

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

People hardly reason logically, but allow sentiments, emotions, opinions and beliefs to becloud any objective analysis and evaluation. Rationalizations and/or beliefs take precedence over realism and concrete facts.

Yusufu Turaki¹

In discussing religions other than our own we can help the adherents of such religions to see how others understand their religion.

Wilson Sabiya²

My thesis was and remains that Islam requires Muslims to join hands with other Nigerians in the struggle to create a better, more religious and human, more liberal, honest and fair political environment in which all Nigerians can improve their lives—economically, culturally, intellectually, spiritually and morally. The struggle is for me, a revolution against our collective oppressors rather than a crusade against our fellow oppressed.

Sanusi L. Sanusi³

Some seven decades ago, an aging European professor observed that when a seasoned writer re-reads his own earlier writings, he will often want to soften some of his earlier superlatives or strong statements.⁴ In other words, some ideas may have changed along the way. Indeed, some ideas may soften over time, while some convictions may also be strengthened by repeated confirmation of the facts. Both of these have occurred during the development of this project.

This project has taken long from take-off to this final volume. When I started I knew that some of my theories, thoughts and reactions would change as I proceeded, that I would grow along with the series. I suspect that if you have read this series, one volume after another, you will have noticed some inconsistencies, changes, and both “softeners” and “hardeners” along the way, accompanied by some ambiguities, uncertainties and wavering postures. An “always” may have been changed to a “sometimes” and a “never” or two to “seldom.” Besides, as a role model of mine, Abraham Kuyper, himself a prolific writer, wrote, “It is impossible for a work that has taken two years to complete to be up-to-date in the first chapters.”⁵ Let alone a series of eight volumes! As we say in Nigeria and if I may say so myself, “*Na yi kokari!*” or “I’ve tried-o!”

A book on proposals and solutions. Is this really useful or even necessary? Sabella Abidde doubted the value of such attempts. He wrote:

Rehashing the continent’s problems is not the solution, it solves nothing; but the problems are there and true. Everyone seems to know what the solutions are; but for whatever reason, the continent’s challenges seem to have defied all developmental theories and strategies. What works in other parts of the world doesn’t seem to work in Africa. The continent, it seems, has developed resistance to routine solutions.

*Africa, it seems, is caught in a web of infinite tempests and destruction.*⁶

True, he wrote of Africa as a whole, but if you replace references to the continent with Nigeria, it seems like an accurate description. But Nigerians are a resilient and hopeful people who do not readily throw in the towel. They have confirmed the need for finding solutions time and again throughout the decades since 1977. The editor of *ThisWeek (TW)* wrote the following in 1988: “How far can the Constituent Assembly (CA) go in pleasing Muslims in providing for the sharia without stepping on the toes of the majority who are non-Muslims? That is the critical question, indeed, the challenge that faces the 564 wise men.” “Because of the sensitivity of the issue, *TW* put together all there is to know about the sharia and the controversy that threatens to undermine Nigeria.”⁷ All there is to know about sharia? More than a slight exaggeration, given the centuries of scholarship devoted to the subject! As to solutions, Akpaka wrote, “There is an avalanche of opinions on what should be done to ensure the harmonious existence of believers in the two feuding religions.”⁸ That is no exaggeration and that is the focus of this volume, including Appendix 1, 6 and 35.⁹

Basically, Muslims strongly advocate legal pluralism in order to make room for the expanded sharia. Christians on the whole are not interested, not even in Canon Courts. They continue to insist on the status quo with a Common Law system for all, that is said to be neutral and objective, secular and non-religious. That evaluation, I served you notice in Volume 7, I will challenge in Volume 8. Its time has come!

