

SAMPLE POLITICAL ISSUES

▲ INTRODUCTION

If adopted, the perspectives with which we are working in this series could eventually seriously change the Nigerian religious, cultural and political landscape. It will help us understand each other. It will or should help us become more fair as it will expose certain practices that cannot stand up to the new light. I will occasionally bring up the gander/goose analogy in efforts to alert you to unfair or unjust situations. In this chapter we will examine a few Nigerian political issues in the light of our Kuyperian perspectives.

Of course, the Kuyperian perspective does not come to an empty public space. The place is already crowded with ATR, Christian, Muslim and secular views. I do not come with final solutions; only with suggestions and parameters that I sometimes dignify as “proposals.” These expose certain existing weaknesses that are based on distorted worldviews and suggest new directions based on my proposed shifts in worldviews and parameters. Come and hear me out. Then try to work out these shifts yourself in a prac-

tical way. It will work best in a group context where it can all be discussed, challenged and, perhaps, resolved.

Both Christianity and Islam have a number of firm principles, some of them overlapping, that should shape their political life. These include justice, equality, rule of law, pluralism, tolerance, human rights and human responsibilities. Mohamad Rachid adds *shura* [consultation] and *bay'a* [pledge of allegiance, voting] to the list. Some of these will be treated in this and succeeding chapters. However, neither religion prescribes exact political structures for the embodiment of these principles. They are free to flesh out these principles in different ways, depending on the context in which they are applied. With Nigerian Christians having their spiritual and theological wings clipped by their secular heritage, their Muslim neighbours, pushed by their greater consciousness of the wholistic nature of religion, tend to be more aware of these principles and more insistent on fleshing them out. Christians have some catching up to do now that they, too, are becoming more aware of Christian wholism. But, even for Muslims, remember the paradoxical statement of Rachid about how theory and practice in this realm “have separated a long time ago,” even though “the two influence each other profoundly.”¹ Apparently, a principally difficult separation becomes very easy in practice.²

▲ THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

I fear I am going into areas that are over my head. So, let me restrict myself to some principal perspectives, leaving the details to experts. Though sometimes Muslims come across with great certainty about the nature of Islamic government, there is a general agreement that there is no pre-fabricated fixed form to be applied in every country and circumstance. As Asghar Engineer puts it, “The political universe of Islam has never been a fixed entity. It has been continuously changing depending on locale and time. Also, it

is difficult to trace any fixed notion of an Islamic state either in the Qur'an, in *hadith* literature or in any political theory propounded by any Muslim theologian."³ Muhammad Asad affirmed that "Islam offers us a definite, clear-cut outline of a political law of its own," but the specific form must be left "to the *ijtihad* of the time."⁴

As is to be expected from a world religion, Muslims hold a variety of opinions about the purpose of government. An anonymous author of an article in *The Pen* begins by referring to "a state which owes its justification to the call of Islam and aims at establishing the law of Islam as the law of the land." But then he goes on to prescribe a wide range of functions and obligations of government that virtually makes the latter responsible for all of life. It must provide citizens with all "economic facilities as are necessary for...human happiness and dignity." Free education for all, women and men, Muslims and others, is also on the job list. In general, the government's responsibility for citizens is similar to that of parental responsibilities for children!—the actual language used. It must also ensure that no one's standard of living "falls below an equitable level." The state must "enable its citizens to live up to the demands of Islam." Then there is the responsibility to ensure equity within the community, so that every one "shall have enough to eat and to wear, shall be succored in case of illness, and have a decent home." Well, there is more, but this gives you the picture—an all-pervasive parental government.⁵

For most Muslim writers, justice and morality are two major foci. Engineer describes "justice in social, economic, legal and political sense" as a "kingpin" of an Islamic society. In fact, he calls justice "the most fundamental Islamic value." The name of Allah is from *Aadil*, meaning "Just."⁶ Turning to Nigerians, contributors to the compilation edited by Syed Rashid also place the emphasis on justice. Abubakar Gwandu affirmed that the "dispensation of justice occupied a high priority" under the regime of Shehu

Danfodio, the famous 19th century revivalist. “The administration of justice is always regarded as one of the most important functions of any Muslim government,” he asserted. Such administration “is one of the greatest acts of worship.”⁷ In the same book, Omar Bello posited that “the first [duty of government] is “the establishment and preservation of faith.” However, “the fulfillment of this purpose means the realisation of justice.”⁸

Again the parallel with Kuyperian thought. During the 1960s Canadian Kuyperians established what is now called Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), a Christian crusade for justice. Its heroic services throughout the nation but especially to the FG of Canada won the founding director, Gerald Vandezande, the Order of Canada award. The title of one of his books is telling: *Justice—Not Just Us*. Add to that the subtitle, *Faith Perspectives and National Priorities*, and you have the gist of CPJ’s focus. Staff member Chandra Pasma wrote recently, “God calls us to practice justice, compassion, love and stewardship. We must do this in every aspect of our lives.... “ “For government, public justice requires promoting just relations between people within God’s creation, correcting injustice and nurturing conditions that enhance the common good.”⁹

The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in North America is the largest of a cluster of small North American Reformed churches considerably influenced by Kuyperian thought. I refer you to Appendix 83 for a brief discussion of its stance with respect to government and justice.

Although some consider justice, morality and religion as separate subjects, in Islam they easily fuse into each other. While a few paragraphs earlier we read of the emphasis on justice, Abul Mawdudi summarized the main purpose of an Islamic government as to “bid what is proper and forbid what is improper” (Qur’an 22:41):

the aim and purpose of the state is the establishment, maintenance and development of those virtues which the Creator

*wishes human life to be enriched by and the prevention and eradication of those evils in human life which He finds abhorrent. Islam places a high ideal before the state for the achievement of which it must use all the means at its disposal. This ideal is that the qualities of purity, beauty, goodness, virtue, success and prosperity which God wants to flourish in the life of His people should be engendered and developed and that all kinds of exploitation, injustice and disorder which, in the sight of God, are ruinous for the world and detrimental to the life of His creatures, should be suppressed and prevented. Islam gives us a clear outline of its moral system by stating positively the desired virtues and the undesired evils. Keeping this outline in view, the Islamic state can plan its welfare programme in every age and in any environment. The constant demand made by Islam is that the principles of morality must be observed at all costs and in all walks of life.*¹⁰

Already twenty years ago the Nigerian Tawfiq Ladan, writing about the devastation caused by alcohol, asked, “What government...would ever tolerate the massive human and material destruction which alcohol causes...?” He answered, “Every endeavour in aid of the cause of justice, the removal of oppression, the realization of the basic human needs constitutes what is morally right, to be promoted by the state.” The other side of the coin applies as well. Whatever “hinders the flow of justice or causes injury to the social or moral fabric of society ...constitutes an evil to be eliminated by the state.” “The preservation of the nation’s social morality is a constitutional issue.”¹¹

According to Pierre Trudeau, a former Prime Minister of Canada, the government has no business in the nation’s bedrooms. In contrast to this, Islam is not afraid to acknowledge that the result of our bedroom freelancing leads to social disruption, disease, break down of families and hordes of single mothers. The weight of all of

this has to be borne by the people's purse, whether private or public. Therefore the Islamic government steps in to stem the spread of the virus of rampant immorality and social disruption. Hence the readiness of sharia governments in Nigeria to punish what secular governments consider private and are afraid to touch and many secular people consider normal and acceptable behaviour. If you judge a tree by its fruits, as Jesus suggests we do, the Islamic perspective cannot simply be dismissed without further ado.

But this perspective does lead to intrusive government. Since governments historically cannot be trusted to keep their intrusions at a benign level, Nigerian Christians and Muslims must together decide which kind of government they want. The Kuyperian emphasis on sphere sovereignty creates less of an intrusive government than does classical Islam. That Kuyperian perspective is concerned with justice and liberty. However, since the time it was hammered out, the issues of sexual freelancing and addictions and their subsequent social disorientation have become more rampant and, in my judgement, now call for renewed consideration. Probably Nigeria should experiment with a cross-pollinated system that includes elements of both intrusion and sphere sovereignty. Total *laissez-faire* morality leads to social chaos as we see in the West. At the same time, experience has shown that prohibition has not been successful either. Criminalization creates a whole new culture of policing, prisons and violence as we see in both the West and Northern sharia states.¹² Are we damned either way?

*Perhaps this all indicates the need for religions to step up **spiritual** discipline instead of depending too much on legal discipline, but yet somehow creating a **legal** dam to stem the tide of rampant immorality. The problem is that the former is not done very effectively or faithfully either. This calls for more wisdom than I possess by myself! I present you with the issues from different perspectives*

and with some choices, but am not prepared to indicate my own choice at this point. When experts and people of goodwill line up on different sides, then you know you have to move carefully and be sure you have established a well-founded framework of reference from which to proceed.

▲ THE DEMOCRACY FACTOR

There is no country on earth where the rhetoric of democracy is fully matched by reality, but some are closer to the ideal than others. The Muslim theory as Mawdudi explained it speaks powerfully to my Calvinist heart. Allow me a summary of some of his core democratic ideals. He insisted on the “absolute equality” of all before the law. This is true for born Muslims, converted Muslims and even for Christians. The lives and properties of the last “are as sacred as the lives and properties of Muslims. Discrimination based on class was one of the greatest crimes...” Turning to the concept of *khalafa*, he asserts, “Governments are representatives (*khalifa*) of the Creator of the universe...” “...no individual or dynasty or class can be *khalifa*: the authority of *khalifa* is bestowed on the whole of any community.... Such a society carries the responsibility of the *khalifa* as a whole and each one of its individuals shares in it.” This, states Mawdudi, “is the point where democracy begins.... Every individual... enjoys the rights and powers of the caliphate...and in this respect all individuals are equal. No one may deprive anyone else of his rights and powers.” “Whoever gains their confidence will undertake the duties...of the caliphate...; and when he loses this confidence, he will have to step down. In this respect the political system of Islam is as perfect a form of democracy as there can be.” Mawdudi summarized the principles for the legislative assembly or *shura* as follows. Both executive head of government and assembly members should be freely elected by the

people. People and representatives all have the right to free speech, including the right to criticize. Government must be open, transparent and accountable.¹³ That's all pretty hard to say “No” to!

Probably some readers of the Mawdudi paragraphs above are wondering what planet he is from. There is not a single Muslim country, let alone Islamic one, that seems to even come close to those ideals. He was fully aware of this. The very last sentence of his booklet puts it clearly: It is painful that “throughout the world, rulers who claim to be Muslims have made disobedience to their God and the Prophet the basis and foundation of their government.”¹⁴

For comments on the practice I turn to Rachid, to whom I am grateful for his permission to use his clear portrayal of the actual situation:

In general, Islamic countries have the appearance of democratic or constitutional systems. What is lacking is the essence of democracy and freedom. There are constitutions, parliaments, elections, parties, courts, and media. But all of these are under the control of the ruler. Some rulers have recently allowed a measured and limited opening in the system. Most rulers, however, especially in the Arab world, remain beyond criticism and accountability. They are usually praised for their ultimate wisdom in running the affairs of the country and for always making the right decisions. Those rulers (kings, presidents, emirs, sheikhs, and leaders) are depicted as infallible. Their regimes are authoritarian, oppressive, and intolerant, in stark contradiction to the ideal Islamic principles.

That there have been notable achievements no one should deny, but certainly over the past few centuries, political failure has been more prominent. I refer you to Appendix 84 for Rachid's explanations. These include the external factor of colonialism: Colonialists did little to advance democracy, as Nigerian writers have pointed

out frequently. There is also the internal factor of Muslims themselves who “tolerated tyrants and despots even when Islam recommends standing up to them.” And then there is this matter of worldview, of Islam giving “priority to the community over the individual. This has caused people to forego their rights and privileges for the benefits of society at large.”¹⁵ There is a lot to be said for some of these Islamic political principles, but Muslim people have been no more successful than have Christian people in faithfully carrying out their religiously-mandated political principles. Human nature is the same everywhere. The Bible describes it as deeply corrupt, excluding no one, not even Muslims.¹⁶ Rachid ascribes this to all people being “fallible,” but it goes deeper than that. We are not merely able to fall [fall-ible], but we *have* fallen, all of us, and deeply so.

