

▲ FOUR

MISCELLANEOUS CHRISTIAN OBJECTIONS AND PROBLEMS

“What you are speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you are saying.”

“Religion is not a region or an aspect of man’s existence. It is the centre of his being. It is in it that all questions of meaning... and relevance find their ultimate answer.”

D. D. Dodo, 2000

▲ INTRODUCTION

Throughout the BZ era, Christians have consistently opposed the expansion of sharia. They oppose anything to do with the alleged Grand Plan and they oppose the insertion of sharia in the constitution. At one time the Anglican Bishop of Kaduna, Ogbonyomi, national Vice President of CAN, along with President Okogie, threatened to sue the FG if sharia were to be included in the constitution. This, according to Muslims, did not really deserve any attention from them, but it did raise their ire.¹

Earlier chapters have already indicated the strong opposition of Christians and this chapter will show even more of it. So you have every reason to expect an almost exclusively negative evaluation of sharia from them. Nevertheless, there were a few positive Christian voices that you should know about. One is that of the late Maikudi Kure, an ECWA pastor with a Maguzawa background. He allegedly declared on BBC “that the same tenets of the sharia are enshrined in the Bible and the declaration of Sharia in Zamfara is a welcome decision, as it will curtail” all the social vices both Christians and Muslims oppose.² Olubi Docasta, a leader in the Zaria Celestial Church of Christ, a significant church on the Nigerian scene, supported sharia for the same reason: because of the need “to minimize the trends of social vices.” If the push for sharia is genuine and not political, its advocates will “be remembered here and hereafter,” he predicted.³ Docasta’s positive expectation is far removed from that of most Christians, who do not expect anything good from sharia.

Emmanuel Kana Mani, the Anglican Bishop of Maiduguri, capital of Borno state, initially sounded a fairly positive note. By mid-2001, he stated that so far sharia had not “adversely affected non-Muslims.” Nevertheless, he supported the stand of Borno State CAN against “the full implementation of sharia because of differences in religions.” CAN had warned against possible problems for Christians, but so far these had not materialized.⁴

Like almost all Christians, Haruna Dandaura, one of the “fathers” in this project, did not favour the new sharia, but, unlike other Christians, neither did he favour the strong Christian campaign against it. He once wrote that Christians should not be disturbed about sharia, since it has nothing to do with them. It is an internal Muslim affair. “I fail to see why Christians are trying to bring pressure against it.” He also cautioned that “it is very dangerous to try and stop them from having it,” since the sharia is not of their own making but is enshrined in the Qur’an. With CAN

leaders already skeptical about indigenous Christians from the core North, such arguments on his part did little to restore Dandaura's relationship to them. His independent spirit caused Christian leaders to ignore his insistent call for dialogue, but more of that in Volume 8.⁵

But he *did* oppose the sharia and told me more than once that it is basically a political strategy. Shortly before his death, he thought to detect that it was actually fizzling out. Many Muslims, he observed, have already lost interest, since it is not yielding the expected dividend.⁶ And though he may not have been CAN's favourite, his advice does seem to have been heeded by the FG. The year 1988 saw him leading a delegation to Vice-Admiral Festus Aikhomu, then Chief of Staff. The mission was to advise the FG to stop the debate on sharia in the CA and let the matter be handled by FG itself. The delegation feared the debate would tear up the country. Apparently, the FG listened. Shortly afterwards it instructed the CA leadership that the sharia sections in the report with which the CA was dealing had been declared off limits and that the debate on the subject should stop.⁷ Many Christians, it will be shown in Chapter 5, were bitter about this FG interference. Whether they were aware of Dandaura's role in it, I do not know.

It is also good to remember from Volume 6 that not all Muslims favour the new sharia regime. This holds true for both BZ and AZ periods. Matthew Kukah adduced a number of Muslim participants in the CA 1977 discussions who privately indicated considerable opposition to the adoption of sharia for a variety of reasons. Many Christians concluded that if Muslims do not agree with each other or not trust each other, how can we trust what they say or do about sharia? Muslims shot themselves in the foot and handed Christians an easy victory.⁸

That situation still obtains currently. The Christian Governor of Ogun state, Olusegun Osoba, pointed out that many Muslims are opposed to the new sharia. It could lead to division among

Muslim sects. Even some Muslim fundamentalists, he said, “do not agree with its application for fear.”⁹ Not even all Northern *governors* favoured sharia with equal fervour. The former Kano Governor Kwankwaso “was seen as unenthusiastic and was known not to favour harsh punishments.” He gave in “because of public pressure.”¹⁰ Musa Gaiya reports that Kwankwaso lost his attempt at a second term precisely because of this attitude. Gaiya describes the Katsina governor as moderate, but he has a radical deputy.¹¹ The Gombe Governor and his Deputy reportedly both hesitated about sharia. The Governor of Adamawa refused to sign the bill, and the House could not muster the two-third majority needed after such refusal.¹² But Gaiya, after having travelled around the sharia states, concluded that those that have implemented sharia “are serious about what they are doing.” At the same time, its implementation “is laden with problems.”¹³

The negative spirit of rejection is standard among Christians. However, when they meet with Muslims, both put their best foot forward and try to be civil to each other. For example, at the meetings of NIREC, an FG-supported body of Christian and Muslim leaders, the spirit tends to be “touchy,” with opinions between Christians and Muslims “sharply divided,” according to Minchakpu. Yet both groups force themselves to arrive at some form of lowest common denominator decisions that may sound like agreements but that have different meanings for the two sides. At one meeting, both groups agreed on two things: One, “that Muslims cannot be prevented from practicing their religion.” Two, “that sharia was not to be extended to non-Muslims.”¹⁴ Sharia was to remain an internal Muslim affair. Of course, it is one thing to agree on these principles; it is quite another to carry them out—and that’s precisely where Christians have constantly experienced serious problems. Besides, the term “practicing their religion” has a different meaning for the two. And once the meeting was over, few of the Muslim participants seemed bothered by the continued

forcible imposition of sharia on Christians. Why should they? After all, Islam stands for freedom of religion. No compulsion. So, it cannot be imposed. It *cannot* and therefore it does not happen!

Most Christians respond to sharia with great vigour; some, violently. One A. A. Shu'aibu, a Muslim from Malali, Kaduna state, in a letter to the editor of *NV*, reported his "utmost dismay" about hearing the strong utterances of Sunday Mbang, at the time national president of CAN, on a radio broadcast. According to Shu'aibu, Mbang "openly insulted and ridiculed" Governor Sani for "having adopted the Islamic legal system as demanded by the majority who voted him into power." Mbang allegedly "discarded courtesy and sanity and ridiculed his status by raining abuses and name calling on his fellow human being for having danced to the yearnings of his people." At another time, the same Mbang allegedly blessed a group of Yoruba in Ogun state who had unleashed "mayhem" and killed their Hausa Muslim neighbours for not adhering to the local laws of Yoruba ATR. Mbang is said to have blessed "those who would annihilate Islam and her following. He sees nothing wrong with such a dastardly act, in so much as his Christian followers were not in any way affected."¹⁵ Shu'aibu was definitely unhappy!

Christian objections to sharia are based more on practical experience than on principle and theory. Dogaraje's Gwamna of Unijos allows that Muslim reasons for sharia may be sound. In fact, "their rights cannot be denied." However, these reasons do not resonate with Christians. In spite of high Muslim rhetoric, he writes, Christians interpret the sharia enterprise as "merely political."¹⁶ That, it should be understood, is hardly true. Nevertheless, he summarizes some major reasons Christians reject sharia that provide us with a good introductory handle. He begins with

Christian fears of a gradual Islamization of Nigeria and a ploy to deny Christians their rights in Islamic dominated

*states. Christians fear the extension of sharia to non-Muslims, which they see as a framework for future and further emasculation of Christians. Christians also see sharia as neo-feudalism masked in a neo-jihadist garb with political colouration, which smacks of pharisaic antics of religious hypocrisy. It is amidst these fears that the Christian response could be contextualised.*¹⁷

That pretty well sums it up.

In this chapter we deal with a number of miscellaneous Christian objections to sharia. I use the term “miscellaneous”, but that is not the same as “unrelated.” As far as Christians are concerned, underneath the entire sharia enterprise lies the alleged “Grand Plan” of Muslims to take over Nigeria. Everything Muslims do or say with respect to sharia must be understood in that context. Even apparent inconsistencies in word or deed on their part are fully consistent with that plan. In this environment, contradictions between the parts are consistent within the climate of the whole.

A more common interpretation is that it is all politics, the term now understood in a totally negative way. Those means and that politics can be flagrantly contradictory, but they are consistent with the grand goal of it all—and that is where Christians “catch” them. It must be a wonderful feeling of freedom for Muslims when they seem incapable of embarrassment when caught in such murky situations and they just go on pushing their own agenda as if nothing happened! If it advances the Plan, go for it and damned be the consequences. If it brings the Qur’an closer to the Atlantic, then do not worry about short-lived hostility. Eventually people will come around and forget, as many forgot the Muslim slave raiding and turned to the Prophet. If nothing else, there is money there!

▲ SHARIA: PART OF THE GRAND PLAN —————

Both Christians and Muslims in Nigeria speak of each other's grand plans to destroy each other. Both embrace conspiracy theories about the other. Volumes 2, 4 and 6 contain quite a few Muslim references to alleged plans on the part of Western Christo-secular imperialists to destroy Islam. Volumes 3, 5 and Chapters 6, 7 and 8 show Christians similarly accusing Muslims of scheming to destroy them and erase them from the face of Nigeria. More recent indications of such Muslim ambition are presented by Yiljap Abraham. Writing about the Maiduguri violence of February 18, 2006, he reported that many people were "shocked at the attempt to eliminate Christians in Maiduguri." Tanimu Damuut, a Christian father of ten, overheard Bauchi Muslims during their violence in February 2006, say, "These infidels are a nuisance in this town. You have been feeding on the wealth of our land and it now is time for you to quit our land." Upon this, they promptly destroyed and looted the family property.¹⁸

There are also writings about Muslim designs for the entire world.¹⁹ Though such concepts are politically incorrect in the West and thus hardly discussed publicly, neither Muslims the world over nor Nigerian Christians are embarrassed about such theories, at least, in so far as they reflect on the other religion! To them, they are real. And though I have long resisted this view, I confess to having been won over by Nigerian Christians after years of living there and after even more years of research. The politically correct is a mindless blindfold that hides the obvious. *The Western world needs to see a doctor.*²⁰

Though I have adequately described Christian allegations of Muslim plans in Volume 3, allow me a short quote from one of the "Fathers of Northern Nigeria," the highly revered Sardauna, passed on to us by Jude Aguwa via John Paden, the Sardauna's biographer. "Replying to an invitation to visit Saudi Arabia, the Sardauna said:

‘I have earlier spoken of conversion of non-Muslims to Islam. I would like to say that this is only a beginning, as there are other areas we have not yet tapped. I hope when we clean Nigeria, we will go further afield in Africa.’²¹

Nigerian Christians see almost all Muslim moves in the country in the context of this Grand Muslim Plan for Nigeria, including all new sharia efforts. A good decade before the Gusau Declaration, the editor of *The Pen* called CAN to order, especially Okogie and Ogbonyomi. He called on the FG to “tame and curb the excesses” of Okogie, who had apparently expressed himself in a manner described “to say the least, wild” about sharia. The editor of *Alkalami*, the Hausa-language parallel to *The Pen*, was similarly vexed by Okogie. He wrote, “We have frequently said that if we want peace between Muslims and Christians, Okogie must be reined in. A blind man does not realize he is being watched, until people rub against him.”²² Okogie had complained that the sharia was part of “systematic Islamization” of Nigeria. This is no more, according to the editor, than “weird imagination.”²³

Danjuma Byang did not beat around the bush when it came to the Muslim plan. On the back cover of his BZ book on sharia he wrote, “The wind of Islamic fundamentalism that has been blowing across the entire world marked Nigeria out for Islamisation a long time ago. Many strategies and methods were carefully mapped out and are being vigorously pursued. One such strategy is to tamper with the secular status of this nation and to substitute the present legal system with the sharia.”

Byang’s book describes the planning, the politicking and the scheming the Muslim community engaged in towards the establishment of a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal—step by step. They were beginning to press for Sharia Courts in the South. Once those would be established, they then could argue that, since these courts are now all over the federation, there is a need for a federal one as well. After that, it would be easy for them “to do away with the

‘colonial legal legacy’ and replace it with the ‘indigenous’ one. The next step would also be easy: just declare Nigeria an Islamic state.” Yes, “every call to create more Sharia Courts is part of a grand plan—a calculated step towards a definite destination.”

Byang quotes from a letter by an unnamed Muslim at the Centre for Islamic Legal Studies at ABU, dated November 11 1977, in which the author discusses Muslim strategy during the period of the first CA. Muslims at the time were concentrating their struggle on “three basic areas: (a) the full implementation of sharia; (b) the transformation of the educational system to reflect our ideas; (c) the fight against secularism in politics and daily life.” Somewhat prematurely, the writer boasted that “of these three, we have been succeeding on the sharia.”

Another development along the same vein was the “explosion of Arabic/Islamic centres established and funded by governments all over the country.” This was not surprising, according to Byang. He wanted us “to remove any lingering doubt that Muslims have a blue-print of their goals, visions and strategies to Islamize Nigeria. And they are using every weapon available to them.”²⁴ Sharia is prominent among them.

Dodo thinks that all the fears that Christians entertain about sharia will in fact be realized in due time. “My fear and conviction that all these things will happen to Christians are heightened by what I have heard, seen and read. Those who saw the Sardauna at the height of his Islamic religious campaign from 1960–1966, will understand when I say the plan to turn Nigeria into an Islamic country did not start with the Zamfara Declaration in 1999. The Zamfara Declaration is a *continuation* of the plan.” This was a plan “to clean Nigeria,” a term calling to mind the later infamous term “ethnic cleansing,” except that now we are talking “religious cleansing,” two terms that in our context almost overlap. Dodo points to various steps taken by the Sardauna and later governments, all of which were steps towards “the plan.” Various national agencies

were set up to advance Islam. There were no Christian parallels developed, because of the plan to convert them all. “Since Christians know that there is a plan to completely Islamise Nigeria, every major move by Muslims is seen or interpreted as contributing towards turning Nigeria into an Islamic state.” In some other volumes I compare this mentality to the former cold war between the West and the Communist world. Nothing is looked upon on its own merit; it is all part of the “war.” The secret smuggling of Nigeria into OIC was one such step. The plan’s operators “never miss any opportunity whenever such comes their way.”²⁵

Right after the Zamfara sharia launching, Osa Director wrote, “The Christian community across the country and non-indigenes resident in Zamfara state have sharply denounced the action, which they interpret as an affront to their beliefs and a subtle attempt to gradually Islamise the nation.” The Zamfara state chapter of CAN almost immediately noted, “Sharia is not a legal system per se, but an Islamic way of life that must be imposed on non-Muslims in the state.” The branch asserted from the beginning that Sani’s real objective “is a plan to carve out Zamfara state from Nigeria,” something that the failed coup of Gideon Orkar years earlier was meant to achieve.²⁶ Patrick Ekpu, Catholic Archbishop in Benin, suggested that “the sharia experiment in Zamfara may just be playing the old script of Islamising Nigeria.” Ekpu believed “that the governor of Zamfara is being used by Islamic fundamentalists, individuals and nations to float the idea with a view to feeling the pulse of the good people of Nigeria on the issue.” George Igbokwe, an official of the Edo state branch of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), declared that the purpose of the new sharia “is to make Zamfara state an Islamic state.”²⁷

You may remember the crisis in 1986 about whether Nigeria should join the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).²⁸ Christians opposed it bitterly. They recognized it as a joint effort of the FG and Muslims to take another serious step towards the

Islamisation of the country. Another Muslim institution was lurking just around the corner. In 1973, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the economic branch of OIC, was established in Saudi Arabia. Nigerian membership was already an issue in the 1980s, but it did not materialize. Probably it was placed on the backburner while the OIC conflict was raging. I have in my archives an undated document from the Lagos State Branch of CAN that called upon “President Babangida and his group” to note two related issues. The first: “We Christians re-affirm our ‘NO’ to the OIC.” Second, “We now say capital ‘NO’ to Islamic Bank and any other religious bank.”²⁹

The FG tried more seriously to join it in 1999 but was forced to delay the move once again due to religious controversy.³⁰

Finally, in June 2005, Nigeria joined the Bank. The FG paid \$3.4 million as “initial membership subscription” with taxpayers’ money. Christians were predictably upset, since they saw this move also “as the continuation of the Islamization of the country, increasing the already tense religious atmosphere.” It is another sharia institution imposed on the citizenry. It was like grinding salt in the Christian wound, for eligibility included membership in the hated OIC, with which the FG also had its way eventually. To me the surprise here is that this FG move did not generate more public unrest. Perhaps some hard lessons are being learned? Has tiredness set in? Are Christians relenting? Becoming more tolerant or “reasonable”?

The issue did not escape the politicians. It divided the House of Representatives along the Christian-Muslim fault line, each side taking their predicable stands. Halims Agoda reminded his colleagues that the 1999 Constitution “forbids the government from adopting any religion as a state religion.” He said Nigeria’s membership in IDB will indicate that the country is an Islamic state. Others argued that “in view of the prevailing religious atmosphere, Nigeria should not become a member of the bank.” The atmosphere referred to was, of course, that of sharia. After the House

was “hurriedly adjourned,” “the government announced the membership.” The Minister of Finance, Okonjo-Iweala, explained that the bank “promotes economic and social development of member states.” She added that it “performs functions similar to those of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international financial organs.”³¹ As far as Christians are concerned, it was another nail in the coffin of the secular nature of the country, another step down the slippery sharia-plan slope. It did not help any that this move was taken only a few days after the Central Bank had approved the opening of a local Islamic bank, Jaiz Bank International, a part of the international movement towards such banks, even in the UK and US.³² But...no loud demonstrations or riots this time.

The entire atmosphere was one of suspicion and of expecting the worst from “the other side.” By 2004, even Muslim leaders appeared tired of the mayhem. Muhammadu Maccido, the Sultan of Sokoto and thus heir of the famous Ahmadu Bello, called a meeting for Muslims and Christians to search for solutions. CAN declined. The Secretary General, Saidu Dogo, explained “that if Christian leaders accept to meet with Muslim leaders, they would be mortgaging the collective interest of Christians and placing them under the ambit of Islamic imperialism.” He further explained that “the motives are suspicious.” It is simply one of the many steps in which Muslims try to trick Christians into submitting to them. CAN’s position is that only the FG can call such a meeting. CAN was not about to “surrender our sovereignty to the Sultan. Their Plan is not going to work.”³³ Typical cold-war logic, though not necessarily wrong.³⁴

This was at least the second time CAN refused to meet with Muslims. In 1988, the FG called a meeting under its own Advisory Council on Religious Affairs, but it unilaterally appointed a Muslim chairman. CAN refused to attend and demanded a “joint chairmanship” that would preside rotationally. It was pacified when

positions were re-arranged. Charles Williams then declared CAN ready to participate in the next meeting.³⁵ Apparently the cold war had intensified to such a degree in 2004 that this time around, CAN failed to offer an alternative; it just refused to attend.