In 1989, Nigerian Jacob Olupona called an internationally-sponsored conference centred on that very question. Developments had “brought into serious question the ability of Nigerians to live together peaceably and in an atmosphere of mutual respect.”¹⁰ Olabiyi Babalola Yai, a Nigerian on the faculty of the University of

Florida, chimed in with “Religion, which has always been a formidable asset in the life of Nigeria as a nation, has now come to be perceived as a potential Achilles heel of the African giant.”¹¹ More recently, Ndamsai Anthony Addu’a, a Jos-based pastor of *Ekklesiyar ‘Yan’uwan Nijeriya (EYN)*, wrote in his master’s thesis, “In an environment filled with violence, trust and interdependence can hardly exist. When this happens, development of any kind can never be realized. Lives and communities are lost. Imagine the fate of such communities when people do not depend on one another; where differences produce suspicion, distrust breeds contempt, and prejudices foster hostility. This is the kind of situation we face in Nigeria.”¹² The question has thus remained as lively as ever for decades.

As in the West intra-Christian intolerance and religious bloodshed led to negative attitudes towards religion and, in some countries spawned a secularism impatient with and suspicious of the trappings of religion,¹³ there are similar signs developing in Nigeria. The Catholic scholar Jude Aguwa began his Preface as follows: “History is replete with evidence of great achievements as well as failures inspired by religion. When turned into an ideological tool, religion can become a highly paradoxical instrument, a double-edged sword. In the hands of the ‘saint,’ religion is a veritable means of humanization. The ‘villain,’ on the other hand, employs religion to render selfish service to the ego, individual or group.”¹⁴ It is the purpose of these chapters to find ways to cleanse the religious motif that is so strong in Nigeria and harness it for the constructive purposes of peace, harmony, progress and community. Given the Nigerian condition, that is an admittedly formidable task.

Habila Istifanus, General Secretary of the Association of Christian Lay Centres in Africa, using the insights of Cardinal Francis Archue, insisted “that inter-religious cooperation in the emerging situation is not optional. The Cardinal himself wrote:

‘The emerging situation calls for joint action of people from different religions to promote justice and peace, to reduce or eliminate tension and extremism and to defend human dignity and human rights, especially as regards to life and family.’” Istifanus went on to argue that, “since most of the conflicts in Nigeria, whether political or ethnic, usually end up bearing religious colouration and end up between two religions, there is need to do a closer study of the two religions. There must be a serious deliberation on the issue of religion in Nigeria; how these two religions should operate.”¹⁵ That’s what this volume, including Appendix 1, 6 and 35, is all about.

This is not the first time some of the ideas featured here are broached; you may find some in earlier volumes. But here you will find them back in the context of a special concentration on solutions or actions to take. Gathering them thus can give them a new force and meaning, for they are now seen in the context of proposals and solutions. Some proposals are hugely important, especially the Christian and Muslim views on secularism, but I will devote little space to that subject, simply because the entire volumes 4 and 5 deal with it extensively.

In a way, this entire series could be considered the story of the goose and the gander. An English proverb has it that “what is good for the goose is good for the gander.” It is just another way of saying, “Do unto others as you want them to do to you.” Essentially, it is a call for fairness among humans. Throughout this series we have found that this essential and basic commitment to each other is often forgotten. Christians and Muslims both accuse each other of things they themselves do. Both seek to impose unwanted systems on the other, but neither recognizes that they are doing so. Both have made promises to each other that their religion will not be imposed on the other, but both have in fact so imposed. Muslims insist on freedom for *da’wah*, but refuse to recognize the Christian freedom to evangelize. Muslims demand freedom to convert into Islam but deny the freedom to convert

from Islam. The goose and the gander are deaf to each other's cries, accusations and demands. I hope that this volume will not only make this clear but also convince both to clean their ears, listen to each other and develop a sense of fairness and realism. Dogmatic postures of the past do not work well in the modern context of multi-religion and multi-culturalism. *Both goose and gander need to learn the art of compromise, allow each other space. Hopefully this can be done without either renegeing on their essentials.* But that remains to be seen.