Coming back to Nigeria, in the early 1980s Mahdi Adamu of the University of Sokoto explained that the majority of Muslims at the time were not aware of their pitiful un-Islamic situation.¹⁷ It was the duty, he asserted, of the educated to teach the people about their plight. He predicted, “Once all the Muslims have understood the position, they will use the democratic process to bring about the change—an event we all pray for.”¹⁸ Almost two decades later, Governor Sani was the democratic answer to that prayer.¹⁹

Muslims have expressed amazement at the charge that the new sharia agenda is undemocratic. Was it not part of Governor Sani’s campaign? Did the people not respond positively to the campaign? Were proper political and government protocol not observed? And did the people not celebrate en masse upon its declaration?—two million strong!²⁰ The entire flow of events leading up to its establishment was far more democratic than anything the colonialists ever did. Philip Ostien of Unijos has led a team that has done more field research on the subject than anyone else. He claims that these sharia developments are highly democratic in nature. He calls these developments examples of “Nigeria’s new-found federalism at work

even among the states that are predominantly Muslim; a good example of the different states as ‘laboratories of democracy’, each seeking the local political accommodations that suit it best. Nigeria needs to see more of this, not less.”

The steps taken are a victory for democracy as well as for federalism. They have not been imposed by dictators acting unilaterally from above as a means of currying favour with Muslim radicals.... They have been enacted by democratically elected executive and legislative officials responding to the unquestionable desires of the vast majority of their constituents at a relatively local level. This again is unique in the modern political development of Islam.

In Sub-Saharan Africa and in Muslim states, rule by law is an exception. Ostien points to Nigeria’s sharia developments as a plus for the formation of rule by law rather than by arbitrary rulers. “In the Islamic view, governments exist only to ensure that the sharia is properly administered and enforced. Governments are subordinate to the sharia and must execute its commands and prohibitions. In other words, what Islam envisages is a scheme of divine nomocracy, in which the law is the medium of social control—truly, a government of laws, not of men.”²¹ Secular scholars do not easily recognize that there is this positive aspect, for they want government under the rule of men, not of God. It is to Ostien’s credit that, despite his secular orientation, he recognizes the democratic elements in these religious developments.

The recent Gallop Poll of the Muslim World, said to be “the most comprehensive study ever done of this group,” shows that many Muslims the world over “cite the equal importance of democracy and Islam to the quality of life and progress of the Muslim world. They see no contradiction between democratic values and religious principles.” “Most want neither theocracy nor secular democracy but a third model in which religious principles

and democratic values co-exist. They want their own democratic model that draws on Islamic law as a source.” And most want to keep the clergy out of politics and women’s issues.²² Freedom House, at the time the employer of Paul Marshall, also engages in surveys on the subject and found that “the majority of the world’s...Muslims live under democratically elected governments.”²³ Those findings should not surprise anyone. R. James Woolsey, a former director of the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), wrote earlier that “Islam is not inconsistent with democracy. The majority of the world’s Muslims are living in democracies.” He also suggested that US policy should be to “encourage democracy, freedom and the rule of law in the Muslim world.” They should do so by making “common cause with the... millions of decent and reasonable Muslims...who want peace and prosperity...and are not interested in either supporting terror or living under repressive laws.” This could include some form of sharia, but definitely not “extreme sharia,” that “Islamist instrument of totalitarianism.”²⁴

So, Nigerian Christians should perhaps become more open to Muslim arguments for democracy. The larger ummah seem to have it within them. Christians should recognize the potential positive democratic gains in the new sharia towards which Ostien has drawn our attention. They should search for ways of living with a modified sharia that is somehow incorporated into a reformed legal system broad enough to include aspects of both. In this attempt, Christians should beware of the input of secularism, for it does not understand wholistic religion and always wants to shunt it aside.

Perhaps the suggestions above should be tried first in the current sharia states and then, if the state model turns out successful, at national level. Of course, this suggestion assumes that some other issues are ironed out as well on both sides, for it is part of

a larger package. Again, this is a call on Nigerians to pull all the stops on their imagination to release the juices of their creative best.

According to Ostien, sharia is an important step towards democracy in Nigeria. Rule by law is replacing arbitrary personal rule that is so common in Muslim societies, a great step forward in the direction of democracy. That, at least, is the core value of the new direction, even if its adherence left much to be desired right from the beginning. However, it is a real question whether the new sharia is being observed any more faithfully than is/was Common Law. Evidence in Volumes 6 and 7 is negative. There *are* the genuine gains of democracy, increased application of federalism and of legal principles more reflective of the culture, but, given the continued corruption and continued harassment and persecution of Christians, I see no evidence of increased rule by and adherence to law.

I want to congratulate the Northern Muslim *ummah* for having rediscovered and, however haltingly, re-instated this central kernel of true Islam. Rule by law, whoever introduced it first into the world, is a great gift that Muslims have long been denied and that is frequently trodden upon in Nigeria as a whole. It is an essential element of democracy that even Christians should applaud.

I now challenge the Nigerian Muslim ummah to work hard at taking the serious wrinkles out of the system. That will be absolutely necessary if it is not to fizzle out either by the dynamic of its very faulty implementation or by force on the part of its enemies—and victims! Yes, it has its victims. Volume 7 is full of their stories. That, my Muslim friends, is your challenge. You have taken the first step. Now take the next democratic step befitting Nigeria's "multi-situation" by treating your Christian minorities as truly equal partners. To fizzle or to sizzle—the choice is yours.

Nigerian Christians, on the other hand, have failed to recognize any positive aspects in these recent sharia developments. They have been so blinded by anger and prejudice that they did not analyze issues carefully and mostly just flailed their arms in unthinking holy horror. *Developing a new modus vivendi requires appreciation and understanding of the positive aspects of the sharia agenda.* These positive aspects could turn up among the building blocks for the new Nigeria that must come out of open negotiations. That holds true all across the board, not merely in the political sector. Along with Ostien, I want to see Northern Muslims given a chance to develop their democracy—but, and this is a big “but”— *a democracy for all citizens, regardless of religion, that excludes persecution of Christians and gives them equal opportunity to participate in the affairs of state.* Any definition of democracy with any hint of exclusion is not acceptable in today’s Nigeria. *The new arrangements will have to erase all Christian fears of dhimmi status, whether official or unofficial.* Yes, there is a price to pay for peace. It demands compromise and sacrifice, sometimes sacrifice of long-standing semi-Muslim traditions.

In an earlier draft of this chapter I demanded an open public rejection by Muslims of the *dhimmi* arrangement. During the review process it occurred to me that such a demand might be asking for too much and would bring shame on Muslims.

Instead, as a face-saving measure, I hope Nigerian Christians will be satisfied with arrangements that clearly prevent the development of dhimmi status without demanding an open rejection. Face-saving is an important tool for peace building, especially when you are dealing with a proud people. And after all, Nigerian Muslims will be held accountable to the global ummah for their compromises. We should not make it more difficult for them than necessary, for that would be counterproductive.

The above really means that Muslims have to make up their minds about Project Nigeria. Do they accept this colonial construction as one nation? Have they come to terms with it? There have been very few voices that want to end the “experiment.” They have welcomed Christian business people and professionals from the Middle Belt and the South into their midst, but want to exclude their religion and deny them many rights. That is an impossibility that will continue to create chaos. *They accept them in a dualistic way, separating their persons and occupations from their religion and rights, a dualism that core Islam normally does not tolerate.*

Democracy has its own inherent weakness or Achilles’ heel. During a Canadian television programme, Shabir Ally, a Canada-based Muslim scholar and imam, was asked whether Muslims are planning to take over the world or the country. He replied that Islam does not believe in imposing itself on others. It gains converts by persuasion. Once the Muslim community is strong enough, it will by democratic means gain the upper hand. That includes the government. The interviewer called him a moderate and he accepted the description.²⁵ You may draw your own conclusion what that could mean in Nigeria! *It may not be Islamic to impose the religion, but it does seem to be “Muslimic” in the sense that Muslims commonly practice it.* What would Ally say about our Nigerian Sheikh Abubakar Gumi and his ideological descendants? Here is a recipient of the King Faisal Laureate Award, the Muslim equivalent to the Nobel Prize, advocating every means of imposing Islam on Nigeria and causing division, all activity supposedly condemned by Islam.²⁶ How did he earn that distinction? By being an unfaithful adherent to Islam or by just being a Muslim?

Should Nigeria design a limited form of democracy that would close a serious democratic loophole by eliminating this Achilles' heel in order to prevent the development of such scenarios? With their numbers, Christians have the potential for a similar "democratic coup." It might require a covenant between the two to prevent a "democratic coup" on the part of either.

Perhaps it does. But even then, can you assume such a covenant will be adhered to? Western democracies have little resistance to the abuse to which some groups subject them simply because such abuse was far from the minds of the architects of democratic systems. Resistance to such undermining tactics are not built in. Western democracy is the product of the Western mind. People from other cultures come with different mindsets that they then apply "democratically" and "legally" to such systems and in the process undermine them. Political correctness often prevents resistance to such processes. Just watch Canada!

Would such a covenant make sense in Nigeria when you have the likes of the late Sheikh Abubakar Gumi c. s. with their tactics to take over the country? He openly incited the people against the FG, while the latter let him get away with it.²⁷ Ibrahim Sulaiman suggests that Muslims start new relations from scratch with Christians. I affirm this with my own suggestion *that it must then really be from scratch, where both sides spell out their basic parameters and negotiate them before proceeding **without any hidden agenda**. But Sulaiman warns that any arrangement "is essentially tentative in the sense that as long as Islam is yet to attain a clear-cut supremacy over every other way of life, no process of any kind can assume the stamp of finality."*²⁸ So, clearly it becomes necessary for Christians to have it out with Muslims: *Will you agree to a covenant and will you adhere to it? What guarantee can you offer? But,*

according to Sulaiman’s warning, such a guarantee would only be temporary.

I advise Christians to work out such a covenant with their eyes wide open and a clear understanding by both sides that the moment Muslims prepare to break it, all agreements are over and all hell will break loose. Muslims will only have themselves to blame for the ensuing chaos.

But Christians must realize that Muslims have their reasons for doubting the sincerity of Christians. Christian blindness to their own imposition of secularism upon Muslims does not give Muslims a lot of confidence in them either. They, too, need to be assured of Christian adherence to any pact or covenant.

There is one more democratic issue to be considered. With the exception of a narrowly restricted sharia in the North, all Nigerians are subject to Common Law. In other words, Muslims have long been subject to a law that is both foreign and repugnant to them. But now, a number of states have democratically declared sharia as their new legal framework. In the case of some governors, it was a major part of their election platform. When they instituted it, huge crowds of grass root Muslims attended the occasion with a tremendous show of support. It was all very democratic. This brings up a couple of legitimate Muslim questions.

The first is why the democratic nations of the West immediately denounced this move so vigorously without giving it a chance to succeed?²⁹ Why did they not jump in with encouragement and support to steer it into the right channels? Their reactions gave credence to Muslim accusations that the West is out to destroy Islam. Here was an attempt to institute rule by law through democratic means, a development the West fosters everywhere— and they sought to squash it! To the credit of the USA, it pursued a restrained policy “to encourage a peaceful resolution to the sharia issue” and to urge “that

human rights and religious freedom be respected in any resolution,” a policy they implemented behind the scenes through regular diplomatic channels.³⁰ In general, though, one cannot blame Muslims for their puzzlement and angry reactions.

