognize

as qualified for the Traditional districts, so that the schools in them need not be taught by Moslems." Thus, though he did not have any confidence in the intentions of officials, he pushed ahead with cooperation.

Maxwell realized that if the mission was to take up the challenge of education, it would have to accept grants from the government, for mission resources would be insufficient for such a huge task. He was willing to seek such, but with mixed feelings. He did not wish the mission to appear as recipients of gracious favours from the government and therefore opposed automatic application of grants. "Let us deserve it first," was his attitude, "and then apply." Hence, when Ruxton had procured grant money for this purpose and planned to distribute it according to results already obtained, Maxwell proposed to the mission that it be accepted on those terms.

Maxwell insisted also on yet an additional condition for accepting such grants, one that he expressed several times and that indicates his deep suspicion of government motives. It was that missions must "retain complete control of the schools." Back in 1910, Ruxton and another official tried to persuade Maxwell to insert alterations in the resolutions of the Protestant Missionary Conference of Lokoja that would increase government control over the schools, but Maxwell adamantly refused: "No sir, our schools are ours. If we get Government grants, we shall ask them for results only; we shall present children for examination in subjects for proficiency in which grants may be made; but as to our schedules, our timetables, our mode and spirit of teaching, hands off" (Boer, 1979: 163; Maxwell, *Diaries* [6]: 18).

The Lokoja Conference of Missions in Northern Nigeria of 1910 agreed with Maxwell. Not much came of the grants, but by 1913 discussions and consultations on the subject increased. The 1913 Lokoja Conference expressed interest in training students for the civil service and for commercial clerks; they intended to seek government advice and cooperation in the matter. They also declared themselves in favour of cooperation with the government in the production of textbooks "and in other questions pertaining to education." In 1914, the mission discussed these concerns with the government's education officer, Hans Visscher, a former CMS missionary. In 1915, the SUM accepted the government's offer to sell textbooks to the mission. Field Secretary Dawson expressed the basic idea entertained by the missionaries on this score. It is the government's business to promote education, while the mission is interested only in evangelism and training of church leaders. Hence, the mission should "secure the advantage of Christianity of the education by Government to the people." This should be done by placing a teacher in each school to teach religion and by issuing Christian literature. Visscher was reported to have stated that the government would expect the missions to supply the teachers for "distinctly Christian religious instruction." He concluded, "We think ... that it is a matter for congratulations that Government should save

us the trouble of issuing school books and opening schools, and leave us free ... to devote our energies to more direct Christian propaganda.

In 1913, the government planned a primary school in Ibi for chiefs' sons. Both Ruxton and Visscher wanted a missionary as headmaster who would be paid by the government, but they were alone in government for favouring such mission involvement. Dawson favoured such arrangements because the alternative would be a Muslim principal, while the mission would be allowed merely to come in occasionally to teach religion. The arrangement would amount to the government "paying our men to do the work the Mission sent them out to do, and providing the scholars for them to teach and win for Christ and Government can get pupils in a way we cannot." The plans did not materialize, for Ruxton went on leave and that left no one to push for the mission's interest.

When he saw his plans dashed, Ruxton suggested to Dawson that the SUM make an offer directly to Lugard, who was the Governor-General of all Nigeria, to cooperate. While on home leave, Ruxton met unofficially with mission executives in London and suggested ecumenical pressure on the government. But already prior to Ruxton's suggestions, the mission at home had approached Lugard together with the CMS and a working agreement had been made between the two missions to regularly address the government jointly on educational matters. The result was a considerable number of joint presentations. A more Lugardian policy was finally offered to the missions during World War I.

In spite of all the plans and controversies, the education of non-Muslim tribes was not getting off the ground. The provincial government then appointed a clergyman, Bargery, as Director of Education in Traditional Areas and missions were asked to cooperate in education. The aim was education with an emphasis on character building and religion. In Traditional areas, only the Christian religion was to be taught, not Islam. Religious instruction was, furthermore, to be compulsory for these schools, though objectors had the right to be excused during this time. This policy was judged so favourable by the mission that they not only agreed to participate, but also placed some of their own schools in this government scheme. It was agreed that graduates from approved mission schools would be recognized and eligible to compete for positions on the same basis as graduates from government schools.

At one level, then, the struggle by the mission for cooperation with the government in education had been won, but at another front, new frictions arose. The missions sought government aid to supplement the income of mission schools. Thought it was a struggle, the missions had their way. However, by 1916, it appeared that these grants were not without strings, for the government presented an ordinance prohibiting grants to mission schools established after the law went into effect. The ordinance in effect curbed the establishment of new mission schools, for the mission's resources were too slender to continue their

expansion programme without such grants. According to Crampton, it represented an attempt of the Colonial Office to oppose the uncontrolled expansion of mission education even in the non-Muslim areas (Crampton: 93). The missions together objected strongly to the measure. A letter of protest was sent to the Governor General in which three objections were listed: (1) it was discrimination; (2) its definition of schools was too wide so as to include even choirs, Sunday schools, catechumenate classes and even sewing classes; and (3) it was in effect a withdrawal of the earlier promises of cooperation in Traditional education. The letter ended with an implied threat: "The present Ordinance ... would scarcely appeal to our friends and supporters in the Homeland as 'encouragement'." At the home front, both the CMS and SUM appealed to the Colonial Office and the SIM was encouraged to do likewise. Only two months later, the SUM received the reply: the ordinance had been approved and there was no hope of repeal. The missions did not relent. A "desultory correspondence for about five years with a succession of officials" took place and eventually success was booked.

In 1918, the SUM's executive committee instructed their secretary to investigate British educational codes in other British African colonies "for comparison with that in Nigeria and further action there anent if necessary" (Boer, 1979: 192-195; *LB*, Apr/1911: 65; Crampton: 93).

During the middle decades, Bristow emerged as the SUM's main educational strategist. He sought the cooperation of the government once again in getting chiefs and other prominent citizens to send their sons to mission schools. During the 1930s, the government of Plateau Province again proposed that missions undertake all primary schooling in the province, but, again, it was never put into practice. A main issue was still that of government grants to mission schools. On the whole they were recognized as necessary, but they were still accepted with trepidation. Oldham advised the SUM to prepare for the near future when the government was likely to seek closer cooperation with missions in education, and that even larger grants could be expected. A national conference in Nigeria in which the SUM participated in 1928 expressed appreciation for such financial aid.

In 1942, the government adopted a new education scheme in relation to the Development and Welfare Fund that would provide for almost wholesale government support of education, including that of missions. Bristow wrote a memorandum discussing the scheme and all its implications. He recommended acceptance and the mission agreed.

Time and again the mission agreed to grants, but the suspicion with respect to government intentions never waned. Some felt the government sought to use the mission for its own aims. Grants would be accepted only "when given unconditionally," to make sure no limits would result on "the mission's spiritual work." When grants were offered for the Gindiri Training School, the mission instructed Bristow to enquire as to the implications. Farrant

received a letter from the government attempting to allay the mission's suspicions: "I hope that you are not under the impression that by taking a grant you are terribly bound? There is a more broadminded view now. It is the spirit and not the letter that we go by." In 1943, the question cropped up again with respect to Gindiri, this time focusing on capital expenditures. Grants were accepted on condition that no strings be attached "prejudicial to freedom of religious teaching ...." In 1941, Farrant sent a circular to SUM missionaries to solicit their opinion on government grants. The responses ranged from wholehearted acceptance to outright rejection. The main reasons for rejecting were basically two-fold: (1) It would create a class distinction among church workers, since teachers would get a much higher salary than the church could ever pay pastors and evangelist; (2) These grants would give more power to the government in mission schools, with the result of increasing secularization. Some presented arguments for as well as against subsidies. Spencer felt that one advantage would be improved school equipment. Suffill was optimistic that with teachers off the church's payroll, the church should be able to raise sufficient funds to provide adequately for those remaining her responsibility. Wood of the CCN favoured mission acceptance of government proposals. Grants were often considered acceptable simply because the alternatives were worse. The threat of Muslim influence in government schools meant the mission would have to press on with insufficient means. Bristow favoured the government scheme of the 1940s for such reasons. "Roman Catholics and others" would take full advantage of the scheme and leave the SUM behind. "There are," he asserted, "only two alternatives, either we must learn to understand and drive the '1942 model' ... or else sit on the roadside watching the cloud of dust disappearing over the horizon." In addition, Nigerian Christians would insist on accepting the scheme.