I am fully aware that I have by no means exhausted the literature produced on the subjects covered in this series. I have gathered what I could during my occasional visits, from the internet and what my Nigerian friends sent me. However, the feedback I am receiving from various sources in Nigeria satisfy me that, for Northern Christians at least, I am giving an accurate portrayal of their experience, even though I accept the likelihood of some factual errors. Muslims, for reasons of their own, seem more hesitant to respond, so that I cannot gauge their reaction as well, but I have not given up hope. Some are generous enough to respond. I continue to reach out to them and solicit their reactions as well as I can from my distant perch in Vancouver. Distant as it is, I am often able to provide Nigerians with information to which they had no access.

As you read, you must constantly keep in mind the atmosphere in which all these solutions are offered: an atmosphere of extreme violence and near chaos. During my most recent visit in 2005, compounds I used to enter freely have been turned into heavily guarded forts with guards 24/7. During our absence, guards have been killed and residents seriously violated. The long-distance luxury buses plying the roads have their front seats occupied by police with cocked guns, ready to take on armed robbers that may block expressways at any time. Such situations hardly put one at ease. Nigeria is in serious crisis.

Paul Adujie, a Nigerian writer in New York, introduced an article on religious violence thus: "I read with utmost disgust, the detailed news reports of the gruesome and needless murder of one Ms. Oluwatoyin Olusesan. And it is with equal disgust and disdain, that I regard the deafening national silence over this complete disregard for the sanctity of human life, by some, especially, in the name of religion!" The rest of his article goes beyond disgust and disdain; it has moved over into despair. A few paragraphs further, he wrote, "Religious and ethnically motivated murders have become too frequent in their occurrence and irritating regularity! I am a believer of one, united great Nigeria. But the question must now be asked, at what cost would we have one Nigeria? Especially, when some Nigerians think nothing of the lives of other Nigerians, as they constitute themselves into the judges, juries and executioners rolled into one?" I strongly urge you to read Appendix 69. It gives many examples of recent religious violence as well as accounts from the past.¹⁶

And then there is a growing judicial violence that is paralysing the court system. *The Guardian*, on the day I write this paragraph, featured a story about Abubakar Habiu Hashidu, a former governor of Gombe State and once again a gubernatorial candidate at the time. The man was standing trial "for political violence" before Chief Magistrate Joseph Shinga. This was a case of a powerful Muslim politician being sentenced and kept in custody by a Christian magistrate, a mere *kaffir*. The story included Hashidu's gang forcing their way into the court premises with primitive weapons and beating both staff and the Magistrate himself. The writer commented that such judicial violence is part of a "rising wave of attacks" in different parts of the country. If care is not taken, this can only result in anarchy. "The courts are hallowed chambers and should be duly respected. Any attempt by any individual or group to sidetrack judicial due process and resort to lawlessness against a judge desecrates the court and its sovereignty."¹⁷

Well, that's the almost impossible atmosphere in which people have to find their way and in which, after a 30-year presence and a good 40 years of research, I dare to write this book, but even after all that, not without considerable hesitation.

▲ HOUSE-KEEPING DETAILS

Let me take you behind the curtain of both this project and of this volume. When I began, I did not have a carefully worked out detailed plan for this series. It grew and occasionally took unexpected turns, often for reasons of economy. From the beginning I have been concerned that this book stay within reach of Nigerian readers, especially those with tertiary-level education. Since books in their traditional forms are expensive in Nigeria, I have resorted to the cheaper digital device of the CD—the *Companion CD (CCD)* you have read so much about already. Be sure to read the next few paragraphs very carefully so that you do not get confused about this book. It gets a bit complicated. The complications are all *CCD*-related.¹⁸

First, a rather surprising announcement: *This volume is divided into Part 1 and Part 2, the former being exclusively digital—for now, at least—, while the latter is in hard copy, though it is also on the CCD in its entirety.* The digital Part 1 contains the “Nigerian” chapters; the hard copy Part 2—in other words, the book itself—, my own reflections, parameters, suggestions, options and challenges. I do apologize for this development; it is the result of the world's economic melt down. One day, *insha Allah* [Hausa-Arabic for “God willing”] they will all be published neatly together as a series of e-books.