The second question is directed to Nigerian Christians. You have considered it proper for Muslims to be governed by a legal system and constitution they consider alien and repugnant. On what principial basis do you now disapprove of a majority decision of some states to go sharia? If Muslims formerly were *forced* to submit to Common Law but now, through democratic means, have gone sharia, why is it improper for all residents in the sharia states to be subject to sharia law? Why should Christians be exempt from Muslim law, when Muslims have all along been mostly under Common Law? *Why may a Christian-based Common Law be imposed on all, but not a Muslim-based sharia?* I know, one reason is that, until you read my discussions in earlier volumes and earlier chapters in this volume, you thought of Common Law as neutral and objective, not religious. We have dealt with those mistakes. It is not neutral and objective and it is deeply religious at base. We have now or will soon do away with the dualistic mistake and historical misunderstanding of your previous position. So, now where does this lead us? To questions like this: *Why should sharia law be applicable only to some and not to all residents? If Common Law can be applied to and even forced on all, why not sharia?*

I know, of course, that you not only have (wrong) principial reasons for rejecting sharia, but also *legitimate fears*. You have experienced a great deal of harassment, injustice and persecution in the name of sharia and you want to stem that tide. Fair enough. Good reason. But if we now begin to dialogue seriously with each other and the sharia has been cleansed and other agreements discussed throughout this book have been reached, then would you still object to having Christians subjected to sharia law in sharia states? If not, would you continue to expect all Muslims to be subject to

your Christian-based Common Law? If so, why? On what basis? Why “no” to the first question and “yes” to the last? *This is where the effect of earlier discussed parameter shifts should drive us into new directions.*³¹ This is a question of goose and gander. What is good for the one is good for the other. What is bad for the one is bad for the other.

In all of this it is good to remember that, though militants push for a severe form of literal sharia, most sharia advocates are not militant terrorists and can, I suspect, live with a more liberal form, provided it is negotiated in a positive climate of trust, goodwill and respect.

▲ PLURALISM AND THE MAJORITY FACTOR ———

For a multi-cultural and multi-religious Nigeria there really is no alternative to pluralism. Though adherents of both religions are frequently heard advocating pluralism,³² both also engage in the game of numbers and majorities. Griswold was repeatedly told, “Democracy is a numbers game. That’s why whoever has more believers is on top.”³³ Hence there is the fierce competition of numbers going on that causes every census to derail. Abdul-Razaq Ibrahim Fagge argues that with Muslims having a 50% majority, Christians 40% and Traditionalists 10%, “one may expect the Islamic legal system to prevail.”³⁴ Vice Admiral Nyako declared that “a cardinal pillar of democracy is the acceptance of the majority decision of a legislative body endorsed by the Chief Executive as law.”³⁵ Indeed, that is so—if we want to continue with the adversarial system we operate. Of course, Christians also claim a majority. Who actually knows?

But even in the adversarial atmosphere of the West, the views of the majority cannot simply be imposed on the minority[-ies]. The latter have rights that are protected by the constitution. They cannot be overridden in roughshod manner by a minor majority.

Certainly a majority of ten percent cannot topple an existing legal system and replace it with a different one. Such major changes need the consent of almost all stakeholders if it is to succeed. Why do we have our current controversies? Partially because the colonialists overrode Muslims in roughshod manner, which now, almost a century later, is producing this backlash. But Muslims now overriding the “other side” will not produce justice for all. Muslims have experienced a bitter pill. It cannot be corrected by passing it on to the next people in line! Two wrongs do not make a right. One injustice cannot be corrected by another injustice. Besides, we have heard it repeatedly in this series: It is un-Islamic to impose a religion on a people. It is unbelievable that some Muslims and Christians want to use the modern adversarial majority party system in Nigeria to impose an alien legal system on an unwilling people.

Of course, in their reaction to the sharia issue, Christians should remember and acknowledge the colonial undermining of sharia. That *was* an unjust imposition. As Mohammed Tabi’u put it, the revived sharia in Nigeria “is the case of a colonized people trying to reclaim their values in the post-colonial period.”³⁶ This actually sounds exactly like the goal of MB ethnic groups placed in the hands of Muslim emirs during the colonial era and that is discussed under the heading further down in this chapter, “Internal Colonialism.”

As in so many Christian-Muslim issues, they face similar issues but look for different, if not opposite, solutions. Since both religions have suffered from unwanted colonial impositions, we should understand each other's problems sympathetically and work together to undo and prevent any imposition on each other from now on. Remember: What is bad for the goose is also bad for the gander. Or as Jesus put it, "Do unto others..."

True, if we take the current historical situation of all religions in Nigeria being governed by secular Common Law as legitimate, then Fagge's proposal above is legitimate, for one injustice is as (il)legitimate as another! If Common Law may legitimately be imposed on an unwilling people, then why not sharia law? If one religion-based system may be imposed, why not the other? However, as two wrongs do not make a right, so two injustices do not create justice. If we want to cut through the majority-minority game in order to arrive at the best possible mutually satisfactory arrangement, then even minorities need to have their rights acknowledged and safeguarded, especially major minorities. If this has not been the case in the past, we cannot undo the damage. As Gordon Spykman wrote in the context of human rights, "We cannot undo the past, but we can repent of what has happened and is still going on."³⁷ *We must simply agree to start over with fresh arrangements and leave the injustices and grievances of the past behind.* Nigeria has the unique chance of showing the world how it is done! What an opportunity! But we can't do it unless we forget our grievances, be honest and work at it together. We can redeem the reputation of Mother Africa! Yes, we can!! *Christians and Muslims are forgiving people.*

At the federal level, the proportions of the two groups being about equal, I ask you to consider the type of pluralism just described: strict equality among the parties at the table characterized by tolerance and mutual goodwill without any special privilege. This means that we quit playing census and majority games. From here on it is a game of equal partnership while signs of any superiority complex are out of place.

Though in the past, I did not favour leaving the religion question out of the census, I now feel that for the time being the question *should* be kept out. Let us leave the majority game behind for

now. *First create a workable system based on an atmosphere of equality, tolerance and goodwill rather than on the numbers game.*

At state level the situation is more varied and more complicated. I am suggesting a **“five or ten plan.”** With guidance from FG and supervised by a small group of state indigenes highly respected for their integrity and representing both religions,

*each state could consider taking a religion census. No matter how minimal the number of Christians or Muslims in the state, to begin with, a five or ten percent minimum of all elective and appointed positions might be awarded the minority religion for the next five years. That equation would be adjusted in states with different proportions and be reviewed every five years. The goal should be to work in time towards fair representation that reflects the real situation but with a **minimum** of five or ten per cent reserved for the minority religion or worldview. Similar patterns could be developed at LG levels.*

Hans-Martien ten Napel, a constitutional lawyer and political scientist with Kuyperian leanings who specialises in church-state relations, suggested, “A multi-cultural conception of democracy requires that power-sharing arrangements be introduced.” He advises that this be done by “*consociation*,” which is “a political arrangement in which various groups...share power according to an agreed formula or mechanism.” This could include “an electoral system of proportional representation, executive power-sharing, provisions for cultural [and religious] autonomy, and safeguards in the form of mutual vetoes.”³⁸

The main point of this section is to do away with the numbers mentality and aim for a democracy in which everyone participates and where minority rights are protected, honoured and observed. The numbers emphasis leads to oppression and exclusion, the opposite of what Nigeria needs. The numbers may provide the majority in state government and LGs through elections, but they

should not determine rights. The rights of the majority and the minority[-ies], at least the sizable minorities, are equal. That is pluralism. And that is so African—to operate by consensus rather than numbers that lead to the disenfranchisement of many.

▲ PARTY POLITICS

There are some good reasons to question the benefits of imported party politics. It has created so much disunity and division among the people to the extent that it has torn ethnic communities apart into opposing groups, even damaging the unity of church and mosque communities. Muslim and Christian candidates along with their supporters defame their opponents fiercely, including their faith mates. In Plateau State, for example, during the last two gubernatorial elections, most major candidates were members of one church, COCIN. But you'd never know they were fellow Christians, let alone members of the same denomination! All the moral restraints of religion are thrown to the wind. Muslims are no better. It basically has amounted to multiple crusades to place certain people in power with their supporters expecting ample rewards in terms of position. And position, of course, means access to money. Though ethnicity and religion are not supposed to play a part, they merely go underground and play their barely disguised distorted roles there. And then there is the role of the opposition whose function it is to deliberately critique, find fault and, in general, berate whatever the government in power does, whether good or bad. This is all based on secular assumptions about separation of religion and politics and on the Western adversarial model. It all goes against the grain of the two religions not only but also of the traditional consensual decision-making in Nigeria. And it forces the two most omnipresent forces in Nigeria, namely religion and ethnicity, into illegitimate and destructive roles underground.

Chandra Pasma of the Canadian Kuyperian justice group,

Citizens for Public Justice, faces the same adversarial system in Canada and pleaded for a change in the Canadian party system that could be applied to the Nigerian system as well. She called for all parties to work together for the good of all citizens. “Political parties need to cooperate” and work on a conciliatory basis. “Parliamentarians of every party represent the legitimately held views of Canadians [read: Nigerians]. All Canadians [read: Nigerians] deserve the right to have their voices heard in the decisions of our country. This cannot be accomplished unless parties are willing to put aside partisan attacks and work together to achieve the common good.”³⁹

This proposed change would do away with the current adversarial system and fit well with the proposals for shura and consensus offered further down. Furthermore, it is in keeping with the core spirit of both religions.

One of the political features that encourages the development of these illegitimate roles is that our political parties are supposed to be secular and neutral with respect to religion. Politicians and government authorities are afraid of religion in their sphere. As I wrote in Volume 5,

While these people are politicians conscious of their respective religions, the secret of their cooperation is keeping religion out of the party's affairs. Etiebet warned, “Please don't try to bring religious garb into Nigerian politics. We are a secular society and the dominant ones are Christianity and Islam. We do not want anybody to bring these two religions into conflict.” There is no need to repeat what I wrote on the subject in Monograph Four. So, religious people in; religious groups with their vested interests out. That is the standard Christian recipe for peace and cooperation between Christians and Muslims.⁴⁰

And so we create parties that hide their true intentions. Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) and the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) pretended not to be Muslim parties. No reference to religion in their names and membership included Christians. The reality of their strong Muslim orientation was barely hidden and occasionally it would come out into the open, usually in distorted form because Islam is not supposed to be favoured.⁴¹ Neither the listings of the Nigerian Muslim parties on the website of the African Unification Front (AUF)⁴² nor their Wikipedia entries provide any clue to their Muslim orientation. Religious parties in other African countries, both Christian and Muslim, appear openly on the AUF list. Paden and Shawulu show clearly how this “underground religion” plays havoc with both religion and politics.

So with both religions in Nigeria actively combining religion and politics in an illegitimate way, let's give open recognition a chance so that a healthy and legitimate combination can play positive roles in the nation. Pretence of neutrality creates confusion and deceit while it leads to the chaos of the politically correct. Allow Christians and Muslims to campaign openly by bringing their religion-based social views to bear on their political programmes, but without religious or political rancour.⁴³

Other countries, including some Western nations, have overtly religion-based parties. My own Kuyperian tradition spawned a Christian political party that has been very influential in The Netherlands and even produced a number of Prime Ministers.⁴⁴ Seeing how both Liberal and Conservative parties were secular and, under the influence of the French Revolution, eager to reduce the influence of religion in culture, including politics, Kuyper “argued for the right to bring a revelation-based perspective into public life.” He successfully launched the Anti-Revolutionary Party, “rev-

olution” here referring especially to the anti-religious spirit of the French Revolution. Though Christian, the Party was independent from any church; it depended directly on divine guidance from both the Bible and general revelation that comes through history and experience. It was an expression of the Church as organism, of the Body of Christ in society.⁴⁵ Paul Marshall, an American who has been monitoring religious developments throughout much of the world, advised that there is much to learn from the Christian Democratic parties in Europe, especially from the Kuyperian strand.⁴⁶

Bacote raises the question whether Christians should always organize themselves separately into Christian parties. He decided that this would depend on the local situation.⁴⁷ Years ago, Henry Farrant, a long-time SUM missionary leader and statesman during colonial days, opposed the notion of Christian political parties. “It is important,” he wrote, “that Christians should learn not to make the Christian faith into a political party.” It “attracts one group and permanently alienates another.... The trap can only be avoided by a spiritual understanding of our Lord’s teaching and having a consequent love for all men.”⁴⁸ Statesman that he was, Farrant was and thought like an Evangelical who do or at least did not engage in structural renewal. He assumed the existing adversarial system and could not imagine any other alternatives. Christian parties worthy of the name do not behave that way. I know Kuyperian members of various Christian political parties, some even as professional politicians, who embrace the entire world and reject no one. The Evangelical perspective along with its traditional dualism is simply too narrow to imagine such developments.