There was a clear ambivalence on the part of the government. While on the one hand they actively sought mission cooperation in education, there were many instances where government discriminated against Christianity in favour of Islam. Sometimes this was the result not so much of official policies as it was individual preference on the part of officials or it was implied in the practice of indirect rule. Anglican Bishop Smith mentioned cases of Traditional boys forcibly enrolled in government schools where they were taught by Muslim teachers from Muslim textbooks and "morally bound to become Moslems." He further reported that Christian boys in industrial schools were compelled to work on Sundays. During the 1940s, missionary Doris Spencer accused the government of prescribing textbooks that were clearly Muslim inspired. She commented, "Were children in schools for Moslems only given reading books upholding Christian doctrine ... there would quickly be strong objections made." Her comments referred to the Hausa reader series, *Magana Jari Ce*. She claimed Muslims were exerting strong pressure against teaching of Muslim children in government schools and felt that Christians should display similar zeal to prevent their children from being exposed to Muslim influence. "Instead of this," she complained, "we got approved

school books made almost into handbooks on Mohammedanism.” In another report, we are told of a student in a government school who tried to take a Christian stand, “but the Moslem teacher told the visiting ‘white man’ and this official told the boy he must conform to the Moslem religion.” “How difficult it is,” the author lamented, “when the Government definitely takes the side of the False Prophet.”

Some cases were reported of Muslim rulers seeking to prevent children from attending mission schools. Tett related that “Moslem overlords use threats to prevent the traditional peoples from allowing their children to attend our CRI’s.” In the same area, a local chief was instructed by his Muslim district head not to send boys to such CRI’s. When a father wished to send his boy, he told the local missionary that he could not do so unless he received permission either from the emir or the district officer. In this case, the latter supported the father.

The Conference of Missions for the Northern Provinces asserted their rights by applying “for a right of entry into Government pagan schools for the purpose of giving religious instruction of a non-denominational character to such pupils as desire it.” The same conference demanded also that missions be given representation on the Board of Education for Northern Provinces as well as on provincial boards. At the next conference in 1932, the secretary reported that the government had accepted both demands. These were important steps for the missions in that they thus got a voice in the decision-making process. The missions thus scored a significant victory in their crusade for rights and religious freedom.

Throughout the middle decades there was uncertainty and friction with respect to the education of Muslim children. It appears that for a while it was prohibited to receive Muslim children in Christian schools. A breakthrough occurred that allowed Muslim children to attend such schools, provided the manager of the school was certain the parents realized the Christian nature of the school. However, in the early 1940s the government denied Muslim parents the right to make such decisions for children under eighteen. A writer in *LB* commented that “when so much is made of the object of the present war being a struggle for personal liberty, this is a strange denial of it.” The excuse of the government for this action was based on Islamic law which does not acknowledge such a right of parents, a judgment obtained from “the two most influential emirs,” that is, the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emir of Kano. These two Muslim leaders even disclaimed for themselves the authority for such decision. A clause to this effect was to be inserted as a condition for all new stations, in medical work as well as in schools (Boer, 1979: 63, 279-282, 303; 1984: 77-84).

Farrant pointed to the failure of missions to live up to their responsibility by not meeting government standards of efficiency. Missions must rise to the occasion, for it had become “fairly obvious that Government education will either be Mohammedan or else without

religious value ... for the satisfactory education of Christian children.” He also accused the government of some of the practices already listed above. Lugard had determined that education was to have a religious bias in order to build up morality, but when the government actually founded schools in Traditional areas, Farrant lamented, they would prohibit the teaching of religion. The final result was that “educationally the Government has been a proselytizing force” for Islam (Boer, 1979: 303; 1984: 83).

During the closing period, educational cooperation retained much the same flavour. The mission requested salary grants for industrial training as well as for the School for the Blind and the government agreed. Salary grants were also requested for a number of individual mission educationists.

There was some, but not much, sense of danger in such cooperation even during this period, in spite of nationalist warnings. After all, the Sardauna, the Sultan of Sokoto, had himself praised the mission’s efforts and expressed desire for continuation after independence. The mission was called upon by an independent Nigerian government to “serve on committees, and to help with new syllabuses, etc. Some of the staff are busy writing textbooks ....” (Boer, 1979: 395; 1984: 77-84; *LB*, May/1961: 48, July/1949: 42).

Another major area of cooperation we wish to describe is that of public health or medical work. The story of cooperation in this area is basically similar to that in education, except that it was less extensive. With very few exceptions, most references in the sources to medical cooperation include indications of hesitation on the part of the mission. A happy example of such an exception was the government’s allowing the mission to purchase drugs from the former’s medical stores in Lagos during World War II when all private sources had been exhausted. This arrangement was such a relief that Chandler, a medical missionary, felt moved to thank God for this provision. Oldham advised the mission that as in education, they should get prepared for new forms of medical cooperation with the government.

Beyond these two references, all others betray this undercurrent of suspicion. The conference of missions at Port Harcourt recorded its pleasure at the cooperative spirit of the government and pledged in turn to help in raising health standards. Nevertheless, the conference stressed that “the value of the offer is contingent upon any conditions attached to it.” It was stipulated that the scheme should be fully cooperative, involving trust on both sides.

On the one hand, we recognize that the government will require safeguards to see that grants are used for the purpose for which they are made. On the other hand, it is necessary to ensure in our hospitals and dispensaries freedom of action as Christian Missions, and that cooperation shall not denigrate into undue interference. To this end we consider a Board of

Medical Services ... should be appointed on which the Missions should have an adequate representation ....

In 1930, the government invited the SUM to have its dispensaries join the government system to upgrade services, but the mission refused for four reasons, two of which were technical and two based on suspicion. The latter were: (1) desire to continue to witness to patients and (2) refusal to accept any aid unless given unconditionally. The matter was settled by the government promising aid for mission dispensaries under these conditions in places where there was no government dispensary. In 1931, local authorities granted one hundred pounds for a dispensary at Panyam, but it was mission policy not to accept such grants for building projects and so it was going to be used for the purchase of drugs. Though we have not uncovered a statement as to the reason for this policy, there is no doubt that it was based on fear that ultimately the government might place restrictions on the work at the facility if it had been built with government funds.

Barnden, a medical missionary, lamented in 1940 that much more could be done for lepers if only the government would give more assistance. He does not appear to have been consistent on the matter of government grants, for in his reply to Farrant's circular regarding grants for education, Barnden expressed himself negatively. In his response he recalled an earlier government plan to aid the mission's medical work, but the plan "fizzled out and today we cannot get a penny out of them for even our leper work at Vom." He cited the example of a voluntary medical agency without a Christian thrust that was getting various forms of assistance, such as free rail travel and clothing for leprosy patients imported duty free. No such aid applied to missions "because of Christianity. The attitude of the Government towards Christian leprosy institutions in Moslem areas is a warning that no help will be given to any Christian work unless it be secularized." In 1944, Barnden reported that the mission's hospital at Vom was receiving no government assistance.

In addition to the financial problems, there was the perennial question of the prohibition of working among Muslims, also in medical work. In 1929, Dawson reported the good news that when the government trusted the mission to act with discretion and where the native authority had agreed, the mission might "try through Christian service to win the confidence and friendship of the Moslem communities." Though it appeared that the green light had been given, in fact the light remained at amber for some years. It was not until 1936 that a policy was translated into reality with the government's invitation to begin mainly leprosy work in Muslim areas.