Fortunately, by 2007 cooler heads prevailed. Both Christians and Muslims were facing the April election with a sense of danger. A joint meeting was held by CAN and the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) under the joint leadership of Archbishop Peter Akinola, CAN President, and Sultan Saad Abubakar of NSCIA. At a joint press conference they declared April 10 “a national day of prayer to ward off looming danger,” the danger being potential violence, mixed court signals, and “perceived state of ill-preparedness of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).” The leaders observed, “There is so much anxiety in the land, largely caused by the perceived nonchalance of the INEC.” This meeting and this decision was a great step forward from the aborted meeting of 2004.³⁶

Joseph Ajaver, a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, Abuja, described in a sermon how this plan works in the local village situation; in this case, his own home village. The people are Traditionalists. A Muslim trader moves into the village and is welcomed by the people. He settles in the centre of the village and demonstrates his “superior” religion by faithfully and publicly carrying out his religious rites. His religion and its rites, his dress, his disciplined way of life—it all looks impressive to the villagers. Before long a local or two decide to join him. Soon a few more Muslims come trickling in. It all seems very innocent and unthreatening. More locals join. As the Muslims increase in number, they begin to apply their political acumen. Pressure is put on the chief and elders to convert to Islam. Suddenly the villagers discover that, with the cooperation of the local converts, these strangers have taken over key positions in the community. And now they helplessly watch the Muslim community complete the infiltration pro-

cess, while the locals end up marginalized. It happens time and again, village after village. At national level, he warned, that is exactly how sharia is spread.³⁷

It is an old strategy that the earliest SUM missionaries already observed. Lowry Maxwell, one of the SUM pioneer missionaries, suggested that Muslims were the natural leaders of the people.³⁸ “Muslim traders penetrated farther and farther into the districts of the now receptive Traditionalist peoples who appreciated their wares. As business relations expanded, the initial mistrust would dissipate and be replaced by mutual confidence and recognition of common interests. What began with the ‘impersonal form of a sack of salt’ would end in the conversion from fetish to Muhammad.”³⁹

A similar infiltration process is taking place with mosques. Debki urges his readers to remember how things get done. Think of how your neighbourhood mosque was built and its plot allocated. “All the garages, markets, ministries and street mosques were built on tricks. They would be praying at a place. If no one talks, they would arrange stones or blocks in the form of a mosque. If no one talks, they would build two or three blocks high. If no one talks, they would build their mosque. This is exactly what sharia is believed to intend doing, and this is why you and I will have to talk about it till the very end.”⁴⁰

These are some of the proven and traditional methods followed by Muslims everywhere. Anyone wondering what this means for the Western world? Could not happen there, you say? This process is one of filling a vacuum. Traditional religion was beginning to leave people dissatisfied; it no longer seemed to fill their needs in their changing world. A spiritual-religious vacuum was developing that Muslims filled. In the West, many people have restless hearts in the cold climate of secularism that an increasing number is trading in for the sureties and dignity of Islam.

When you read Chapter 8, keep these factors in mind. You will be able to understand sympathetically why the Plateau people resist Muslim infiltration as strenuously as they do. They are one of the few who caught on before it was too late. This time, Muslims face active Christians, not passive Traditionalists; Christians, moreover, who have a memory and experience. They realize what the arrival of the first stranger means for the future. It is a new experience for Muslims to be caught at their game—and it makes them nervous. Nigerians have learnt the lesson that Westerners are still working on.

In spite of all this, Human Rights Watch claimed to have found “no evidence of a campaign to ‘Islamize’ Nigeria.” I wonder how wide they flung their nets. Did they take wider historical developments into consideration or did they confine their research to an isolated sharia issue of the here and now? There are some statements in the report that make me doubt the professional level of their effort, especially their depth.

▲ CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLIES —————

Most mature Nigerians and all readers of the earlier volumes of these studies know about the series of CAs that have been held in Nigeria over the years.⁴¹ In every case, except the National Conference of 2005, sharia has been a major bone of contention and in every case Christians have been very adamant against the inclusion or expansion of sharia, generally demanding that the status quo of the Penal Code be maintained. And throughout these debates the issue of the Grand Plan featured prominently. *One could almost say that the history of CAs is the history of the struggle about the unfolding of the Grand Plan with sharia as its centrefold.*

Charles Williams, long-time General Secretary of both the Christian Council of Nigeria and of National CAN, spoke of

1977, the year of the first CA, as a “crucial year” with regard to sharia developments:

Muslims exerted all vigorous efforts to write the sharia into that Constitution. On their own part, the Christians opposed the move to make a “sectional” religious law to form part of the Constitution which would govern all Nigerians irrespective of their religious persuasions. The various arguments which Christians proffered against the inclusion of sharia seemed unbeatable. The FG did not, therefore, give that law constitutional backing. The Muslims felt offended by what they regarded as a defeat for them, but a victory for the Christians. Since then, Muslim fanatics have been showing keener and fiercer determination to exterminate Christianity from Nigeria and substitute Islam for it.

Williams thought to find the cause of Muslim aggressiveness at that first CA in two vital Muslim meetings held a few years earlier. These were the Conference of World Islamic Organisations of 1974 in Mecca and the World of Islam Festival of 1976 in London.⁴²

Referring to the Muslim demand for a constitutional provision for a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal (FSCA), Matthew Kukah described Muslims as arguing “passionately that granting them the FSCA was the surest way to peace and justice.” “Non-Muslims, appalled by the stridency of the Muslim demands, concluded that Muslims were seeking to use the provision as a Trojan horse to install Northern hegemony and perpetuate Muslim dominance.” The issue was eventually settled under pressure of the FG, but the harm had been done. “The debate revealed some worrying trends as to the place of religion in national politics. More importantly, it woke up Christians from their slumber. They began to re-examine the Islamic agenda and its overall implications for the survival of Christianity and democracy in Nigeria.” While the Northern

Muslims had shown their inclination to use religion for political purposes, Christians were emboldened by their “victory in throwing out the sharia clause.”⁴³

With reference to CA 1977, Jude Aguwa wrote, “The vehemence with which Muslims pursued the discussion raised serious apprehension among non-Muslims.” “The ferocity of the demand is typified in a statement of the Muslim Students’ Society” that he then quoted at some length. The statement is typical of the most radical you will find in greater detail in Volume 6. They insist on “the total application of sharia.” It is “not reducible, nor can it be compartmentalized.” Muslims must “stand firm and resist to the last man this effort of non-Muslims to suppress Muslims and eliminate sharia.” They must be prepared to “lay down their lives and oppose all opponents of Allah.” They must also “reject any form of compromise.” Muslims who oppose sharia in the CA “must take full responsibility for putting the entire nation to chaos.”⁴⁴

Onaiyekan gave this interpretation of CA 1977 at the NIREC Conference in 2000:

The dispute was not whether the sharia should feature in the Constitution. The draft constitution, taking note of the existing situation, did make provisions for the sharia. The debate was more on the extent and scope of the sharia in the constitution. The supporters of the sharia wanted it to be parallel law to the laws of the land with jurisdiction right up to the Supreme Court level. Others, mainly Christians, felt that there should be just one law in the nation and that the sharia should have status which the draft constitution also allowed for the native law and customs courts. In between these two positions, the great debate disorganised and almost stalled the proceedings of the conference. 183 members walked out of the conference. Eventually, in a typical Nigerian way, a compromise was arrived at. The compromise is what we have in the

1979 Constitution, whereby Sharia Courts of Appeal were allowed in the states that already had them or wanted them. Provisions were made for the Supreme Court to have legal officers versed in the sharia to hear matters that come before the Supreme Court from the Sharia Courts of Appeal. It was a compromise that did not fully satisfy either side.

The 1979 Constitution certainly did not envisage the Government of the Federation or of any state totally embracing sharia as the law of the land.

Onaiyekan then proceeded to summarize the rest of the constitutional story. During the Buhari administration “some modifications seem to have been attempted for the purpose of extending the jurisdiction of the sharia.” Byang supplies the details of this move down below. This raised a lot of dust but is now history. Not as much has been written about Abacha’s CA. Onaiyekan reports that a document was produced, but it has never seen the light of day.⁴⁵

Yusuf Yariyok, in a paper detailing various alleged attempts to break up Nigeria, views sharia as a tool used to achieve this breakup. The CA of 1978 could have led to a breakup, if it were not for the valiant attempts of Christopher Abashiya, one of the “Fathers” in this series.⁴⁶ I am not sure how this squares with a story about a Catholic three-some at the CA that reportedly claimed *they* were responsible for the victory. Joseph Agbowuro, one of three Catholic priests on the CA, proudly boasted that had it not been for him and his two colleagues, “sharia would not have been ousted.”⁴⁷ Perhaps it was teamwork with Protestants and Catholics each boasting about their own efforts.

Philip Ostien is an American legal scholar on the UJ law faculty, born in Nigeria to missionary parents. He has great interest in sharia developments in the country and was the front man in Jos for the 2004 sharia conference at UJ. He considers himself a typi-

cal Western secularist, though his opinions about sharia are hardly typical for a secularist. So, as a “non-religious” expatriate, he does not really fit in the scheme of this series, but Nigerians have brought him into the discussion. He appears in Volume 6, because some Muslims were suspicious that he was bringing the American agenda to Nigeria via the Jos conference, even though he had previously written an article in which he favoured sharia developments and chided Christians for their opposition. And now, Christians bring him into the discussion, also to disagree with him. Sometimes a man just cannot win!

This time it was our mutual friend Musa Gaiya who brought Ostien’s name into the arena. Ostien had advanced the thesis that Christian intolerance and intransigence at the initial CA left Muslims dissatisfied and angry. If, as Gaiya interprets Ostien, “Muslims had gotten their way at that time [1978], they would have been satisfied and would not have over-stretched the scope of sharia as they have now done.” Gaiya dismissed the argument as “tendentious.” It “should not delay us.”⁴⁸ On basis of my view of secularism,⁴⁹ I agree to some extent with Ostien’s critique of the Christian stand at that early CA. Like Gaiya, I disagree with his conclusion. *The “Grand Plan” of Muslims, including their sharia campaign, will not be stopped by Christian tolerance and compromise, by a friendly give-and-take atmosphere, by appeals to fairness or by solid logical argument. Christian resistance only postponed the unfolding of the Muslim agenda.*

While leading up to 1995 constitutional developments, Obed Minchakpu summarizes a hefty list of Muslim successes towards their agenda and then describes 1995 sharia developments as simply another step. Muslims having succeeded with various measures on his list, he wrote, “The stage was set for another step ahead in their bid to Islamize Nigeria. The CA was the stage they were waiting for.” “The jihadists who were given the mandate for the CA were there. They were armed with their hidden agenda, the

Islamisation of Nigeria. They were prepared to ensure that whatever document that emerged would give Islam an edge over Christianity.” Alas, Christian members were so preoccupied with their own personal political agendas that they were caught unawares. The result of their lapse “was the successful entrenchment of sharia in the Draft Constitution.”⁵⁰

We are now living with the “Abdulsalami 1999 Constitution” which, because of its military inspiration, can “hardly be considered made by Nigerians.” The military story is completed, but the issue “still leaves a lot of room for further discussion and clarification.” These constitutions and amendments are all the products of military regimes. It is time the Nigerian people themselves have a crack at it. Sharia is one of several unfinished issues. It should be dealt with in the context of a general review, not just one with an exclusive focus on sharia alone.

Onaiyekan thought this could possibly be dealt with in the 2005 National Political Reform Conference (NPRC), but that, surprisingly, did not even touch the sharia issue.⁵¹ There were some, both proponents and opponents, who thought it should. Osa Director reported that Akinola Aguda, a “respected retired jurist, came short of advocating a sovereign national conference on the matter.” He said, “If any state wants to introduce sharia, they could call a meeting of politicians to discuss the matter again. They can take it to the National Assembly.”⁵² Dung L. Dung insisted that such matters be placed on the agenda. His major concern was the internal colonialism under which the British had placed other ethnic communities under the authorities of Muslim chiefs and emirs. In the minds of Christians, that arrangement is directly related to issues of Islamization and sharia. The one can hardly be discussed without the other. “Here,” Dung declared, “lays the root or beginning of the injustices, imbalance and inequities that have long permeated and bedevilled Nigeria.” “These issues have to be taken up by the NPRC for serious discussion with a view to correcting these

imbalances...and iniquitous treatment of Middle Belt ethnic-nationalities by the Hausa-Fulani emirates at the instance of the Sokoto Caliphate.”⁵³ It turns out that President Obasanjo himself listed religion as one of the no-go areas.⁵⁴ In a way it is regretful that religion—and, thus, sharia—was excluded from the agenda. It could have been *the* opportunity to deal with this very explosive subject once and for all, but, given the heated sharia atmosphere at the time, that might not have been possible. Consequently, the Conference failed also to deal with the letter of complaint from CAN about the treatment of Christians in the North.

▲ POLITICS, MANIPULATION, ECONOMICS, RELGION

Christians on the whole regard sharia a religious issue that should not be mixed up with politics or government. For this reason, Zakka Nyam, Anglican Bishop of Kano, shortly after the Zamfara Declaration, advised all governors who were thinking about introducing sharia “to step down for traditional rulers like the emirs who are the natural custodians of the people’s culture.” Governors should be aware they were voted into office by Christians as well as Muslims. Hence, if they wish to bring in sharia, the honourable thing is for them to step down for traditional rulers.⁵⁵ In other words, sharia is not suitable for politics, at least not in a multi-religious constituency.

However, Christians charge that in fact sharia has long been used for political purposes and continues to be. That is the mainstream opinion among Christians and affirmed by many Muslims, especially by university graduates and those influenced by “the Mallam,” the late Aminu Kano. One of Haruna Dandaura’s friends, Mijinyawa Labbo, a Hausa-Fulani Christian in Zaria, had as his main sharia worry “manipulation by politicians and its operatives.” He pointed to the practice of the Muslim NPC of perse-

cutting all those not toeing the party line—and that was done by “sharia agents, of course.”⁵⁶ Kukah summarized the opinion of Balarabe Musa, a member of the Muslim/Marxist-oriented NEPU, who had observed during the BZ era

that the northern ruling class purposely set out to use the sharia debate to gain political advantage during the second republic. They knew they were threatened by the new democracy. They had no foothold or any solid base for political competition as a block with the rest of the country. It became clear that Islam would offer the only alternative for the protection of their class interests. So they held on to the issue of the sharia in the Assembly as their only weapon for mobilisation in the North.

Kukah then moved on to Mahmud Tukur, a former Head of the Department of History, ABU. Tukur revealed that “Certain groups with political ambitions from the North...decided to use the sharia debate as a means of mobilising support. They would use the support they had earned in presenting themselves as defenders of sharia.... The idea was to build up a pool of supporters that should be relied on for electoral advantage for the advancement of their class interests....”

I am writing about how many Christians charge that sharia was used for political purposes by Muslims. Those politicians were allegedly assisted by “Christian” Southerners. They had common class interests with their Northern Muslim counterparts that overrode their religious and tribal loyalties. They were part of the scheming. Their part was to gain political power in the South by *opposing* sharia! One political plan with opposing regional approaches to achieve their common class interests! Both using religion; both, sharia.⁵⁷ *I will be circling around this point for the rest of this section of the chapter, just going round and round to include the views of a wide range of Christians.*

Note that the above information comes from prominent

Muslims, but is passed on to us by a Christian writer. Christians are aware of this cynical political use of sharia. Kukah, as we shall soon see, is of the opinion that this cynical politics is the main driving force behind sharia. That it is for many can hardly be doubted, but *mainly*?

Even the Muslim walkout from the CA and defeat in 1978 was a political strategy, according to Byang. They backed down, but Byang suggested that this action was simply “part of a strategy by which to ensure” that next time they would be more successful in their demand. They did not simply relinquish. He was right. Kukah reported that a Muslim member of the CA, Nuhu Bamali, explained that “the walkout was hypocritical. It was not done in favour or against sharia; it was for people to enhance their political future.” Paul Unongo, a prominent Christian member, explained that the walkout was “a political weapon and part of the arm twisting means to effect a constitutional crisis which would make the prospect of a military intervention a very good means of frightening the Southern delegates into submission. But it was an act of political miscalculation, for it woefully failed.” Even though they did not win, “the sharia debate had been used by the ruling class in the North to raise the stakes in the impending political process.”⁵⁸ This is also clear from the now open secret that the ousted Buhari regime wanted to impose sharia. And that, in turn, was “just a prelude to turning Nigeria into an Islamic state.” After that has been accomplished, it would be “childish to argue that Nigeria is not an Islamic state.”⁵⁹

The late Ishaya Audu, one of our “Fathers,” whose long involvement in the affairs of the nation afforded him a seasoned long-term view, was very negative about sharia developments. He had lost faith in the contemporary generation of Muslims. “They know it is unconstitutional and that it has nothing seriously religious about it. It is dishonest; it is first and foremost a political instrument to topple Obasanjo”—and probably disintegrate the country.⁶⁰

However, these “natural” explanations did not prevent him from recognizing the spiritual reality behind it all. With reference to Ephesians 6:12, he wrote, “The Word of God has stated clearly that we should look to the realm of the spirit in order to perceive and understand what these eruptions are all about.” “The moment a sinner responds to the Gospel, the person moves out of Satan’s camp into the Kingdom of God. Satan will not give up without a fight and from then on the new Christian becomes a target of attack, harassment and persecution by Satan and his demonic agents. Jesus has warned believers of this.” Audu then proceeds with the Biblical history of Ishmael, the son of Abraham and said to be the ancestor of the Arab peoples. In Genesis 16, it is written that he “will live like a wild donkey. He will be against everyone, and everyone will be against him.” “The descendants of Ishmael and their way of living today are well known and adequately testify to the accuracy and truth of the above prophetic statement. Just look around the world, starting from Nigeria, and see the fulfillment of the prophecy.”⁶¹ Audu recognized that *spiritual and natural explanations are not mutually exclusive but complementary: Both are true at the same time, for God and Satan both frequently work through us, using all of our scheming and planning and doing in the visible realm.*

Baiyewu and Mwadkwon assert that Governor Sani “exposed the political undertone” in his very first public statement on the new sharia on 19 September 1999. In Chapter 3, we overheard John Gangwari’s questions about the sufficiency of the Penal Code. His own answer to all his questions was that, since the Penal Code was sufficient and covered the entire sharia waterfront, *therefore* the motivation for the new sharia is politics, plain and simple. But does the second statement really follow logically from the first? Perhaps not, but if there is this unspoken premise of politics, then the statement begins to make sense. He quoted Yunana Sokoto, a Fulani Christian who provides the missing logical link and declared, “This

Sani's sharia is just a grand design to undermine the present government and cause confusion." "They are not happy with the idea of a Southern president or a Christian president."

Richard Akinola similarly stated that the entire sharia is "aimed at destabilising the Obasanjo administration." A certain Okorie, writing in *Vanguard*, concurred that the "sharia riots were a carefully articulated plot to bring down the Obasanjo government."⁶² "Many well-meaning Nigerians from different religious leanings agree that the current sharia saga has been politically masterminded by opponents of democracy and the present democratic regime."⁶³ This opinion received corroboration from no one less than the Muslim Vice President of the nation, Abubakar Atiku, who allegedly told CAN executives that "sharia was just a smoke screen to destabilise their government."⁶⁴ It was also confirmed by the Muslim Governor Ahmed Makarfi of Kaduna, who is to have said, "As for the riots that engulfed Kaduna, it was not a religious thing per se. The whole confusion was targeted at the president of the country."⁶⁵

Elder Dogo of Northern CAN agreed that there is this connection between politics and sharia but strongly objected to it. These connections always create crises. "They [the Muslims] pretend they don't know Nigeria is a secular country. These governors often deliberately provoke Christians." Some of the sharia governors "deliberately introduced sharia in order to scuttle democracy." They are dishonest about their intentions. They introduced sharia "purely for political reasons. When politics is mixed with religion, there will be a problem," and that is what we now have.⁶⁶ Readers of Volume 6 will recognize this as an issue of contention among Muslims as well. The scuttling of democracy refers to the alleged conspiracy to topple Obasanjo about which Muslims argue with each other.