In the Nigerian context, religious parties, whether Christian or Muslim or in combination, would not be out of place. Nigerian Muslims discuss it occasionally. In general there is a tendency in Nigeria for people to organize themselves for social and other purposes on basis of religion, simply because Nigerians are so religious.

Governor Sani of sharia fame encouraged Muslims from all walks of life to organize Muslim organizations to push Islam everywhere.⁴⁹ The country is full of religious social and professional organizations. So, the approach would not be foreign.

An important factor to take into consideration is that Christians are not meant to struggle by themselves. They are not a bunch of individualists who find their own way in life. They are a Body of Christ, a community where people support each other, not just in the church institute but in the world. Religious organizations in various sectors can give expression to that sense of community. Such communities think and reflect together. Individual Christians and Muslims should not have to constantly re-invent the Christian or Muslim wheel for themselves; they should explore things together as a Body and be aware of what worked in the past.

Kuyper and his followers “believed that there are real, divine ordinances built into creation by God that can be discovered through experience. These laws are discovered not merely through Biblical exegesis or spiritual reflection but in the process of governance.” The same is true for laws in other cultural sectors: they are discovered by actual practice. The Bible does not “mandate the adoption of Scripture as a code for Christian law for the state.” Christians can learn much about a Christian approach to politics by studying the ways of politics through the centuries. “The rules of political life are built into the created order.” Even “non-Christians can articulate approaches to national life that reflect divine principles.”

“How does a statesman acquire knowledge of the divine ordinances?” Kuyper explained that “it requires the ability to derive Scriptural principles as well as the acumen to draw principles of political order” from observation and study of the world. There is need for “interdisciplinary expertise” that must lead to “coherent unity within the thought of the statesman.” This approach was exemplified by Jesus, His incarnation, the mutual permeation of divinity and humanity.

Kuyper did not think his approach was valid everywhere and at all times. Situations are too different from each other for one standard Christian political theory for all. But there *are* “eternally valid” principles such as justice, authority, struggle for freedom and progress. There is also the communal nature of religions and the need of their adherents to struggle together and support each other. The Old Testament history of Israel serves as an example of the fortunes of a nation under circumstances of obedience and disobedience to God. “Once these principles are combined with knowledge of history and politics [which are gained elsewhere], then it is possible to move towards discovery of the divine ordinances.” The work is never finished. “The political principles, once discovered, are not to be left alone but refined with each subsequent generation.” But however you organize politics, there are certain norms or characteristics that must be met. They should at the very least include the following: “a climate of service and nurture, a climate of justice, an attitude of humility and a zeal for creative development.”⁵⁰

Kuyper’s party was fully pluralistic in that it supported the rights of all philosophical and religious orientations equally, secularism being one of them without it constituting the *de facto* establishment as it does in Canada. Till this day, that form of pluralism evokes respect across the world, even among some Canadian secularists who are usually not aware of its religious background. Canada has had to grudgingly make room in various cultural sectors for some of the pluralistic demands of Kuyperian Canadians. The logic of its pluralism so exposes the establishmentarian logic of secularism that governments and courts were forced to buckle under.⁵¹ This powerful version of pluralism is realistic and fair, for it allows everyone a place at the table, prevents the development of unhealthy political correctness and gives room for religions to contribute their noblest and best *openly*—and lets the people decide.

For an exercise, I urge you to study Appendix 16, 18 and 22 in Volume 5. A comparative study of these three documents may help loosen up our political imagination as we move into the negotiation mode with our Muslim compatriots. They will help us develop a political mind that can benefit from the experiences of three widely different bodies, the Anti-Revolutionary Party of some earlier generations, the Christian Reformed Church in North America and CAN. You have your work cut out for you!

Some Muslims also had thoughts about religious parties. Long ago Sheikh Abubakar Gumi preferred them. He wanted a political system “that is rooted in...Islam.” Christians and Muslims should both have their own parties. In the case of mixed parties, Muslims would not allow a Christian to serve as leader.⁵² If you know anything about Gumi, his attitude towards Christian leadership will not surprise you. It does not bode well for good relationships, but at least he wanted an open role for religion in politics.

The Islamic Democratic Progressive Party, you may already have read in Volume 6, showed a more positive attitude towards cooperation. Waziri Gwantu described it as “a politically-based association to further their struggle for the establishment of sharia in states where Muslims are in the majority.” The National Chairman was Mansur Al-Mansoor Williams, who announced that the party had a “14-point agenda” that included:

Giving every Nigerian citizen the right to participate in running affairs of the state; ensuring that rulers were not above the law, everyone is equal before the law; providing every Nigerian with all basic necessities of life; protecting every Nigerian from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment; protection of religious sentiments; freedom of conscience and conviction; freedom of association; freedom of expression; the right to protest against tyranny; the security of personal freedom and

sanctity; freedom of private life; protection of honour and security to life and property.

This was to become a multi-religious effort. The aim was to form “an ideal government which will be subservient to the Creator of mankind and the whole universe as demonstrated by both Holy Prophets Muhammad and Jesus.” It was to include “wise and intellectual men and women of both divine religions (Islam and Christianity)” who would together “establish a uniform regime based on the principles of the Qur’an and divine teachings of the Bible” in order to “lead humanity to happiness in this world and in the hereafter.” Chairman Williams stressed that his party “would expectedly be the only dynamic force for the 21st century and beyond” and added, “We are committed to bringing back spiritual values in the world that is daily becoming godless, materialistic and arrogant.” Apparently not lacking in self-confidence, Williams “believed” that his party was “the only force and political umbrella under which all Nigerians can unite. It would also be the only one capable of creating a real spirit of love, brotherhood and peaceful co-existence irrespective of religious affiliation.”⁵³

Plenty of intention; much hope. The multi-religious nature of this venture is typical of Yoruba mentality that tends towards inclusivism and syncretism, more so than the North that is more anti-theological in attitude. But please note that even this explicitly inter-religious venture is still to be based on sharia.⁵⁴ *Regard it as a step in the right direction, an overtly religious ecumenical political experiment in pluralism with a strong sharia component. Give Muslims a chance to start somewhere, to experiment. Christians would do well not only to encourage it but for some to join and for others to create a Christian parallel. Hopefully some compromise agreement about the sharia dimension can be achieved.*

No doubt, some Christians will regard the suggestion that they join in an effort to extend sharia to Muslim-majority states as out-

rageous. But if we accept the various worldview elements I have presented in earlier chapters and volumes, then it may not be so outrageous. If we recognize that everything is infused with religion, neutrality is a myth, pluralism is a must and law must reflect the aspirations of a people, then on what basis do we resist such extension? Common law brings as much dissatisfaction among Muslims as does sharia among Christians. There is every reason to assist each other to develop a pluralistic system with which both feel comfortable. Williams' approach must be given serious consideration as one of several models. It may suit some people; it won't others, but that is true for all political parties.

Allow the formation of parties based on different worldviews and religions. Some may openly be based on a single religious orientation; others could form parties that include adherents of both religions who have found enough social principles in common that they will offer as their platform. Both kinds of parties will offer their vision and hopes for the country and the people will vote for the one they prefer. There is no special need for a secular set up that purposefully offers a "neutral" platform, for such a party would not be neutral, for it would be based on the secular belief and value system! But, in the name of pluralism, such a party should be welcomed side by side with the others.

What would be the advantage of such a party system over against our current one? *The major advance would be its realistic nature.* It would openly acknowledge the reality, the power and the purpose of religion and allow it to work itself out in the marketplace of politics. Religion would no longer be suppressed so that it would now be able to play its legitimate and positive role publicly.

One of the issues during Nigerian election campaigns is the religion of the candidates. The question keeps cropping up whether

Christians and Muslims may or should elect candidates from the other religion. Due to legal requirements, parties are purposefully multi-religious.⁵⁵ Former President Obasanjo received much support from the core North. The practice has long-standing support. Ibn Khaldun wrote centuries ago: "Good leaders are determined by the quality of their rule as seen by their subjects rather than by the purity of the ideas to which they subscribe. Governments are the just desserts of the societies in which they are found,"⁵⁶ a well-known current platitude that is apparently of ancient origin.

We have already seen that there can be a disjunction between a politician's official faith or doctrine and his actual political policies. Sometimes this means necessary and legitimate compromise in the face of pragmatic realities, especially in pluriform societies like Nigeria. At other times this is due to a disjunction between the doctrines of the group to which one officially belongs and the personal convictions and ambitions lodging in the heart where your *real* commitment and faith reside. Such disjunctions are usually not difficult to detect. When a candidate who seems to be an active Christian or Muslim destroys the reputation and spreads false rumours about his opponents, then the disjunction is obvious. His official religion is external and peripheral; his real faith and values is in power, selfish ambition and similar dangerous traits; it may have tribalistic qualities.⁵⁷ The question of his official religion is thus often irrelevant, for he may not be governing according to its tenets.⁵⁸ Both Christians and Muslims need to pay attention to this possibility.

I believe that the party system and the short terms of office have played havoc with the new sharia campaign. Not only did opposition parties and politicians defile, berate and derail the enterprise, but the short term of office also militated against a more gradual approach that would have allowed for better preparation. It was all too rushed. What with an ill-prepared and corrupt judiciary on seat in every state, much more time was needed to put

everything in place. However, politicians were in a hurry to make their mark with a view to the next election. Though throughout this series I have rejected the notion that the entire enterprise was merely political, I do recognize political motivation as part of it. The rush and inadequate planning gave the sharia a bad smell in Nigeria and, indeed, throughout the world. The campaign's architects have to take the responsibility for doing much damage to the reputation of sharia and Islam as a whole. They became the laughingstock of the world. Probably it should have started with a consensus of the political parties to all support it so that *long-range* plans could have been adequately made, regardless of who was in power. How can serious Muslims use something as sacred as sharia as a political football? The whole thing was an incredible show of defamation of what Muslims supposedly hold the most sacred. The campaign required more spiritual and political maturity than was at hand. The beginning was a tragic lack of preparation, not even to mention the treatment allotted to Christians as reported in Volume 7.

The above criticism differs from that of Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, who insisted on another kind of preparation. He wanted to cleanse the entire social fabric of the sharia states to raise it to an impossible utopian level prior to the installation of the new sharia. Though he sounded strong and brave, it appears that he thought the sharia to be such a weak instrument that it cannot work under real, existing conditions and would have to await a more utopian environment. Sharia was not to be the engine to *create* better conditions so much as the end product of a long process of social progress that sounds unreal. From my Christian perspective, his demand was based on too optimistic a view of human nature and an inadequate sense of human evil. His kind of utopia has never existed and never will. This is a question of Christian versus Muslim worldview.⁵⁹

In view of the negatives associated with the current party

system, I want to recall for serious consideration two political styles that are at home in Africa but have been neglected in the current fracas. I refer you to the Muslim *shura* or consultation and the traditional consensus model. Mohamad Rachid placed *shura* first in a short list of Islamic “major political principles.” Though it may take different forms in different contexts and countries, “it should be practised by Muslims all the time,” he wrote.⁶⁰ The writer of a Wikipedia article explains that “some Muslims believe that Islam requires all decisions made by and for the Muslim societies to be made by *shura* of the Muslim community and believe this to be the basis for implementing representative democracy.” This belief is characteristic of liberal movements within Islam. Many Muslim countries have a *shura* body in their governmental structure. A bit later in the same article the question arises: “What is the *shura* principle in Islam? ... It is predicated on three basic precepts. First, that all persons in any given society are equal in human and civil rights. Second, that public issues are best decided by majority view. And third, that the three other principles of justice, equality and human dignity, which constitute Islam’s moral core, ... are best realized, in personal as well as public life, under *shura* governance.” However, many prominent Muslim leaders deny that *shura* can be interpreted in such modern democratic ways.⁶¹ Probably one of the more balanced recent discussions on the subject is the article by Muqtebar Khan of Adrian College, Michigan, “*Shura* and Democracy,” which I highly recommend for Muslims and Christians participating in the negotiations for the new Nigeria.⁶² Even though he doubts that *shura* is compulsory or even that it *must* be interpreted democratically, he does seem to allow for such usage.