Though the conditions were unacceptable, the SUM agreed to work under them at Maiduguri because it was felt the scheme nevertheless gave "promise of a wider field of effort." Dawson suggested that it would "mean a much wider scope for Christian witness, judiciously

exercised ...” The aim of the mission of the proposed colony was described as two-fold: (1) to rid Bornu of leprosy and (2) “to secure the privilege of witnessing for Christ to the one million Mohammedans in the Province.” The program would provide a reason for touring the province and opportunities for witness would not be lacking. Such work would demonstrate both the love and power of God. The welcome accorded by emirs and chiefs augured well, in spite of the odious clauses. In other words, the mission felt that somehow personnel would be able to circumvent the restrictions so that this ministry would not be neutralized. In fact, one report indicated that the dispensary in the colony was used for “religious and other classes.”

Another enlightening case was that of Nguru Hospital, also in Bornu. When the provincial resident was approached in 1939 about a station at Nguru, he advised the mission to apply for a limited mission, that is, a mission aiming only at Traditionals and Christians, as it would stand a better chance of approval, especially if medical work were included. While the application was being processed, the government suddenly sprung the “18-year” restriction on the SUM. This condition was not acceptable to the mission, but there was hope it would be modified or dropped. When the government gave its general consent, the SUM did not officially accept or reject it, but the resident was verbally informed that the mission was holding the matter in abeyance till further developments were more clear. The issue was finally settled in 1944, at least with respect to the Nguru application. The “18-year” restriction was dropped and conditions similar to those at Maiduguri were accepted by both parties. Government’s consent came after the Shehu of Bornu, the traditional ruler of the province, indicated his agreement. The SUM accepted the arrangement, provided “the other bodies interested in the principle that was affected ... offered no objection.” The matter had been concluded basically behind the scenes by means of correspondence and interviews (Boer, 1979: 283-286; *LB*, Jul/1923: 67, Jul/1944: 45, Jul/1931: 62-63, Jul/1929: 78, Jul/1940: 59, Jul/1937: 57, 74).

During the years after World War II, the mission community deeply regretted the government’s continued reticence to cooperate in medical work. A medical missionary conference in 1946 pushed for very close cooperation. It suggested that the government should consult missions whenever the former contemplated new moves in medical work. It also urged that mission hospitals be recognized as the official medical facilities in their particular areas and that mission teaching hospitals be eligible for grants. Training of dispensary attendants should include both government and mission trainees. In view of the large number of leprosy patients treated by missions, the latter should receive “a fair share of the Welfare and Development Fund.” These suggestions were made because the very survival of medical missions were said to depend on their finding a “recognized place in relation to the government Medical Services.”

We are not trying to create the impression of total lack of cooperation. The mission received grants for various medical projects. But there was evidence, in fact, of increasing severity. Muir aired the complaint that even though the government was “very willing” to cooperate in education, it was “to be regretted that more regulations, particularly in medical matters, have been imposed and that it takes longer to get permission to open new work.” There was the tendency on the part of the government to impose restrictions concerning evangelistic work in leprosy colonies also in those colonies located amongst Traditional communities. Edgar Smith presented a concrete example of the Tamiya colony at Takum, a community where Muslim population comprised no more than five percent.

During these closing years, the missions continued gallantly to oppose the various restrictions on medical work. The Northern Mission Council declared that missions were “willing to participate in all possible ways in the humanitarian services of leprosy relief,” but only on condition that they would not be prevented from carrying on their evangelistic services as well, at least in the non-Muslim areas. Due to such pressures, the clauses were deleted and the government agreed to provide grants for leprosy work as well as for more general medical services and all without the restrictions they had sought to impose (Boer, 1979: 396-397, 1984: 84-87; *LB*, Jul/1947: 39, Jul/1952: 64).

Another issue to be discussed in this chapter is the mission’s attitude towards politics in so far as it relates to our subject. The first point to be made is that SUM was very deeply embroiled in colonial politics. They openly and proudly supported the idea of colonialism not only, but they also supported the colonial regime in many concrete ways. They consciously sought to instill a sense of loyalty in the hearts of Nigerians. Furthermore, the many-faceted relationships of cooperation with the government was also in effect a testimony to the people as to the positive value of the colonial order. From beginning to end the mission was embroiled in controversy with the government with respect to the freedom of religion. They applied as much political pressure as they thought useful, usually in cooperation with the wider missionary community. They also cooperated in efforts to influence the inclusion of religious liberty in the constitution of independent Nigeria.

The strange thing is that in spite of these obviously political activities, the SUM, in keeping with the missionary community as a whole, rejected any political role for themselves! At the World Missionary Conference of 1910, it was agreed that “everywhere a missionary is under a moral obligation to abstain entirely from politics.” The SUM’s archives contain a letter by the secretary of the CMS in which he states that “the CMS expressly warns its missionaries against engaging in political intrigue ....” In 1950, Bristow asserted that “missionary societies in the Sudan have very wisely avoided politics, and have no intention of entering into them.” *LB* carried an article by missionary Veary from French Equatorial Africa who stated that, in

spite of the non-political ideal, it was “of course ... impossible for a Mission of our size and importance to remain outside these political developments ....” The intention, however, was clear enough (Boer, 1979: 105-106, 275, 390-391; 1984: 92; *World Missionary Conference*, II: 169, I: 285, IX: 170, VII: 83-84, 149, 95; *LB*, Jul/1950: 72, Nov/1952: 114, 97, 99).

During the final period, the mission began to recognize the political implications of certain aspects of her ministry. The majority of the folk amongst whom the SUM was working were largely oblivious of the political developments about them. They could end up with little or no representation in an independent government. “This situation,” it was suggested, “gave added importance and urgency to our ... educational work.” In other words, the political importance of the mission’s educational program did not go unnoticed. Bristow lamented that “the people would have been in a better position if the missions had not been so reluctant in the past to venture upon an educational programme. All the Christians are still too backward educationally to take an active part in political leadership.” True, missions were “at long last beginning to take up educational work in a small way, but it is probably too late to have any effect on the present situation.” Nevertheless, though few, Christians were already leading in the movement to safeguard non-Muslim interests and their leadership so far had been “wise and a credit to the quality of their Christianity.”

One missionary even recognized the political aspect of the organized church. The threat of a Muslim majority required African Christians to devise a “united front and speak with one voice to government.” Missionary Potter thought this need called for a Union Church that would comprise all the churches in which the various SUM branches had a hand in establishing – in other words, an ecclesiastical organization with a political thrust. Nigerian Christians, however, cognizant of the same problem, responded by establishing a Christian political party, the Middle Zone League, in which David Lot was a leading figure. Edgar Smith very guardedly commented, “The way it will work out is not yet known.”

However, all this did not mean that the mission had now come to recognize itself as a political force, except on one issue. That issue was that of the rights of minority tribes under the new constitution. It was agreed to raise a “strong voice” regarding such rights. All avenues were to be explored, including the CCN, the IMC and African church leaders. When someone asked whether this was not interfering in politics, the answer was simple and pragmatic: if we do nothing now, the churches will feel grieved at our silence. It was subsequently decided to bring the concern to the Northern Missions Council “in an attempt to get assurance that Northern Nigerian non-Muslim minorities will have adequate representation in the various houses. Use may be made of any competent avenues, including those at home” (Boer, 1979: 392, 1984: 92-93).

The mission's general pretense of political aloofness did not mean political indifference on her part. Though David Lot and the late Nyako, two members of COCIN, both testify that certain missionaries tried to dissuade them from their political activities, most evidence points to rather lively interest in the involvement of Nigerian Christians in politics. Bristow's comments on education are indicative of this spirit. When Lot was elected into the government, the mission was grateful. The official report for 1951 reads, "We thank God for men of such caliber in the Government of the country in these early, important and formative years of self-government." An article in *LB* suggested, "It is indeed a cause for praise that this fine man has influence in the affairs of this country."

