

My Dear Salisu

Thank you so much for your articles from that Marxist Journal. I have copied them all into permanent files for future reference.

I really do not have time to move over to a study of Marxism in Nigeria. But I have noticed that both Nigerian Christians and Muslims who are serious about having their faith contribute to the welfare of the nation, often turn to a Marxist solution. One of the reasons is that the alternative, Capitalism, has been so harsh on Nigeria. Another is that they have not found any resources within their respective religion for a solution. And so the existing ideology of Marxism seems like a reasonable and practical solution.

In my view, Marxist often does a good job of analyzing and exposing the dynamics of oppression. However, its solutions are something else. It is not realistic in its optimistic view of human nature, at least as far as Christianity is concerned. It is probably closer to Muslim theological anthropology than to Christian. So perhaps its optimism is more acceptable to you than to me. In short, Marxism always fails in its solution because it fails to recognize the depth of evil. Evil always will overcome its plans and ruin them. You probably do not meet many people who have lived under it. They can tell you all about it!

The second reason for my claim that it is not realistic is its history in the world. It has always ended up in oppression of everyone and the impoverishment even of its home turf. Look at Eastern Europe, incl. Russia and its former satellites in Asia.

The third reason that Marxism is unrealistic is its basic worldview that asserts priority of place to the economic aspect. Everything is reduced to economic interest. To a degree that is close to the truth, but the same will hold to the new proletariat it is seeking to raise. It will also fight for its economic interest and, once in power, violate those of everyone else, for the evil in man will take over.

Both Christianity and Islam assert that the underlying foundation for all of life is not economics but religious. Even Marxism is a faith with all kinds of beliefs and doctrines. For a solution we have to look first of all in the direction of religion.

Now religion is also a human affair and can and indeed often is distorted and oppressive. That happens when complications of evil take over there as well. You see, there is no area in all of human life that is free from evil self interest, not even religion. However, when we seek to sort out the basic relevant Muslim and Christian ideas and apply them as well as we can, we will get on the right road to a solution.

You being a Muslim (I think), you should read Muslim social theology. You will find a lot of good stuff there, more than in Marxism. Also read Christian social theology and you will find the similar ideas, though not always identical.

So, as a young Muslim scholar, do not be misled by the superficial attraction of Marxism. Listen to them, especially to their exposure of the dynamics of oppression. Then turn to the social writings of Nigeria's two major religions for direction.

In Nigeria, Muslims have written many articles in the media, many papers for conferences, and many books about Islam and society. There is plenty of that for you to work on.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of Nigerian Christians. They have been misled by Western missionaries who have been very much influenced by Western secularism and therefore imported a narrow version of Christianity. Hence no serious writings from them on Christian social thought. I am one missionary who has sought to reverse that trend by publishing social stuff. It is mostly published by the Institute of Church & Society, which, unfortunately, is currently closed. If interested, go see Prof. Art Helleman of the Relig. Studies Dept. at Unijos and ask him about my books. He has access to all of them.

My current writing project has as one of its goals to break the secular yoke of Nigerian Christians and to demonstrate to my Muslim brothers that Christianity is much bigger and wider than the distorted version they meet in Nigeria.

Well, I hope I have been of some help to you. I will be glad to discuss further.

Yours, Dr. Jan H. Boer