Fred Okoror and Clifford Ndujihe clearly associate Governor Sani's sharia with political manipulation. They quarrel with people

who “play politics with religion in this country” and ask, “Why should the Zamfara State Governor introduce it at the time he did?” After all, Nigeria has had Muslim presidents who had “the opportunity to play with the sharia the way they wanted, but they did not.” So why now that “another man is president?” “Make no mistake about it,” they argue, “this is a secular country. Nobody should force anybody to worship anything in a secular state.”⁶⁷

Ola Makinde, Methodist Archbishop of Lagos and a member of NIREC, in an interview with *Newswatch*, described the new sharia as “political sharia” that has been reduced to a political tool. This is in distinction from the time of the Sardauna Ahmadu Bello, when they were “operating spiritual sharia.” Christians did not object to and fight that kind of sharia.⁶⁸ I wonder if the bishop may have forgotten the Sardauna crusades or *jihad*?

Paul Adujie, on the one hand agrees that sharia is within the framework of Nigeria’s federal type Constitution, but on the other, thinks of religion as an individual and private matter that “has no place in governance.” This is the typical secular perspective common to many Christians that has been described in Volume 5. Religion in government constitutes a distraction from urgent government tasks. In addition, “spirituality”—here another word for sharia—“has become the camouflage and cover for political leadership that is bereft of useful and productive ideas. Nigeria’s political class must stop covering their complete ineptitude and volcanic capriciousness that is frequently displayed by these vacuously depraved charlatans currently at the helm.”⁶⁹

Lanre Issa-Oniulu, writing in *TD*, refers to Governor Sani as “the reckless governor” who is a “danger signal in the quest for more autonomy for the state. I am all for sharia, but I can say with all sense of fairness to the Yerima”—a traditional title by which Governor Sani is also known—“that there is no sharia in Zamfara. Neither the setting nor the characters running the system have fulfilled the conditions for sharia and they all know this. Yerima is

merely playing politics. Every Muslim wants sharia, so in expressing federalism in Zamfara, Yerima is capitalising on the faith of his people to exploit them.” He is among the loudest advocates for “devolution of power. Yerima already has his own police, the ‘*yan doka*, chasing poor people all over the place in the name of sharia.” Further terms Issa-Oniulu uses in reference to Sani include “mis-used power” and “power-drunk.”⁷⁰

Olusegun Osoba, being Governor of the southern state Ogun, should understand his colleagues on the throne. He described “the imposition of full sharia by Zamfara as dangerous and unconstitutional.” The move, he said, “was not totally religious but has political undertones.” Sharia has been “turned into a political weapon.” “It is very bad for this country that we are politicising a very dangerous, sensitive matter.” Nevertheless, he was hopeful that, though its extension “was a politicisation of the issue,” it would “blow over with time.”⁷¹

In the light of all of Dodo’s discussions scattered throughout this chapter, Dodo concludes that the real Muslim aim is to remove Christians, especially President Obasanjo, from power. The chaos caused by sharia politics might “necessitate the coming back of the military to take over the government. And if experience is anything to go by, it is a Muslim general that would be brought to rule Nigeria.”⁷²

Olufemi Awoniyi, founding director of the Centre for Religion and Public Issues in Lagos and an ECWA clergyman, attacks the opinion of the Council of Ulama of Nigeria that the Nigerian Constitution is mere guesswork in the attempts to include sharia elements. He concludes that, since it was developed by leaders from all walks of life and from both religions, “the Constitution is not a conjecture but the considered expression of the Nigerian people.”⁷³ This holds true for the entire process of constitutional development over more than two decades. So, he asks, what could be the reason the Council vilifies the Constitution? Since the Council

consists of intelligentsia, it could not be ignorance.⁷⁴ The only explanation he can come to is “the Council’s contemptuous disregard for the instrument.” “By propagating falsehood about the Constitution, the Council must have hoped that it will be able to unleash terror with impunity.”⁷⁵ Remember, without a Constitution, the powerful will always lord it over the weak. The country would descend into “anarchy and chaos.”

Awoniyi also accuses the Ulama of contempt for their fellow Muslims. He emphasizes that throughout the years of constitutional development, many well-educated Muslims participated. They “fought tooth and nail” to have their way with sharia. Yet the Ulama judged that hardly any of these prominent Muslims were “capable of interpreting the Islamic faith.” Awoniyi describes this as a “bizarre view that is an admixture of self-delusion and rabid intolerance characteristic of terrorists.” The Ulama document in which all this is found contains language that disqualifies all non-Hausa/Fulani, including Muslims, from participating in such affairs. So, religion, political manipulation and tribalism all in one. *Without digging deeper*, it is difficult to say here which of the three in this perspective is primary.⁷⁶

Elections and campaigns are routinely corrupted in Nigeria, with politicians from both religions using every trick in the book without any scruples whatsoever. Muslim destroying Muslim; Christian destroying Christian, even members of the same denomination. Winning is the word. The stories are simply unbelievable. In the Zamfara sharia state of peace and tolerance it is no different. Reporting on the campaign leading up to the elections of 2003, Minchakpu wrote that Christians in this state “were denied the right to register as voters.” Linus Awuhe, State Chairman of CAN, told him, “Electoral registration materials were diverted and given only to Muslims, including under-age children. Eligible Christian voters were denied the opportunity to register.”⁷⁷

Debki had his sensitivities honed in the context of the Kaduna sharia riots of 2000. He has thrown his weight on the political side. Definitions do not say it all, he argues. "The definition and pronouncements of adherents are driving towards religion, while the actual concept is political. Sharia is aiming and struggling at controlling the political powers and economy of Nigeria." "The adherents' banner is religion, God on their side and lips, claim of superiority over their political opponents on their neck tag."⁷⁸

The sharia crisis of 2000 was no exception. Like all other riots, this, too, was "politically motivated under the cover of religion, using sharia as a tool." Debki appealed to Solomon Lar, who similarly described the various riots discussed in Volume 1 as political, even though they often took the form of religion, that is, pitted Christians against Muslims. The perpetrators are forever using religion to cause conflicts. Debki asked the same question others have asked. If the struggle is really about sharia, where were its proponents during the regimes of Muslims like Shagari, Buhari and the others? Why did Muslims not implement sharia in those days? "It is really embarrassing to hear even the past Head of State speaking publicly in support of sharia implementation," when he did nothing about it when he was in power. "This is just an effort to sabotage the present democracy and civil rule."⁷⁹

Debki also recognizes economic motives. He claimed that the FG was aware of the fact that the real "aims and objectives of sharia government is to use public funds and other resources for the propagation of Islam." Again, the sharia struggle "is only striving towards a selfish use of government funds to enrich certain individuals and/or to finance their religious programmes from the public treasury." It is a well-known fact that "Muslims in positions of leadership use their positions to propagate Islam." These allegations would turn the entire enterprise into a blatantly religious one that would harness political and economic means to achieve its aims. Where does that leave Debki's insistence on the

primacy of politics in all this? Remember my earlier comment about contradictions.

There are more economic motives. Somehow, ordinary Muslims were expecting to increase their income under a full sharia dispensation. This might be more folk religion than orthodox thinking, but that is an economic motive that plays a part among popular Islam, according to Debki. At the time of the Kaduna sharia crisis of 2000, he wrote that there had “been a lot of [popular] speculations that the sharia will favour Muslim women, thereby placing them on salary without going to work.” In addition, “the men will be given loans to go into business.” “These speculations made Muslims radical in their demand for immediate sharia implementation.” Many Muslims in Kaduna were insisting that “even if one Muslim remains, the sharia struggle must continue.” “People in this group are ever ready to spend the whole of their times and lives fighting for sharia, for nothing is worth fighting for like daily bread to a hungry soul.”

Elite at the top echelons have their own economic hopes for sharia. According to Debki, “Sharia governors are nothing but mere shameless beggars, going about Arab countries with their dishes [beggar’s bowls]. They are making business.”⁸⁰ It will be remembered that the role especially of Saudi Arabia did come up a few times in Volume 6. Debki’s humorous hyperbole may not be that far fetched.

In spite of Debki’s insistence on all these non-religious motives, he does acknowledge that genuine religion is also playing a part in the sharia saga. In the riot of 2000, for example, there were some Muslim “fanatics” who “really did it purely on religious basis, because they don’t want to hear about Christianity,” especially not in the North. “It is their sincere and heartfelt desire to see that Christianity comes to an end.” Besides, it is not possible to separate religion and politics. All the fighting during the riots was between Christians and Muslims. The lines of division were clean,

clear and absolute. Many Muslims fought it as a religious battle, but, he then adds, “because of the economic benefit they expect, if the supreme sharia dream becomes a reality.” Well, what’s a contradiction here and there? If Muslims can handle them as I have shown above, why not Christians? Christians, wrote Debki, also fought on a religious basis, for they were aware of what would happen to them under sharia. “In fact,” he concluded, after all is said and done, “*it is not wrong to conclude that it was a religious war between Muslims and Christians which politicians instigated.*”⁸¹

Byang warns against the push for the government to financially support the sharia along with the entire Muslim establishment. The private affairs—remember, that is part of the definition of religion for many Nigerian Christians—of only a section of the people should not be paid for by the taxes of all, an opinion shared by many. That is economically wrong. It is also an economic wrong to spend the proceeds of oil on sharia, when the region producing the oil has no need for sharia and resists the entire Islamizing enterprise. Could the sharia states run their system without that oil income? “Can they generate [enough] money from their Muslim citizens to build and run the sharia system?” If they can, Christians will not be unduly worried “about the wasteful venture that the sharia enterprise portends!”⁸²

Nasarawa State is one of Nigeria’s youngest states. It was carved out of Plateau State because of religious reasons. They wanted to get away from the domination by Plateau Christians. Though they may not be in the majority, Muslims dominate the place. It is a non-sharia state, but its establishment is one of the clearest examples of politics serving religious ends. This is precisely the point in Lawi Kyuney’s account of its separation from Plateau. Muslims “are using politics or, rather, government in power, to intimidate, suppress, subjugate and recolonise Christians and by so doing retard the spread of the Gospel in Nigeria, to delay the advancement of Christianity. *This is a matter of spiritual warfare.* Politics is only

being used as a gateway to achieve victory in that respect.”⁸³ Or, as the recently deceased lawyer and former military governor, Colonel Yohanna Madaki, a long-time hero of mine, put it in the context of the Sayawa people in Bauchi state, “The crisis is religious,” an interpretation supported by CAN.⁸⁴ This in spite of the fact that governments, politicians, Muslims, secularists and, some Christians, including, apparently, Matthew Kukah, all, for reasons of their own, attribute all this unrest and violence to other causes, especially politics.

Another issue important especially to Catholics is the fact that the extended sharia has been established by politicians, not by religious leaders. John Onaiyekan wrote: “It is interesting that for the most part, it is not the religious leaders pushing for sharia, but the Muslim politicians. Christians have seen this very clearly, and have learned not to allow the politicians to manipulate things in this direction.”⁸⁵ Dodo similarly complained that the new Zamfara sharia version has been initiated by politicians, not by “genuine Islamic religious leaders.” He is aware of the unity of religion and politics in Islam. Nevertheless, probably because of residual dualism inherited from the Catholic tradition, he insisted that the sharia should have been established by those who “are especially trained and appointed as religious leaders as distinct from Muslim politicians who double as political and religious leaders.” In other words, the new sharia regime should have been established by the Ulama, not by politicians. “Those who arrogated to themselves or usurped religious leadership” over the issue of sharia neglected some basic procedures, one of which was consultation with Christians, with FG and even with Muslim authorities.⁸⁶ Fellow Catholic Gangwari also aired this complaint. “This new sharia is not being introduced by the Islamic clergy but by politicians. The development has been criticised even by Islamic scholars.” Nigeria paid dearly for it with violence.⁸⁷ It is thought to have contributed to the politicization of sharia.

There was serious failure at more than one front. Dodo commented that Sani's failure to consult Christians drove them to the conclusion "that Muslims meant more than what they are saying."⁸⁸ As the saying goes, "What you are, speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you are saying." Christians remember how Nigeria was smuggled into the OIC. "Once beaten, twice shy." Thus "Christians have every reason to be suspicious." Other neglected issues included failure to weigh "the resultant effect" on other parts of Nigeria, ignoring the religious violence over the past twenty years, and to seek compromise, a basic feature that helped make previous constitutions possible. All these failures along with the "sudden deviation from the [existing] compromise [of the Penal Code]" have led to the conviction that "religion is being used to achieve political objectives" and that "the sharia problem is a cover up for something else and not purely for religious reasons."⁸⁹

The report of Human Rights Watch contains a strong emphasis on the politicization of sharia on the part of politicians. As one pundit in Kano put it, "The public were sincere in demanding sharia, but the government was not sincere in giving it..." Governor Sani in particular was singled out here.

▲ PROMISES AND BREACHES

Sharia came accompanied with many promises to Christians, especially in Zamfara. The basic promise was that the new sharia would not affect Christians. That major promise came, of course, with a whole lot more implied promises in its wake. Unfortunately, Christians experienced that major and all those implied promises only in their breach, one after another.

The fact that Christians know better and do not take these promises very seriously tends to frustrate Muslims, who ask how many times they have to reassure Christians about this. Their question is: If it does not affect you, why are you concerned about

sharia? Christians are constantly berated for opposing something that will not affect them and that therefore should not concern them. They should just leave Muslims alone to do their own thing and there will be peace. Christians would actually be happy to do just that, if Muslims were not trying to recruit the government in their campaign and forcibly impose themselves on others. Christians are not swayed, for their experience does not conform to the promise. They were affected by sharia long before the Zamfara regime came into effect.⁹⁰

Yes, this, too, is an issue inherited from BZ days. Byang claimed that it is impossible for sharia not to affect Christians, a claim corroborated by experience. Christians and Muslims mix in many ways in society, including intermarriage. Families comprise adherents of both. They do not live separated lives. The law of one religion at times cannot but impact that of another. A Christian, e.g., cannot inherit from a Muslim relative.⁹¹ A common example is the story of Adamu Wafara of Minchika, Adamawa State. As a Christian convert from Islam, his family promptly disinherited him by deleting his name from their father's will. That is applying sharia to a Christian. In his case, things became more complicated after Wafara mysteriously disappeared and was thought dead by his siblings. Then they immediately jumped on his wife and demanded all the rights they would have in a Muslim family!⁹²

Dodo spoke in the same vein. He quoted one E. N. Adamu, who said, "Before sharia, they burnt our churches, slaughtered our wives, our children and pregnant mothers. Who knows what the full manifestation will mean?" Continuing on his own, Dodo wrote, "If without the full-scope sharia these things are happening, one should expect the worst" with the new. Christians have learned their bitter lessons. They know what happened before in Nigeria and in other countries. "They would not like to see those things happening in Nigeria. Hence their resistance to the full sharia." "That is why Christians are saying a big 'NO!' to the full-scope

sharia.” The promise of a Christian-friendly sharia is a hoax, charges Dodo. “I state categorically without mincing words that any Muslim who says so is not telling the truth.” There is a Hausa proverb that says, “*Zama da madaukin kanwa yakan kawo farin kai*,”⁹³ meaning, “One is bound to be affected by whatever his neighbour is doing.” “To say that Christians can live with them without their way of life affecting them is not only a lie but also a deceit.” Or, as Dodo put it elsewhere, “Who can deceive Christians into believing that the adoption of the full sharia will not affect Christians, since Christians know what is happening in countries that have adopted the sharia?” Another Hausa saying makes the point: “*Idan mafadi wawa ne, mai ji ba wawa ba ne*,” meaning: “If the person talking is a fool, the person who listens is not.” Christians know the new sharia will lead to religious war in Nigeria as it has elsewhere.⁹⁴

Onaiyekan similarly discounts Muslim “declarations and assurances” that sharia will not affect Christians. “The reality on the ground proves the contrary. For example, in Zamfara state, the new regulations are not directed to only the Muslim citizens. They are meant to cover everybody. Who will uphold and defend the right of the Nigerian citizen in such a state not to be subjected to a law that infringes on his rights and freedoms under the Constitution?”⁹⁵

Badejo, also a Christian member of NIREC, refers to this Muslim promise as deceit. “Nothing could be farther from the truth,” he declares. Christians were already affected during the BZ sharia. For example, Christian children of Muslim parents cannot inherit the parental estate, especially property. It will become even more difficult if sharia is now extended to criminal matters. What of mixed cases involving Christians and Muslims? If Christians refuse to appear before Sharia Court and Muslims refuse the Common Law Court, we end up with anarchy. “It is absolute deception to hold that the application of sharia will only affect Muslims, for they do not live in isolation.”⁹⁶

Under the new regime their situation only deteriorated. Some Muslims grudgingly admit it, while a few openly state that this is actually their ideal. They *want* Christians to be affected. But most continue their tired song on the subject. Below follow some examples that obviously belie that promise. *Compass Direct*⁹⁷ reported,

*As in other Nigerian states where Islamic law has been imposed, Muslims insist that they will not apply it to Christians—who have found out just how painfully false that claim can be. Sharia helps government officials to jail Christians without cause, limit their job prospects, remove their church buildings and force their daughters to marry Muslims. In a state where the population is roughly divided between Muslims and Christians, Islamists have taken a deliberate stab at religious domination and largely succeeded.*⁹⁸

Pastor James Obi of Channel of Blessings Church in Gusau and Secretary of Zamfara state CAN, reported that CAN had complained to the State Government about *Hisbah* mistreatment of women, but “to no avail.” And then Obi let the cat out of the bag: “*The government has always told us that this is an Islamic state, and they will enforce the tenets of Islam on all who live in the state. If we don’t like it, we can go to hell. So, unless the Nigerian government acts to protect us, we have nothing to do—we are hopeless here.*”⁹⁹ After all the government’s promises, this alleged statement is hard to believe. After all the experiences Christians have had with sharia, it is easy to believe. Remember the Dodo statement at the mast of this chapter.

Christians in Kibiya LGA, Kano, mostly indigenes, have undergone massive harassment, intimidation, marginalisation and bribery. All the familiar tricks of the trade described in this and several other volumes of this series were applied to them. “In the whole of Kibiya LGA there is no single government employee who

is a Christian.” 130 Islamic schools; not a single Christian one, nor a single CRK teacher. Christian students are forced to take Islamic studies. Local authorities “continuously boast that they are implementing sharia and that the State Government was ready to support them, should any crisis erupt. They have mockingly informed Christians that they control the government, the police, the judiciary and other apparatuses of government.”

The local chapter of CAN wrote a petition to Governor Ibrahim Shekarau that was copied to President Obasanjo. Signed by Chairman Yunana Yashim Tula, Matthew Abdullah and other officials, it read,

We have therefore interpreted the implementation of sharia in Kano State to mean that Christianity must be cursed and vanquished at all cost: Christians must be subjected to all forms of deprivations. Christians must be coerced to convert to Islam or else must be made to suffer severe penalties and strictures, all Christian places of worship must be destroyed, prevention of building of churches, schools or any form of enlightenment or advancement programmes by Christians, while on the other hand lifting the banner and flag of Islam high. Your Excellency, Christians were told at the inception of sharia by your administration that sharia will not impinge on their rights, that they will not suffer any deprivations, [but they] are beginning to doubt the moves behind the introduction of the law.

CAN demanded the replacement of *Sarkin* [Chief] Fammar with a more fair-minded person, compensation for destroyed properties and for persecution as well as the transfer of Alhaji Mohammed Sani, the Divisional Police Officer.