Especially Farrant was interested in Christian influence in government. The government may have the chair, he warned, but the Church should not "sit upon its knee." "The Church is not to be courted by, or nursed by a Government. She has her own sphere. The respective tasks of Government and of Church are complementary..." He stated that "it is one of our objects to make the true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report." Thus it was only natural for him to appreciate any evidence of Christians having a role in the government. Upon his own appointment to the Board of Control of Gaskiya Corporation, a government-owned organization, Farrant remarked that "this is a gratifying recognition of the political importance of the non-Moslem people and lays a responsibility on them as well as giving them an opportunity of expression." When Nigerian Christians received greater recognition in tribal councils, Farrant again rejoiced, especially because this development was welcomed by colonial officials as well. It was "a matter of praise to God when the Church by Christian living wins its way to acceptance" (Boer, 1979: 397, 391, 302; 1984: 93-94).

Farrant was particularly interested in the liberty of the weak. This he regarded as an important issue for David Lot *c.s.* to tackle as a major concern. Some of his articles deal extensively with various political topics, such as methods of election, composition of the Nigerian government, constitutional developments. One very important political suggestion he offered was that the Middle Belt become a separate region rather than be subsumed in the larger Northern Region. However, his concern was mainly for the freedom of religion. His political interests were subservient to his missionary concern for the freedom of religion; they did not constitute an interest in politics as such. It was also this primary religious interest that caused Farrant to be concerned with constitutional developments.

Though he was deeply interested in constitutional safeguards for religious freedom, Farrant was quite aware that such safeguards constitute no guarantees. "It looks well to have safeguards written into a constitution," he warned, "but they can be ignored or misinterpreted by government ...." He suggested that "the most reliable protection for a minority is its own strength of character and stability of purpose." As far as Christians in

Northern Nigeria were concerned, “their progress will depend much more upon their fidelity to Christ than on safeguards in the Constitution.”

Before concluding this section, we draw attention to a statement that spoke volumes and that was more representative of most missionaries’ political thinking than was Farrant with his keen interest. There was a general apprehension among missionaries that after independence the alleged Muslim majority in the north would make it difficult for Christians. This situation might not be so dangerous, Edgar Smith thought, if only Muslims “could divorce their religion from their politics.”

### **COLONIAL OPRESSION OF ISLAM: SUPPRESSION OF SLAVE TRADE**

There is one area in which the colonial government definitely suppressed Muslim aspiration and practice in Northern Nigeria. I refer to the practice of wholesale slave raiding and slave trading on the part of the northern Muslims *vis a vis* their Traditional neighbours. Though in the minds of most people the trans-Atlantic slave trade between West Africans and Europeans stands out more vividly, there was also the large-scale internal trade of Nigerians by Nigerians, of Traditionalists by Muslims. Without seeking to belittle the trans-Atlantic trade by contrasting it with the Muslim equivalent, proper historical perspective demands that the latter be examined with the same intensity as has the former. As many think they can see a connection between the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the present relationships between Africa and the West, so there are good reasons to posit connections between the Muslim enslavement of Traditionalists during pre-colonial days and present concepts of jihad.

Before we actually describe the Muslim slave trade as it was witnessed by Christian pioneers in the North and other places, it is also of historical value to mention some differences between the two slave systems. First, it cannot be denied that whereas the trans-Atlantic trade was a connivance between Africans and Westerners who came to our shores, the Muslim slave trade was conducted within Nigeria solely by African Muslims. No outside party can be held responsible for the latter.

Secondly, whereas the descendants of the victims of the trans-Atlantic trade survive and are easily identified as significant minorities in some countries of the Western hemisphere and as majorities in some others, Rev. Dr. Yusufu Turaki, the General Secretary of the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA), has recently raised the question as to the whereabouts of the offspring of the victims of the Muslim trade that were taken to Muslim countries beyond the Sahara desert. Though eye witnesses, as we shall see shortly, insist that the Muslim trade was very extensive, the offspring of the multitude of these slaves are very few in number.

**They form a mere smattering in the Arab world. What, demands Turaki, happened to them? Is it more than a rhetorical question?**

**Thirdly, without belittling the guilt of Christians involved in trans-Atlantic slavery, it is a historical fact that it was a combination of economic developments and Christian conscience that forced its abolition. The internal Muslim slave trade was stopped by a combination of Christian and colonial forces. There are no indications that Muslims would have stopped the practice if they had not been stopped by these external non-Muslim forces.**

**In the next few paragraphs I want to describe this Muslim slave trade in all its horrors as reproduced by an eyewitness, namely Dr. Karl Kumm, the founding father of the SUM. He was not only a missionary statesman; he was also an explorer who trekked widely through tropical Africa and wrote several books about his experiences.**

**Kumm did what he could to describe the inhuman conditions caused by Muslim slavery. On his trek from the Niger River to the Nile River he carried with him the photograph of a Bishareen, one that haunted him and refused to release him:**

**Only a dark-eyed Bishareen, an untaught desert ranger, lithe, sinewy, half savage, proud, bold, free. With his wild crop of matted hair done in the style of the Sphinx and the old Pharoahs, gripping his well-worn stick in both his hands, he sits there leaning forward, searching us with unfathomable issues, sunk in a deeper silence, hanging on his relation to us, this hour, this day.**

**We cannot escape those eyes. Walk away, they follow. Meet them, they are watching you. Turn from them, they watch you still. Ignore them, neglect them, busy yourself with other things – still their haunting question pursues.**

**As we look we seem to see in and through that photograph the dark-skinned people of the whole Sudan. The eyes that look at us from that one silent face are eyes innumerable, hopeless eyes of slaves, anguished eyes of tortured women; keen eyes of clever traders and the proud glance of chieftains; others dull, bewildered, shadowed by life's miseries, unlit by any of heaven's rays. The face with its grave questions stood for the face of thousands – faces of slave driver, of fanatic Imans, rich Emirs, lazy princes, half-starved naked Nile savages, wild Dinkas, Shilloks, Nuers, and a hundred other tribes. Their lands came up before the mind, stretching from Abyssinia across to the Atlantic – free kingdoms, ancient mountains, lakes, empty wadies, desert and green oases, palm-fringed villages and wells. Like a dream they swept before us.**

**The vast Sudan – 3000 miles across ... 100 lands, 100 languages, all, all non-Christian to this hour .... (Boer, 1979: 126; Lucy Kumm's Introduction to H.K.W. Kumm, 1907: 6-8; Cleverdon: 20-21).**

We quote at length to demonstrate the intensity with which Kumm experienced his burden for the Sudan and how intimately this burden was related in Livingstonian fashion to the slavery problem.

It is clear from this quotation that Kumm relished such descriptions. With never failing vigour and a piling up of dreadful images, he would pour out such descriptions one after another, forever groping for more effective vocabulary combinations. There was the “curse of Ham that had been Africa’s woe, and for centuries and millenniums it has been in the grip of demons. Chains have bound it. Chains of superstition and idolatry, chains of mental ignorance and physical slavery ....” (*LB*, Jun/1908: 123).

One is tempted to pile up quotation after quotation, for a mere summary hardly does justice to the depth of feeling Kumm himself experienced and as he imparted it to his constituency. He wrote of emirs sending slave raiders into their territories in order to collect the annual tribute due to him and in the process destroying, killing, enslaving, utterly devastating large areas. “I have known close on five thousand square miles of territory absolutely depopulated by the ruling emir.” He had personally seen “huge walled towns deserted, thousands of acres of farm land relapsing into jungle and an entire population absorbed. And this sort of thing is not done once or twice in a century, but it is absolutely being done somewhere or other every day” (*LB*, Jan/1907: 12). With prolonged experience the cruel and ingenious methods of torture became increasingly refined: “The refinements of torture that suggest themselves to the lustful mind of the Sudanese Mohammedan are many and peculiar.”

Real misery is seen written on the faces of those whose families have been destroyed or torn from them. There is the mother who has lost her children; the lover who has seen his sweetheart torn from his arms; the chief who has lost his authority; the slave on whom privation and disease have set their mark; the woman with sunken eyes, gaping rib spaces, and long skinny breasts; and the man with tumid spear-thrust or raw, oozing sword-slash fresh upon him. Behind the shed is the body of a slave who has just drawn his last breath, his thin limbs tangled in the agony of death (Kumm, 1907: 124).