Indian Muslim activist –not militant!—scholar, Asghar Engineer is more certain about the issue and gives it a modern democratic twist. *Shura* is his first answer to the question about the democratic nature of Islam. It is emphasized in the Qur’an (3:159; 42:38) and applied even to the Prophet, who was “required to con-

sult his people in worldly matters and Muslims are required to consult each other in their secular affairs.” Engineer acknowledges that this *shura* and “modern day...democracy may not be exactly similar,” but “the spirit of ...democracy and the Qur’anic injunction to consult...is the same in spirit.” Today, *shura* includes democratic processes, constitutions and elections.⁶³ Clearly Nigerian Muslims have homework to do on these issues and this should be done *shura*-style.

Can its practice be adapted to modern pluralistic Nigeria and be used to improve or even replace the adversarial style of the party system? The concept itself seems to favour respect and dialogue rather than the confrontation that currently characterizes party protocol.

And then we have the African Traditional concept of *consensus*, a practice to which I have already referred several times in this chapter. I have created Appendix 86, where you can become more familiar with the subject.⁶⁴

Consensus is a process for group decision-making. It is a method by which an entire group of people can come to an agreement. The input and ideas of all participants are gathered and synthesized to arrive at a final decision acceptable to all. Through consensus, we are not only working to achieve better solutions, but also to promote the growth of community and trust. Voting is a means by which we choose one alternative from several. Consensus, on the other hand, is a process of synthesizing many diverse elements together. With consensus people can and should work through differences and reach a mutually satisfactory position. It is possible for one person’s insights or strongly held beliefs to sway the whole group. No ideas are lost, each member’s input is valued as part of the solution.

*A group committed to consensus may utilize other forms of decision making (individual, compromise, majority rules) when appropriate; however, a group that has adopted a consensus model will use that process for any item that brings up a lot of emotions, is something that concerns people's ethics, politics, morals or other areas where there is much investment. Consensus does not mean that everyone thinks that the decision made is necessarily the best one possible, or even that they are sure it will work. What it does mean is that in coming to that decision...when it works, collective intelligence does come up with better solutions than could individuals.*⁶⁵

The Ghanian Kwasi Wiredu “discusses the use of the consensus principle for political theory and practice in Africa. The...principle used to be widespread in African politics, and Wiredu elaborates on the example of the traditional political system of the Ashantis in Ghana as a possible guideline for a recommendable path for African politics.” “According to Wiredu, a non-party system based on consensus as a central principle of political organisation in Africa could avoid the evident problems of both the one-party system and the multi-party system imposed by the West.” So far, an editorial introduction to Wiredu's paper. And now Wiredu himself:

It is often remarked that decision making in traditional African life and governance was, as a rule, by consensus. Like all generalisations about complex subjects, it may be legitimate to take this with a pinch of prudence. But there is considerable evidence that decision by consensus was often the order of the day in African deliberations, and on principle. So it was not just an exercise in hyperbole when Kaunda, (democratically) displaced President of Zambia, said, “In our original societies we operated by consensus. An issue was talked out in solemn conclave until such time as agreement could be

achieved.” Or when Nyerere, retired President of Tanzania, also said, “In African society the traditional method of conducting affairs is by free discussion” and quoted Guy Clutton-Brock with approval to the effect that “the elders sit under the big trees, and talk until they agree.”

Reconciliation is, in fact, a form of consensus. It is a restoration through a reappraisal of the significance of the original bones of contention. It does not necessarily involve a complete identity of...opinions. It suffices to feel that all parties can feel that adequate account has been taken of their point of view in any proposed scheme of future action or co-existence. Similarly, consensus does not in general entail total agreement. To begin with, consensus usually presupposes an original position of diversity. Because issues do not always polarize opinion on lines of strict contradictoriness, dialogue can function by means, for example, of the smoothing of edges, to produce compromises that are agreeable to all or, at least, not obnoxious to any. Furthermore, where there is the will to consensus, dialogue can lead to a willing suspension of disagreement, making possible agreed actions without necessarily agreed notions.

Consider the non-party alternative. Imagine a dispensation under which governments are formed not by parties, but by the consensus of elected representatives. Government, in other words, becomes a kind of coalition – a coalition not, as in the common acceptance of parties, but of citizens. There is no impediment whatsoever to the formation of political associations to propagate preferred ideologies. But in councils of state, affiliation with any such association does not necessarily determine the chances of selection for a position of responsibility. Two things can be expected. First, political associations will be avenues for channeling all desirable pluralisms, but they will be without the Hobbesian proclivities of political parties, as

*they are known under majoritarian politics. And second, without the constraints of membership in parties relentlessly dedicated to wrestling power or retaining it, representatives will be more likely to be actuated by the objective merits of given proposals than by ulterior considerations. In such an environment, willingness to compromise, and with it the prospects of consensus, will be enhanced.*⁶⁶

Please do read the entire article in Appendix 86 for serious consideration. I recommend that this traditional practice be considered together with that other tradition of *shura* and see what comes out of that mix. Perhaps these practices could give new life to the party system. Perhaps the party system should be discarded in favour of these traditional features. The last paragraph in the long quote above points in the direction of the potential benefits promised by such a change of gears.

Rather than spend a lot more time defining and discussing the concept, I refer you to a strong statement achieved by consensus and determination on the part of the African Development Forum 2000 about HIV/AIDS.⁶⁷ Only a few years ago many African leaders were in a state of strong denial, but they have come around to a strong consensus to take the bull by the horns. HIV/AIDS is not the only bull to be defeated. Replace references in the statement to “HIV/AIDS” and “Africa” to “religious peace” and “Nigeria”/“Nigerians” respectively and you have the strong consensus needed for our peace. It took persuasion, arm twisting, tremendous persistence and stubbornness on the part of a number of pushers, but they succeeded. What other kind of definition and description do you want of consensus? Here you have it. The impossible became possible. Christians, Muslims and others reached a consensus no one wanted to begin with. It is deeply African and it works. Check it out! Better yet, try it!

*The above materials give me hope that an expanded version of Muslim shura and an updated traditional consensus model could help us get rid of the colonial adversarial system that creates so much hostility among the people and between various governments. Combine that with my earlier proposal of the “equality of status, access and rights” formula, and you may have a winner! So, now our formula is expanded to “equality of status, access and rights; critical solidarity; independence; shura/consensus.” I recommend that this combination be explored seriously. Such a shift in parameters is likely to result in much greater co-operation all across the board.*⁶⁸

One reason people resist religion-based political parties is that sometimes religion itself is distorted into an unofficial but *de facto* party. I describe that ugly feature elsewhere⁶⁹ and strongly urge you to re-read those materials. Instead of repeating or summarizing them, I encourage you to follow the study guide below. But I do need to clarify a point I neglected to mention in those earlier discussions, namely that the communal aspect of religion is valid and necessary. Religion is by its very nature communal or social. It is when these two aspects of religion, the personal and the communal, are separated from each other that problems arise. Then each goes its own way and ends up working against everyone else, even against the religion itself.

At the end of the day, it is good to hear the warning from Kuyperian Mouw directed to Christians, but which Muslims may also wish to take to heart. As religious people

we must seek the common good with the clear awareness that in the public square we are surrounded by people “who call good evil and evil good, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” [Isaiah 5:20 in the Old Testament]. And yet it is in those cir-

cumstances that we hear again the Lord's ancient call to His redeemed people to seek the welfare of the city.... This messiness, then, isn't something that we can hope to eliminate; nor can we minimize it as we develop our strategies for public witness. To endorse...[this] is to learn to live with some...messiness.⁷⁰

Mouw's statement should be taken to heart, for it can help prevent premature disappointment when things do not result in clean and clear-cut arrangements and when so many questions remain unanswered. Just do not expect to end up with clear-cut delineations without remaining problems. Do not expect that all the jots and tittles will be in place. They never will. Life is just too messy for that. Accept it.

Study Guide 9 — Religion Distorted as “Party” **(Appendix 105)**

▲ PLURALISM AND THE ETHNIC FACTOR —————

It is an easy slide from the above to the subject of ethnicity. It already appeared in the discussion there in its degraded form of ethnocentrism or tribalism. I am going to draw your attention to the role of ethnicity in the Nigerian struggle, both in its positive and negative aspects. But, apart from a short section in Appendix 75, I will not repeat what I wrote earlier on the subject.⁷¹ I will “force” you to turn to those places by means of the study guide further down.

Africa is well known for its ethnocentrism, for its strong emphasis on the community. In the traditional worldview, one's identity is deeply rooted in the tribe. Benny van der Walt refers repeatedly to Africa's communalism – an over-emphasis on the community. All members of the ethnic group are obligated to advance the harmony and power of the group. Traditionally, this is

a loyalty that stops at the border of the tribe. One has little or no obligation to members of other ethnic groups. Why, some ask, is tribalism so rampant in the church? Because the traditional view of community or communalism still reigns in the church; it still has a strong hold on the people deep down in their hearts. The new religion and the church's power are useful in so far as they enhance the well-being of the tribe. They will be ignored by many if they prove inconvenient to the tribe.⁷²

Kuyperian thinking wants to be realistic and give space to all the various social forces that are out there. That is the pluralism for which it is so renowned. A healthy political order cannot shut out reality, for that leads to political correctness, something I have vouched to avoid. For Nigeria that means it has to make room for the realities of both ethnicity and religion, give them constructive roles instead of shutting them out and thus turning them into destructive forces.

At one time Ambassador Tanko Yusuf campaigned for a government chamber in which every tribe would have at least a minimal presence, his aim being to harness the constructive side of Nigeria's ethnic composition, rather than have it play dubious and destructive roles underground. As religion needs to be openly recognized and given its appropriate function, so with the ethnic groups. I believe Yusuf brought something to the table that should be seriously examined. This was the man who served as the Christian apostle of unity and who was strongly opposed to tribalism and divisions.⁷³ This was not a contradiction so much as that he realized *the only way to overcome tribalism is to give the tribe a legitimate role*. I am not sure I can take you further on this topic, but *I urge especially political strategists to seek out close political associates of the late Ambassador to check out and perhaps build on his plan.*⁷⁴

Ethnocentrism or tribalism is not restricted to Nigeria, of course; it is found in various shapes and with different dynamics

among all peoples. It is part of the same group of issues that includes such concepts as collectivism vs individualism, an issue that has long been and continues to be discussed by sociologists, political scientists and economists. Kuyperians have been concerned with these issues since day one.

Kuyperian thought insists that a human being is an individual in communion or in relationship with his neighbours and thus rejects the two poles of individualism (Western) and communalism (African). Nigerian Muslims often claim to favour communalism, but I wonder to what extent such claims are genuinely Islamic or more an expression of ethnocentrism or culture in general. Wanting to do justice to both of these two poles, Kuyperians advocate pluralism. Van der Walt describes the three social perspectives with the help of three examples. Individualism is like a cluster of individual atoms: “there is no social reality apart from the individual identity.” Collectivism is like the “segments of [an] orange [that] have no separate identity apart from the whole orange, which is then more real and more important than the segments.” Pluralism is like a clock, where every cog has its own place and simultaneously interlocks with all its parts to make it run. “In the same way, each societal relationship is a reality and has its own place and right to existence—in harmony with all the other societal relationships or structures.”