Similarly, Barrister M. J. Tula, representing COCIN, wrote a similar letter of complaint in which he emphasized that all the members of his church client are indigenes and thus have “the right

to practice any religion of their choice.” He also pointed out that COCIN’s not having a building permit is nothing unusual. “There is not a single building in the village that has the approval of the LG.” The barrister concluded his letter with the warning, “We humbly call on you, as a matter of urgency, peace and stability of your LG and the State, to intervene with the view to resolving the issue in the best interest of the parties concerned, so as to avoid anything that may be unpleasant to the entire community and the State at large.”¹⁰⁰

As to foreign situations, I have already shown that Christians know about the place of *dhimmi* in Muslim societies. Though no country today applies the classical *dhimmi* status to anyone, it has never been withdrawn officially by Muslim authorities or spokesmen. Of course, in some countries it is even worse: All citizens must be Muslims, as in Saudi Arabia and Mauritania. In such countries there are no *dhimmi*s to worry about. Nigerian Christians have no doubt that, given the opportunity, Muslims would apply it to them. Some, no doubt, would even more prefer, in the words of the Sardauna, to “clean” up the country. If governors are prepared to allow the classical apostasy tradition to operate, even outside the law, why should they hesitate about the *dhimmi* status? Christians fully expect that the position of Christians under sharia would be akin to that of the classical *dhimmi*. As Musa Gaiya explains it, Christians “fear for their fate, should Muslims be allowed to have their way.” It seems they have already been turned into second-class citizens. Even though today no Muslim country uses the *dhimmi* system, in Nigeria it would not be unthinkable for “over-zealous Muslims” to resort to the system “to chart relationships with Christian neighbours. And this will be easier in states where the sharia is adopted.”¹⁰¹

In 2003, Christians began to recognize another breach in the promise. A CAN delegation headed by Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon registered a complaint with Stephen Shekari, the Christian

Deputy Governor of Kaduna state, about the closure of Christian schools during Ramadan, the month of fasting. This requirement, explained the bishop, creates “the impression that the country is an Islamic state. Some people are trying to use religion to stop Christians from getting educated. This is a violation of our rights.” He made it clear that Christians expected the sharia governors to undo this and other measures that affect Christians. After all, they promised!

The sharia bulldozer seemed relentless, unstoppable. About the time Christians were registering the above complaint in Kaduna, Zamfara state decided that all schools, including private and Christian schools, are to teach Arabic to all students or “face stiff sanctions.” Ibrahim Birnin Magaji, Director of Press and Public Affairs for Governor Sani, commented at a press conference,

Arabic language has to be made compulsory in public and Christian schools, because of its importance to the implementation of the Islamic system. Arabic is the major medium through which Islam is propagated. The teaching of the language in schools will be of an advantage for the government and for the growth of Islam as a religion. It is therefore based on this premise that the Governor, Ahmed Sani, after consultations with Muslim leaders in the state, directed that Arabic language be made a compulsory teaching subject in all the schools in the state.

Christian leaders were furious and condemned the decision, saying it “was an attempt by the Government to erode the religious rights of Christians in the state.”¹⁰²

Musa Gaiya, without approving sharia, is about the most sympathetic among Christian writers towards sharia arguments. Nevertheless he rejects the promise that sharia will not affect Christians as impossible. It leads to separating communities into “sharia zones” and “Federal zones” where sharia is not enforced. Of

course, the old “*sabon gari*” or “strangers’ quarters” in some major Muslim towns long ago set the precedence for such division. But even there, the population tends to be mixed. “Selective implementation is impossible in some places, because Muslims and Christians live together and constantly interact with each other,” he wrote. And does the criminalization of alcohol not affect the social life of many tribes where it is ingrained?¹⁰³

Christians experience the sharia regime as oppressive in almost every direction, as a long series of broken promises. Musa Gaiya explains that Christians “fear for their fate.” “They have watched their schools taken away, their churches destroyed, their children denied opportunities to learn CRK in Muslim dominated areas.”¹⁰⁴ It is quite understandable that Byang dubs the Muslim promise as “absolute nonsense.” The sharia itself makes no such promise. In every society with a sharia influence Christians are always affected adversely. The Muslim promise is simply “an attempt to place blinders on the eyes of Christians.”¹⁰⁵

Minchakpu wrote the following in 2006, well into the sharia era:

*St. Peter’s Rev. Saleh, now pastor at St. John’s Anglican Church in Kaura Namoda, recalled how officials often had promised that sharia would only be applied to Muslims. Sharia had long been in effect in civil matters, as in all of Nigeria, but its imposition in criminal matters in 12 northern states has thrown the country into a constitutional crisis. “When sharia was introduced by the government of Zamfara state, we were told that it is meant to guide Muslims in their faith and that it has nothing to do with us Christians,” Rev. Saleh said. “Surprisingly, sharia is now a weapon being used against the church in Zamfara state.”*¹⁰⁶

▲ MUSLIMS NOT PRACTICING SHARIA

Both Christians and Muslims often say that many Muslims do not practice sharia. They may go through the rituals, they may have the structures, but actual life practice negates it all. If you have read Volume 6, you know how Muslims criticise themselves for failure at this point. They themselves have often suffered at the hands of corrupt and inept *alkalai* [local sharia judges]. It is, of course, a familiar theme for all religions, since they tend to promote standards that are impossible to attain after our fall.

Speaking in March 2000, just a couple of months into the new sharia, Bamigboye asked whether the present sharia agitators are better Muslims than those who demanded its abolition 50 years earlier. The present call for a fuller sharia, he charged, “is not only mischievous and misleading, but, having regard to the havoc it has caused, criminal.” This is not the sharia of peace and order that Muslims boast about. “These tiny cliques” calling for sharia “are not Muslims. They are neither within the tenets of sharia nor are they representative of the larger Muslim population.” “Inciting disturbance, murder and arson in the name of a religious legal system against innocent members of other faiths is unjust and shameful, just as acting contrary to constituted authorities at the Federal level and the Constitution of the land, is rebellious and not in consonance with good conduct.”¹⁰⁷

CAN Zamfara state disqualified Governor Sani from his sharia enterprise. They refer to his “past records in the Central Bank and in the State’s Ministry of Lands and Housing where he worked in the past.” Given his track record there, CAN “does not see him worthy enough to champion the cause of sharia in a country where great religious men such as the late Ahmadu Bello never tried to trouble the nation with sharia. CAN therefore believes that the man must have a hidden agenda other than the promotion of Islam.” It concluded its communique by calling on governments at

all levels “to stop this religious madness that the Governor is hoping to inaugurate on 27 October 1999.”¹⁰⁸

At a CAN meeting it was divulged that Governor Sani, the sharia pioneer, was so busy buying up houses for himself that “the masses are angry with him,” so angry that he does not dare attend the mosque in his own capital!¹⁰⁹ Actually, much of this volume you are reading right now is one grand testimony to the reality of the subject at hand. Everywhere, on almost every page, you find stories and even sections full of indications of non-Muslim behaviour on the part of Muslims. This book is about Christian opinions and actions, but Volume 6 is full of confessions by Muslims themselves of their failure to live up to their sharia promises and Muslim standards. Christians are not impressed. Muslims have not been successful in their public relations with others.

Sharia and its advocates not only emphasize that it spells peace, the peace that in fact is not there, but the same can be said for toleration, equality and fairness. If you have read Volume 6, you will remember all these grand claims for sharia. Josiah Idowu-Fearon has been a life-long student of Islam and knows it in depth. He reminds Muslims of the sharia emphasis on impartiality and fairness and then charges them for not practising it.¹¹⁰

▲ SHARIA AND VIOLENCE

There are at least two issues of violence in connection with the new sharia. First, there is another oft-repeated Muslim *promise*—yes, another promise!—that sharia will bring peace and tolerance. In other words, it will bring an end to the violence and the high tension that has marred relationships for so many decades or, at least, reduce them noticeably. Muslim proponents of sharia tend to be very annoyed at the suggestion that sharia causes violence. By definition, that is not possible! Instead of causing more violence, sharia is supposed to reduce it and bring peace. In earlier volumes we have fre-

quently run into emphatic Muslim statements that the cause of the various riots between Christians and Muslims over the years, whatever it is, is *not* religious and thus *not* sharia. Muslims often blame it on poverty, unemployment, immorality, hoodlums and political manipulation to deflect blame on their religion. Governments reject religious interpretation because it is too hot a potato to handle.

Secondly, the very opposite to the above promise is the frequent Christian *accusation* that, in fact, sharia is the *cause* of much violence. During the first six years after the Gusau Declaration the promise has not been realized. Already in Volume 6 I share with you *Muslim* reports that violence has continued unabated and the peace of sharia has so far eluded all. In this section we find *Christians* reporting on continuing violence, some of it actually caused by sharia. In their minds the association is a “no-brainer.” Gangwari reports that the reactions to the Gusau Declaration were “immediate and devastating.” Riots soon took over the country from Kaduna to Lagos. “Like wild fire....” “People fled to all directions. There was total breakdown of law and order. Nigeria was boiling.”¹¹¹

The Nigerian Muslim reactions to the infamous Danish cartoons of the Prophet are an example of such escalation six years after Gusau. If sharia is to deliver its promises, something of that should be noticeable by 2006. Not so. I reproduce one sample report on cartoon violence:

Cartoons Spark Violent Attacks in Northern Nigeria

*Up to 100 people may have died in the violence that rocked parts of Northern Nigeria on February 18, 2006, following the publication in Europe of cartoons satirizing the Prophet Muhammad. Sources report that at least 30 churches and 250 shops and houses were destroyed in Borno state, when a peaceful protest in Maiduguri turned violent and a crowd armed with sticks, machetes and iron bars rampaged through the town, destroying Christian properties and targeting members of the clergy.*¹¹²

Nigerians reported cartoon-related violence to Barnabas Fund, a ministry based in the UK. When Barnabas collated all the cartoon events throughout the world, it concluded that Nigerian Christians suffered “by far the most destructive attacks.” It also reported on Christian retaliation in Onitsha and Enugu and expressed its disapproval of such reaction. However, Christian leaders had forewarned that they might “not be able to restrain ‘restive’ Christian youths much longer.” Peter Akinola, National President of CAN, said,

*It appeared that Christian attempts at peaceful coexistence have been sadly misunderstood to be weakness. We have for a long time now watched helplessly the killing, maiming and destruction of Christians and their property by Muslim fanatics and fundamentalists at the slightest or no provocation at all. That an incident in far-away Denmark, which does not claim to be representing Christianity, could elicit such unfortunate reaction here in Nigeria is not only embarrassing but also disturbing and unfortunate.*¹¹³

Dodo claims that throughout the period of CAs from 1979–1999, the sharia did not cause “any violent religious crisis” until the Zamfara Declaration at the end of 1999.¹¹⁴ When that decision was copied by other states, the “2000 Kaduna mayhem” was lit. One reason that the expanded sharia led to violence, according to Dodo, was that it was handled by the wrong people: by politicians instead of religious leaders. This “resulted in the unimaginable dimension of violent clashes, of wanton destruction of lives and property.” Had it been handled by “genuine Islamic religious leaders, the mayhem that took place in Kaduna in February 2000, and the retaliatory violence in Owerri, Aba and other places, would not have taken place.”¹¹⁵ So, yes, sharia caused violence, but it would not have been necessary; it was not due to sharia so much as leadership. But with the new sharia and the dis-

agreement about which has supremacy, the Constitution or sharia, Dodo predicted there is “bound to be a clash.” The compromise of the Penal Code has served Nigeria for forty years and brought peace. The Penal Code never caused violence. Dodo asks, “Are we tired of peaceful coexistence?” Is that the reason Muslims are now pushing for full sharia? “I am asking this question, because the adoption will lead to war or to the disintegration of Nigeria into several countries.” Most Nigerians want to keep Nigeria as one country. What of the Muslims?¹¹⁶ So, for Dodo, sharia has led to violence since its launching and will lead to more in the future.

Christians attribute many incidents of violence to sharia. Byang insists that the Kaduna riot of 2000 “was the result of the Kaduna State Government wanting to impose the sharia.”¹¹⁷ They often claim that even the violent aftermath of the Miss World Pageant was really Muslim retaliation for the failure of Governor Makarfi of Kaduna to implement sharia throughout the state, instead of limiting it to Muslim-majority LGAs.¹¹⁸ You may recall from Volume 6 the violence in Makarfi, Kaduna state, over a Christian teenager with mental problems who allegedly desecrated the Qur’an. The violence resulted in the death of a high but undisclosed number of Christians, the displacement of hundreds more and the destruction of properties, including 10 churches. Bodies were piled up on trucks for mass burial. Archbishop Makinde blames the violence witnessed in Nigeria on the “mindless introduction of sharia in some Northern states.”¹¹⁹

Sam Kujiyat of CAN Kaduna charged at a press conference that Muslim leaders are deliberately using fanatics to create havoc. “Islamic terrorists, hiding under the cover of religion, have invaded the state and are now unleashing terror on Christians over stupid reasons,” he said. He referred to a “new” trend “in which religious sentiment is being used as a cover to victimize Christians.”¹²⁰ All of this, remember, is taking place in the AZ era, when sharia is supposed to curb chaos and create order. Christians notice little of it.

CAN officially published additional cases of vandalism, mostly in Kaduna city. A driver killed because he was driving instead of attending Friday prayers. On the same day, the “Jesus Embassy,” along with musical instruments and other valuables, were destroyed by “irate Muslims.” Four days later the ECWA Church on Aminu Road was burnt.¹²¹

The Zamfara state Branch of CAN complained from the beginning of the new era about the violation of freedoms and rights. The demolition of several churches in Gusau and “the trial and conviction of six Christians under the sharia are some of the sinister moves by Zamfara Government to humiliate Christians.” Sharia is “inimical to peace, law and order.” The government’s attitude “is an open invitation to religious anarchy.” Then there was the government’s “clandestine military training of Muslim youths, who will be used to force non-Muslims to bow to Islam, as confirmed by the Governor’s unguarded and provocative public utterances.” In contrast to the demolition of churches, Zamfara CAN asserted, “We watch daily how Islamic bodies spring up to enjoy assistance from the Government. The Government pays all the imams and their welfare is a priority. Mosques are built in every nook and cranny of the state by the Government.”¹²²

At the very beginning of the AZ era, Bee Debki begins his book on that note. The Kaduna violence of 2000 is simply the latest in a chain of events, reaching back to independence, that has produced violence, disturbances, depression and clashes. Behind that chain are shadowy “men and women of darkness.” Referring to 2000, “This time, some group of people are using the issue of sharia, which can do irrevocable harm and tear Nigeria apart.” “Sharia is a tension builder and a threat to unity.”

A good example of sharia as a tension builder is the graffiti that Debki saw on Kaduna walls after the 2000 riots. “Agree or not, sharia must be done.” “Who owns the North?” “*Sharia dole*” [“Sharia is a must.”]. “Sharia or war.” “Islamic Sharia Zone, Keep

Off.” *“Sharia ko mutuwa”* [“Sharia or death”]—and “many other provocative writings.” “If this is the case,” Debki wrote, “sharia seems to be dangerous to human society, especially to non-Muslims. Hence one ought to keep off its zone.”¹²³

Threats did not come only from the grassroots of youthful rabble rousers; they also came from Muslim leaders in both implicit and explicit forms. During the hot days of 2000, Dodo reminded us of “the high-tension emotionally-heated debate on sharia at the CA 1988, when the position of Christian and Muslim members were poles apart.” Yahaya Kwande, an indigenous Muslim and political leader in Plateau State, is well known as a mild-mannered, balanced moderate. But to Dodo he “epitomized” the Muslim attitude in this heated atmosphere with this statement about sharia: “It is part of the fundamental human freedom of Muslim religious tenets and if he gives up the obligation to his belief, he would be a man without religion.” To Dodo, this was not merely a statement, but an implied threat. Another, more explicit, threat of violence came in the form of a communiqué published way back in 1986 by the Council of Ulama that warned, “Muslims have vowed to reject any new political order that does not recognise the application of sharia.”¹²⁴

Dodo also reported on an Ibo plan to establish a separate “Sovereign Biafra state.” It was to take place on May 27, 2000, when “the Biafra flag would be raised again.” Foreseeing violence, Ibos in other states started returning home and non-Ibos living among them started to return to their own states. “There was chaos and confusion. If Biafra had been declared as planned, other parts of Nigeria would have followed and that would be the end of Nigeria.” Apparently, some people worked very hard to have this plan “put in abeyance. Many people sweat profusely.” That is violence due directly to sharia. Dodo responded to these developments with the suggestion that “If the adoption of the full sharia is going to cause the break-up of Nigeria, it is better for Muslims to

return to the Penal Code.” Especially if you look at countries that have traveled that road. They have been fighting between Muslims and others and even between Muslims themselves. Do we really want Nigerians to “engage themselves in a religious war, which is worse than a civil war? To me, it is better we allow the sleeping dog lie by returning to the Penal Code.” Gideon Orkar’s failed coup was a response to the implied Muslim demand for either sharia or separation. Christians thought that Muslims should be grateful for the compromise of the Penal Code, since Nigeria is not a Muslim country. Instead, Muslims went too far and “Christians are saying ‘No!’ because of the adverse effects sharia is going to have on Christians and because it is going to plunge Nigeria into a religious war that will break up the country.”¹²⁵

Even Inter-Gender Centre in Jos, an organization trying hard to be neutral in the Christian-Muslim conflict, published claims of sharia-related violence several times. Referring to Kaduna, Ityavyar and Gundu wrote, “The partial introduction of the sharia in parts of the city has heightened polarization and increased tension in the city.” Again referring to Kaduna, they wrote, “There was a large-scale violence over the planned introduction of sharia in the state.”¹²⁶ As if that were not enough, they wrote with reference to the JNI of Kaduna:

It is sometimes seen to be taking positions that may not be palatable to people of other faiths. The last sharia controversy is a good example. While JNI believed sharia is in the interest of its members and forcefully pushed for its implementation by the state, others, particularly CAN, felt that even if it was in the interest of Muslims, it was wrong for the state to champion its implementation. The result was the 2000 violent conflict.

They also allowed Akume’s claim of that connection to stand: “The introduction of sharia as a state policy by some states no

doubt helped to fuel the already existing tension in the region.” Former peaceful neighbours “suddenly became enemies.” He repeated the opinion in the next issue of the *Inter-Gender Peace Bulletin* (IGPB): “The introduction of sharia no doubt played a significant part in the deficit in relations between the two religions.” “The possible application of these laws on Christians is what sparked off many of the recent crises.”¹²⁷

Akume’s articles were noticed by one Ali, a Muslim writer, who caught the insinuation and objected to it.¹²⁸ Inter-Gender sought to balance such statements with recommendations such as “Too much emphasis should not be placed on ethnic and religious differences, as some of these conflicts are found to be manifestations of social, economic and political problems.” It was their way of pacifying at least three of the Inter-Gender stakeholders: government for political reasons, Muslims to clear them, European donor agencies for their secular orientation. Besides, Ityavyar and Gundu admit that even if the crises were “not because of religious differences, when conflicts occur, they quickly assume a religious dimension that is difficult to contain.”¹²⁹

Sharia proponents are frequently up in arms—some, figuratively; others, literally—against those who associate sharia with various violent riots that have occurred since the Zamfara Declaration. The Plateau violence from that time till the terrible explosions of 2004 are said to have no connection with sharia. After all, Plateau is not a sharia state, so the argument goes. A workshop in which Christians and Muslims participated and organized by Inter-Gender Centre produced the observation “that the differences between Muslims and Christians are insufficient to account for the hostility between the adherents of the two faiths.”¹³⁰ That’s a typical “discovery” when Christians and Muslims meet together, but not so typical when you get Christians by themselves. Go to COCIN or CAN or any other Christian body and see how far you get with such a statement!