Here we have landed in what Livingstone referred to as “hell,” the place where “Satan has his seat.”

The side-effects of this terrorism as Kumm described them were astounding. During his trans-Africa safari in 1909, Kumm came across the Sara-Kabba people, who had their women stretch their lower lip to incredible ugliness, not because the men folk thought this beautiful, but, to the contrary, supposedly to make them unattractive to Muslim slavers. After centuries of harassment, these people had withdrawn themselves into swamps. As soon as a stranger came in sight, in this case Kumm himself, he “heard shrieks, a rush, a rustling in the grass, and there was silence; the population in the village decamped” (Kumm, *Hausaland*; 155-156).

It was this Muslim terrorism that Kumm indicated as his main reason for favouring European intervention. In the course of describing two Arab slave routes, he advised the British and the French to cooperate in closing the one (*LB*, May/1910: 120). With the arrival of Europe in Africa, the spell cast over the continent by demons, ignorance and slavery was broken, “and in our days the giant is lifting himself from the ground and in his half-sleep is looking around questioningly.” “Africa is today standing before the crossways ....” The “evil dreams” that have “made Africa’s sleep unhappy and restless” have come to their end (*LB*, Jun/1908: 122-123). Though with some hesitation, the doctor supported Martin Luther’s evaluation of Mohamed as “the first-born son of Satan,” because of Islam’s “avowed acceptance, practice, and teaching of slavery.” It becomes for this reason “one of the most wicked, if not the most wicked religion...” (*LB*, Aug/1906: 161; *Cf.* Kumm, 1917: xvii, 29-30). Kumm simply did not tire from describing the worst and most flagrant degradation he had witnessed in Africa.

Muslims were worse than Traditionalists in Kumm’s mind. The darkness described earlier was largely caused by the Muslim slavers; Traditionalists were mostly innocent victims. The Muslims were the perpetrators of Africa’s greatest evil, the agents of demonizing Africa. Though he attributed a higher degree of civilization to Islam, they also were regarded as excelling in works of evil. Whereas Traditionalists were often portrayed as open to the influence of the West, Islam was depicted as opposed to all progress, as the greatest “promoter of barbarism in Africa,” the “greatest enemy to European culture in Africa.” Religious intolerance, brutality, fanaticism, unbridled covetousness, lying and deception were all characteristics of Muslims (Kumm, *Khont*: 228-229). “Wherever Mohammedanism has gone, lying and stealing and sexual diseases have spread, until certain pagan places which were clean fifteen years ago, have become syphilitic cesspools” (Cleverdon: 161). To Kumm, Islam “was ALL BAD” indeed (Boer, 1979: 128; 1984: 36-37).

Colonial government and the missions worked together to undermine the Muslim slave trade. Faithful to the tradition of Livingstone, missions advocated the replacement of this illegal trade with legitimate trade, meaning colonial trading patterns. On the whole, missionaries had high expectations that Africa would be truly liberated through the colonial capitalistic order. Remember their implicit definition of colonialism given earlier.

The second way the SUM cooperated with the government in eliminating the slave trade in Northern Nigeria was in taking over from the government what came to be called the Lucy Memorial Freed Slaves’ Home. Though the SUM took it over, the government continued to subsidize the project, which was moved from its original location in Umaisha to Wukari, Gongola State. The inmates of the Home were children freed from Muslim slavers. During the mid 1920s the Home was closed, since there was no further need for it: slavery had largely been overcome (Boer, 1979: 139, 157-158, 188-189, 277; 1984: 76-77. Maxwell, *Half a*

*Century: 55, 82; Diaries [2]: 41, 43, 50*). However, recently Willem Berends, a missionary of the SUM working among the Kambari people of Niger State, met a man who was freed from slavery as late as 1945.

## **CAPITALISM: THE AXE TO THE ROOTS OF BOTH CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM**

The introduction of the colonial order, especially its economic and educational aspects, were basically threats to traditional Muslim society. It appears that most colonial rulers did not understand this feature, for where they saw external threats to Islam, especially missions, they would seek to contain them – except, of course, the slave trade. The spirit of Capitalism goes counter to the Muslim spirit. Secular Western education was largely opposed by the Muslim community, a fact that has caused an educational imbalance that is problematic till this day. It cannot be gainsaid that the imposition of these colonial elements constituted an attack on the root of Muslim society, though it may not have been intended as such. At this level colonialism definitely worked towards the undermining of Islam. Muslims are right on this score.

However, the same is true with respect to Christianity. We have seen how difficult a time the missions had to protect themselves against repeated government attempts at secularizing education. Western secular education is as anti-Christian as it is anti-Islam. Here the two were essentially in the same boat. And even though missions advocated Capitalism as the economic cure for Africa, I have elsewhere sought to convince Christians that such support was misdirected and that in essence Capitalism is un-Christian in spirit, a subject on which I cannot further elaborate here (Boer, 1979: 456-457, 489-490; 1984: 115ff, 160ff; 1977: *CTJ*).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The time has come for presenting some conclusions from the foregoing materials.

1. Missionaries supported colonialism in principle and had high hopes of African liberation from it.
2. Missionaries almost from the beginning right up to independence waged incessant battles with the colonial regime because of the many obstacles the regime created to their work. These were bitter battles and fierce.

3. All areas of cooperation between missions and regime were fraught with suspicion and tension on the part of the missions, for their respective reasons for cooperation were different and not infrequently based on opposite motivations.

4. Missions regarded government opposition to their work as a betrayal of true colonialism and failed to recognize that, in fact, this opposition was an expression of the deepest and actual nature of colonialism. The missionary definition of colonialism was diametrically opposite to actual colonialism: liberation versus exploitation. The fact that most missionaries were blind to the real nature of colonialism is due to their dubious theology, a factor that does them no credit and leaves them without excuse (Boer, 1979: 446-473, 1984: Ch. 8).

5. The frequently-asserted notion that the colonial government was supporting Christian missions is so one-sided and without proper nuances that it is no more than a false myth that continues to be perpetrated by some non-Christian groups for reasons of their own, namely Muslims, Marxists and some secularists. These groups have vested interests in perpetuating the myth and we can count on their continuing to do so – regardless of the publication of this article!

6. It would not be historically valid to assert the opposite of the myth, namely that colonialism aided Islam and opposed Christianity. Such an assertion would merely constitute an attempt to create an opposite myth. The fact is that the situation was very nuanced. Christians would be served at some fronts; Moslems at others. In some cases both suffered. However, the evidence is clear that missions profited mostly in micro-issues, while Islam was supported at the macro-level. That is to say, Christians were often aided in small ways. Where they seemed to profit in larger issues, it was constantly a matter of tension because of diversified basic goals. On the other hand, the regime did much to protect Islam from the missionary approach not only, but in many ways supported Muslim expansion at the expense of Christians.

7. There is one area in which the Muslim community was oppressed by the regime, namely in the suppression of the Muslim slave raiding and trade. Somehow, most of us do not mind this suppression! I have not ever heard Muslims publicly complaining of this particular instance of oppression by the colonialists. I wonder why! Though this particular form of the jihad is --- temporarily? ---- ended, other forms appear to be in the active mode.

8. In one sense both Christians and Muslims were dealt a serious blow by the introduction of colonial capitalism and secular Western education. Muslims were more awake to this threat than were Christians, who had developed a blind spot with regard to Capitalism. But whether or not Christians recognized the non-Christian nature of Capitalism, the fact is that in the long

run these two aspects of colonialism constituted an attack on the foundations of both religions.

## **APPENDIX I**

The following constitutes my response to Prof. A.B. Fafunwa's article in the *New Nigerian* of July 4, 1974. I sent it in to the *New Nigerian* but received no response.

### **EDUCATION, RELIGION AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

The *New Nigerian* of July 4, 1974, features an article by Prof. A.B. Fafunwa, entitled "Educational Backwardness of the North: A Colonial Phenomenon." I do not intend to dispute the point of the title; indeed, to do so would require one to force the facts of history.