Van der Walt summarizes this pluralist view in the following seven points. As you read them, contrast them with the typical outlook of ethnocentrism with its hierarchical and central command structures as you perhaps know it from your own experience and culture.

- *In an open, plural society a great variety of relationships in which people live and work are acknowledged and respected, and not only one encompassing societal relationship which dominates society (for example, the state, family, clan or tribe) as in a closed [tribal] society.*

- *Societal relationships can be institutional relations, that is, instituted by God, such as marriage, family, church and state. We are born into most of these relationships. There are all sorts of relationships, however, which come into being through human initiative and endeavour, and of which man becomes a member voluntarily and from which one can withdraw again, such as a sports club, a trade union, etc. Such kinds of societal relationships are, however, also subject to God's creational norms.*
- *A societal relationship binds people according to a specific yet limited purpose, and under specific conditions. Each relationship therefore has its own norms to give direction to it.*
- *Each societal relationship has its own nature, and therefore differs from all others as regards objectives and the way in which authority is maintained.*
- *Not all societal relationships are equally important (for example, a state as compared to a soccer club), but they are still equal.*
- *Because each societal relationship is equal, it is also sovereign in its own sphere. Other relationships may not interfere in its sphere without fundamentally good reasons.*
- *This competence in their own sphere does not mean that societal relationships are divided from each other in watertight compartments. They should not compete or be threatened by each other. One also cannot expect everything from one societal relationship (such as family or marriage). The wealth and diversity of being human will only emerge when the various relationships come to full deployment.⁷⁵*

At this point I challenge you with two study guides on the related issues of ethnocentrism and the question of individualism vs collectivism/communalism.

**Study Guide 10 — The Problem of Ethnocentrism
(Appendix 105)**

And here is a study guide on a Kuyperian perspective on individualism and collectivism, also from Volume 5.

Study Guide 11— Individualism vs Collectivism
(Appendix 105)

▲ INDIGENE VS SETTLER _____

We also need to address the issue of indigenes versus settlers in this section, for it has played a crucial part in Christian-Muslim relations, in both MB and the core North.⁷⁶ We cannot continue to treat third generation residents as settlers or foreigners. We cannot welcome non-indigene business people and professionals, but demand that they leave their religions at home. Islam does not accept such bifurcation: you come as a whole person, preferably a Muslim. Originally the influx of MBers and Southerners was part of the colonial invasion of the North; they were not invited by the local community. However, after several decades of independence, they can no longer be considered invaders. Whenever they flee due to violence, Northern governments invariably invite them back. Thus they can no longer be regarded as unwanted guests. Yes, communities have their own right to protect themselves, but after Southerners have contributed so much to their host communities and have been invited to return several times, they need to be treated as equals.

Hassan Karofi wrote an aggressive defence of Kano's alleged tradition of absorbing strangers in the city not only but also in its culture and structures.⁷⁷ I would urge you to read it, since it gives quite a different picture than the volumes in this series would lead you to expect. Though I do not have the space for a full analysis, I do point out that all the alien individuals and groups that he mentions by name that migrated to Kano over the centuries were Muslims; Christians enter the picture only towards the end. One gets the pic-

ture of total peace for all, including Christians. If you have read the previous volumes you may well ask whether there is more than one Kano. In fact, yes, there is. There is the ancient city itself and then there is the Sabon Gari or Strangers' Quarters, where the Southerners, many of them Christian, live. And, of course, earlier volumes tell you that, instead of being an exemplary city of peace, Kano has been a cauldron of violence between Christians and Muslims not only, but also between Muslim sects themselves. Though I find Karofi's article very fascinating and informative, I cannot accept his picture of the peaceful, tolerant and hospitable nature of Kano, at least not when it comes to Christians.

Some people had high hopes that the Plateau Peace Conference 2004 would solve that State's ethnic and religious problems. The report states that in pre-colonial Jos there were no Hausa indigenous groups. It also draws attention "to minutes of an interactive session among the various communities of Jos North LGA held in...2004, in which the Hausa made it clear that they lay no claims to the ownership of Jos and the stool of the Gbong Gwom Jos."⁷⁸ Unfortunately, the riots of 2008 were about the control of the Jos North LGA. *Had nothing been solved? What will it take?*

Ethnocentrism comes more easily to us than does pluralism. The latter needs to be learned and often comes with considerable struggle and human cost. Ethnocentrism comes more naturally because it is more in keeping with the egocentrism buried deep in our hearts. In the OT it was a common feature that, together with other negative cultural qualities and practices, were to some degree tolerated in the context of progressive revelation, while certain passages explicitly condemned it.⁷⁹ Since some readers may not have access to the *Companion CD* with all the appendices, I herewith copy Day 344 from my 1995 publication, *The Prophet Moses for Today*. It is most appropriate for the situation. The meditation reads as follows:

ROLE OF ALIEN

Leviticus 18:26—*But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things.*

Aliens have certain rights, according to the Bible, but also obligations. Living in the Middle Belt of Nigeria as I have since 1966, I am only too familiar with the ugly picture of the dominant settler communities who have taken over from the locals. While the Bible calls for the acceptance of settlers or aliens, it also provides guidelines for them to follow. The basic guideline is that they follow all the commandments God gave His people. That's what our text says today.

Sometimes local people have exploded with long-developing resentment against settler communities that have taken over local power and despise the locals, their customs, their religions and their rights. These situations often go back to colonial times, when such areas were put under Hausa or Fulani emirs and who then encouraged their own people to come and dominate. Our verse and others like it (Ex. 12:49; Lev. 16:29; 17:8-9; Num. 15:14, 29) expect the alien settler to recognize the same laws by which the people of God conduct themselves. If he puts himself above them, despises them and tramples on them, he can only expect resentment and discrimination. Worse, if he tries to force his own stamp on the host community, the community may resist him. He is no longer an alien protected by God's laws. He has become an invader.

Not surprising that some locals rise up.

This and other passages emphasize that in most cases the same law applies to local and alien, to indigene and to "settler." That is a powerful teaching that we Christians need to take more seriously. However, where the alien outsmarts the locals and takes over from them, he is "no longer an alien protected by God's laws. He has

become an invader.” This has happened frequently in Nigeria and it has often led to fierce uprisings by the locals. Though such uprisings may be unavoidable at times, when they happen, Christian leaders from all walks of life need to do their utmost to douse the fires of violence and try to settle the issue in a Biblically acceptable manner.

Justice can mean that the locals must accept the newcomers as their own within a few years or a generation. Give them the same privileges and obligations. *However, that justice may be hard to practise if the “alien” Nigerians come with secret plans and ambitions to take over the place.* That, of course, is the Christian complaint in Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi State, and Southern Zaria, Kaduna State.⁸⁰ And that is also the strong accusation of the Plateau people with respect to the Muslims amongst them. In such cases, the hard truth has to be spoken on all sides.

Yes, on all sides, also by me. I have shown my hand in the above paragraphs, my sympathies. But have Muslims in Jos, for example, no case at all? Or have Ibos in Kano or Zamfara no case at all? I refer you to Mahamman Adarawa’s two bitter articles about the 2008 Jos riots.⁸¹ What are we to make of that? As I have brought to your attention in other volumes, there are at least two histories written about Jos, that of the Christians and that of the Muslims. Just note the differences in vision between Volumes 2 and 3 of this series. I have not come across any objective history that I trust as representing the historical truth accurately. Probably the most reliable and objective—but neither fully neutral and certainly not fully as angry as Adarawa’s—is an article written by Umar Habila Danfulani of Unijos under the title “The Jos Peace Conference and the Indigene/Settler Question in Nigerian Politics.” He begins his essay as follows: “Labels such as ‘settler’, ‘native’, ‘non-native’, ‘host community’, ‘foreigner’, ‘native foreigner’, ‘stranger element’, ‘squatter’, ‘non-squatter’, ‘immigrant’, ‘migrant’, ‘indigene’, ‘non-indigene’, *mbák*, *Gambari*, *Hausa-*

Fulani, nyamiri, nasara, ngwa, arna, kirdi, and baro among many others are used daily in Nigeria to describe, stigmatise or stereotype the 'other' as a category who 'does not belong.' Such a beginning is enough to lead to the tentative conclusion that the "indigene vs settler" attitude is deeply ingrained in the Nigerian mentality of exclusion. Probably it is the natural result of the ethnocentrism that marks the entire country. That being the case, you cannot expect to erase this feature from the culture in a few easy steps. Even religions that basically disapprove of this kind of exclusionary attitude have a hard time overcoming it in their adherents. So, do not expect an easy solution to the cases of sharia states vs MB and Southern immigrants or that of Plateau State vs Muslims-Hausa/Fulani. When this coincides with religious fault lines it becomes even more intractable.

I just wrote that Danfulani's presentation was not fully neutral. A clear example is his treatment of Jos religious census figures. He wrote: "According to the 1952 census figures, Christians formed 84.5 per cent of the population of Jos town, with Muslims making 12 percent and adherents of traditional religions the remaining 3.5 percent. Today, Plateau State enjoys a majority Christian population of about 95 per cent, while Jos town itself is overwhelmingly Christian." Why this strange toggle between state and city here? There is no way that Muslims constitute only five per cent in Jos. Is Danfulani trying to hide something? Christians are likely to fault me for raising this question; Muslims will affirm it.

Danfulani claims that the land issue is the foremost problem causing the Plateau crisis. I disagree, though it is no doubt one of the sparks that helped jumpstart this sad history. I also agree that land issues are very important. Henry Farrant already recognized that in 1921, when he wrote, "You can have no more Christian thing than when you safeguard the land for the people."⁸² Nevertheless, I would promote Danfulani's second cause to first rank in terms of cause for violence. That cause "is centred over the

politics of participation in government by both ‘indigenes’ and ‘settlers.’” He wrote:

Moreover, appointments in Plateau State, which is predominantly Christian, during the long military (mis)rule was along religious lines, with the Muslim minority sometimes having more portfolios than Christians. With the return to multi-party democracy, however, the Hausa-Fulani Muslims were left out in the cold, since they lacked the numerical strength to successfully back their candidates. This coupled with the issue of ethnicity coalesce to cause Muslim Hausa-Fulani minority, who used to be in the centre of political activities, to feel that they are losing control. The Christians were eager to exercise their voting right to wrestle political control from the Hausa-Fulani Muslims whom they regard as “settlers.” In 1999, no Hausa-Fulani Muslim was voted either to the Senate or the National House of Assembly and only one was voted to the Plateau State of Assembly.

This heightened the indigeneship, citizenship and settlersip syndrome in the area. The recurrent problem constituted by the indigene/settler syndrome in Jos, mostly between the Hausa-Fulani self-styled Jasawa and the traditional natives of Jos town (the Berom, Anaguta and Afisare) constitute a major factor for the Jos crises.

The 2004 Jos Peace Conference ended up with declaring the Afizere, Anaguta and Berom ethnic groups as the only indigenes to Jos, “but as to the Hausa-Fulani...we make bold, on the evidence at our disposal, to advise them that they can qualify only as ‘citizens’ of Jos,” that is, non-indigene.⁸³ The overwhelming Christian majority was not about to give the Hausa-Fulani Muslims a centimetre.

Here we have the kernel of the problem: politics. Yes, but remember that for Northern Nigerian Muslims and as a conse-

quent fall out, that of Plateau Christians as well, politics and religion coalesce.⁸⁴ Christians were not simply ethnocentric or small-minded. To them it was a matter of the struggle against the Muslim *jihad*. We are back to the politico-religious problematic that I have insisted on throughout this series. The land and territorial issues, the first cause as far as Danfulani was concerned, do indeed play an important role in all of this.⁸⁵

Danfulani also brings up other factors that we have come across at various times in this series. There are the social factors of the Muslim failure or rejection of social integration, the issue of unilateral intermarriage and contempt for the local culture and institutions. These are additional fundamental reasons for “deep seated bitterness, with far reaching social consequences, that has [also] continued to fan conflict...”