Clearly the Inter-Gender Centre, under the direction of soci-

ologist Dennis Ityavyar, a friend of mine and a Christian, seems to have a hard time with these issues. Funded by secular Western donors, he has to tow a neutral line between the two religions, “neutral” as secularists define it, of course. In this effort he would sometimes allow statements from one or the other side that could hardly be considered neutral. However, it is very interesting to note that the title of a topic to be discussed at a Centre event had to be changed from “Management and Resolution of Sharia-Influenced Conflicts in Northern Nigeria” to “Management and Resolution of Conflicts in Communities in Northern Nigeria”!¹³¹ That is more than an innocent change of name; the change itself is a statement.

Violence, of course, comes in different forms; it is not only physical. Baiyemu and Mwakwon wrote that to speak of “negative effects” of sharia is no overstatement. “Given the fragile political unity of the country and the premature democratic governance after decades of military rule, the unrest, the unexpected migration of Christians from the affected states have caused victims a lot of economic loss and psychological trauma. A lot of Christians have lost money and property in the process of migrating from sharia states.” People have suffered from theft. They have suffered loss of business. Many shops have closed permanently. A whole class of internal refugees has been created. That is all violence.¹³² Here the concept of violence is legitimately enlarged to include general chaos as it was in the context of South Africa’s apartheid.

It is not only Christians who declare sharia responsible for violence, even the occasional Muslim admits it. Minchakpu emphasized this point by citing Abubakar Umar, former military governor of Kaduna state. At a press conference on April 4, 2005, Umar “blamed the violence on the implementation of the sharia” as well as on “Muslim leaders in Northern Nigeria.” He thus held sharia responsible for the deaths of 10,000 people,¹³³ a most unpopular opinion among Muslims, but nevertheless

quoted frequently by both Christians and Muslims.

The self-designated “neutral” Human Rights Watch reported that “since the extension of sharia, there have been religious tensions and sporadic incidents of violence in several... states.... Some, though not all of these, were sparked by disagreements over the introduction of sharia to criminal law; more generally, sharia had the effect of hardening positions and accentuating the polarization between Muslims and Christians.”¹³⁴

The very week that I am editing this chapter, there is a real threat of new world-wide violence in reaction to Papal comments about the Prophet Muhammad and terrorism.¹³⁵ This time the reaction is not against some secular cartoonist and his publisher, but against the most visible icon of Christianity, the Pope. Muslim reactions demonstrate that whatever the impact of their world-wide revival, the new emphasis on sharia has hardly helped to douse their *sometimes-justified* anger. Instead, sharia has led to more anger and more turmoil, including violence.

In reaction to the Papal comments, anti-Christian violence erupted in Dutse, the capital of the sharia state of Jigawa. “At least 14 churches and many Christian homes were destroyed.” The government had allocated other plots for new churches to be built, but all in one place and outside of the city. It asked Christians “to refrain from rebuilding permanent churches in their former locations,” which, I presume, were scattered throughout the city. They *may* use the old properties for residential purposes and even for temporary worship centres. Of course, this leads to the creation of a Christian ghetto and to marginalization. Some Christian leaders refer to this development as “apartheid,” while others approve of it as a safety measure.¹³⁶

Other reports about the same Dutse violence put it slightly different. “At least ten churches were set alight and Christian homes and business were looted.” Though the police were warned of the pending riot, they did not show up till the violence had subsided twenty-

four hours later.¹³⁷ Violence inspired by a strong denial of violence! The point is simple: Sharia has not so far reduced tension and violence or enhanced peace. According to Nigerian Christians, it has increased the former and reduced the latter. The irony of it all!

Violence may be caused directly and indirectly by sharia, but that does not leave Christians without any responsibility for it, according to Dandaura. He was worried “about how Christians in Northern Nigeria are imbibing and popularising the culture of violence.” He urged Christians to leave vengeance to God. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Though not a pacifist, he favoured non-violence and was an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi. In contrast to many Christians, Dandaura did not give up on “the other cheek.”¹³⁸

One group that is another source of great annoyance to Christians in sharia states are the ‘*yan agaji* or the *hisbah*,¹³⁹ the youthful corps of sharia watchdogs appointed by some sharia governments. They have been creating tension in many places ever since the beginning of the new era as we have already seen in Volume 6. Christians in sharia states “have complained of assault, harassment, intimidation and flagrant violation of the religious rights of Christians.” Someone called them a “terror machine in the hands of fanatical Islamic governments aimed at strangulating Christianity in Northern Nigeria.”¹⁴⁰ Another report has it that, though these groups are instructed to ensure adherence to sharia, “contrary to Islamic injunction, it appears that the corps operatives have sought to enforce the sharia code upon Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The net result is that their activities have generally engendered skirmishes and breaches of the social order. We do not think this is the goal of the Kano state Government. We support the call by Muslim clerics for restraint on the part of *Hisbah* Guards.”¹⁴¹

Stories of violence will be found aplenty throughout the next section.

▲ OPPRESSION

Almost all the examples and stories in this book about sharia problems could go under the heading of this section. In the minds of Christians, oppression and sharia are synonymous. That, of course, is the very opposite of Muslim insistence on peace, tolerance and equality. Many of the issues of this section have already been treated from the Muslim perspective in Volume 6. I can thus be briefer here with emphasis on Christian attitude.

1. CHURCH BUILDINGS

The issue of church buildings is an old one and has already been treated extensively in Volume 3. But we are now in the sharia era and revisit the issue from that vista. From that volume you will remember the difficulties of obtaining permits to build churches. To get to the bottom of this issue I refer you to Turaki's discussion in Chapter 7 of this book. An application for building a church is submitted to the proper authorities, but seldom is there a response. After a long time and many visits to the authorities, the church in desperation begins to meet in a house and before long you end up with a house church, something that offends Muslim neighbours in principle, quite apart from the increase in traffic and noise levels. Neighbours complain to the authorities and the church is told that its house church is illegal. The church responds by reminding the authorities of their pending application. It is a ping-pong game without any move forward. Eventually notice will be sent that the building in question will be bulldozed.

Zamfara is, of course, the mother of all sharia states. From Volume 6, you may recall Governor Sani's comment that Christians in his state are very happy and content with the situation. He "allayed fears of persecution expressed by Christians outside the state" by countering that "sharia emphasises justice even to non-Muslims." He also rejected the accusations that churches were

being demolished. Instead, during his tenure “churches are currently being built all over the state,” he claimed. He urged Muslims in the state “to imbibe the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) to accommodate the non-Muslims, respect their views and opinions.”¹⁴² In actual fact, it is rather as described in the previous paragraph.

Minchakpu reported in 2001 that “tensions between Muslims and Christians have boiled over” since the introduction of sharia.¹⁴³ From that same year we have the report about the government’s destroying churches among the Maguzawa Christians as reported by Mary Joe later in this chapter. And from there things went from bad to worse.

Gaiya dubs this matter of church buildings “one of the thorniest issues in Zamfara state.” Gusau has no *sabon gari* or ‘strangers’ quarters like some other Northern cities. Christians and Muslims live next to each other. For this reason, Christians want to build churches everywhere as well. An upsurge of newer churches has led to demands for more space for church buildings. When they apply for permission to build, they receive no response. Hence, some just go ahead and build churches without permission. Others build what look like houses but are in reality churches. These are the “illegal” structures that the Zamfara government is demolishing.¹⁴⁴

The problem became such a common scenario that Zamfara CAN held a meeting with the state’s Commissioner of Lands and Housing along with his Permanent Secretary. The arguments went back and forth, with the commissioner insisting that the churches wait for approval, while the churches kept emphasizing the endless delays. During the “discussion” one of the CAN members, pastor Okafor, accused the Government of trickery: “It is the trick that the Government wants to use on the Christians, that is, the talk of converting residential houses to churches.” He also reminded the commissioner that some of the churches under attack were in existence before the creation of Zamfara State. They have a history. He

went on to say, "The Government has [already] concluded what they want to do; if not, they could have listened to their [Christians] suggestions and appeals." Of course, the commissioner denied that the Government had secret plans. The problem, according to another member of the CAN delegation, Samuel Ogbode, lies with the Government. "The only thing they should do, if they really want peace in the land, is to grant approval for the existing churches and then the new ones can apply from the master plan." Okafor proposed that "all the errors that were jointly done be corrected. Let these churches be formalized." According to the report, the commissioner never went beyond his insistence that the churches should submit applications and, once granted, they would be free to worship.¹⁴⁵ The meeting, it seems, was a futile exercise of spinning wheels. According to reports, the demolition of churches continued.

Gaiya reproduces a strong letter to Governor Sani from Living Faith Church, whose building was marked for demolition:

Undoubtedly, since the advent of this administration in May 1999, the Government has been pursuing an orchestrated agenda to curtail the growth of Christianity in the state, despite the hue and cry from all sections of the country. We respect unequivocally the choice of the state in adopting sharia, but in a federal state such must be subject to the condition that the rights of non-Muslims within the state are not trampled upon. Demolition of churches by the Government amounts to a deliberate violation of the Constitution, which Your Excellency solemnly affirmed to preserve and defend. We must state that strict adherence to the constitutional provisions by this administration would be the surest and best way of ensuring peace and progress of the state and indeed the enthronement of the nascent democracy in the entire country. Accordingly, your administration's attempt to inhibit in any

*manner the right to freedom of worship and from discrimination of Christians in the state is not only ill timed, irresponsible and insensitive to our aspirations as a people, but capable of becoming an incitement for chaos and breakdown of law and order in the state and the country as a whole.*¹⁴⁶

Minchakpu wrote an article about the situation in January 2006, that goes as follows:

*Churches Marked for Demolition in Zamfara State*¹⁴⁷

“For your information, the state Governor, Albaji Ahmed Sani, has ordered that your church should be demolished before his arrival in this town tomorrow. So, we shall carry out this directive tomorrow morning.”

On October 10, 2003, the Rev. Seth Saleh, then pastor of St. Peter’s Anglican Church in Bakura town in Zamfara state, received a Bakura town councilor as an unexpected guest in his house with the above message. The following day, the local government demolished St. Peter’s Anglican Church.

*The demolition of that church in Bakura marked the beginning of an assault by Islamic fundamentalists in Zamfara under the leadership of Governor Sani through imposition of sharia.*¹⁴⁸ *In Gusau town alone, 14 churches have been marked out for demolition. Those 14 churches have already received demolition notices, according to Rev. James Obi, pastor of Channel of Blessings Church and secretary of the Zamfara state chapter of CAN. [Here follows a list of the affected churches.]*

The government demolished Rev. Obi’s Channel of Blessings church in 1997, and it has marked his rebuilt church for destruction as well. “We have been served with demolition notices and even then, there have been announcements over the radio and television on the churches to be demolished,”

Rev. Obi lamented. "It is just a matter of time, and these churches will be no more."

John Garba Danbinta, Anglican bishop of Gusau, said the demolition of St. Peter's Anglican Church in Bakura came on Governor Sani's orders. "The governor is from Bakura, and because he is the champion of Islamic jihad in Nigeria, he felt it will be unwise for a church to be seen in his hometown," Bishop Danbinta said. The bishop pointed out these arbitrary demolitions to refute those in Nigeria who declare Christians face no opposition from the state. "The news outside Zamfara state is that everything is okay with Christians here," he said. "Some claim that the governor is good and treating Christians well, that Christians do not have problems—but this is false. The problem of persecution of Christians here is a reality. It is a major problem facing us today in Zamfara state."

Since the introduction of sharia in January, 2000, Zamfara authorities have banned Christians from sharing their faith and from building churches, said Danbinta. Officials are keeping Christians from building churches, he said, by making it impossible for them to acquire land. "We cannot get land, because there is a deliberate government policy to deny Christians land to build churches." There are about 4,000 Anglicans in Zamfara, yet Danbinta said that in almost all parts of the state the government has refused to allow the church land to build places of worship. "Sharia, it would seem, is being implemented to curtail Christianity, since it is only targeted at Christians," he said.

The Rev. Barnabas Sabo, pastor of the ECWA church in Gusau town, concurred that local governments are using sharia to deny churches land. Towns denied lands for building churches include Mada, from which Rev. Sabo's church members have to trek more than 20 kilometers to Talata Mafara to attend worship services. Other towns and villages where the

ECWA church has been denied land are Kasuwa Daji, Dansadau, Tsbiri in Talata Mafara, and in the Bakura area. “Gov. Sani, in six years of introducing sharia in the state, has used public funds to build well over 70 mosques,” Rev. Sabo said. “Yet no single church has been built by this same government. How fair is this?”

All of these stories are corroborated in CAN reports, especially by the Zamfara state branch.¹⁴⁹

Given all that, it is not surprising that the Zamfara state chapter took the state Government to court. The case was dismissed “for lack of *locus standi*.” Then a group of indigenous Christians, including one Pastor Ishaya, went to court. I have not heard the end of these stories.¹⁵⁰

The story in Kano is much the same. From the onset of sharia till the time of writing in 2006, Kano state continued her tradition of harassing Christians by, among other things, demolishing churches or withholding permits to build.¹⁵¹ In 2001, Kano CAN sent an SOS message to President Obasanjo about church demolitions. They wrote that “more than 80 per cent of churches in Kano state have been denied a certificate of occupancy. New applications are simply denied or expired applications are not renewed. Consequently, Christians are forced to worship in homes, but then they are threatened again, since homes are not licensed for worship.” Then follows a list of churches recently demolished. On one section of the city “all churches and mosques were [declared] illegal structures and would all be demolished.” Of course, nothing happened to mosques.¹⁵²

The complaints did not cease. The Kano government “is systematically demolishing Christian churches.” Joseph Fadipe, Kano CAN Chairman, reported, “The government’s complaint against Christians is that there are too many churches in Kano and Muslims are not happy with the development. They are demand-

ing that church leaders give the government approval to reduce the number of churches by 50 percent.” CAN responded, “We can never endorse the demolition of churches. We would rather have all churches in the state demolished than to support the demolition of some.” Christian leaders met with the government “on three occasions to discuss the matter, but the meetings ended in dead-lock.”¹⁵³ And all of this despite government assurances that sharia would not affect Christians!¹⁵⁴

Gaiya found that the Katsina state Government “was milder on the new churches.” The Government, he wrote,

*asked CAN to find a place outside the city, where all newer churches could be relocated. The idea seemed attractive, but on second thought, CAN felt that might not be a good thing after all, because in the event of a riot, the hoodlums would know where to go for the churches. But even there ECWA was asked to stop its building of a large church, because the building was too tall for the comfort of authorities. It is located in Nagogo Street, a major street in Katsina that links the Governor’s office to the Emir’s palace.*¹⁵⁵

Its height goes against the spirit of traditional Muslim contracts with dhimmis that forbids Christians to have buildings higher than those of Muslims.

At a Christian gathering in Kaduna during 2000 chaired by Yusufu Turaki, Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Biafran leader during Nigeria’s Civil War, revealed the deeply bitter reason for Ibo dissatisfaction almost fifty years ago.

Since 1960, we have watched our human rights as people coming from elsewhere to live here being trampled upon with impunity. It is in the face of this massive, all embracing trampling down of human rights that we have gathered here to review the situation and perhaps to make the appro-

*priate adjustment to our strategy of combating it. I will appeal to all Christians in the North and in the South to join hands to stand shoulder to shoulder and face these onslaughts on our rights.*¹⁵⁶

In an interview with *Newswatch*, Ojukwu reportedly said that “if bloodletting is the price to be paid for having a united Nigeria, there is no need for a united and indivisible Nation.”¹⁵⁷ Though Christians in the North were not secession minded in 2000, they understood this secession leader very well.

2. CLASS AND IMPLEMENTATION

In Volume 6, I discussed the static interpretation of sharia and the resulting hypocrisy.¹⁵⁸ I there demonstrated how closely the implementation of the new sharia follows class lines. Okezie Chukwumerije of San Francisco tied them firmly together in an article that constitutes Appendix 3. The old certainties of religion that come with the static interpretation, he argued, help divert people’s attention from their everyday problems. Instead of taking the bull by the horns, the problems can conveniently be blamed on disobedience and unfaithfulness towards God. “Enact laws to impose religion. And *voila*, all our problems are solved.” That is, he suggested, what sharia does for the illiterate masses. An essential component of this approach is a literal interpretation that simplifies things. You steal a cow and you lose a hand. Simple. Uncomplicated. Understandable.

But it creates widespread hypocrisy. Alcohol and adultery, e.g., are publicly denounced but secretly indulged in. The country is riddled with this kind of hypocrisy at every level, from the illiterate to the elite, including religious leaders. At another level, the hypocrisy comes out in the fact that the harsh aspects of this literal sharia are implemented only with respect to the poor. The elite support this kind of sharia because, while it gives the poor hope

and thus helps avoid insurrection, the elite do not steal goats or cows. Their kind of theft is not affected by sharia, for they do not take each other to court for the crimes they all commit. Chukwumerije says he can imagine the elite arguing that, given a literalist interpretation of the sharia, stealing nairas or dollars is not covered by that kind of sharia, for such practices did not exist at the time the sharia was formed, but stealing cows was! He also imagines that Sani Abacha, the late former dictator, who was allegedly the most corrupt of all, would have supported the sharia enthusiastically for all the reasons above.

In spite of all this, some Christians recognize that there are more enlightened versions of Islam around. Chukwumerije, for one, referred to Bosnia as one country where a more liberal Islam is in vogue, one that is not hostile to modernization and development. That is the version that Nigeria needs, according to him. Education and open minds are “not inherently incompatible with the practice of faith, but the deliberate closing of the mind as in the case of the Nigerian sharia definitely is.”¹⁵⁹

Musa Gaiya reminds us of provisions in the sharia that, when applied, would contribute to a more human face to sharia. Whereas in the birth pangs of the new sharia, poorly trained judges treated cases of theft, for example, in an inadequate way—Stole a goat? Whack, an amputation!—the real sharia demands careful examination of the circumstances of the case. Writes Gaiya: Theft “attracts capital punishment [*hudud*], provided the item stolen was properly protected in such a way that the thief had to forcefully remove the item. If, for example, one leaves his car unlocked outside one’s house and somebody steals it, it is not a crime. So also a house boy cannot be charged with theft if he took his master’s [unprotected] property without his consent.” The hand of a hungry thief would not be amputated. A woman engaged in adultery under attenuating circumstances would not be stoned. You may remember that more liberal Muslims have written a great deal about this deeper,

more gentle and more dynamic understanding of crime and punishment in the sharia.

Not many Christians acknowledge such qualifying sharia provisions for the simple reason that they have seen little of it practiced. Or perhaps these cases went unnoticed, since they were not provocative, did not affect Christians and represented the more normal situations. They are more impressed—and angry—with sharia cases that lead to injustice and/or that involve Christians.

3. WOMEN AFFAIRS

Before we even talk of Nigerian women, you should realize that Nigerians in general are all too aware of the situation of women in Muslim-dominated societies elsewhere. Byang quoted a lengthy document about the fate of women under the Afghan Taliban. It is widely recognized that the Taliban do not represent the norm for most of the Muslim *umma*, but some of their policies and ideas are widely popular in various quarters throughout the world. On the day I am writing this sentence, Reuters reported that an alliance of religious parties are trying to block efforts by the Pakistani government to ease up on adultery laws for women. Yes, there are political reasons for this opposition, but the fact is that such measures are opposed even today on basis of deviation from Qur'an and *Sunnah*.¹⁶⁰ I am happy to report that the government is making progress in that parliament has approved the measure.¹⁶¹ The *burqah* is now a familiar look all over the world. Nigerians see the relationship between what is on the ground in various Muslim countries and what could develop in a Nigeria subjected to sharia.¹⁶²

Whatever more liberal Muslims may write about women and about sharia not being applicable to Christians, women themselves as well as men know that the situation on the ground is quite serious. A group of NGOs, most of them with an emphasis on women, “are aghast at the recent moves in some states to introduce laws

purporting to be 'Islamic' or 'Christian.'" The reference is to sharia states but also to Cross River state where retaliatory moves are on to introduce Christian laws. Parts of the document these NGO's collectively published are discussed under their appropriate headings. The conferees were especially offended that Zamfara prevents women from sharing public transport with men. This arrangement denies them both freedom of movement and of association. Taxi and bus drivers create their own criteria about whether they want to pick up women or not. It often depends on a woman's style of dress. The conference rejected the Governor's assertion that these laws are meant to fight prostitution, gambling and other vices, since these cannot be overcome by violating women's rights. The situation lends itself to any woman in public being accused of prostitution.¹⁶³

Zamfara state CAN charged that

our women and other young ladies were molested for reasons best known to sharia proponents. Some Christian ladies were abducted and taken to various destinations under the alleged reason that they were prostitutes. At the Federal Polytechnic in Kaura Namoda, female students were pulled down from motorcycles and ill-treated. This stopped when the female students mobilized themselves and beat up one of the sharia enforcers.