But you don't need to wait for that, since *everything* is already on the *CCD*. You don't even have to buy one single hard copy volume. It means that if you have the book in your hand, you have only the chapters dealing with *my* proposals and solutions. Sorry

about that. Two items of good news, without any more bad to follow. (a) If you have the 2009 edition of the *CCD* in your hand, you hold the *complete* project. You do not need to buy anything else to access it all, appendices, chapters, volumes. (b) If you have *only* the hard copy Volume 8, those chapters of Part 1 contain little that is not already scattered throughout the other volumes. *The bottom line is that you are better off with the CCD than with the hard copy volumes of this series, for the CCD contains it all. If you have a book, you will still need the CCD for the additional materials.*¹⁹

Next, I am embarrassed to confess to breaking a promise for the third time! In both Volumes 6 and 7 I promised I would include a chapter on the Muslim reactions to Christian critique and rejection of sharia. I had to bow out in both volumes because of space. Now I have to bow out the third time with the same regret and for the same reason. However, it is not left out completely. I did write the chapter and include it as Appendix 1. Provided you obtain the *Companion CD*, you *do* have access to it. In addition, a lot of material similar to that found in root Appendix 1 is scattered throughout this and earlier volumes. You may miss some interesting details, but you will *not* miss the spirit of those reactions.

Then I was going to have a chapter each on Nigerian Muslim and Nigerian Christian proposals about and solutions for the country's religious problems. Again for the same reasons of space and economy, these two chapters now constitute root Appendix 6 and 35. So, now you have **three root chapter-appendices that are only on the CD**—Appendix 1, 6 and 35. All three of these chapter-appendices generate their own sub-appendices. So, note the following carefully:

Appendix 1 can also be considered Part 1, **Chapter 1**.

Title: "Muslim Reactions to Christian Critique of Sharia."

Appendix 2-4 are generated by Appendix 1 and support that root "chapter-appendix."

Appendix 6 can also be considered Part 1, **Chapter 2**.

Title: “Muslim Proposals and Solutions.”

Appendix 7-34 are generated by Appendix 6 and support that “chapter-appendix.”

Appendix 35 can also be considered Part 1, **Chapter 3**.

Title: “Christian Proposals and Solutions.”

Appendix 36-69 are generated by Appendix 35 and support that “chapter-appendix.”

Then you have **Part 2 with its 11 chapters**, each of which also generates appendices (70-104). All the appendices are listed by number, author, title and year in the book itself.

I draw your attention to the “monster” or root folder <Miscellaneous Articles> on the *CCD*, referred to in the Bibliography as well as Endnotes as <Misc Arts>. This contains thousands of articles of interest to readers of this series. Many are referred to in the text of this series. As you read about any subject, be sure to check the folders and subfolders in <Misc Arts>, for it is almost certain that there is more on the same subject. That folder will especially be useful for Nigerian researchers who have difficulty accessing the internet or finding the printed materials. It is a virtual library—from the Nigerian context, an outstanding and unique one.

One warning that holds for all the volumes. The materials in <Miscellaneous Articles> have constantly undergone re-organization. This means that folders and articles have been moved around and are not always found in the place specified in the bibliographies or endnotes.

If you do not find an item in the specified location, you will have to resort to your computer’s <search> function to find it in its current location. Search by date—example: 2009-04-02—, author’s last name or two or more keywords in title, and you should find it.