In such volatile contexts, history is usually reconstructed in various ways. Though I refer to two histories, Danfulani lists more. He reports that “the Plateau Peace Conference noted that certain individuals and groups distort history concerning land ownership for selfish purpose and in order to cause confusion.” Allow me a few quotations from his paper.

Attempts at establishing native/indigene status has in some areas given birth to intense production and/or reproduction of ethnic/group histories (of migration/settlement patterns) in order to prove exclusive claims and refute the claims of rivals. In Jos, appeal has been made to oral sources in order to bolster claims over the town.

The various Commissions of Enquiries also created their own distinct myths of legitimisation. Thus so many myths of legitimisation are evolved in the creation and recreation of history. Coupled with this is the habit of copiously quoting colonial sources towards affirming exclusive claims and legitimacy.... Definition of the relevant other is not usually anchored on any

proven history of migration and settlement, suggesting that various nuances and possibilities are involved in the construction of political identities. For instance, power relations at local levels may determine labeling of groups as “natives” and “settlers.” For example, the Tiv are considered “settlers” by others, such as the Kambari, Alago and Jukun in Nasarawa South Senatorial district of Nassarawa State. Yet the Kambari who are of Kanuri extraction and who control the local power structure in Lafia emirate, and who seek the exclusion of the Tiv from participation in social and political life of the area are themselves migrants who arrived in the area in the course of the 19th century. This is a classic example of a group of “settler” status defining and stigmatising others as “settlers” on account of existing power structures and domination.⁸⁶

I cannot speak for Muslims or Islam, but I have the distinct impression that most Nigerian Muslims are not averse to the rewriting of history if it advances their plan, *da'wah* or *jihad*, even if it cannot stand the test of genuine historical research. I know the same is true for ethnocentrism and its practitioners. However, it is *not* acceptable for Christians to distort history for the sake of advancing their own status at the expense of other groups.

One responsible method to overcome all these vested-interest myths is to employ a team of professional non-Nigerian African historians without any vested interests in Nigerian situations. Perhaps the Association of African Historians could provide a team of experts to do away with all the myths and get to the bottom of these histories. They would submit their findings to a forum of members of this Association before they become official. It is likely that local vested interests will attack and reject the reports of these historians. They will hire local historians to undermine their findings. Of course, the arrangement can include a mutual agreement that the results of these historical reports will be binding on all par-

ties. The government could help steer the community towards such a decision. Those reports would for the next few decades constitute official history on basis of which decisions would be made.

I did consider suggesting a local historical conference, but the aftermath of the 2004 Jos Peace Conference does not encourage more conferences!

We in Nigeria should not think that we are the first or only ones to have this problem. When you google “ethnocentricity” you get 832,000 entries! When you google “2008 Jos violence” you get thousands more! That means the entire world is watching us Christians and Muslims and mocking us for our intolerance and inability to cooperate. There is no hiding these days with internet being accessible everywhere. Everything is done on the world stage. Now, if that is not enough to give us *kunya* or shame, what will? *Is that what it takes to motivate us to dialogue and reconcile?*

*As to ethnocentrism and its results, both religions, officially opposed as they are to this mentality, at least to its ethnic component, have to dig deeply into their spiritual arsenals and do their utmost to erase this attitude from among their followers. They need to devise very intentional and well designed programmes to overcome it. They will also need to generate the patience needed to sustain the programme until it has yielded significant and observable results. I propose that leaders from both religions from all walks of life, at national and local levels, work at this together. They will very likely come to the conclusion that they should teach their people to work together on concrete social projects at grass roots level across ethnic and religious boundaries. Seriously. Everywhere. Continuously over the years in a sustained manner. **I urge ordinary Christians and Muslims not to wait for their church or mosque leaders to start this. They, the church as organism in society with all***

their various skills and daily interaction with others, can proceed on their own—teachers, business people, professionals, farmers, women, youths, students, boys, girls, anyone.... Let's go!

The above suggestions about professional historical research and those in the box above make sense only if there are no hidden agendas or plans. As long as Muslims are suspected of having their plan to dip the Qur'an into the Atlantic, it will be difficult for Plateau Christians to agree to any such arrangements. Muslims, I do not tire of reminding you that you still have a job of gaining the confidence of your fellow citizens. Without that confidence, it will be difficult to move forward.

▲ THE PARTIALITY FACTOR: APPOINTMENTS, PROMOTIONS, ACCESS

If you have read earlier volumes of this series, you will remember that the matter of appointments and promotions in both civil service and the uniformed forces has been a sore point on both sides, especially at federal level. In addition, there are the accusations of unbalanced access to the public media along with a myriad of other forms of discrimination. Both Christians and Muslims have long accused the FG of favouring the other side. Both groups have published extensive lists of appointments and promotions “proving” their point. When compared, these lists prove nothing—except that perceived partiality is alive and well!¹⁸⁷ But even if, judging from the contradictions and selectivity between them, the lists can not be relied upon, the point they are trying to make is clear enough. The same situation holds for states and LGs with mixed constituencies.

Here I dare step in without any hesitation, even as an expatriate. Partiality and discrimination have no legitimate place in any healthy nation. Nor will sincere Christians have any truck with

them unless there are extenuating circumstances. ATR, yes, it will. And Islam? Well, which Islam do I go to for an answer? What with the obligation of wholesale *da'wah*, many if not most Muslims will favour Muslim appointments, not to speak of the *jihad* impulse as popularly understood.

If we really want peace, we have to firmly decide to put this aspect of our history behind us. All tiers of government must provide for equality of access to positions, promotions and everything else public, at least according to the proportion of our varied populations. I am not so sure about Islam, but certainly Christianity teaches fairness, generosity even.

Karofi reports that the administration of Governor Shekarau decided to appoint non-indigenes as special advisers and members of the state executive council. There are three of them, but two of them, judging from their names, are Muslims. Fred Azuka was appointed Special Adviser Inter-community Relations in charge of Southeast and South-South; Malam Mika'il Adebayor, Special Adviser for South-West; and Dr Salahuddeen Adams, Special Adviser in charge of Northern minorities. There are several others who were elected and serve in LGCs in the state. Two Ibo ladies were elected councillors but they represent *Sabon Gari* in Fagge LG. The exceptions are few and they concerned the marginal issues of minorities only, but let us acknowledge these appointments and elections as a positive change of direction.

These developments, according to Karofi, have "brought encouraging harmony among the various peoples living in the city. Everybody now lives in peace, as people believe that their aspirations are being met through representation." I am not in a mood to argue the point, but Kano's does not go beyond token representation, especially when you contrast the actual scene of violence for

which the city is known to that depicted by Karofi. Kano hardly presents a serene picture of peace!

Of course, we need to make the same call on all states on behalf of “non-indigenes” or “settlers” who have moved in generations ago from whatever state. I have friends in Jos whose grandparents moved there. The current generation knows no other home state, but their children, fourth generation, are barred from state scholarships and are not even considered to come from the catchment area of Unijos. At the same time, no one can accuse Christian-majority MB states of the same blatant partiality and discrimination as is practiced in the core North. The Plateau State Secretariat is home to many Muslims. I have personally been treated by a number of them with contempt and hostility.

When governments in the deep South appoint a few token Muslims, the latter gush all over them with goodwill and high Northern officials come and express their exhilaration.⁸⁸ Do they rejoice because they appreciate impartiality and neutrality—or because they consider these as tiny steps in the march of the Qur’an towards the Atlantic? In view of the fact that, apart from similar tokenism in Kano, I am not aware of reciprocation by the North, deep down within I fear it is the latter. Muslims, I believe you get the point. If those token Southern appointments gladdened your hearts, you need to reciprocate to demonstrate your sincerity. And since you consider yourselves superior, you need to demonstrate that you can outdo them in hospitality, acceptance, pluralism, tolerance, appointments and move beyond tokenism—unless those become obstacles to your *jihad*?

*You need to convince us once again, not by grandiose claims for the tolerance of Islam, but by ordinary, fair appointments and access decisions. You cannot continue to welcome me to carry on business or provide professional services without eventually giving me a voice. You cannot tell me to bring my business but not my religion. **You cannot welcome my body but tell me to leave my soul behind! No Muslim would make such a non-Islamic demand! Would you?—but you do!** And for all of us, tokenism will not solve the problem. We must move on and be one nation, not a nation of disenfranchised citizens.*

But there are exceptions to these rules here. Rules assume a relative peace and harmony and usually include protocol agreements. Unfortunately at this very time of writing, these conditions have been disrupted once again. In spite of the 2004 Plateau Peace Conference, the war over Plateau State openly erupted again at the end of November, 2008.⁸⁹ Though I do not support the notion that all is fair in war—or was that “all is fair in love?”—normal routine cannot continue under the guise of political correctness, i.e. false peace. **If** Muslims officially agreed to the resolutions of the 2004 Peace Conference in a bid for time and secretly were planning new *da'wah* or *jihad* strategies for the state, then it is time for serious defensive, if not offensive, action, not mere discussion, though that does not necessarily call for physical violence. Some democratic civilities may need to be suspended.

But we Christians must also examine ourselves. We definitely have genuine reasons to defend ourselves against Muslim plans for Plateau. But we must also ask ourselves to what extent we are moved by impulses that come either from our ATR inheritance or from pure anger and hatred. In the Western world, “Christian” people who were “converted” by the sword, including and perhaps especially Bishops and their ilk of the time, for centuries inflicted

unbelievable cruelties on each other. Africa is experiencing similar ugly scenes, Rwanda perhaps providing the most infamous example. The Tiv-Jukun and the Jukun-Kuteb debacles took place within our own MB, Christians against Christians—or is that “Christians” against “Christians?” People in Nigeria did not convert by the sword, but many did convert under various pressures such as Muslim incentives and of people movements. Years ago, Henry Farrant predicted “The Church in the near future will have masses of unconverted adherents whom it must lead to the truth.”⁹⁰ After having been in Nigeria for some years, I was once assigned to help turn a church district around that faced exactly that problem.

Today’s Nigerian Church needs to ensure that in its defense against Muslim challenges it is motivated by Biblical inspiration, not primarily out of the ancient worldview or the angry memory of the slave raids of past centuries or current provocations.⁹¹ This does not necessarily exclude taking concrete defensive measures anymore than my godly parents and their contemporaries did against German Nazi cruelties in my birth country during World War II.

Some hostile strategies are perfectly legal. If Muslims move into a state en masse as migrants but for *jihadic* purposes, they are not doing anything illegal. They may be following the letter of the law, but not the spirit. The same if Christians were to intentionally migrate to Kano State for the purpose of turning it into a Christian state. ***Should they perhaps begin to plan for this as they believe Muslims to be doing in other states?*** When this happens, does the invaded community have the right to defend its integrity by putting up obstacles? In the Western world, Muslims are rapidly increasing in number both by immigration and by having larger families. People see it happening before their eyes, but, due to democratic political correctness, feel helpless to do anything about

it.⁹² Could this become an issue in some Nigerian states? In Plateau? In the core Northern states? In a sense, all are under attack from fellow citizens and all have placed obstacles in each other's way. The current migration into the core North is not a planned one; it is rather motivated individually and not for any religious intention.

In Chapter 7, I suggest that communities, like individuals, also have certain rights and may defend themselves. But how do you defend yourself against legal democratic means? Do the normal provisions of democracy need to be suspended or restricted to counter such legal attacks? I could argue that this is exactly what the core North is doing with its (largely unofficial) restrictions on Christian non-indigenes. It does not seem to be the way to go. "Christian" Plateau State has the challenge of determining a response on basis of the Christian faith. And all states have to make it clear whether they accept Project Nigeria, imposed as it was on them by foreigners. If the answer is affirmative—and I hear no other voice at this point—then we all have to accept its implications.