One Mrs. Ladi Ochonu was attacked in her family home in Gusau for no apparent reason. Zamfara CAN further charged that indigenous Christian young ladies "are enticed with money and other gifts to forsake their faith and join the Islamic faith. The Government even facilitates divorce between indigenous Christian couples, after which the woman is re-married to a Muslim." CAN finally sighs, "The list cannot be exhausted." Besides, "some incidents do not get to the CAN office for fear on the part of victims of more victimization. They don't want trouble."¹⁶⁴

Obed Minchakpu reports that the sharia is forced on women frequently so that the “religious liberty of Christians” is seriously restricted in sharia states. He tells of twenty-three women in sharia courts over dress and prostitution charges in Zamfara, Bauchi and Borno states.

On December 30, 2003, another fifteen women were arrested because of alleged prostitution. The University of Maiduguri ordered Christian women barred from taking exams if they did not adopt Islamic dress. Chinwendu Nnadozie recently reported that sharia police or *hisbah* are harassing women in Minna, a fact for which Niger state Commissioner for Information, Umaru Ragad, expressed regret and promised the government would call them to order.¹⁶⁵ The issue of forcing women to wear *hijab* to their offices was also becoming a problem in Kebbi state. As time went on, an increasing number of LGs in sharia states were trying to enforce this fashion. Women were encouraged to resist this trend everywhere.¹⁶⁶

CAN held a press conference on the issue in Yola and protested against the states that were now enforcing *hijab* on all school girls, whatever their religion and whatever their school, public or private, even Christian schools. Three days earlier, on September 1, 2003, the Kano state commissioner for Education, Ishaq Mahmoud, told a group of journalists that this measure was necessary to ensure that “the teachings of Islam are applied in each and every aspect of governance.” A few months later, Bello Kuceri, an official of the Zamfara state Islamic Unit, declared, “We shall continue the raids in the Christian quarters, because we are being paid to do so and anybody caught will face the wrath of the Law”—sharia law, that is. You just cannot stop asking what happened to the promise to Christians!

The dress code issue was not confined to the North. Minchakpu wrote, “While in the Southern part of the country Christians are more dominant population-wise, Muslim funda-

mentalists have invaded Christian and public schools to enforce the wearing of the Islamic veil.” It happened during February, 2003, in Yoruba land. The attack was on both teachers and students, with many “maimed, assaulted and seriously wounded.” The turmoil also affected discipline; insubordination and disrespect became the rule. It led to clashes serious enough that schools were closed for one month. The teachers’ union called on the FG “to resist attempts to transform our schools into centres of unhealthy religious propaganda.” Archbishop Job of Ibadan was concerned about “religious fundamentalism assuming a frightening dimension.” All religions, he insisted, should be free to practice without disturbing each other.¹⁶⁷ This Southern situation may not be because of an imposed sharia, but the timing of it indicates that it was influenced by the sharia climate in the country.

As to the prostitution charge, in some states Muslim girls are expected to marry by the age of thirteen; in Bauchi, above sixteen. Any girl not married by that time is considered a prostitute. Eight women in Missau, Bauchi state, were convicted for being single and, thus, prostitutes. Each received “a N300 fine along with ten lashes.” At another occasion, Babangida Mohammed of the Bauchi State Sharia Commission, told Minchakpu, “The government gave the directives, because it has to be seen to be enforcing sharia.” He added, “We would do everything possible within the limits of the legal powers vested in us to ensure that the sharia is fully implemented in this state. Sharia is our way of life and this must be enforced here. All those living in this state, including non-Muslims, must live their lives in accordance with sharia.” When Minchakpu asked why sharia is applied to Christians, Mohammed replied, “Because there is a general belief among Muslims that Christians support the consumption of alcohol and prostitution.” Roman Catholic Archbishop in the North and Chairman of Northern CAN warned that this situation could lead to “the incarceration of innocent Christian victims.” That, in turn, might lead to more conflicts.¹⁶⁸

The *Hisbah*, of whose general behaviour we will hear more further down, are especially instrumental in the harassment of women. Murtala Dangora, a Kano ECWA official, charges that “Christian women are daily assaulted by *Hisbah* on claims that they are not dressing in conformity with Islamic religion.” “Why should this be the case?” he asked. They also harass Christian women for riding on “motorbike taxis.” He continued, “This is so even when the government is aware that there are limited means of transportation.” The reporter continued, “Since Muslim women are in *purdah* [seclusion] and only Christian women are engaged in productive activities, they are the only ones stopped for riding on the motorbikes.” The reporter explained, “According to sharia, men and women are not allowed to travel together on public transport, though women are supposedly allowed to travel with their male relations.” However, according to Seth Saleh, an Anglican priest, the *hisbah* have prohibited Christian women from traveling even with their husbands in Zamfara state. He further explained that, “if you are a Christian in Gusau and you do not have a car, it is impossible for you to move about with your family. You cannot travel or move together with your wife in the same car. So your wife has to trek to wherever she is going.” A natural question to Rev. Saleh that I cannot suppress: Why should the *wife* do all the trekking?! Or did you fail to teach her how to drive?

Another pastor, James Obi of Channel of Blessings Church in Gusau and Secretary of Zamfara state CAN, commented that “*Hisbah* activities have been humiliating to the church in Zamfara. Cases of rape and assault of Christian women by *Hisbah* corps and Muslim fanatics are on the increase in the state.” Obi reported that a Christian lady had been attacked and pulled off a speeding motorcycle by some *Hisbah* members and ended up in the hospital. About the same time a female member of the Roman Catholic Church in Gusau, on her way home from church, “was attacked, stripped naked, raped and beaten into a coma.”¹⁶⁹

To alleviate these problems somewhat, Zamfara state CAN helped Christian drivers form the Association of Christian Motorcycle Operators (ACMO). They are clearly identified by their cross symbols and are known to carry females. This helped relieve the restriction and ensure a market for their service. Even Muslims are joining them, because their business is lucrative, according to Musa Gaiya. One was impounded by “sharia youths” for allegedly carrying alcohol. The case went to court and the offenders paid their fine. However, instead of releasing the taxi, the court held on to it, claiming “the Governor wanted it taken to the Government House.” It had been there for more than a month at the time this CAN report was written. Thus it is no wonder that Zamfara CAN also established its own Christian Complaints Commission.¹⁷⁰ Small chance that any such government body would go to bat for Christians.

In 2002, a “religious crisis engulfed” the Federal College of Education, Zaria, that led to death and property destruction. CAN pulled the name of the Provost, Aliyu Muhammed Shika, out of its files and recalled that twelve years earlier he had caused a “religious crisis in Queen Amina College, Kaduna, when he introduced the Islamic mode of dressing” for all students. In addition, he was the Deputy Provost of the Kafanchan College of Education at the time of the riots there in 1987.¹⁷¹ Thus, a relentless Islamizer who causes crises everywhere. The sharia “peace” of Kaduna could not prevent this latest crisis, not with such a person at the helm. So, CAN demanded his outright dismissal, without which, it predicted, “there would be no peace in the college.” The point here is that in this man’s agenda, the dress code was already a contentious issue a decade before the declaration of sharia. It all constitutes one extended line without interruption.¹⁷²

You may remember the issue of the eleven nurses sacked without pay at the Federal Medical Centre, Azare, Bauchi State, due to their refusal to replace the traditional Western nurses’ uniform with

an Islamic one that was to include a veil and trousers.¹⁷³ A Christian NGO, Macedonian Initiative, sought to help the situation by reconciliation. It quite naturally regarded this move as “a deliberate attempt to infringe on their fundamental human rights and religious freedom.” Ladi Thompson, leader of the NGO, warned, “It is nurses today, tomorrow it might be mechanics, doctors or lawyers.” A letter from the Fellowship of Christian Nurses (FCN) to Dr. S. Y. Sabo, Medical Director of the Centre, stated, “To forcefully implement the trousers uniform on all female nurses, regardless of their faith, appears to be a deliberate attempt to infringe on their fundamental human rights and religious freedom. The action of the Medical Centre is also an attempt to force the female Christian nurses to act contrary to the teaching of the Holy Bible as contained in Deuteronomy 22:5.”¹⁷⁴ Sabo allegedly responded that they had “to obey before complaining.” The case was taken to court, but Sabo failed to show up and so it had to be rescheduled. On March 24, 2004, the case was dismissed on basis of technicalities and lack of merit. The basic issue, according to some, is whether or not Bauchi is a Muslim state, a status Christians deny.

The Human Rights Watch Report indicated the regulation was surprising, since it is a federal institution. The FG eventually ordered Sabo to re-instate the nurses. He was dismissed upon his refusal. The nurses were re-instated in August 2004 and deployed back to their home states, but I have not heard about any back pay.¹⁷⁵

In Volume 6, we have already heard about the episode of Andrew Akume, a Christian lecturer at ABU, who asked a Muslim female student not to wear the *hijab*.¹⁷⁶ His objection was based on university policy, which sought to prevent students from hiding their personal identity. Though he was merely applying university policy, Muslim students threatened to kill him. After he went underground, various *fatwas* were issued on his head.¹⁷⁷ Such inci-

dents are the result of a heightened sense of Muslim identity, an outgrowth of the new sharia. Some Muslims are prepared to ignore all legitimate authority when it suits their fancy, even when these authorities may be Muslims. Wearing a *hijab* is more important than obeying official policy.

But Christians also realize that sharia can be oppressive to *Muslim* women. Nigeria's infamous adultery cases are only the better known examples,¹⁷⁸ but by no means the only ones. Gaiya reproduces a story told by Hawa Ibrahim, Amina Lawal's lawyer, of a fifteen-year old Zamfara rice-hawking girl, who was drugged, raped and became pregnant. "When her pregnancy started to show, she was charged with fornication—sex before marriage, which is punishable with 100 lashes. In court she told the story of the three men, who were then called to testify. But since they all denied her account, she was given a further sentence of 80 lashes for telling lies." In Maliki Muslim law, the one applied in Nigeria, pregnancy establishes a case of adultery on the part of the woman. However, "even if she points out the man responsible, all he needs to do is deny and he is free." DNA evidence is not accepted.¹⁷⁹

Bulus Wakili reported additional developments in Bauchi State. He is aware that his story will seem like a "fairytale" that is almost impossible in our modern age. The story involves "more than 50 Christian children and women." "The State Government, through the State Sharia Commission, has allegedly embarked on strategies aimed at not only frustrating the Christian minority, but making their lives unbearable." A syndicate is abducting "women and children who are eventually converted to Islam." As some victims tell the story, "children are lured by wealthy imams and taken to various locations." They are eventually married to men in distant villages, so no one will recognize them. Along the way, they are forced to convert to Islam. It happens in various LGAs and often involves secondary school girls. When parents complain, they are often referred to sharia courts that are not supposed to judge

Christians. Besides, they do not believe they will get a fair hearing there. The case of Gloria Simon of Unguwan Kuka was referred to the Emir of Dass, who allegedly told the parents “to forget the abducted girl and steer clear of her, since she is now a Muslim. The girl does not have to consult the father for anything she wants to do.” That was how the case ended. Some of the reports are confirmed by human rights groups.

Then there is the story of Rejoice Daniel Chirdap, another secondary school student. Through a process of trickery she was lured to the house of one Alhaji Sabo Adamu Gadau in Bauchi city. The middle part of the story as told by Wakili is reproduced in Appendix 20. After the entire ordeal was over, Rejoice’s mother, Anna Chirdap, said, “I will never allow my male child to establish friendship with a Muslim, talk more of allowing any of my female children to do so.”

When Wakili contacted Bala Ahmed, the Sharia Commission’s Information Officer, he denied that the Commission is involved in abducting children or converting them. “Converting to Islam is never forcefully done and we only entertain cases of people who on their own decided to convert.” “Our governor is a man who wants peace and justice. It will be unfair to say that the commission is against Christians. Ours is just to implement the issues of sharia in the state and nothing more.”¹⁸⁰

4. ALCOHOL AND BUSINESS

Among Christians alcohol has long been a bone of contention. I am not aware that Christian leaders or churches have officially objected to sharia restrictions on alcohol, but Christian business people and others have warned that the sharia ruling affects alcohol-related businesses and angers their owners, some of whom consider themselves Christian. In Volume 6 I reported two stories about lorries transporting alcohol in Zamfara and Kano States that were attacked and destroyed. In Kano a private group of Muslims

destroyed a consignment of alcohol worth almost \$10,000.¹⁸¹ It was meant for a hotel in *Sabon Gari*, where most people are Christians. The manager said this had never happened to him before and he “was angry because he had been told that sharia would not affect non-Muslims.” Besides, he said, “The government has never categorically stated that the sale of alcohol is prohibited in this area.” Ado Gwaram, the Kano State Secretary, said that the official *Hisbah* would not have handled the incident in this “unfortunate” way. Other incidents told in Volume 6 would cast doubt on that statement.¹⁸²

Zamfara State CAN tells the story of a motorcycle-taxi driver, a member of ACMO, who carried a female passenger along with her beer. Both were fined and paid their fine, but the beer was thrown out. This, reports CAN, is one of several cases of Christians taken to Sharia Court for alcohol offences, some cases involving a fortune of the commodity. In April, 2001, Governor Sani ordered his *Hisbah* youths to burn two lorries allegedly carrying beer. However, they were on Federal roads and thus Federal territory that is not supposed to be covered by the new sharia. Furthermore, the one carried empty beer cartons; the other, soft and malt drinks.

The business climate in Zamfara has, according to CAN, deteriorated. The economic drive of the people has been frustrated and the atmosphere is no longer conducive. Due to the violence associated with sharia, people can no longer trust the security of their businesses. And where there is no security, people cannot invest. This also makes for a poverty-stricken church.¹⁸³

We have already overheard Dodo strongly describing the Muslim promise about sharia affecting only Muslims as deceit. Christian dealers in alcoholic drinks will definitely have their license revoked under the full sharia. This amounts to chasing them out of sharia country, an act traditionally considered terrible by Nigerians, especially since they have the constitutional right to

live anywhere in the country. Though a merchant may not officially be told to leave, in effect he becomes the victim as per the very popular Hausa proverb, “*Kora da hali ya fi kora da baki.*” This means it is better to openly tell someone to leave than to make things so miserable for him that he leaves on his own. Such behaviour leads to violating the Constitution “with reckless abandon” and renders it useless.¹⁸⁴

Such incidents proved the reservations of the legal profession legitimate. Thompson Okpoko, President of the NBA, stated that his Association was “still looking into the bills passed by Zamfara, but he elucidated on the imminent constitutional crisis that may arise from the sharia declaration. If the law forces a legitimate businessman to close his beer parlour, then you are infringing on the rights of the businessman because of your own rights. The way of life of the Muslim (the sharia), he pointedly said, must not infringe on the rights of others.”¹⁸⁵

Other business people also expressed early concern. An Ibo spare parts seller, Okechuckwu, reported that the Ibos had met with Governor Sani and received assurance about their security. But Oyewole Bankoli, a Yoruba taxi driver in Gusau, warned of the danger of the sharia situation turning “into sectarian bloodletting and even economic rust for Zamfara. We have peace and order in Gusau now, but we are afraid that when the government starts enforcing the sharia law strictly by January 2000, we may be in for serious trouble.” This fear, according to Director, was intensified by the training of the ‘*Yan Agaji*. The warning about the economy was not far fetched, seeing that, apart from agriculture, the “economic mainstay of the state is in the hands of non-indigenes, who are Christians. From the artisans to the mechanics and even the medical doctors, the engine room of the state is oiled and peopled by non-indigenes, many of whom are likely to flee when the sharia becomes strictly operational.”¹⁸⁶ Rumours of “most banks to relocate outside the state” had a basis in the fact that sharia forbids

charging interest. Such a development “will spell doom for the economy,” according to a banker.

5. EVANGELISM, CONVERSION, APOSTASY, PERSECUTION

Muslims have traditionally sought to prevent Christians from targeting Muslims for evangelism, though they insist on *their right* to target Christians! Nothing new under the sun. The prohibition continues and will be enforced wherever the new sharia is enshrined. From the point of view of the UN, the freedom to evangelise is a basic component of religious freedom, as is the freedom to convert to another religion, *from* as well as *to* Islam. Byang warns that under sharia this freedom “will be defined and allowed in terms of only what is not threatening to Islam. Evangelism will be highly restricted, if permitted at all. It will be illegal for a Muslim to become a Christian. And the state will permit the murder of a convert by members of his own family. In some countries it is known as ‘honour killing!’” This means that “religious repression will definitely be a major and permanent feature of the supreme sharia.” How can all this be possible in a “religiously plural society?” Such repression has been going on for long already under the old sharia. “Then how will it be when the supreme sharia is fully entrenched?”¹⁸⁷

Dodo takes us back to the take-over of Christian schools during the 1970s. This was a Muslim “ploy to stop the work of evangelisation,” he charged. The adoption of the new sharia is simply another “potent weapon of keeping Christianity completely out of the predominantly Muslim areas of the North.” It is designed to undermine the Constitution which gives every person “freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion and freedom to manifest and propagate his religion.” The sharia states “will become a ‘no-go area’ for the Christian Church. This is another major area in which sharia will adversely affect Christians.” The process has already started in Zamfara.¹⁸⁸

Not only is Christian evangelism prohibited under sharia, while Muslims are encouraged to practise it, Muslims who convert to Christianity are declared apostate and lose all human rights, while Christians joining Islam are embraced. In other words, conversion is out, unthinkable and not allowed, in spite of the constant repetition by Muslims that there can be no compulsion in religion. Gwamna states, “It is assumed that Islam is a faith which no Muslim would ever conceivably wish to forsake.” No compulsion is needed, for it is an unthinkable and impossible move. People would only take the move under some form of compulsion or enticement. But Gwamna argues, “Consequently, the option to do so does not [really] exist. Islam is a faith which no adherent is free to leave and that which one is not free to leave has become a prison.” To “be true to the Qur’an, [Muslims] should allow non-Muslims particularly the right to free choice of religion in a state where neither can claim superiority.” “The contrary could be accepted only after a ‘truly Islamic state’ is attained as is being canvassed by Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky. Until then, sharia will remain contentious in Nigeria.”¹⁸⁹

Apostasy, of course, leads to death wherever this can be arranged. Short of that, it leads to serious persecution, shunning, disinheritance, loss of family, job and property. Remember the comment of Governor Sani that there is no need for codifying apostasy law, since the relatives and “friends” of an apostate will take care of him/her? And this is not only true in hard-core Muslim countries, but it is even openly advocated in secular countries like Canada, where Mohammad Asrar Madani published a book on the subject under the title *Verdict of Islamic Law on Blasphemy and Apostasy*.¹⁹⁰

Nigerian Christians are only too aware of this abrasive and extreme Muslim one-sidedness. Note the term “extreme,” not “extremist.” This feature is not restricted to extremist Muslims; it represents the “extreme-ism” of mainstream Muslims. It is a

major reason for Christian opposition to sharia. I personally know a number of ex-Muslims who have suffered severely at the hands of their families and others. Though there are those who get killed, more get severely persecuted just short of death. Under the heading “Killing Infidels,” Minchakpu relates the story of a Muslim convert:

Sharia as a weapon has been particularly sharp on Kabiru Lawal, a former Muslim who four months ago received Christ. The Hisbah Commission, Zamfara state’s agency for the enforcement of the sharia, is gunning for his life.