I need also to alert you to numbering issues, namely, the *numbering of appendices and of pages*. Note that the numbering of the appendices from the digital Part 1 through the hard copy of Part 2 is continuous. The last appendix in Part 1 is number 69, while the first in this Part 2 is number 70. It is, after all, one book, one volume. *This feature does not apply to the pagination*. Every appendix from number 1 to the last has its own internal pagination, including the root chapter-appendices. Part 2 has its own continuous pagination from beginning to end, but, again, excluding the appendices. In the references to appendices in the endnotes, there is no page indicated either, since internal appendix pagination is not fixed at this point.

As in previous volumes, there are the two definite time zones in these chapters and appendices: “Before Zamfara” (BZ) and “After Zamfara” (AZ). You will find that there is not a great difference in the hopes and prescriptions Christians and Muslims offer before and after the Zamfara Declaration. One difference is that the term “sharia” is more frequently the explicit focus of attention during the later period, due to the fact that twelve states have adopted the wider sharia. While the term may not be used as much during the earlier period, the concept is there all along, often lurking in the shadows.

I cannot continue repeating all I have said in past prefaces and introductions about endnote style, quotations, ellipses, and other technicalities employed in this series. If you find “irregularities,” please consult previous volumes for the explanation. You can always consult the Bibliography for more complete information about endnote entries. The endnotes are many and sometimes lengthy, but the bibliographical information in the endnotes is kept to a minimum to be supplemented by the Bibliography. *One new feature* in this volume is that I occasionally throw in a brief comment or translation surrounded by brackets as in “[...]” That always signifies a Boer comment, even if it is located within a title

or quotation. It is a convenience to save you the hassle of checking a remote endnote.

The chapters and appendices in this volume are really no more than samplers. The ideas, proposals and recommendations for a healthier Nigeria are so many, that I can do no more than give some indications as to the kinds of ideas that are out there. Many of them are scattered throughout the other volumes. I do want to make it easier for you to locate them by referring you to *folder <Proposal Appendices>*.

▲ END REMARKS

I recently came across a discussion I had read before, but that, to my current chagrin, did not particularly hit me at the time. It is Ibrahim Ado-Kurawa's discussion of different levels in Muslim-Christian relations. I would have introduced myself in Volume 1 as a representative of the first level that he describes as "those who will be kind to the Muslims." The Qur'an 5:82 describes them as follows: "And the nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say 'We are Christians. Because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world and they are not arrogant.'"²⁰ With respect to Muslims, I think thus of myself even more now than when I started. Though no Muslim, I am an admirer of Islam, albeit a critical admirer. Well, what would you expect? I am critical of Christians as well. I am critical of myself! May I then so belatedly introduce myself in this final volume of this series.

This monograph comes upon the heels of seven volumes of struggle and, not infrequently, heated emotions. Reading them may lead to the conclusion that all Christians and Muslims hate each other without exception. This is by no means the case. Christians and Muslims cooperate with each other daily at many fronts, especially in business and politics. It is nevertheless encour-

aging at the beginning of this volume to take note of an important conclusion of sociologist Dennis Ityayvar and his team. At the end of an extensive programme of peace advocacy, he wrote, “The very positive response of all the stakeholders...indicates that there is a large reservoir of goodwill within the communities for the pursuit of peace and mutual co-existence.”²¹ That is what I want to build on. It is in that positive awareness that I invite you to join me on this final lap of the journey.

Anyone doing a review of this book must be acquainted with the previous volumes, where (s)he will find ample reasons for many of the points brought up in the proposals and parameters offered in this volume. They do not stand on their own; they have their background and history which you must know.

▲ SPECIAL NOTE TO READERS

A book once written is frozen and cannot address later developments, not even developments about the book itself. But life is not frozen; things change. Perhaps a new distributor or a new edition or a new version of the *Companion CD*. So, if there are issues you want to discuss with me or things you need to know about new developments around this series of books, be sure to check my website www.SocialTheology/ Islamica. I will try to announce any changes there. Otherwise contact me at boerjf@hotmail.com. As long as God gives me health and breath, I promise to answer the concerns of all my reader friends.