Furthermore, Fafunwa demonstrates that he has engaged in some solid research, something that in itself demands respect. But, like all research, not all gaps have been filled. There are a number of inconsistencies and even inaccuracies, to only some of which I draw the readers' attention.

## **FLAG AND BIBLE**

It is true, the flag followed the Bible and vice versa – but is there an alternative chronological sequence besides these two? It is, unfortunately, also true that the missionary force in Nigeria has for years tended to identify the kingdom of God and that of the British. They have tended to entertain a naively high view of the goals and accomplishments of Western civilization. Patriotism, combined with a dichotomistic view typical of many Western Christians, has frequently prevented the missionary force from a serious recognition of the prophetic message of Scripture that judges the aspirations of Western civilization as much as it does those of any other culture.

It is, however, definitely not true that British occupation and Christian evangelism have been “synonymous.” I have just spent one and a half academic years studying such questions as they relate to the missions in the North, especially to the British branch of the Sudan United Mission, a mission that entered Nigeria in 1904. At the commencement of this study I entertained a bias much like that of Prof. Fafunwa, but have since come to the discovery that, loyal as this mission sought to be to the colonial regime, it was engaged in a bitter and running battle with the government almost from its very inception till the time of independence concerning freedom of religion and proclamation among northern Muslims. The government did not encourage mission work among Muslims; in fact, it prohibited it. Judging from Fafunwa's article, he knows this, for he refers to protests against this government policy on the part of the Anglican Church. It was precisely at this point that the basic divergence in the respective impulses of missions and colonialism brought the two parties to continual loggerheads. Calling colonialism and evangelism among the North's Muslim population “synonymous” is wholly incorrect, regardless of the popularity of the emotionally-laden charge.

Fafunwa speaks of an “unholy alliance to convert Emirs, Chiefs and their people into Christianity,” the parties to the alliance again being church and state, missions and the colonialist regime. That there was an alliance on many fronts between these two parties is not to be disputed, but at this particular point it broke down. Of course, missionaries would have welcomed such conversions – but the colonial enterprise, conceived as it was for economic reasons, opposed all attempts at converting northern Muslims, for that would have

caused upheavals detrimental to the colonial cause. The missions would have welcomed an alliance at this front as well, but the government refused.

Again it is false to assert that the colonial regime cooperated with missionaries in imposing Christian textbooks on non-Christians. Western, perhaps, but not Christian. Whereas missionaries were not always aware of the difference, it is clear from Prof. Fafunwa's article that he recognizes this distinction as being an important one. As a matter of fact, there is evidence that the colonial government imposed literature on students in so-called neutral or secular schools that was deeply Muslim in spirit. I refer to the Hausa series *Magana Jari Ce*.

### MISSIONS VERSUS AFRICAN CULTURE

Another popular charge reproduced by Prof. Fafunwa is that missionaries sought to impose Western culture on Africans. Unfortunately the effect of much missionary activity has been in that direction, but that occurred against the expressed desires of most missionary societies in the North. The Lokoja and Miango series of missionary conferences fulminated against all Westernizing tendencies of new converts. They featured discussions, for example, on the possibility of putting such Westernizing Christians under discipline. The desirability of indigenous hymnology was strongly expressed. The inmates and Nigerian employees at the Lucy Memorial Freed Slaves' Home were prevented from wearing European clothes. The children at this Home were originally lodged in Western buildings, but the SUM, poor though it was, thought its fear of Westernizing tendencies a sufficient reason to construct round houses for the children, even though there was ample room for all. The numerous references in missionary letters, diaries and minutes to the question at hand, at least in those of the SUM, are eloquent testimony to the intention of these missionaries.

The intention to prevent Westernization of Christians was strong, but the results have not measured up to these intentions. It would be worthwhile to study the reasons for missionary failure at this point. No doubt, missionaries themselves are partly responsible for this failure, for they were more bound by their own culture than they themselves realized, but that does not fully account for the problem.

### CIVIL RIGHTS IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

Under this heading I wish to engage in a discussion of Prof. Fafunwa's basic thesis, namely that Muslims in the North have been cheated in the educational process under the colonial regime as well as under independent government. Prior to this discussion, however, I cannot

suppress an important question. Fafunwa refers to a Christian synod in Lagos that asserted the right of “every Muslim as well as a pagan to have the knowledge of that religion made clear to him, and that no chiefs or government have the right to prevent this.” I entertain many misgivings about modern civilization, but I consider freedom of religion one of its great contributions worth defending. Does Fafunwa actually disagree with this right? Surely, he would not place himself in a position where he would have to defend such a reactionary view!

With respect to Fafunwa’s basic thesis, however, one can only concur, even though I am a Christian, and a pastor at that. In their eagerness to have men acknowledge Jesus Christ, missionaries have been short-sighted in that they fought for only the rights of Christians, not for those of Muslims. Any civil rights movement – and among other things, missions were that, too – that fights only for the rights of one segment of the population will eventually have the tables turned on itself and find itself justly accused of oppressing the neglected segment. That is, in fact, what Fafunwa is doing: accusing the missionary movement of oppressing the Muslim community of the North. In so far as these missions have not championed the Muslim rights as well, Fafunwa is correct.

Sympathetic thus as I am with this basic assertion, I am compelled to disagree with the offered solution: all schools to become secular and citizenship oriented. I have two reasons for my disagreeing on this matter.

First of all, his solution is based on the assertion that the products of Nigerian schools are not possessed by a genuine Nigerian spirit, in fact, are not true Nigerians! That, I submit, is an insult to all Nigerians who have attended any of Nigeria’s education institutions. Furthermore, it throws doubt on the loyalties of Prof. Fafunwa himself, for he too, I suspect has attended these institutions.

My second and more weighty reason for objecting to his solutions is the simple fact that it is impossible to build a school system free from any bias. Every person has his bias, holds certain presuppositions – acknowledged or unacknowledged --, entertains a worldview, whether that be Muslim, Christian, secular or whatever. A secular school system is not merely neutral, but in its silence with respect to the Almighty and His laws is in fact teaching His irrelevance and imbibes a spirit of indifference towards Him. A secular system would teach attitudes that go against the very grain of both Islam and Christianity. Fafunwa’s solution is no solution, for it merely would give us a new form of educational spiritual oppression, this time against Christians as well as Muslims.

Justice must always be based on facts, also educational justice. One of the basic facts of Nigeria is its religious pluralism; we have Muslims, Christians, secularists, Animists as our

main constituents. If we wish to escape monopoly of one group over the others, we must give them all equal educational right. Instead of one system, whether Islam, Christian or secular, recognition of all three would help overcome the problem. All parents need to be able to send their children to the school that is an extension of home and in which parents can trust that their most important values are cherished, not trampled upon. A three-pronged system that would provide for three types of schools, each sharing the people's taxes representatively would put the deathblow to all possibilities of monopoly and oppression.

Prof. Fafunwa might object that such a system would have strongly divisive tendencies. I cannot vouch for secularism, but would trust that modern Islam can muster a philosophy of education that would inculcate a healthy degree of patriotism. As to Christianity, properly conceived, it cannot be divisive, for its deepest intention is reconciliation. Finally, the government could continue to keep careful watch on developments and devise proper safeguards in the system.

My basic assertion then, finally, is that Fafunwa's solution is impossible, because neutrality does not exist. This fact must be recognized if Nigeria is to design a system that does justice to all main groupings. The effect of Fafunwa's solution is simply to replace one oppressor with another.

## **Appendix II**

### **Bingham Against the Government**

#### **HISTORIC MEMORANDUM PRESENTED TO THE MISSIONARY CONFERENCE AT MIANGO WHEN THE SUBJECT OF RELATIONSHIP OF MISSIONS TO GOVERNMENT WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION<sup>1</sup>**

The subject was opened by Mr. H.D. Hooper, the C.M.S. Secretary for Africa. Rev. R.V. Bingham then rose and addressed the meeting presided over by Bishop Smith as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> (J)

Missions in Nigeria have shown long patience with a government that has long hindered their progress, and in calling for further and united action, it is well to consider the steps that have been taken in the past.