In late December and early January, agents of Hisbah invaded the Lawal family’s house three times looking for the twenty-nine-year-old man. Agents told family members that whenever Lawal is found, he should be prepared to pay the supreme price of abandoning Islam—death. Each time the Hisbah arrived, Lawal was at the Federal Medical Centre in Gusau town due to illness. He is now in hiding, no longer free to walk the streets of Gusau. His father, Mallam Lawal, comes from a family of Islamic clerics.

In 2002, Lawal read in the Quran about the second coming of Jesus into the world. Lawal, who holds a diploma in business administration, said his decision to investigate the life of Christ was informed by his desire to know whether “Jesus was coming as a Muslim or a Christian.”¹⁹¹

The stories can get quite complicated. You can find many of them at www.compassdirect.org and www.barnabasfund.org. I “treat” you to the story of Pastor Zacheous Habu Bu Ngwenche, himself a convert from Islam, and others who followed his example:

The thirty-one-year-old pastor of Foursquare Gospel Church in Akwanga, in central Nigeria’s Nasarawa state, was arrested

twice in September for harboring a Muslim who converted to Christianity. After the second arrest, he spent seven days in a cell in Lafia, the state capital.

One of Ngwenche's disciples, Adamu Bello, had gone to Bauchi state, in Northern Nigeria, where sharia has been imposed, to proclaim Christ among Muslims. In the village of Bura, in Ningi Local Government Area, Bello preached to Bature Suleimanu Idi, a Muslim who in January gave his life to Christ. Sensing that Idi's life was in danger because of his decision to become a Christian, Bello sent him to Akwanga to take refuge with Ngwenche. In August, Shiite Muslims in Akwanga discovered that Idi had converted to Christianity; they abducted him on September 10.

"Idi was abducted in front of my house and taken to a mosque belonging to the Shiite Islamic sect on Wamba road in Akwanga town," Ngwenche said. "I went and met the leaders of the Muslim community in this town to protest the abduction. But they claimed that I was holding Idi against his will and was teaching him Christianity without the consent of his relations."

The Muslim leaders reported the matter to the police, who arrested Ngwenche. Questioning both him and Idi, Ngwenche said, police discovered that Idi had decided to become a Christian without outside pressure. But police said that the case was "very sensitive in view of the volatile nature of religious issues in Nigeria" and took Ngwenche and Idi to police headquarters in Lafia. In the criminal investigation department, the assistant police commissioner questioning them found only confirmation of what Akwanga police had discovered—that Idi's conversion was voluntary and uncoerced. Police released them but instructed Ngwenche to arrange for Idi to be taken back to his hometown of Ningi. But Idi told police that he would not go back to his village, as

his family would kill him for renouncing Islam.

After Ngwenche and Idi returned to Akwanga, on September 12, the Muslim militants again abducted Idi. Ngwenche again reported his abduction at the Akwanga police station that same day. The police asked him to go home but report back the following day if Idi did not return. "I returned the following day to the police station when Idi did not return home," Ngwenche said. "I was arrested by the police and detained."

Police again took him to Lafia, where they held him in detention for seven days, he said. Ngwenche's church helped him to win bail. "I have now been told to produce the Muslim convert, even when the police know that it is the Muslims that abducted Idi," Ngwenche said. "My fear is that he will be killed. We have raised teams of searchers to help rescue Idi." Police have told Ngwenche that if he does not produce Idi before the end of the year—in the next two weeks—he runs the risk of going back into detention.

Though not a clear majority, Muslims have large populations in Nasarawa state. Some officials in the state have campaigned for sharia to be imposed, as in twelve northern states, but so far without success.

Ngwenche, also a former Muslim, became a Christian as a young adult and soon thereafter heeded the missionary call. After graduating from the Foursquare Gospel Church missions school, he decided his first mission field would be his family; his Muslim parents were the first to convert. "My family members became the first members of the church I planted in my village," he said.

In April of 1997, he planted the Nassarawa state's first Foursquare Gospel Church in Aban village, which today has about 100 members. He also planted a church in Agyaga with 60 members; in Ningo village, 20 members; and in Goho vil-

lage, 25 members. Other villages where his church plants are budding are Ninga, Anjida, Andaha and Buku. On the whole, Ngwenche has planted 18 churches in eight years with a total of about 300 members. While developing 26 pastors as well as missionaries working in 22 areas, Ngwenche has seen opposition rear its ugly head.

“In 1989, I planted two churches in the villages of Nunku and Nunku Chu,” he said. “These villages were Muslim villages. I was frustrated there; I was beaten up by the Muslims, our church was attacked and all we had was destroyed.” The 15 members of the church in Nunku, including 14 converts from Islam, scattered. Likewise, the 25 members of the church in Nunku Chu dispersed; 15 of those members had been Muslim. The two churches existed for just one year.

Because of the opposition he faced in those two villages, Ngwenche moved to Akwanga to plant the church he’s now leading. Of its 34 members, three are converts from Islam.¹⁹²

These events took place in the non-sharia Nasarawa state. Sharia or no sharia seems to make little difference. We can see why Governor Sani said he does not need to codify apostasy law. The dynamics are there even without sharia.

In spite of such stories, many Muslims continue to turn to Christ. I know quite a few of them personally. They are found everywhere.

According to Matthew Kukah, someone asked a question about the apostasy issue to Muslims at a National Seminar on Sharia in February, 2000. No one supplied the answer. Then Kukah himself raised the question on Radio Nigeria and now Dodo raises it as well. The question is who gets killed: a Christian or a Muslim? Though Muslims seem to find it difficult to answer the question, it is in reality quite simple. It is the Christian who gets killed or persecuted under sharia. One Shaibu Haruna reports

a similar experience. He was part of the family when living a life of crime and wickedness, but was disowned after his conversion and becoming a law-abiding citizen!¹⁹³ This is a common situation. I remember a “useless” drug addict and thief in Jos who was not kicked out of his family till he became a Christian and tried to straighten out his life! When he died, they did not care what happened to his corpse and it was left to strangers to bury him. For them, he had died long before. What is with this Muslim promise that sharia affects only Muslims? CAN of Zamfara commented, “The Governor believes that his powers as the state’s chief executive permit him to do anything that will further the cause of his religion. This is done with little or no regard for the protection of the people’s human rights.”¹⁹⁴

In spite of all the above, Human Rights Watch reported finding no evidence of “coercion or harassment of a religious nature. Non-Muslims are largely free to drink alcohol, though mostly in designated types of places, not just everywhere. Non-Muslim women can wear their own style of clothing—with some exceptions.” Neither has it found that conversion leads to execution. In short, Christians “have tended to exaggerate the impact of sharia on non-Muslims.” Well, we remember the Governor’s comments on this one! Execution privatized! Extra-judicial “justice.” But often with the involvement of state-appointed *‘yan agaji* and even of the federal NPF.

Human Rights Watch did find that there was a lot of intimidation, much of it by the people, rather than the government, though the latter cannot be declared innocent by any means. Those affected are Muslims as often as Christians. Critics of government or sharia were often “publicly discredited and ridiculed.” Sometimes their death was demanded. The report mentions a number of prominent Muslims: Shehu Sani, director of the Civil Rights Congress; Ibrahim Zakzaky of Shi’ite fame and Hussaini Umar. A lot of “self-censorship” is taking place among the people

out of fear they will be considered non-Muslim.¹⁹⁵ Gaiya has found that “many moderate Muslims are not comfortable with the way the sharia is being implemented, although most are silent for fear of sanctions by the state governments and the radical Islamists.” Nevertheless, the Muslims he met and interviewed were co-operative and “proud of their achievement now that the sharia was fully implemented.”¹⁹⁶

But Musa Gaiya wants us to think a second time. He wants us to understand the Muslim view of human rights and religious freedom as a background to what seems to most of us a most unreasonable attitude towards conversion from Islam. He quotes the following from *The World of Islam*:¹⁹⁷

The rights of the individual come second to the greater good of the Ummah....Islamic thinking is far more concerned with the group, the family, community and society. Humans exist within an established social structure and it is difficult for a traditional Muslim to mentally pluck an individual out of that structure and ascribe rights to him or her which might conflict with those of the community to which they belong.

Remember what Gaiya said earlier about secularism, individualism, the nature of religion and related issues. This is part of the same perspective. Understanding the communal nature of Islam and its rejection of the secular perspective on human rights, we can perhaps better understand Islam’s resistance to individuals bowing out or to allowing the virus of another religion to attack the entire community and thus undermine its very foundations.¹⁹⁸ It is very similar to the dominant perspective of the Old Testament. Understanding is helpful, but it is not synonymous with agreeing or accepting.

6. JUST PLAIN VIOLENCE

And then there is the category that can only be described as

“plain violence.” Raw, brutal violence that is nothing short of barbarism. Minchakpu tells the story of the family of Oladapo and Atinuke Afolabi in Gusau. They had lived at the same address on Katsina Road for ten years. On October 20, 2002, a group of Muslims along with some members of the Nigerian Police Force came to their house. The police beat members of the family, while the civilians burnt the house and all their belongings. A Muslim mob had gathered and they began to shout, “Kill the infidels. Kill the infidels!” The family ran away for shelter. When they arrived, they found Atinuke, the wife, missing. Ten months later she has still not been located. This, according to Minchakpu, was all “in a bid to enforce the sharia.”¹⁹⁹

Peter Akinola, National President of CAN and the Anglican Primate of Nigeria, “lamented the dastardly acts of violence against Christians in the country.” He rhetorically asked, “How can anyone explain the reason for invading a church, where women, children and men were worshipping, asking them to surrender and lie face down and then proceed to machete and axe them to death in their house of worship?” He darkly hinted at the possibility of turning the country into a battlefield.²⁰⁰

7. MARGINALIZATION

Like many of the other complaints, that of marginalization is not a new one either. In September, 2003, CAN held a meeting in Yola with that subject as major agenda. The FG was called on “to put a halt to the marginalization and religious persecution of Christians” in the North. CAN published an 11-point communiqué on all the subjects we already know: sharia forced on Christians; Christian students forced to wear *hijab*; lack of CRK teaching; denial of admission into university departments of law and medicine; exclusion of Northern Christians from FG positions; Muslims representing Christians from Christian-majority states in the Federal Cabinet, even though Christians are excluded

from positions in Muslim state governments. Muslims, Christians acknowledge, have similar complaints, but theirs are not valid. Minchakpu reported, “In the last week of July, 2003, leaders of the Muslim community in Nigeria had claimed that Muslims were being marginalized in the country. Christian leaders from northern Nigeria countered back by saying the claim of the Muslim leaders was false, and that it is rather Christians who are being discriminated against in the country.”²⁰¹

Minchakpu continued, “In view of the glaring evidence of discrimination against Christians,” Northern Christian leaders are demanding that the FG “convene a national sovereign conference to decide whether the country should remain as a single political entity.”²⁰² Things were getting serious. A conference was held in 2005. But the National Conference did not place sharia and related issues on the table. A letter from CAN complaining about all the sharia problems did not evoke any significant response.²⁰³ Were people afraid to touch a hot potato? Were things simmering down or even fizzling out as had been predicted? Possibly a bit of both.

8. CORE NORTH INDIGENOUS CHRISTIANS: HAUSA-FULANI AND KANURI

There is a special category of Christians whose very existence is often denied and whose status under sharia therefore needs some attention. I am referring to Christians of Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri stock, the Kanuri being the dominating ethnic group in Borno State. Some of these converts come out of Muslim families. Three of the “fathers” in this series belong to that group—the late Ishaya Audu, the late Haruna Dandaura and Christopher Abashiya, all of them men of prominence and great honour. Then there is our sister Mary Anfani Joe, the one who proposed splitting up the core North between indigenous Christians and indigenous Muslims. Others are villagers who used to be adherents of ATR and never became Muslims. They are known as *Maguzawa*.²⁰⁴

Their numbers are surprisingly high, not to say staggering. Mary Joe puts the figure at “well over 9 million”! Referring to the figure of 9.8 million he found in *TC*, Dandaura insisted that “we are much more,” for that figure does not include the Christian Hausa-Fulani living in Kaduna, Katsina, Gongola and Bauchi States.²⁰⁵

In spite of these high numbers, remember that Governor Sani denied their existence? This has been a problem of long standing. We have already met Daniel Gowon, brother to Yakubu Gowon, a former Military Head of State, in Volumes 1 and 3. In his capacity as Chief of Wusasa, he wrote a submission to the Kaduna State Commission of Enquiry about the 1987 disturbances in Kaduna State. Part of the document constitutes Appendix 2 in Volume 1. In his report he complained that certain extremist Muslim groups did not tolerate Christian presence in the “Muslim North;” they were “denying the history of the people. The fact is that Hausa-Fulanis became Christians and have a community of their own. By all standards they have equal rights for living in this area.” The notion that “the Hausa people are all Muslim is often confronted with the reality of communities like ours. It seems that we now pose a problem for the concept of the one solid Muslim North.”²⁰⁶

Joe confirmed that “there has been the misconception that there are no Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri Christians in the North.” This misconception is a serious matter, she explained, for “it has been used politically to the detriment of the Body of Christ throughout the country.” Joe tells how some of these Christians applied for a series of federal job openings in a Muslim-dominated area of Kaduna state. An LG chairman through whom some of the applications were sent said, “He has no Joshua, no Elijah and no Samuel in his LGA.” So he refused to sign any of those forms. Joe reports on other cases of discrimination against her people that we cannot go into. We have enough on that subject in Volume 3. Nevertheless, these folk are known to have great “tenacity and determination to

assert their presence in spite of attempts to deny their existence.”²⁰⁷

CAN rejects the assertion by the Zamfara Government that “99 percent of the state is Muslim” as “false and sweeping, but also as unscientific speculation. The truth is that, in addition to the rapidly growing population of non-indigene Christians from the various parts of the country and the world, there are also non-Muslim indigenes, who are grossly marginalized and dehumanized on account of their Christian religious inclinations.”²⁰⁸

One incident is too interesting to ignore. Joe’s Christian organization wanted to play some traditional Hausa music during radio time they had purchased on Federal Radio Kaduna. The music was refused, for airing it would constitute a public admission that there are Christians among the Hausa. The officer in charge of their programming warned them not to insert anything typically Hausa in their offerings. Strong denial of an alleged nine million people plus!

The same denial is practiced in the villages, where there are many Hausa churches. Village heads tell them they must remove their signboards so as to make them invisible. Some interviewers asked Joe about rumours that churches are either destroyed or converted into mosques. Joe answered, “Governor Sani did it in Dashi.” “Eye witnesses said he was there personally. What was he doing there at 11:00 pm? You know, he forced the door open. The witnesses are there and shamelessly he is coming to deny it. He pulled it down and then they prayed that henceforth this place is an Islamic center. This man has a serious agenda and he is not alone.” This situation is a far cry from the claims and the promises of Governor Sani and his sharia pals. I personally visited some of these village churches with Professor Ishaya Audu as my host. They are there; they cannot be denied. Mary Joe warns that this is all part and parcel of the Muslim sharia project. She has “a document on the implications of sharia. It is a gradual process of Islamization. This has been planned several years back.”²⁰⁹

Dandaura was also concerned about these Christians, espe-

cially because, in addition to having their very existence denied, they are disinherited under sharia, since they are “apostates.” For this reason he, Ishaya Audu and a few others founded *Jam’iyar Masihiyawa a Nijeriya* [Association of Followers of the Messiah in Nigeria] to protect their interests and affirm their presence. Mary Joe and Ishaya Audu also worked together under the banner of TAMANI, the acronym for *Tarayyar Masihiyawa a Nijeriya* [Fellowship of Followers of the Messiah in Nigeria]. I am not sure about the difference and the relationship between these two organizations. As to TAMANI, Joe explains that its purposes include evangelism of core North indigenes by their fellow indigenes and spreading information about these core Northern Christians so that their existence and their numbers are recognized.²¹⁰

At the beginning of the new sharia days, J. A. Sani and G. T. Maidabo, chairman and secretary respectively of the Zamfara branch of TAMANI, wrote a letter to Governor Sani in reaction to his alleged statement that his state had only two indigenous village families that were Christian. The two men wrote: “We wish to bring to your notice the many factors that have been militating against the attainment and or enjoyment of our minimal rights. (a) Deliberate and conscious actual denial of our existence and/or actual refusal to acknowledge our existence and presence in the state and its agencies. (b) Misrepresentation to the public as to our existence, numbers [and] spread throughout the state.”²¹¹

Because of all this, Joe declared, “We want the core North to be split. We want a demarcation for the Hausa/Fulani Christians and the Hausa/Fulani Muslims, so that we will now have our own media, schools....”²¹²

In the meantime, ostrich politics of denial will not help anyone. The much-vaunted tolerance embedded in sharia demands that these people be acknowledged and given their rightful place. Professor Baikie, wrote Gaiya, hit the nail on the head with the following:

*The problem with us here in the North is our persistent and adamant refusal to accept that there are Hausa/Fulani who are Christian; there are people from Katsina and Zaria who are Christians. But nobody reckons with them. They see Christians in the North as only Igbo, Yoruba, Southern Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, etc. But believe me, sir: the strength of the North will be doubled in terms of intellectual, professional manpower, if we harness the resources of both Muslims and Christians in the North. It is a formidable group.*²¹³

It is unfortunate that there is friction between these groups and CAN. I had heard whispers to this effect a number of times from *Masihiyawa* leaders, but Mary Joe brought it out into the open. “We realize,” she said, “that officials of CAN are not particularly keen” about our group. The reason for their hostility is that their general experience with the Hausa-Fulani has been very negative. They transfer the resulting animosity and mistrust to the Hausa Christians.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, she emphasized that they cooperate with CAN and fully inform them of all they do.²¹⁵ At a meeting of CAN, Northern States and Abuja, held on June 20, 2001, there was indeed an indication of not just friction but of working at cross purposes. According to reports received by CAN, the *Masihiyawa* group was backing Governor Sani in his efforts to force all women to wear Muslim dress, claiming that *Masihiyawa* women traditionally wear such clothing. Such backing was making the opposition of CAN to this measure more difficult to maintain. Though Gaiya does not emphasize disharmony between them, he does point to their differing goals²¹⁶ that could lead to friction. Probably the impasse between Dandaura and CAN about dialogue has its roots in this friction as well. Another indication of a different focus on the part of Christian Maguzawa is the BBC statement by Maikudi Kure to which I have referred earlier.²¹⁷

In order to help make these Northern Christians more visible,

I attach three articles on the subject as Appendices 4, 5 and 6.²¹⁸ One hails from the BZ era; the other two, from AZ. Between them they indicate that the tolerance promised by sharia proponents has not yet reached indigenous Christians from the core North. From 1994 to 2006, nothing has changed. They are still waiting—and struggling.

The following is a report of conversions to Christianity and persecution among the Fulani Christians. It clearly exemplifies the viciousness with which these Christians are regarded and treated.