People have more than once described the situation in the core North as a form of apartheid.⁹³

If it seems to you that I am waffling a bit in the above paragraphs, you are right. I am bringing up various contradictions in our state, national and religious life to which there is no easy fix. I cannot speak for Muslims, but Christians have to find their way through these contradictions on basis of the Scriptures as well as actual experience. That is their challenge—and their witness to future generations. I believe that the Kuyperian insights advanced in earlier chapters will support us in our quest for peace. I also trust that the political formula that I develop in chapters 5-7 will help us in hammering out our approach.

The Christian Gospel provides the greatest weapon Christians

have at their disposal, namely, the “armour of God” or the “sword of the Spirit” further described in Ephesians 6:10-18. Especially for Plateau Christians it is significant that their earliest missionary pioneers had a long-range view of a Christian community that lives so uprightly and piously that they would become the envy of others, including Muslims, and that spiritual jealousy would draw them into the circle of Christ. In 2004 COCIN celebrated her centennial with great public display of gratitude towards the missionaries.

A real way to honour these missionaries is not first of all by naming a non-existing university after Karl Kumm, the mission's founder, but by instilling in the hearts and lives of its followers a sense of public justice, integrity and honour. Taking up the armour of God in every way. That will be the most effective defence against the encroachment of Islam, guaranteed by a divine promise, more than any political maneuvering. This is not meant to belittle plans for universities or even politics, but to infuse it all with that same armour and sword.

What legitimate action could be taken to counteract legal da'wah or jihad moves in whatever form it comes? This question needs to be considered, but—and this is a very important “but”—such considerations cannot be conducted in an overheated atmosphere of anger and hate. Here wise heads and pious hearts bathed in the glow of the Holy Spirit are required and, not to forget, honest soul searching of our own. This requires the choicest of our sons and daughters along with the fathers and mothers of our nation, those driven by the fear of God and love for the country. No room for hotheads, tribalists, manipulators and adventurers here.

▲ IMPERIALIST FACTORS

Nigeria is an imperialist/colonialist creation. This colonial history is very much part of the current religious conflicts that are the subject of this series. We find it both in the form of a present internal “colonialism” and in the threat of an external force.

1. *Internal Colonialism*

Internal colonialism refers to situations where colonialists placed various Traditional ethnic groups in the MB under Muslim emirs. What Northern Muslims could not achieve on their own was handed them on a silver platter by the British. Though Northern Muslims reject everything colonial, this is one part of their colonial heritage that they defend with all their might!⁹⁴ Ever considered this inconsistency and the reason for it? This situation has continued in the post-colonial era till now and is a major reason for some of the worst riots.⁹⁵ During the intervening years, many of the Traditionalists in these subjugated ethnic groups, especially in Southern Zaria/Kaduna and in Tafawa Balewa area of Bauchi State, became Christian. They were educated up through university and became aware of the background and history of their situation, of specific events long forgotten by intervening generations. They began a campaign to rid themselves of these “foreign” emirs, who were mostly of Hausa/Fulani stock. A number of times the dynamics of these campaigns created tensions that led to the violent riots described in Volume 1.

Actually, in its 2008 Dakar Communique, the OIC supported the call for an end to this kind of internal colonialism. In Paragraph 75 we read: “The Conference renewed its support for and endorsement of the Secretary-General’s efforts, initiatives, and good offices in the search of just solutions to the causes of *Muslim communities and minorities* in non-OIC Member States, whether politically, culturally, or economically....” Unfortunately, specific details in this paragraph show concern only for Muslim minorities in non-

OIC countries. But then the paragraph continues: “The Conference also stressed that the current challenges call for the adoption of the principles of dialogue and cooperation, and the duty to respect the cultures and customs of all peoples, away from violence, coercion, and exclusion.” In view of all the noble and humane sentiments infusing this entire document, I cannot possibly believe that this statement would not cover all oppressed minorities everywhere, not merely Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries. I would expect these same sympathies to be extended to Traditionalists and Christians who were forced by colonial governments that Muslims consider illegitimate and oppressive, into regimes that do not reflect their histories, cultures and values. I would also expect that where such situations exist under Muslim regimes, OIC would want them corrected in order to avoid the appearance of double standards and hypocrisy!

I call upon the FG and various state governments, especially of Bauchi and Kaduna States, to apply OIC standards. This would be the chance for Nigerian Muslims to prove the truth of their earlier claims that OIC is for everyone and that Islam is above the domination and colonialism they so despise in the West.

I call on all parties to recognize the astounding parallel that seems to have escaped everyone. As Muslims demand the renewal of sharia to undo the colonial imposition of secularism, so these Christians, often with the co-operation of their Traditionalist kinsmen, demand an end to **their** colonial imposition, that is, from Muslim internal colonialism. Both religions revolt against the long-range fallout of colonialism. Both struggle for freedom to be themselves. Both have legitimate reasons for their struggles. **Why do we not recognize each other’s parallel struggles and aspirations?**

Could it be that both parties realize that victory of one spells some kind of loss or defeat for the other? The end of internal colonialism would mean a reduction in the power of certain emirs. The end of the imposed regime of secularism over the core North might mean complications for the semi-secular Christians, i.e., a compromise of their treasured unified but mythically neutral legal system. Both would be true, but would those truly be losses? A nation where everyone feels oppressed by the other will never come to rest. A people that feels unfairly treated decade after decade by their rivals will sooner or later explode. By eliminating these obstacles to peace, the imagined losses are small compared to the great gain of greater national unity. The people can finally attend to the business of earning a living and making progress together at the expense of none.

*Both are fighting against the imposition of alien ideologies and worldviews that undermined the very souls of their people and estranged both from their own histories. **Both support the oppression of each other!** It is time both recognize their common involvement and their problems and shake them off together. **Each party has the answer to and control over the other's problem!** **You are each other's occupiers!** Wake up, people! **Trade freedom for freedom and release each other from your bondage.***

The goose and the gander, remember?

Of course, for this to succeed, both groups need to meet some additional conditions and adopt certain parameters that are scattered throughout this book. *Probably the major condition is for both to recognize that we are each other's oppressors and to cleanse our ambitions from imposing ideologies on each other:* Muslims not to impose internal colonialism and Christians not to impose the "secular-Christian" Common Law. Remember the Muslim slogan, "No imposition of religion." Both need to be freed from each other's

impositions by negotiating our way to a mutually acceptable liberation formula. During these negotiations, both need to keep in mind the non-imposition rule of both religions as well as Jesus' rule to do unto others as you want them to do to you. With these two principles in our hearts, we should get a long way.

2. External Threat

One of the negative consequences of the Christian-Muslim rivalry is not only increasing Nigerian violence and unrest, but also the unease this creates for other countries with their own interest in a stable Nigeria. The primary country here, of course, is the US. Paul Marshall is a strong Kuyperian as readers of this series, especially of Volume 5, will have noticed. However, not all the writers in the 2005 book he edited can be so classified. I continue to be disappointed by the pronouncements of their organization. Though Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom⁹⁶ has rendered heroic help to persecuted Christians through their publications and their advocacy work with the American government, their solutions have often been in terms of Western secularism, separation of state and religion and couched in the language of blatant American oil interest. That I do not consider helpful in our Nigerian Christian-Muslim context. Marshall c.s. have several times warned that America cannot afford instability in Nigeria, since it is a major source of their oil. Nina Shea, Director of Freedom House, bluntly stated, "The adoption of extreme sharia by a state should be viewed as inimical to American foreign policy interests." Paul Marshall wrote,

A stable and economically viable Nigeria is vital to Africa and to American strategic and economic interests and warrants US government engagement. Nigeria is the fifth-largest supplier of US crude oil imports. If this significant regional power were to be thrown into a civil war over Islamic

*extremism, it would have a serious impact on sub-Saharan serenity and US national interests. The US cannot afford to ignore the sudden rise of hard-line sharia across northern Nigeria.*⁹⁷

In his earlier report of 2002 on his research journey to Nigeria, Marshall stated with reference to Nigeria that the US has “a moral obligation to help protect those under attack by terrorists.” He lectured his President: “Unless the US adopts a foreign policy to deal with the spreading jurisdiction of sharia law in Nigeria..., America may be faced with civil war or a hostile regime in Africa’s largest country and significant oil exporter.” “It, therefore, is in the US’s strategic interest to devise a human rights policy with regards to Nigeria that ensures religious freedom and pluralism.”⁹⁸ Did we not at least twice before hear similar arguments a few years ago about some Middle East countries?! American officials have admitted that the research and reports of Freedom House have had considerable influence on American policy. It is quite possible that Marshall’s urgings prompted the US to establish both naval and air bases in West Africa. Nigeria acted wisely in repelling American attempts to get a foothold in the region. The feuding parties of Nigeria had better remember Kuwait and Iraq not only but also those American attempts closer to home. It happened twice in a row and not very long ago. The thought of repeat attempts are not far-fetched. Oil can drive even the mighty to desperation! You may want to put your house in order before....

▲ A PROGRAMME OF RADICAL CREATIVITY ———

Nigerians love to talk and write, complaining vigorously. However, few ever take concrete action to solve the problems under discussion. Governments know that and it is for this reason, I believe, that even the worst of Nigeria’s dictators have allowed con-

siderable press freedom, more than complaining journalists would lead us to expect. As long as they can spout off and vent their feelings not much will happen to correct situations. Similarly, religious leaders feel great when they spout off in their double-page communiques of *dogon Turanci* [fancy English] about their issues. They have done their thing and their followers admire these warriors of words. But not much gets *done*.

Proposals about things to do and steps to take abound in all the chapters of this Volume 8, Muslim, Christian and my own.⁹⁹ Here I draw your attention to the efforts of one man and his organization, for he represents the type of radical creativity that could work wonders if it were employed on a wider basis by both Christians and Muslims. I want Nigerians to borrow a leaf from the Muslim civil rights activist Shehu Sani. While everybody complains about the failure of governments to publish the investigative reports about the various riots, Shehu Sani and his group, Civil Rights Congress, threatened the government that *they* would investigate the perpetrators of violence. They would hand their names over to the government so that it would no longer have an excuse for its silence. Unfortunately, I have not heard whether they carried out their plan,¹⁰⁰ but it was a radical and creative challenge.

I recommend that it still be carried out by some non-governmental organization and thus begin to heal this festering wound.

The same Sani is also a playwright whose sharia drama is described in Appendix 6. This drama was so threatening to vested interests that a sharia court banned its public performance. Even CAN condemned this Muslim's attack on the implementation of sharia.¹⁰¹ Though I do not support Sani's alleged socialism, I do recommend his radical creativity, with "radical" referring to the root cause of things. Muslims could produce dramas about the colonial suppression and distortion of sharia; citizens of Bauchi's

Tafawa Balewa and of Kaduna's Southern Zaria, about their internal colonialism. If these could both be sponsored by civil rights organizations, perhaps the commonality of both situations would become clear to the people and they would thus be encouraged to stand up together and support each other.

*Of course, there is no limit to political and religious topics that could be dramatized. Christians could produce plays about persecution; women, about sharia public transport; still others about the sharia liberation they were promised; Muslim critics, about invalid or misapplied sharia. **More positively, dramas could be produced about Christian-Muslim cooperative efforts.** How about a play about a new regime that seeks to combine elements of Common Law and sharia?*

The sky is literally the limit. Christians and Muslims, I challenge you to use your imagination and put it to work in the service of Nigeria's liberation from its own occupation forces—you yourself!—*to mutually release each other from the colonial bonds you continue to impose on each other.*

▲ INSET: JONATHAN CHAPLIN— A KUYPERIAN AUTHORITY ON POLITICS

Jonathan Chaplin is a British Kuyperian who directs the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics lodged within Tyndale House, Cambridge, UK. He has written extensively on politics from a Kuyperian perspective and is a frequent conference speaker. I urge you to read about him, both his unofficial resume/CV as well as his full bibliography on his website.¹⁰² I have archived a number of his lectures on political issues.¹⁰³ Chaplin digs deeply. I strongly encourage those who wish to immerse themselves more deeply in Kuyperian political thought,

to turn to these articles as well as to the website. From there on, google him for more gourmet entrees.