The Church Mission Society was the first to undertake entrance into, and the opening up of, the Northern Provinces of Nigeria to the Gospel. They were magnificently led by Graham Wilmot Brooke and Charles Robinson. From Lokoja they faced the task before them. They sought no protection from the British Government. Carefully they prepared for advance into the Northern Territories, and then the tragedy occurred, and both of these men laid down their lives on the border of the land which they sought to occupy.

It was five years later when the society with which I am connected undertook its first pioneer effort from Toronto, Canada. Our way up the Niger was blocked at that time by the Royal Niger Company, holding charter from the British Government. It refused permission to us to sail up the Niger. We landed in Lagos and assayed the difficult task of the overland entrance into the Northern territories of Nigeria, then known as the Central Sudan. Again we asked no protection from the British Government. My companions faced the Moslem emirs of the north, passed through Ilorin, Bida, Kontagora, Zaria, and today their graves, the one in Bida and the other in Ghirku, in the Zaria Province, give testimony to the fact that, long before the British occupation, the Christian Missionary entered these lands.

We were preparing for our third effort to get a foot-hold at the time the British decided to cancel the charter of the Royal Niger Company, and to seek direct administrative connection with these great territories. At that time, Sir Frederick Lugard appealed to us to submit our plans and movements to him lest we might hamper his operations, and lest any untoward incident with the missionary might demand a punitive expedition which would seriously embarrass them. The Church Missionary Society, which was about to launch another effort led by Bishop Tugwell and accompanied by Dr. Miller and others, made this promise. Our Sudan Interior Mission agreed to Sir Frederick Lugard's request, but, in concluding their letter acquiescing to his proposal, placed, as one condition, that immediately on the effective occupation by the British, no further restriction should be placed on missionary operations.

Sir Frederick Lugard made no protest or demur at such a condition, and, whatever the later interpretation Government has sought to place upon its proclamations, *we claim that an understanding then entered into with our Canadian Mission is just as sacred as any like understanding made with Moslem emirs.*

When Britain finally undertook to break the power of the Moslem emirs of the North, it was on grounds of humanity, and to put an end to the fearful bloodshed of the perpetual

slave-raiding wars carried on by those Moslem emirs. When the British successfully completed their task with scarcely any bloodshed, the whole populace welcomed relief from these cruel oppressors. On Sir Frederick's own testimony, the populace of Kano, sick and tired of the rule of their Moslem king, met them miles before they reached the city with food for his troops. When finally the fleeing Moslem emirs were captured, they trembled for fear that the British Government would give them some of their own medicine, and that they, who had sought to force the Mohammedan religion, at the point of the sword, upon great populations that endeavoured to resist them, would be themselves compelled to give up the Moslem faith and to accept Christianity. When Sir Frederick Lugard decided on his policy that those same blood-thirsty slave-raiders should be placed back again to rule these peoples now brought under British control, he sought to set their fears at rest in this sphere by issuing his proclamations. Those proclamations applied to the missions with which Sir Frederick was then in communication as much as they applied to the Moslem. We quote from one of these as follows: "The English Government never interferes with religion. Taxes, law and order, punishment of crime, these are matters for the Government, but not religion." We claim this as our Magna Carta for Northern Nigeria just as much as these Moslem emirs. We claim it, too, for all the subjects that then came under British rule. We claim that it is the inalienable right of everyone under that British Flag to be left free to peaceably accept and to peaceably propagate whatever religion they choose.

But it is upon a false interpretation of these very proclamations that the Government of Northern Nigeria has built its whole anti-missionary propaganda, claiming that these lands were assured that their religion would not be interfered with and that it involves the exclusion of the missionaries.

We hold the sworn statement of the man who officially translated Sir Frederick Lugard's proclamations into both Arabic and Hausa, and in that statement he declares that there was nothing in a single proclamation that either implied or involved the exclusion of missionaries, and he further states that, as a British citizen and a Christian man he would have refused to translate it had Sir Frederick Lugard requested it. We hold the letter which Sir Frederick sent thanking him for his services and increasing the fee which he had asked for his work.

*The whole conflict must be waged right at this point of our right.* In the early years Sir Frederick Lugard had not thought of the interpretation which he has since permitted to be placed upon his words. We can prove it both by his actions and his words. We quote from his own annual reports as follows:

"1901 – Dr. Miller (of the C.M.S.) and Rev. Anthony (of the Sudan Interior Mission) afford us every confidence that both missions will be of great value in the work of civilization

and progress. It may be advisable hereafter that Government should give them a small annual grant based on results." Both of these missions at that very time had occupied Moslem areas with Sir Frederick's approval.

In the report of 1903 Sir Frederick Lugard states: "The C.M.S. in addition to their stations at Ghirku and Lokoja, and in the Bassa country, opened a mission at Bida with the concurrence of the emir and Mohammedan chiefs." (And yet, since then in Bida itself there has been Government restriction, and, at the present, they refuse to grant license to marry in their Church building inside the town. Why, and by what authority?

In 1905-06, in the government Report, the following paragraph occurs, "The Hausa Mission situated hitherto in the Ghirku District, forty miles south of Zaria, transferred its headquarters to the latter city in March 1905 with my consent on the invitation of the emir, and *they have it in contemplation to open a mission next year at Kano with the consent of the emir and chiefs, and also propose entering Kontagora, where the emir seems quite anxious to allow them to come.*"

Sir Frederick at that time was interested in the occupation of these Moslem emirates by the missions. Not until British officialdom adopted a different attitude was there any question either of right or of peaceable entrance. It is a group of anti-missionary officials who have been responsible for building up the whole position as we have it today, and a later changed attitude of Sir Frederick himself when he returned to his second period of administration. It was in the development of his policy of indirect rule that the manifestation of this antagonism came up, and little by little laws were formulated in which the missionaries had no voice, that curtailed more and more their liberties. These laws were put out under various pretexts. It was under the specious plea of health that the enactment was passed that no white man, including missionaries, should live within 440 yards of any native hut. This enactment often compelled residence miles from the towns in which their work was carried on. Missionaries were the only ones that desired to live in the midst of their people. The enactment worked great difficulty and hardship. Our first lady missionary has been compelled to wade up to the waist in water in the rainy season in coming from her work to the site far out of town in which they were permitted to reside. Of course, this was for her health?

At last our missionaries, tired of conflict with the government, decided to yield this point, and, though they would have their schools and dispensaries in town, walk in the morning, and stay until evening. But, no sooner did they cease fighting this ordinance regarding residence in town, than the order went forth that no site should be granted for any purpose whatever within native towns.

Then, too, came the Government order commanding, under penalties, that no one should practise medicine or be permitted to bring in poisonous drugs unless they were qualified so to do in Britain. If government had undertaken to place doctors throughout the

whole country and to meet the great needs of the natives in this sphere, nothing would have been said. But it involved the closing of all our dispensaries had we obeyed. It invalidated the right of our doctor, who had put his whole fortune into the work, and holds his degree from Toronto University, from practicing.

Twice we memorialized the Government on these matters. On one occasion, Lord Maclay, who was then in the Cabinet, presented that memorial, but our petition was turned down, and we were told that we need expect no amelioration of these conditions.

We continued our dispensary work, and our doctor continued his ministry, prepared to let the Government enforce its penalties. Those were war days. On our council we had two men each with four sons at the front. Another member of our council was brother-in-law of the first Canadian General who laid down his life in Flanders. The rest of us were bound with close ties to our country's cause. Had we passed over to the United States at that time the facts that, in German territory in Africa, missionaries had ten times more liberty than in British Nigeria, it would have had a very serious bearing upon public opinion in the United States. At the very time that Mr. Lloyd George sent over his group of leading British ministers and clergymen with a view to creating kindlier feelings in the United States toward Britain and her allies, we could have vitiated that whole mission by the simple statement of conditions existing in Nigeria. We remained silent in the expectation that, when the war was over, we would secure from our country changed conditions. But we have looked in vain to Government for this. Instead of this, some of the very territory taken from the Germans, in which the missionaries had entire freedom, has now been proclaimed a "closed area" by this government.