The latest attack on the Rt. Rev. Ali Buba Lamido, 47, Anglican bishop of Wusasa diocese in Kaduna state, began as the past year's previous three did: Armed men, whom he believes were Muslim militants, asked a guard at his home where he was, announcing they were going to kill him. Not concerned about stealth in heavily Islamic Kaduna state, the attackers fired into the air, then struck the bishop's workers in the courtyard. This time, last March 10, one of his guard's guests, Samaila Gandu, was shot dead. Guard James Daso and another worker, Bulus Moses, were seriously injured.

This scenario matches other instances in which Muslim militants have assaulted Christian clergy, Lamido said. "It is difficult to believe that it was not religiously motivated, because some bishops have been attacked and one priest was murdered in a similar way," he said. "And the killers never stole any thing from their houses."

Likewise, Lamido told Compass at his Wusasa office, the four attacks on his house since April 2005 have involved no attempted robbery. "In my own case, I am the only Fulani Christian leader in the country,²¹⁹ and I assume this has provoked many Muslim leaders," he said. "In the whole Wusasa village, it is only my house that has been attacked each time and not any other."

Based near the city of Zaria, Lamido presides over the Wusasa diocese of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), where 98 percent of his denomination's church members come from Northern Nigeria's indigenous Hausa community. Christians are in the minority among the ethnic Hausa and Fulani, both mainly Muslim, of northern Nigeria. Lamido has been among the few outspoken Christian leaders in northern Nigeria persistently decrying persecution of Christians. The invasions of his home, many believe, are connected with his outspoken stance. The bishop said he knew the attackers definitely intended to gun him down, as "they had told the guards this." The alleged militants "interviewed them on where I was," he said. Lamido told Compass that police have not made any arrests in connection with the attacks.

As the only Fulani tribesman from an Islamic background who is a bishop in the global Anglican Communion, Lamido presides over a diocese that has 160 congregations with an estimated 60,000 members, 60 priests and 30 lay evangelists. His father was a Muslim cleric, and his Muslim mother "still teaches the Quran to Muslims," he said.

Born into the Fulani Lamido dynasty of Adamawa state in Northern Nigeria, Lamido at age 5 was taken away from his parents by his aunt, Mary Musa. Her husband was a Muslim chaplain with the Nigerian army before both became Christians. Persecution forced the Musas to leave their Kano military base and move to Vom village, a Christian missions hub in central Nigeria's Plateau state.

Lamido, who had been a Quranic student while staying with his aunt, was exposed to the gospel and eventually received Jesus Christ at age 15, with his aunt leading him in prayer. The bishop received his theological education at the Christian Institute in Jos, the Jos ECWA Theological Seminary, the

University of Jos, and the Episcopal School for Ministry in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Working as a Christian minister in an Islamic dominated part of northern Nigeria, Lamido said, has been difficult in terms of personal relationship, societal acceptance and gospel proclamation. He has witnessed massive destruction of churches and killing of Christians in Kaduna state in the past seven years. "Two of our churches in Gindandau and Galadimawa, in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area, were burnt, and the one in Gindandau is yet to be rebuilt," Lamido said. "That was the only church in Gindandau." The Anglican church in Makarfi town, the hometown of the Kaduna state Gov. Ahmad Muhammad Makarfi, was also burned down. All of these churches, he said, were destroyed by Muslim militants in the 2001 riots in Kaduna state. His home church, he said, had five of her members killed in the city of Kaduna, while a teacher in the church's school was also killed in Zaria city.

Besides denying land for building churches, another problem facing the state's Christian communities is the denial of social services like water, schools, clinics, and roads to them by Muslim council officials. "In the past 19 years, water supply to Wusasa has been blocked by the Kaduna state Water Board," Lamido said. "In fact, this is my ninth year in Wusasa and I have not seen a drop of water to drink. Yet, there is constant water being supplied to Muslim areas of Zaria City." Lamido and other Christians in Wusasa get water from wells and boreholes dug by churches in Wusasa, he said, "as pipe-born water has been blocked since 1987, after religious crisis of that year in Kaduna state."

In spite of the opposition of Muslim leaders to Christian evangelization efforts in Zaria and beyond, there are Muslims who desire to embrace the Christian faith, Lamido said. "Despite

the difficulties,” he said, “there is mass acceptance of the gospel and embrace of Jesus as Lord and Saviour by people, even among Muslims.”

Lamido says Islam’s resistance to the gospel in northern Nigeria is more of a political problem than rejection of Christianity by the common Muslims as according to him, “there are Muslims who want to become Christians but they fear persecution from their leaders.” Some of about 100 Muslim converts at his church in Wusasa, he said, have been brought in by Anglican churches in Zamfara, Katsina and other states where persecution is grave. His church is caring for them and teaching them the Bible, and some of them have been enrolled in schools. “We have 100 Muslim converts here; 10 of them were brought in here from Zamfara and Katsina,” Lamido said. “We have integrated them into the church and enrolled some of them in our primary schools, since most of them did not have the privilege of receiving western education. We are concerned about their safety, as some of them were dispossessed of their property when they became Christians.” The largest problem confronting the church, he said, is how to protect these converts from dangers from Muslim militants. “In spite of the difficulties, there are Muslims who are prepared to receive Christ,” he said. “The problem is where to keep them, because of the nature of intense persecution in this part of the country.”

The Church Missionary Society (CMS) of the Church of England began missions work in Wusasa village in 1900. Missionaries focused on the Muslim-influenced Hausa ethnic group. The Hausas who embraced Christianity and rejected Islam were then referred to as the Maguzawas, a name in Hausa language depicting them as those who ran away from Islam.

Based on the work of these missionaries in Wusasa, Lamido said, the first medical doctor, pharmacist, female ambassador, and a host of other first-time positions in northern Nigeria originated in the Wusasa church. Early Nigerian missionaries who continued with the evangelization after the exit of the CMS missionaries, Lamido says, include Malam Zakaria Dimka and Malam Kwashi, father of the present Anglican Bishop of Jos, Benjamin Kwashi.²²⁰

With all of the above facts and stories, Onaiyekan is correct in rejecting the Muslim claim that “Christians have adequate protection” under sharia. “It is Christians who should say whether they have adequate protection under sharia. It is they who wear the shoes and who know where it pinches. I know many Christians who live in Islamic states and I can tell you that they are by no means happy with the so-called ‘protection’ that they are supposed to be enjoying.”²²¹

▲ MISCELLANEOUS DEVELOPMENTS IN SELECTED STATES

Earlier on we have heard Christian complaints, worries and fears about the sharia during the CA years. In this section I want to give a brief report on miscellaneous Christian experiences and situations in four major sharia states.

1. ZAMFARA STATE

Zamfara is, of course, the mother of all sharia states. As far as Christians are concerned, nothing improved during the seven years since the Zamfara Declaration when it comes to the treatment of Christians. Where there was movement, it was always in the wrong direction, from bad to worse. The peace and tolerance of which sharia advocates make so much noise, has not been recognized by

Christians. Sani's sharia regime brought no relief. Minchakpu wrote:

Apart from denial of lands to churches in Zamfara state, Christians have encountered difficulties in other sectors, such as education, where discriminatory school fees have been forced on Christian students, and there is no teaching of CRK. There is no employment for Christians in the public service, and a ban has been placed on Christian radio and television programs. The imposition of sharia in criminal matters in 12 northern states has resulted in numerous conflicts bringing death to thousands of persons, most of them Christians.

*“If there is anything anybody can do to hurt me, it is for such a person to stop me from serving God the way I want and to stop me from sharing my faith,” Bishop Danbinta said. “This is precisely what we as Christians are experiencing in Zamfara state.”*²²²

Moses Ogbodo of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria reported that all these developments “triggered a mass exodus of Christians from the state” and that “almost all churches in the state are empty.” It is not clear whether he was talking about his own or all denominations. Christians suffered from general harassment all across the board.²²³

Nevertheless, Gaiya describes Zamfara as one of “the most peaceful among the sharia states.” He credits this situation to the “open door policy” of Governor Sani. “He has held meetings with CAN officials in his house, and his office is always open for CAN leaders,” according to Gaiya's sources, Father Linus, the CAN chairman for the state and one Mary B. Awuhe. At times CAN leaders ate in the Governor's house.²²⁴ Gaiya's irenic personality may well have coloured these remarks. At any rate, they do not fully square with the reports from local Christians. The meetings

and dinners have probably taken place, but the relatively peaceful atmosphere is another question. Of course, one question you could raise is how political CAN is in its pronouncements and complaints. The fact that she finds it hard to wholeheartedly support core North indigenous Christians, the most vulnerable of all Christian groups, makes me wonder.

CAN itself agreed that on the surface there was a deceptively quiet atmosphere. Things were not openly chaotic.

Anyone coming into Zamfara may not even know that there is sharia or that Christians are suffering in any way. This is because Christians are trying to create an atmosphere of peace by putting into place those basic infrastructures that make life easy. We have formed an association for Christian motorcycle operators and mandated them to carry women. Any visitor who sees women on motorbikes may think that there is no sharia. We have also provided a few taxis.

They even created their own Christian Complaints Commission!²²⁵ Could Human Rights Watch have been fooled by this veneer of peace? Gaiya is too sharp to be deceived by veneer.

2. KANO STATE

As to Kano, Amina Ibrahim commented, “The dilemma for Kano’s government is to continue to accommodate the interests of some five percent Christians, whilst pleasing orthodox Muslims who want to see sharia implemented without compromise.”²²⁶ The promise of a Christian-friendly sharia, as we have seen already in Volume 6, is frequently broken in that kind of atmosphere. While sharia is upheld as a tolerant approach to other religions and allegedly supports multi-religion, the signs of that approach are hard to detect. As Musa Gaiya put it, “A gap still exists between the ideal and the reality.”²²⁷

3. BAUCHI STATE

It is interesting and surprising that, according to a CAN minute, the Bauchi Governor initially rejected sharia. He told CAN he detested it as evil and wanted to use CAN to fight it!²²⁸ It would appear that this resistance was soon overcome, for before long, the situation in Bauchi became quite typical. Bauchi CAN soon was heard to condemn moves to introduce sharia in the state. It sent a petition to the state House of Assembly, signed by Chairman Dauda Marafa and Secretary Daniel Loya, in which it warned that “to introduce a bill on the controversial sharia would not augur well.” Referring to the “large indigenous Christian population,” the petition stated that sharia “would create bad blood among the people.” “To seek to introduce the full sharia in such a multi-religious state will clearly be politically inexpedient, as the Christian communities of Bogoro, Tafawa Balewa, Dass, Warji and Toro LGAs would feel deprived.” The sharia, it further stated, “was in direct conflict with the Constitution, which guarantees Christians the right to pursue their legitimate affairs anywhere in the country.” The move towards sharia was seen as “a diversionary effort to bring religious intolerance and confusion in the country.” CAN reminded the House that they “were elected to provide social and basic amenities for citizens and should not dabble in the controversial and potentially explosive issue of sharia.”²²⁹

In 2001, new unrest and violence arose with Bauchi CAN blaming the introduction of sharia as the cause. In its response, the Government denied the connection. It had a point, of course, since the anger and violence go back far beyond the revival of sharia to the early 20th century. However, sharia revived the anger that is always just below the surface in the state and served as the trigger. But the Government argued along another familiar line. Sharia, the argument went, could not have been the cause, since Christians are not covered by it.²³⁰ Yeah,

right. How far have we moved away from reality here? No wonder that Yusufu Turaki argues that good ideas are irrelevant in the sharia context!²³¹

The same atmosphere of unrest and violence also took institutional colouration in Bauchi state, especially in educational institutions. Clashes between Christian and Muslim students at the Government Girls' Secondary School in Bauchi city led to the death of three Christian students and from there to closure of the school. Subsequently, Christian students were expelled and their parents were asking why only Christians. Abdumalik Mahmoud, Deputy Governor, justified the action: It was intended to "check illegal admissions in the school." The parents insist that it was because they are Christians.²³²

The Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University in Bauchi expelled three Christian students for sharing the Gospel with Muslim students. Muslim students promptly attacked Christian students and murdered their leader. The university closed and dismissed all students to prevent further violence and damage. During the closure, Muslim students pronounced the death sentence on the expelled Christians and had their families attacked as well. In January 2005, the university re-opened, but "without meeting the demands of Christian leaders, who sought to reinstate them."

The university's disciplinary committee that investigated the case was said to be biased, for it had only one Christian in a total membership of eleven. Emmanuel Danboyi, the Christian students' lawyer, requested that the committee's recommendations be nullified, because of its built-in bias. The committee ruled that it was all the result of their having blasphemed against the Prophet. That the human rights of the Christian students were violated did not seem to bother the authorities. What's a human right over against the name of the Prophet?²³³ That is a legitimate question many struggle with. Your answer depends on your worldview.

4. KADUNA STATE

The sharia issue has taken on a different flavour in Kaduna state due to its application only in Muslim-majority LGAs. But even before it reached that state, there were, of course, the two episodes of serious violence in 2000 and in 2002, the latter associated with the Miss World Pageant.²³⁴ During the sharia incubation period in the state, Christians were active.²³⁵ Luka Binniyat reported that the Christian Deputy Governor, Stephen Shekari, threatened to resign if sharia is adopted. The committee appointed by the House of Assembly to poll all the LGAs for their interest in sharia reported that over 70 percent of the indigenes favoured sharia. Christians did not believe it, since 50 percent or more of the state is Christian and ATR. Their members of the House boycotted the deliberations on the report.

At a meeting convened by Kaduna CAN, Shekari said that at that point the administration was still strongly opposed to sharia, but if the House were to support the sharia bill and the Governor assents, not only he but all the Christian members of the cabinet would resign in protest. At that same meeting, Bawa Magaji, Commissioner for Agriculture, told the story how the Muslim community was exerting tremendous pressure on Muslim politicians, including Governor Makarfi, to adopt sharia forthwith. Musa Shekarau, a Christian member of the House, stated that the attitude of his Muslim colleagues was “fanatical.” He threatened that if the sharia were to pass in the House, “the Christian members had resolved to divide the House into two. We have no choice but to carve out a Christian House of Assembly with independent leadership.” At the LGA level, all the local council chairmen from Southern Kaduna [same as Southern Zaria] swore to declare Southern Kaduna a Christian state with a Christian flag. The youth wing of the movement “strongly backed” this possibility.²³⁶ Now we have a threat of internal secession! As one Senior Fyनेface put it, “Nigeria is one interesting country where anything goes

and it is taken as one of those things.”²³⁷ I have repeatedly told you that Nigerians can be very creative and often find original solutions to their problems. That is exactly what gives me hope that they will solve the entire religious problem as well, as hopeless as it sometimes looks.

▲ CONCLUDING COMMENT AND QUESTION —————

In the closing paragraph of his 2000 lecture, Danjuma Byang concludes with these words of warning:

*It will amount to political, economic, social, legal and religious suicide for the Christians in Nigeria to allow the imposition of sharia beyond what is already provided for in the 1999 Constitution. Although what the Muslims seem to be advocating appears to be concern for public morality, yet the side effects far outweigh whatever gains we hope to achieve by it. So, let the Christians arise as one man against this travesty of justice. If we fail to stop the supreme sharia, our children yet unborn will not forgive us for our criminal complacency or perhaps even complicity. So the issue is not as light and small as it appears. May God help us to continue the struggle.*²³⁸

Apart from the discussion arising from the question raised below, this is an appropriate warning with which to end this chapter.

And now the question. It is directed first of all to brother Mathew Kukah, but through him to all Christians, since he is often thought of as a spokesman for the entire Christian community. *Why do you insist so strongly on the primacy of politics in the sharia saga?* You do give occasional recognition that “most people,” at least at certain stages of this history, are basically concerned about and desirous of the religious nature of sharia and its effect on them and their people. But before long, according to you, the religious card had played itself out. It had become “time to settle for the game of

real politics.”²³⁹ Though I fully recognize the role of politics, what definition of religion prevents you from recognizing its foundational role in this basically religious question of sharia? Or has the influence of Western scholarship caught you in its snare of being unable or unwilling to accord religion an independent role, but that it must always be regarded as a factor subservient to politics and economics? Or perhaps the dualistic Catholic heritage of Thomistic Scholasticism?²⁴⁰ The two are related.

You are aware of the Muslim plan for Nigeria, a perfect example of subservience of genuine politics to religion, to wholistic Islam. Or do you think of that plan also as *primarily* political? And what of the OIC? It is an organization of Muslim countries who follow different political systems. It is a political organization, but it is united not by politics but religion. And how do you relate the sharia saga to the decades of blood in your own state of Kaduna? Is that all merely politics? Is that not all part of the Muslim *da’wah*, including power plays and jockeying for positions of superiority? You are aware of the thinly veiled dynamics of the struggles in Plateau state. Do you disagree with COCIN’s insistence that behind it all lies the Muslim *religious* push? Brother Matthew, you have me puzzled. Politics, manipulation, power, land, indigene versus settler—yes, all of that. But what is the bottom line? Behind it all lurks the deep Nigerian Muslim need for power and authority as well as their broad-based *da’wah* programme. When that power and authority is threatened, it can lead to explosions. One authority has said it bluntly: The deep end justifies the means. Islam’s deepest religious drive and religious motivation often accommodates that policy. True, it is *Muslim*, not Christian religion. But why can you not properly acknowledge the primary role of Islamic *religion* in all this?

Once again, my Kuyperian self with its wholistic view of religion has come out into the open. Not all of the sharia campaign is

pure Islam; it is mixed up with other motivations of which even many Muslims disapprove. But as Dodo, your fellow Catholic, put it so well: "Religion is not a region or an aspect of man's existence. It is the centre of his being. It is in it that all questions of meaning and relevance find their ultimate answer."²⁴¹ This statement makes Dodo sound more like a Kuyperian Calvinist than a Catholic Thomist! I am not defending Islam; I *am* arguing that all of this comes out of the central tenets of the Nigerian Islamic worldview. Over to you, brother Kukah.

Back to you, all my readers. Having argued the above point, I remind you of Muslim explanations of Nigerian violence in Volume 2 and of Western secularism in Volume 4. There the Muslim worldview bumps into the harshness of colonialism and the cold, proud rationality of secularism, forces that came close to undermining that worldview. Muslims awoke from their colonial slumber, recognized what had been done to them and reacted with great anger. They recognized the nature of colonial secularism better than did Christians, who reacted with ambivalence and made an uneasy peace with it. After all, both the Gospel and colonialism came from the same West. Those who brought the Gospel did not for the most part understand secularism themselves; it was their native air. To an important degree they had absorbed its tenets. For Muslims, it was a foreign hostile imposition and a subtle undermining force. Muslims are still fighting that colonial secularism. They are doing so with their own weapons of warfare that are sharpened and honed by their own Muslim worldview that is religious at base and subsumes politics, economics and all other aspects.

Christians, on the other hand, are still fighting the old Sokoto Caliphate that used to swoop down on the Middle Belt peoples and carry them off as slaves under the most cruel conditions. To them, colonialism coalesced with the forces of Islam to further their subjugation. While Muslims with their wholistic

religion reject the very structures colonialism has imposed on the country,²⁴² Christians with their heritage of a truncated non-structural religion, accept colonial structures as a given. So, we have a structural war on our hands as well. Western economy and banking vs Muslim economy and banking. Limited government vs totalitarian government. Separation of church and state vs partnership, with religion providing the inspiration, standards and goals. While some Nigerian Muslims denounce today's globalization as just the next chapter of colonialism, Christians participate in it without much critique.

So what do we have? Politics and religion? Politics using religion? Politics serving religion? In my mind, in the case of Islam, all three, but at bottom all of it inspired and driven by the religion of the Prophet. The time is at hand to do away with the political correctness that prevents Muslims, governments and secularists from acknowledging the actual role of religion in all this. The time has also come for Christians to shed their dualistic heritage and recognize the full role of religion. If some semblance of peace is to be achieved, that relationship must be understood and acknowledged honestly by all.