Some things have been modified, and the laws which we were told by viscount Milner would not be rescinded, have been changed. It was one of those Governors who, on taking charge, received our missionary delegate, and who, asking the Resident why the law excluding missionaries from residence in native towns had been enacted, was informed by that official that it was "a health law, Your Excellency," to which the incoming governor responded, "Between the choice of duty and health, a missionary should choose duty." Under that Governor, some of the legislation was rescinded, but he imbibed from those under him, the impression that the British Government had given assurances that missionaries would not be permitted in the Moslem territory, and, while we have much to thank Sir Hugh Clifford for, in retiring from his term of service, he enunciated anew the same idea, as though it had been a matter of permanent British policy.

Again, to prove that such was never intended by British Government, let us quote from the reply received from Downing Street on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1911, in response to a protest against certain restrictions by Residents of that day, as follows: "Mr. Harcourt, however,

thinks it right to say at once that he cannot believe that the local authorities desired to favour Mohammedan rather than Christian Missionary work, or that any instructions from him are needed to make them aware that such an attitude would be wholly contrary to the views of His Majesty's Government."

We charge a complete change of Government attitude since Mr. Harcourt, as Colonial Secretary, made that splendid pronouncement. We can prove that, while the present Government in Nigeria is refusing us permission to enter vast areas in which there are not only Moslems, but tens of thousands of pagan subjects, they are sending their Government-trained Moslem teachers into pagan areas, and that they are using their influence as Government representatives to introduce the Moslem faith.

Two years and a half ago when the missionary delegation led by the Bishop of Salisbury and Mr. Oldham waited upon the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor of Nigeria in London, we were assured as an outcome of the better understanding there that Government would take steps to instruct the Moslem emirs in the principles of British religious toleration with a view to our entrance into the territories of the north. We have waited patiently for that change. In one case we had the willingness of the Moslem emir for our entrance, and yet upon making our application to headquarters we were advised to withdraw our application. Before the Conference, replying to our request for a site in Kano, not in the native city, but in the area occupied by white residents, our application was refused, and when request was made for a reason, the reply was given to us, "I have to inform you that it is against the precedents and policy of Government to give facilities to a mission when the object would seem to be the conversion of Muslims in a Mohammedan emirate. I must reply further that His Honour, the Lieutenant-Governor, Northern Provinces, regrets that he is unable to recommend the granting of your application." Now this was written January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1927. Whatever may be the wish and desire of the Governor to fulfil to the missions his promises, the letter clearly indicates that the head of the Northern Provinces stood in an attitude where he refused to permit our liberty to peaceably approach Mohammedans with an offer of the Christian faith. While assured of a changed attitude, we still wait, after two and a half years, for permission to enter Kano and the northern emirates.

We have borne long and patiently. We do not believe that these men represent the British citizenship of the Empire. We have their own official statement that, in permitting missionaries to enter these very territories, there would be no likelihood of a breach of the peace. For thirty years we have worked in Moslem regions, and Government cannot point to a single place where missionaries have asked protection, or where any disturbance has been created by their presence.

Far from desiring agitation or publicity for our cause, we have sought quietly and reasonably to get Government to listen but the day has passed when we should come as suppliants to them when they place in control men who are known not to be governing with British fair play as neutral in this sphere of religion, but men who are pro-Moslem and anti-Christian.

We never sought Government aid when we went into these provinces before the British occupation. We claim that, since that occupation, the British government has no right to bar our entrance. While acknowledging our debt to many friendly Residents who have sought to aid us, we refuse longer to leave the question of religion to be decided by Residents or Governors, many of whom have no interest in the religious. We ask for our Moslem fellow-subjects of the British Crown the same religious liberty that we demand for ourselves.

With our final appeal to Government, therefore, we should serve notice that now we ask for rights. We are not supplicating for favours, and, if these rights cannot be assured to us, then we must take the only course left open. We are going into these Northern Territories as ambassadors of Jesus Christ, who, sitting upon the Throne of power says, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations."

### **Appendix III**

## **ANTAGONISING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH<sup>2</sup>**

**H. G. Farrant**

Opposition of Government to the advance of Christian Missions has been strongest in the Moslem Emirates but because Missions have now occupied so much of the pagan areas it must not be thought that their entrance there was unopposed.

Objection was made because a tribe was under a Moslem Emir, or the claim that a district was unsettled was continued long after danger had ceased. A Political Officer when interviewing a chief with regard to an application for a site by a Mission would so enlarge on the responsibility that would fall on the chief if the missionary were murdered that the chief

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<sup>2</sup> Farrant, Dec. 16/1929, pp. 4-5 (J).

would promptly refuse the responsibility and the application would be turned down on the ground of the chief's refusal. Under cover of showing to the native how neutral the Government was with regard to religion a Political Officer would ask so many questions and couch them in such a way that the chief would conclude that the officer did not wish the Mission to enter and would say therefore that he did not. The power which a Political Officer wields in this way is very great. It was expressed to me by one officer in the words – "The District Officer can help, he can hinder and he can absolutely block." No charge of bad faith can be brought against the official for no European is present when he interrogates the chief. Later however, especially when the Mission eventually gains access to the tribe, the people tell the missionary very frankly what occurred. None of these things are secret to the native and the people are often puzzled to know why the Government should object to the coming of the Mission. The missionary who feels bound to maintain the prestige of Government is as puzzled to reply.

After a Mission is established there are still interferences, varying in magnitude from the destruction of a Church, an instance of which is given in this memorandum, to instances of petty but vexatious meddling. Some of these latter are due to the personality of the official and would not be supported by Government but there is reason to think that the knowledge that the policy of headquarters was antipathetic to Missions allowed individuals to do things which they would not otherwise have done.

Perhaps, more than from any other cause, interferences arise from the apparent inability of any Political Officer to think of the Christian Church as anything but a foreign organization. In some districts Islam is not ten years old but is accepted as indigenous and left alone. In the same district Christianity may be twenty-five years old and spreading from native to native in the identical way in which Islam spreads. Yet a native Christian will be interrogated by a District Officer as if he were a dangerous propagandist from Moscow instead of a common farmer who has come to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are few chiefs who do not believe that their conversion to Christianity would be received with disfavour by Government.

Taking Garkida and Zaria as two examples of what I mean – every native in these districts, be he Christian, Moslem or pagan, is quite sure that the Government is against the Mission. In the whole of Northern Provinces the total mass of interference accumulated throughout the years is prodigious and every bit of it is known and remembered by the native whether he is Christian or not. The Church therefore is growing up in the consciousness that it was born against the wish of the Government. The strongest impressions are formed in childhood and the impression made on the Church in the Northern Provinces will probably never be effaced.

Speaking purely as a Christian, the fact that it has been so clearly shown to all the Northern Provinces that the Christian Church is not protégé of an alien Government gives me no cause to complain. Anyone who studies the history and present position of the Church of Scotland and contrasts it with that of the church of England will be assured that lasting benefits accrue to a Church which grows up in opposition.

Speaking however as a British subject, I and the greater part of the three hundred missionaries in the Northern Provinces who are also British subjects, ask if the church can only grow strong by discomfiting the government and if it is really necessary for the Government to alienate further the organization which is destined to be the greatest spiritual force in the Protectorate.

#### **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>COCIN</b>	<b>Church of Christ in Nigeria (Jos based)</b>
<b>CMS</b>	<b>Church Missionary Society (CMS)</b>

<b>CTJ</b>	<b><i>Calvin Theological Journal</i></b>
<b>ECWA</b>	<b>Evangelical Churches of West Africa</b>
<b>IMC</b>	<b>International Missionary Council</b>
<b>LB</b>	<b><i>Lightbearer</i> (SUM magazine)</b>
<b>SIM</b>	<b>Sudan Interior Mission</b>
<b>SUM</b>	<b>Sudan United Mission</b>

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